Rules and recommendations for the management of course evaluations at the Faculty of Science

Introduction. This document provides rules and recommendations for the management of course evaluations at the Faculty of Science, in accordance with a Study Programmes Board decision of 3 March 2010. Appendix 1 contains relevant extracts from the Higher Education Ordinance and the Guidelines for matters relating to Lund University and its students, while Appendix 2 contains applicable sections of the Lund University policy for quality assurance and quality enhancement of education 2009–2012.

Course evaluations are an important instrument for the development of the Faculty’s programmes and free-standing courses. How did it go? What lessons can we learn for the next time the course is offered? What should we continue with/remove? What can be improved? In the work to develop our programmes and courses, the views of the students are important.

Our students have the right to give feedback, both positive and negative, on the courses they take. This is accompanied by a responsibility to participate in course evaluations; not least out of solidarity with future students.

Course evaluations shall be performed after every course. However, the format of the course evaluations may vary depending on the course type/level, number of students, etc. They can be carried out using Web-based tools (Appendix 2 contains information about the Web-based tools available at Lund University), through the completion of paper evaluations or through an oral discussion with the students. It is appropriate to have some form of course evaluation during the course; this should be carried out in cooperation with the student representative(s) on the course.
As with all systematic quality assurance work, documentation is important. Course evaluations, analyses of these and changes that have resulted from course evaluations shall be documented and made available.

We should treat course evaluations with the same care as we treat our teaching and research. The literature on course evaluations is extensive; a good introduction with a fairly comprehensive bibliography is provided by Stefan Ekecrantz (UPC-rapport 2007:3, Stockholm University (in Swedish)).

This document contains rules and recommendations for the management of course evaluations in first-cycle education at the Faculty.

**Rules:**

1. The Faculty has delegated responsibility for carrying out, analysing and collating the results of course evaluations to the head of the department responsible for the course. Usually, the head of department delegates the responsibility to the senior director of studies or the department’s first-cycle study programmes board.
2. Course evaluations shall be carried out after every course.
3. The results of the course evaluation shall be collated and any proposed changes shall be discussed in the departments’ first-cycle study programmes boards.
4. Course evaluations and collated results shall be readily available at the department. If there is a course web page, the results shall be made available there.
5. The departments’ first-cycle study programmes boards are responsible for documenting the work on course evaluations.
6. Written or Web-based course evaluations shall be submitted anonymously.
7. Degree projects and work placement courses shall be evaluated and the results of the evaluations shall be documented.

**Recommendations:**
1. The relevance and usefulness of a course evaluation is dependent on as many students as possible completing it. Time should therefore be set aside on the timetable for the completion of the course evaluation.

2. The students or their representatives should be given the opportunity to influence the design of the course evaluations.

3. During the course there should be a dialogue with the students, for example through a mid-semester evaluation. This should preferably be carried out orally with the students or their representative(s), but can of course also take another form.

4. The results of the course evaluation and any changes should be presented at the start of the course the next time it is offered.
Appendix 1

Extract from

THE HIGHER EDUCATION ORDINANCE

Course evaluations

Section 14
Higher education institutions shall enable students who are participating in or have completed a course to express their experiences of and views on the course through a course evaluation to be organised by the higher education institution. The higher education institution shall collate the course evaluations and provide information about their results and any actions prompted by the course evaluations. The results shall be made available to the students. Ordinance (2000:651).

Extract from

Guidelines for matters relating to Lund University and its students

6. Course evaluations

6.1 Time for course evaluations, whether oral or in writing, should be made available in the timetable. Course evaluations carried out otherwise should be such as to encourage the students to respond.

6.2 It should be possible for students to submit their evaluations of a course anonymously with regard to the lecturers and examiners.

6.3 The format, content and follow-up of a course evaluation ought to be decided in consultation with the student representative for the course.
Appendix 2

Extract from
Lund University policy for quality assurance and quality enhancement of education 2009–2012

6. Orientation of work on quality

...Student influence will be so designed that students at all levels are able to assume, together with teachers and other University staff, joint responsibility for enhancing the quality of education...

5. Methodology of work on quality – quality assurance and quality enhancement

Quality assurance of education is based on six main methods. Support in relation to these methods should be provided at the overall University level in the form of manuals and network-based infrastructures:

1. Validation, i.e. examination of the feasibility of adopting new study programmes and qualifications;
2. Evaluation of the quality of examination and of qualifications/learning outcomes;
3. Evaluation of courses – overall assessments of courses based on, inter alia, evaluation questionnaires completed by students;
4. Monitoring of alumni/alumnae and of potential employers;
5. ‘Barometer’ surveys to investigate how students, including doctoral students, and employees experience education;

Extract from
Quality assurance and quality enhancement in first and second cycle studies at Lund University: plan of action for 2009–2010

2.4 Student evaluations and course evaluations

Student evaluations, which constitute the basis for more comprehensive course evaluations, will be carried out in each course. A web-based tool, VETA (Virtual Evaluation Tool for Academia), is being developed to help carry out course evaluations and compilation of results. Instructions for course evaluation will be established.

Appendix 3
Course evaluation – a collective assessment of the course based on students’ evaluations is one of six designated methods for quality assurance and quality enhancement in the University’s quality assurance and quality enhancement policy. For the past ten years, Lund University has offered the Web-based survey and evaluation tool eVal as an aid in the implementation of course evaluations and the collation of results. In 2010 eVal is gradually being replaced by VETA (Virtual Evaluation Tool for Academia), a new course evaluation system.

**VETA (Virtual Evaluation Tool for Academia),**

Examples of functions in the VETA course evaluation system are:

- creating, editing, publishing and distributing digital surveys with an automated reminder function and guaranteed anonymity for students.
- automatically and continually monitoring the composition of submitted answers.
- collating, editing and presenting data on different levels (simple and advanced) depending on the type of user and the purpose of a specific survey.
- creating templates for surveys and questions and/or use general templates.
- creating report templates and/or use general report templates.
- exporting answers to other Excel and statistics programs for further processing, collation and presentation.

VETA also includes functions to make outcome-related course evaluations, where the students’ assessment of their results on the course/programme can be linked to their experiences of their studies and the course or programme. There is also the possibility to choose different combinations of questions about the characteristics of the course, teaching and study environment.

VETA is being developed to be intuitive and self-explanatory. User support will be offered in the form of guides, such as a “Getting started” guide, short instruction films for the most common functions and a list of frequently asked questions.

The introduction of VETA started in February 2010 and is being rolled out to groups of 10–12 people per faculty, with the idea that these people will be able to contribute to continued internal work on VETA and course evaluations, in line with the needs of the faculty. A wider launch of VETA to all teaching staff, course coordinators and equivalents will be able to start later in the spring semester 2010. By then, the support services for VETA will be established and telephone and email support will be offered by LDC Servicedesk.

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