## Second Report from Working Group on Evaluation of Teaching

**Introduction**

The Working Group on Evaluation of Teaching was established by the CDS in 2014. The first interim report of the Working Group was presented in December 2014. That report made a number of propositions and identified a need for further consultation with students and teachers around these propositions (these consultations are described in Appendix C).

These consultations suggest that:

- while evaluation of teaching remains a topic about which there is a wide diversity of views and strong consensus is not likely, the proposals as included in the interim report were broadly acceptable to students and teachers who participated in the consultation process
- the option for students to provide comments in the indicative feedback on a course should be retained. Students should get greater encouragement to provide constructive feedback from Agepolytique and class representatives. They should also be warned that anonymity cannot be guaranteed in the case of potentially criminally abusive or threatening comments.
- While the idea of self-evaluation and peer review in course evaluations was clear in the initial propositions, the procedure for making this operation could be made more explicit.

Drawing on this, the proposals of the Working Group are attached below. They are largely the same proposals as were made in the Interim report of December 2014, with additions as a result of the consultation process in red.


**Proposals**

*Evaluation of a course*

- The process for evaluation of a course is:
    1. Student in-depth feedback on a class is collected. The teacher is encouraged to supplement this with additional sources of data such as:
        - Evidence of student learning (exercises, exam questions and results etc.)
        - Peer Observations (i.e. by colleagues familiar with the disciplinary content)
        - Observations by pedagogical experts
        - Feedback from Academic Commission (where relevant/available)
    2. The teacher writes a short self-evaluation drawing on this data and highlighting planned improvements
    3. This is reviewed by the section, which discusses the self-evaluation with the teacher.

- An evaluation of teaching is required for each course at least:
    1. Each time a course is taught by a new teacher
    2. At least once every three years
    3. Whenever an indicative evaluation is 'insufficient'

- Sections can require a more frequent (a) evaluation or (b) in-depth student feedback, for a course. A teacher may also request an in-depth student feedback for any course they teach. Such in-depth feedback need not include a full self-evaluation and review.

*In-depth student feedback*

- In-depth feedback questionnaires should include (a) a standardized set of questions addressing generic teaching issues and teaching facilities, (b) questions on the integration of the course within a study plan, defined by the section, (c) an option for teachers to add their own questions and (d) a space for comments.

- In-depth feedback will be managed, as at present, by the sections.  The Teaching Support Centre can assist the sections with this by (a) completing in-depth feedback on teaching reports for specific teachers (as at present) and (b) providing a scanning system and support which will enable questionnaires to be rapidly processed by the section.

*Other sources of data*

- The Teaching Support Centre can assist teachers in accessing additional sources of data on a course such as:
  - Carrying out class observations
  - Facilitating peer observations
  - Collection and analysis of "one-off" data on student learning & and impact evaluations of innovations

*Indicative student feedback*

- The indicative student feedback on courses (previously called 'indicative evaluation') should be completed in weeks 4/5 of term (results available on Monday of week 6).

- A Likert style statement should be used ("Overall, I think this course is good") with students having the option of responding "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Disagree", "Strongly disagree".

- If the percentage of students disagreeing that a course is good goes above 30%, the indicative student feedback is deemed to be "insufficient". The mean average should not be used to determine if an indicative feedback is "insufficient"

- Indicative student feedback data should not be kept after the end of the term in which the evaluation is completed and should not be used as a source of evidence in evaluation of teaching for promotion, tenure or teaching awards.

- The comment box for indicative student feedback on courses should be proceeded with the following statement: "Please provide your comments on this course. (Your remarks will be read by your teacher.  Please be constructive and avoid rude or hurtful comments.   If a student makes comments which are potentially criminally abusive or threatening, anonymity cannot be guaranteed)."

- AGEPolytique, the délégués de classe (class representatives), and Teaching Support Centre will cooperate to develop guidelines and resources for class representatives to assist them in encouraging students to use the comment box to provide useful, constructive, and polite feedback to teachers.

- In automated feedback to the teacher, each comment should be presented alongside that student's overall evaluation of the course, in order to allow teachers to better understand the student's overall perspective.

*Evaluation of courses in the case of Quality Assurance and for Recognition/Awards*

- Alongside its role in quality improvement in education, evaluation of courses also plays a role in promotion and awards.  In such situations, criteria for evaluation of teaching should be clear and used consistently.

- Where teaching is recognized or rewarded (i.e., tenure, promotion, or awards), a short portfolio in which teachers (a) identify how they meet the criteria and (b) present selected evidence which supports those claims, should be used (See Appendix A).

- To aid teachers in making and supporting their claims to teaching quality, a roadmap, outlining the most appropriate kinds of data collection and a suggested timeframe should be made available to candidates for tenure or promotion.

