Guidelines for Course Evaluation and the Publication of Course Evaluation Reports

The University of Copenhagen is introducing common guidelines for evaluations of teaching and the publication of course evaluation reports. The new procedure is designed to ensure that teaching is evaluated in a systematic, planned and efficient manner, and that the evaluations exert the greatest possible influence on teaching quality. Evaluations will be published in a manner that complies with current legislation, cf. the Transparency and Openness in Education Act and the Data Protection Act.

Teaching evaluations at the University are based on the following principles:

- they are conducted in order to enhance teaching
- they are conducted to make sure students enjoy adequate learning opportunities that will help them complete their studies
- they are an integral part of the teachers' commitment to enhancing teaching and positive examples will be publicised
- the evaluation process will not be too time consuming for the parties involved
- the data generated will be useful for follow-up purposes and suitable for publication.

The guidelines in brief
The common guidelines for the evaluation of teaching consists of:

1) a minimum standard for evaluation frequency
2) a checklist stipulating the faculties' evaluation procedures
3) a checklist for drawing up specific evaluation plans for each level of education
4) a procedure for the publication of summarised course evaluation reports.
Within this common framework, the faculties will develop evaluation practices tailored to local conditions.

1) Minimum standard for the frequency of evaluation
The minimum standard stipulates the following requirements for the frequency of teaching evaluations at the University:

- Subject elements will be evaluated on a systematically recurring basis, cf. the Programme Order
- At a minimum, all fixed, recurring subject elements are evaluated every second time they are run, unless major changes have been made
- All new elements are evaluated the first time they are run
- Elements will be evaluated in a form the teacher or course leader is able to communicate to the programme management.

2) Checklist for the faculty's evaluation procedure
Each faculty will devise its own evaluation procedure. The checklist below is used to draw up this procedure. The work will be done in compliance with the University Act. The dean has over-arching responsibility for the faculty's evaluation work. Heads of department are responsible for the quality of the department's research and teaching. They also follow up on evaluations of the programme and its teaching along with the appropriate study board and head of studies. The study board assures and enhances the quality of the programme and its teaching, and verifies the follow-up work done on the evaluations.

The purpose of evaluation:
- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- How often are evaluations conducted, and how does this reflect both purpose and need?
- How will the purpose be communicated to students, teachers and administrative staff?
- What is the target response rate for evaluations?

Choice of form of evaluation and the drawing up of evaluation plans:
- What requirements are placed on evaluation methods (e.g. validation of methods, degree of freedom of choice, methodological continuity, etc.)?
- What provision will be made to ensure that evaluations are conducted in accordance with the academic and educational objectives?
• Which perceptions of teaching quality will form the basis for the evaluations, and under whose auspices will they be debated?
• How will consistency be ensured between the purpose of the evaluation, perceptions of teaching quality and evaluation practice?
• How will students be involved in drawing up the evaluation procedure?
• Who is responsible for drawing up the evaluation plan?

Follow-up on evaluations

• Who will have management responsibility for the different parts of the follow-up work (i.e. follow-up concerning the planning of teaching, academic content, examinations, curriculum, staffing and staff training)?
• Who will ensure communication to and with students about the outcome of evaluations and the follow-up work?
• Who will ensure communication to and with teachers about the outcome of evaluations and follow-up work?
• Who will ensure communication with other stakeholders and interested parties?

Publication

• What procedures will ensure that the requirements for publication are met?
• What procedures will ensure that it is possible to link course evaluation reports to the underlying data?
• What provision will be made to ensure that the definitions of the categories A, B and C (which must be outlined in the evaluation summary) reflect the purpose of the evaluation, the perception of teaching quality and the evaluation practice?

Teacher qualifications and skills enhancement

• What policies will govern skills enhancement for teachers?
• What provision will be made to ensure that the opportunities for skills enhancement reflect the faculty's needs?
• What options will teachers have to provide feedback on evaluations?
• How will the faculty's skills-enhancement work be documented?

Maintenance and communication of evaluation practice
• What provision will be made to ensure that an updated and publicly accessible description of the faculty's evaluation procedure is available?
• What provision will be made to ensure that this description is communicated to all teachers, students and other stakeholders?
• What provision will be made to ensure that the available evaluation tools are updated and maintained?

3) Checklist for drawing up specific evaluation plans for each level of education

Depending on the way in which the faculty is organised, the evaluation plan for each academic year will be drawn up at either faculty level, department level or head-of-studies level.

