Teacher guide for course evaluation and quality assurance

Background

As an experiment, the department takes over the responsibility for all course evaluation and quality assurance for all our courses. During the autumn term of 2004 we will conduct course evaluations without using student representatives for handing out and summarizing the evaluations; instead, the department’s personnel will do this. This document highlights the teacher’s role in the process.

Quality plan

As a teacher, you should make a plan on how the course will be run with good quality. The plan need not be written down, but you should at least think through the following aspects.

Right students. Do you get the students that your course is intended for? This requires that information about your course is available and accurate. Do you participate in marketing your course at strategic occasions? Is all information about the course updated? Is the course homepage placed at the designated location of the department’s web (check at http://www.it.uu.se/edu/kurslista)?

Good teaching. Exchange tips with colleagues and in particular studierektors. Apart from the basic pedagogical course, additional pedagogical training and education is available.

Course coherence. If the course consists of several parts, is it clear how they are connected? How well are the students informed about the relations between your course and others? Can you improve these relations? Tip: invite guest lecturers from courses that students could take after yours (and be prepared to give guest lectures in other courses).

Good content. If you are an active researcher in the field, that should guarantee that your content is up to date and correct. Otherwise, you need to verify this, for example by maintaining contact with active researchers. You should also verify that the amount of content is reasonable for the number of credits that the student receives, and that the content is relevant for the study program(s) that include your course.

Fair and effective examination. Think about possible ways of examination. Studierektors can give advice. Fairness includes a reasonable workload on assignments and a balance between testing knowledge and skills. Effectiveness includes a reasonable workload for you and your assistants, and timely feedback to the students.

Throughput. The goal set for the department as a whole is that 70% of our registered students should pass. Though this is a departmental average and cannot be applied to individual courses it gives some indication on what you should aim at.
As said, this plan is not necessarily a written document, but all teachers and assistants that are involved in the course should be aware of it. You studierektor also needs to be informed about your plans to do his job well. So think before your course starts!

**Mid-course evaluation**

As a teacher you are responsible for the mid-course evaluation, which, as the name suggests, should occur around the middle of your course. You decide on the best occasion in the schedule. It should be clear to the students when this evaluation will take place, for instance through the course homepage. The aim of the evaluation is that the students can give their opinions on aspects of the course that can be addressed during the course.

There are different ways to perform a course evaluation. An important requirement is that students can give their opinions anonymously. A simple implementation is to hand out post-it notes during a lecture. Ask the students to write down their remarks and to put the notes on a desk. Leave the room for, say, 5 minutes, while the students do this. You can then easily sort out the notes and spot common opinions. You can of course do this more often than only at mid-course, for instance in a longer course or if you want feedback on some specific point.

Let the studierektor know (preferably by email) that the mid-course evaluation took place and what the result was. Perhaps there are things that you cannot do anything about, but the studierektor can.

**Course evaluation**

A change compared to previous routine is that you as a teacher are responsible that a course evaluation is done, and that as many students as possible participate. Make it clear that evaluations are important and that they should include all opinions (including those of students that have no complaints). The evaluation should take place during a scheduled occasion near the end of the course when you expect that many students will attend (for instance when you discuss previous exams). It should be clear to the students when this evaluation will take place, for instance through the course homepage.

The course evaluation forms can be found at [http://www.it.uu.se/intern/teaching_internt](http://www.it.uu.se/intern/teaching_internt). If you use LaTeX or MSword then you can adapt the form to your course: fill in the course name, teachers name(s) and the litterature; remove parts that are not applicable to your course. Otherwise, print the pdf file, fill in and cross out fields with a pen. If you want to modify the form by adding questions, please check with your studierektor first.

Make enough copies of the form and bring them together with an envelope. Leave the room while the students fill out the forms; they should put all forms in the envelope and seal it. Take or send the envelope to IT- kansli. After a few weeks you will receive the compiled evaluations. Write down your own comments about the course and about the evaluations; suggest changes to be made next time (whether or not you are teaching it then) and e-mail them to the studierektor.
Student representatives

Traditionally the students have conducted these evaluations. Some studieråd (=student union for a particular educational programme) have expressed a strong wish to continue to do this. You should allow them to do it under the following conditions:

- A student representative takes contact with the teacher well before the evaluation (a couple of weeks).
- The teacher decides on the best time for the evaluation.
- All students of the course evaluate it at the same time and using the same form, even if the course is part of several educational programmes. If representatives from different programmes want to evaluate the course they must agree on one of them to do it for all students (if they cannot agree then the teacher conducts the evaluation).
- The teacher brings copies of the evaluation form. If the student representative insists on using another form this should be allowed provided all students use the same form.
- The teacher is always responsible for the evaluation. If the student does not show up, the teacher must conduct the evaluation as described above.

Follow-up conversation

After this, you will meet the studierektor for a follow-up conversation, discussing the course, quality plan, results, evaluation and suggested changes. It’s usually not necessary to document this conversation in writing, but maybe sometimes one does not want to rely on memory alone.