## Appendix A - Proposed Content for Teaching Portfolio

*Current regulations (taken from LEX 2.5.1)*

The teaching staff member's portfolio comprises in particular:
   a. a detailed description (1-2 pages) of their courses and teaching contributions with the teaching objectives pursued and the underlying pedagogy. The Section Director signs it to confirm that he has taken note of its content ;
   b. the results of the indicative and in-depth evaluations for the entire period covered by the portfolio ;
   c. the teaching staff member's comments regarding the evaluations and their course;
   d. a letter of reference from the Section Director ;
   e. their participation in all types of pedagogic activities (commissions, seminars, research, projects, etc.).
   f. a letter of reference from the Director of the Doctoral Programme attesting to the candidate's contributions to doctoral education. The contribution shall be reviewed in terms of the candidate's qualities as a thesis supervisor, participation in teaching doctoral courses, commitment as a mentor, involvement as a member of the doctoral programme committee, as well as participation in scientific and social activities related to doctoral training.

The teaching portfolio may also contain:
   g. course evaluations carried out by CAPE;
   h. a survey conducted among former students who have attended the course ;
   i. other documents selected by the teaching staff member, such as diploma for best teacher.

*Proposed 'New' Model Teaching Portfolio*

The portfolio contains:
   a. a short synopsis of how the teacher has demonstrated that he/she has met the evaluation criteria (1-2 pages)
   b. A list of courses taught over the previous 4 years including: the teaching method (lecture, exercises, project etc.), their level (first year, bachelor, masters, doctoral), and student numbers  (1 page)
   c. letters of reference from the Section Director and the Director of the Doctoral Programme (not included in total page limit)
   d. Evidence, selected by the teacher, to support their claims that he/she has met the evaluation criteria, including content such as (but not limited to):
      a. In depth and complementary student feedback reports
      b. Evidence of student learning (exercises, exam question and results etc.)

      Other relevant forms of data might include:

      c. Evidence of participation in relevant workshops, seminars or conferences
      d. Reports from an Academic Commission
      e. Peer Observations (i.e. by colleagues familiar with their disciplinary content)
      f. Observations by pedagogical experts

In total the portfolio should normally be no more than 12 pages in length (not including reference letters from Directors of Sections and Doctoral Programmes).

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| **1. Is there evidence of a clear focus on student learning?**<br>    a. Have clear student learning goals been identified?<br>    b. Do these goals include rich understanding/higher order tasks?<br>    c. Has the teacher clarified how teaching activities and assessments address these goals? |
| **2. Is there evidence of an attempt to improve teaching using evidence?**<br>    a. Is there evidence of an effort to consciously improve teaching over time?<br>    b. Can the teacher show how they have used evidence to inform their efforts to improve?<br>    c. Is the teacher engaging with a wider community through making their teaching approaches public?<br>    d. Is the teacher using innovative teaching approaches? |
| **3. What is the impact of teaching within EPFL programmes and wider community?**<br>    a. Is there evidence of teaching being well integrated into a programme or programmes?<br>    b. Is there evidence that teaching has a large impact (e.g., number of students, strategically important courses, etc.)?<br>    c. Is there evidence that teaching has enhanced EPFL's profile in the wider community? |

Two consultations were completed.

*Consultation with teachers*

The draft proposals were circulated by email to teachers and they were invited to attend a consultation meeting hosted by the CCE or to send written comments to the CCE.  About 40 participants attended the consultation meeting.  Two teachers submitted written feedback.

At the consultation meeting, participants were invited to raise issues and questions to be discussed by a panel.  Following the discussion, a straw poll was taken on a number of propositions. The results of the straw poll (which cannot be seen as representative but rather as indicative) were as follows:

- 89% agree or strongly agree that we should use the term "Student feedback on teaching" rather than "Student evaluation of teaching"
- 89% agree or strongly agree that in depth evaluations are more useful than indicative evaluation to evaluate teaching
- 62% agree or strongly agree that in-depth evaluations should be carried out more often than once every five years.
- 63% agree that indicative evaluations should be used to provide feedback to teachers early in the semester.
- 51% favour the status quo in terms of who should have access to comments in indicative evaluations. 40% would be in favour of giving student delegates access to the comments.
- 51% prefer the proposed wording of the overall evaluation question (4 point Likert scale), while 35% prefer the current wording.  Only 14% prefer a straight "yes/no" response to the question: "I think this course needs an in depth evaluation".

*Consultation with students*

While Agepolytique was represented on the working group and at the CDS, the class representatives (délégués des étudiants) were not directly represented.  The délégués des étudiants had formed their own working group to bring forward proposals for reforming the evaluation of teaching and the treatment of comments.

Two meetings were held between the coordinator of the Teaching Support Centre and both representatives of Agepolytique and the délégués des étudiants.  A number of mechanisms for treating student comments were discussed.  The conclusion was that a twin track approach should be adopted involving:

(a) student representatives being enabled to be more active in promoting constructive student feedback to teachers in comments and
(b) students being clearly informed that potentially criminally abusive or threatening comments may lead to anonymity being lost.