The evaluation plan determines the evaluation of the individual subject elements. The evaluation plan stipulates:

- which subject elements will be evaluated, and by which methods
- at what point during the semester the subject element will be evaluated
- which stakeholders will help to draw up the evaluation plan.

The evaluation plan will be updated once a year and published in a form that is accessible to all teachers and students.

4) Procedure for the publication of course evaluation reports

Publication requirements

The procedure adopted for the publication of teaching evaluations must ensure that the University complies with the publication requirements stipulated in the Transparency and Openness in Education Act. In that respect, the University has decided that all teaching evaluations will be published from 2009 onwards.

The Transparency and Openness in Education Act stipulates that information about current evaluations of the quality of the University's teaching will be published on the institution's website. However, information about individual teachers is exempted, as are evaluations conducted exclusively by employees of the institution itself.

Qualitative summary of the results of course evaluations

A qualitative, descriptive summary of course evaluations (known as a course evaluation report) will be published at least once a year. The study year is defined as running from September to September, and evaluations for the previous year will be published before December. The relevant manager (head of department, head of studies or head of study board) will sum-
marise the results of the annual evaluations of subject elements. Response rates will also be reported and commented upon.

Evaluation material will be divided up into three categories: A, B and C. The individual faculties are responsible for the definition, development and application of these categories. The definition must relate to the purpose of the evaluation, the perception of teaching quality and actual evaluation practice, c.f. the checklist for faculty evaluation procedures. The definitions of A, B and C must be stipulated in the course evaluation report.

A consists of evaluations which, in relation to the definition of the category, show that the teaching/subject element functions particularly well and serves as an inspiration to others.

B consists of evaluations which, in relation to the definition of the category, show that the teaching/subject element functions satisfactorily.

C consists of evaluations which, in relation to the definition of the category, show that the teaching/subject element requires multiple changes.

The course evaluation report begins by outlining the number of evaluations in each category, complete with reflections upon the spread between the categories. Each category will then be discussed as follows. For category A, the focus will be on particularly positive experiences. Category B (the intermediate group, probably the largest of the three) will be commented on only in brief. For category C, a description will identify where attention needs to be paid, where changes and other follow-up initiatives are already in place or will be implemented in the future. The course evaluation report will also take stock of follow-up initiatives from the previous study year. Skills-enhancement initiatives will also be mentioned in conjunction with the follow-up work.

The underlying evaluation data will be listed at the end of the course evaluation report. The data material can be aggregated, and will include a description of how it was sourced. Data that can be traced back to individuals must not be published. If links to underlying data are not provided, the material that formed the basis for the course evaluation report must be stipulated.

The report will be max. 3 pages.

(See template for course evaluation report and a real-life example from the Faculty of Theology below).

**Publication**

Course evaluation reports will be published on faculty websites. Links to faculty websites will be published on [www.ku.dk](http://www.ku.dk).

**Legality**

The parties involved in the design of the course evaluation report and the assessment of the links to underlying data must take all due care to follow the rules stipulated in the Data Protection Act. Evaluation data that can be traced back to individual teachers must not be published. Particular care
must be taken regarding evaluations that might be traced back to individual teachers and therefore identify them.

In cases where there is the slightest doubt, University Education Services will assess the legality of publishing specific material.

Finally, the parties involved should be aware that the legal framework does not require that all teaching is evaluated, merely that actual evaluations conducted must be made public, except for information about an individual teacher's teaching and evaluations conducted exclusively by employees of the institutions, c.f. the Order governing the Transparency and Openness in Education Act, etc.
Template for course evaluation reports

Course evaluation report for the Bachelor Programme in the History of Literature, 2008/2009

Evaluations have been conducted of 40 different subject elements on the bachelor programme. The average response rate was 50%.

Fifteen of the evaluations were defined as category A, 20 as category B and 5 as category C. [Insert category definitions]

On the whole, teaching on the Bachelor Programme in the History of Literature has made satisfactory progress.

A: It is particularly important to stress the positive impact of the use of blogs in the Interpreting Literature course. It is worth considering whether this method might be applicable to other courses, [Insert other relevant positive examples here].

B: General satisfaction was expressed with the courses yy and zz. Individual proposals for changes have been submitted, and have been passed to the teachers for implementation, [Insert examples here].

C: The evaluations of the courses History of Literature 1 and 2 identified the need to make changes to the syllabus in relation to the course descriptions. Proposals for changes will be discussed by the Study Board next semester. Two evaluations show that... [insert examples of other factors that necessitate change, stating how and when the follow-up work will be done].

Status of follow-up initiatives from the previous evaluation period:

The change to the syllabus for the qqq course has now been implemented, with effect from September 09. Changes still need to be made to the form of examination in relation to the course zzz.

20% of the teachers attended skills-enhancement programmes during the period.

[Link to quantitative material where both possible and legal].

[Note about the type of underlying data material on which the summary is based].
Faculty of Theology

University of Copenhagen

To all teachers on the theology programmes ES 07 and FS 07, including Greek and Latin teachers, the Library Section, counsellors and examination and administrative staff.

Ref. evaluation of the teaching in autumn semester 2007

Thank you for your course evaluation reports for autumn semester 2007. Sixty-eight courses ran this semester (including introductory and summer courses), and the Study Board has received some 50 course evaluation reports. A large number of the reports were quite detailed, for which we are grateful.

The Study Board processed the course evaluation reports at its meeting on 7 March 2008. The Board finds that, taken together, the reports suggest that teaching on the theology programmes – which are characterised by highly different purposes, forms and class sizes – is by and large satisfactory. This impression is partly due to the fact that the reports, in a precise and concrete manner, identify the problems encountered by teachers and students while planning courses and curricula. In so doing, they provide the Study Board with an excellent basis on which to fulfil the obligations of the University Act – i.e. to “assure and enhance the quality of the programme and teaching” (section 18,6,1).

The Study Board’s discussion revolved around the following issues identified in the reports:

Ref. the bachelor programme

Exam registration for the subject Bible Studies, which is part of the first-year exam, is automatic (i.e. all newly matriculated students are automatically registered for the test). As shown by the high number of “automatic” absences from the examination, this arrangement does not work as intended. The Study Board has put forward a proposal for the forthcoming revision of the curriculum, and is also looking at other ways of stemming the drop-out rate in the first semester, regardless of whether this rate is real or “automatic”.

Regarding the exegetic subjects, especially Old Testament Exegesis 1 and New Testament Exegesis 1, earlier feedback that both teachers and students sense some form of disparity between syllabus and time (i.e. number of course hours and study preparation time) was reiterated. In GT 1, it seems to be the minor-subject syllabus in particular that is squeezed. Students in NT 1 find that there is insufficient time for the Greek text (The Gospel According to St. Mark), while the teaching team regretted the fact that the language-exegetical work takes up so much time. The reports have already been sent to the research groups, so the Study Board will in the first instance suf-
office by noting the reports and awaiting the research groups'/ABE’s submission of wishes or proposals for changes to the curriculum.

A significant number of BA students attended the BA project seminar and acknowledged that they would have preferred it to have been organised in a more interdisciplinary manner. The Study Board will take up both this point of view, as well as the students’ wish for written guidance in academic writing (e.g. using style sheets) during the revision of the curriculum.

Ref. the master’s programme

The size of the groups on subject courses fluctuates greatly – from 2-25 (at the end of the semester). Most reports acknowledge the importance of offering additional “narrow” subject courses in future., as well as specially requested courses with very few students when students call for them. According to the calculations last semester, the average team consisted of 15, so the Study Board sees absolutely no reason not to continue to offer highly specialised courses in the future.

In light of the requirements of the development contract, we have also taken note of the report’s observation that courses in English end up being advertised “Now in Danish” as only Danish students turn up for them.

Miscellaneous

It is a legal requirement that evaluations of teaching are published online. Therefore, as well as being sent to the teachers, etc., this letter will be posted on the faculty website.

As announced previously, in this semester the Study Board will, on an experimental basis, conduct a focus-group discussion with students taking compulsory subjects on the bachelor programme. The discussion will be organised around questions of academic standards, syllabus composition, organisation of the teaching, links between subjects, and practical conditions.

Finally, may I remind you that in this semester you will again be asked to give the students the opportunity to evaluate the teaching (the time and nature of the evaluation is to be agreed with the students), and that we look forward to receiving your reports about the semester's teaching by 20 August 2008 at the latest. Please send reports to studienevnet@fak.teol.ku.dk.

Yours sincerely,

Kirsten Busch Nielsen
Head of Study Board, Head of Studies