MINUTES OF MEETING DECEMBER 15TH, 2015


Excused: C. Dionne, N. Monod

Absent: G. Anciaux, M. Soutter

Invited guests: M. Ph. Gillet (VPAA; excusé) et M. P. Vandergheynst (VPAA) et R. Tormey (CAPE).

Meeting begins at 12:15 pm – Room ME.B1.10

1) Approbation of the agenda
   The agenda as it is presented is approved unanimously.

2) Discussion with the invited guests
   Subject: The revision of the « Directive concernant la promotion de la qualité et la mise en valeur de l’enseignement » (P. Vandergheynst and R. Tormey)
   Communication with the professors (A. Kolendowska – DAF)

   The meeting is filmed and the video is publicly shown on the CCE website. This meeting is organised at the request of the Assemblée d’Ecole (AE).

   Mr. Vandergheynst and Mr. Tormey present and comment the directive (see video on the CCE website).
   The beginning of the revision goes back to January 2014. This revision was brought about by the conference of the section directors (CDS) in order to correct a number of difficulties linked to how the evaluations are presently done. A working group was set up led by R. Tormey. During a meeting held in March 2015 where all the teaching staff was invited to attend, an initial report was given. This meeting had been organised by the CAPE and the CCE. In May, a second report was written by the GT (provided in attachment). In June 2015, a corrected version of the directive was then jointly written by CAPE and the VPAA. The amendments made to the directive had been suggested by the working group’s report.
At this time, the draft of the directive is in consultation until January 15th, 2016. Feedback received by the AE and CCE to this date point out the following problems with the current project of directive: the auto-evaluation and its frequency, the fact that the directive seems to only point out the courses which are not properly taught, and through the evaluation given by the students.

Additionally, reactions from the CCE members during the meeting point out the following shortcomings:

- Little appreciation is shown to teaching,
- The fact that one seems to judge their teaching competences and hence shows little trust,
- The fact that the project shown for consultation does not portray the working group’s views (no reward for good teaching, no clear procedure to obtain other data than students’ evaluation),
- Is the section director the appropriate person to evaluate the auto-evaluations?
- The section directors as well as the professors are under estimated,
- Evaluations can be given by students who do not necessarily attend the courses,
- The fact that within the school, teaching is not fully acknowledged for its real value.

R. Tormey explains that some points discussed by the working group have been included in the given project; however, the CCE members and guest are not yet fully satisfied with this project.

Ms Billard thus suggest a vote:
1) Complete revision of the text and new consultation: 9 votes
2) Keeping the directive as it is: 4 votes
3) Minor corrections of the text as it is presented today (reviewed by the CCE): 9 votes

The vote shows a will to change the current text, as well as to make modifications on the presented directive.

M. Tormey reminds that it already took 2 years to achieve the presented directive. He worries that a complete revision would take another 2 years. However, should it take another 6 months to result in a final project, it is acceptable.

Communication with the professors (A. Kolendowska – DAF)

Ms. A. Kolendowska presents the school’s views which are to reward the excellency of teaching, promote teaching through articles in the medias and to create a newsletter.

Ms. Soubeyrand thinks that the bonus system is not appropriate as it is today; there seems to be discrepancies between sections. This leads to point out that there is no teaching valorisation recognition.

The first part of the agenda is at its end; the guests leave the meeting. Mr. Boulic (AE) and the CCE members stay for the remaining agenda.
CCE decision on the subject

The members of the CCE together with Ronan Boulic (AE) then discussed further the two options proposed at the end of the meeting. To recall, these options were to either go for minor modification of the directive after closure of the consultation or to go for a second round of consultation, after major revision of the directive.

The decision was that the best option would be to have a second round of consultation (option 2 above). The reasons for this are two-fold:

a) The current feedback from teachers from various sections is quite negative. There is a need to take into account this feedback and work at resolving the issues. Some of the issues are minor and could be resolved with more explanations of how some of the changes would be put in practice, while others require more in-depth work.

b) As stated in (a), some modifications are not minor and require important rewriting of the current text. It would be poorly received if the final directive departed significantly from that submitted for consultation in its final form.

The CCE agrees to help the VPAA in this process and offers to do it in two-ways:

a) Work together with the VPAA on a revised version of the directive.

b) Consult the teachers, section by section, before and after modification of the directive.

The following time line is put forward:

- Let the current consultation finish as planned and collect all inputs by January 15th, 2016.
- Until January 15, the CCE members contact the sections which have not yet sent input to the AE, collect input from teachers in these sections and encourage the sections to send a formal "prise de position" to the AE by January 15. It would also be good if Pierre sends an email to section directors specifically encouraging them to send input on the directive.
- From January 15 through to March 15th, 2016, the CCE works on a revised version of the directive together with the AE and the VPAA/CAPE, seeking actively input from teachers in each section to ensure that the final draft is representative of the different views.

A working group will draft a revision of the actual text; they are the following:

- Aude Billard
- Volker Gass
- Christof Holliger
- Olivier Martin
- Nicolas Monod
- Jamila Sam

Next meeting:
A date in January 2016 will be rapidly given.

The meeting ends at 2:30pm
PV/S. Muller
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).
## Appendix B – Proposed Criteria for Evaluation of Teaching Portfolio

1. **Is there evidence of a clear focus on student learning?**
   - a. Have clear student learning goals been identified?
   - b. Do these goals include rich understanding/higher order tasks?
   - 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?**
   - a. Is there evidence of an effort to consciously improve teaching over time?
   - b. Can the teacher show how they have used evidence to inform their efforts to improve?
   - c. Is the teacher engaging with a wider community through making their teaching approaches public?
   - d. Is the teacher using innovative teaching approaches?

3. **What is the impact of teaching within EPFL programmes and wider community?**
   - a. Is there evidence of teaching being well integrated into a programme or programmes?
   - b. Is there evidence that teaching has a large impact (e.g., number of students, strategically important courses, etc.)?
   - c. Is there evidence that teaching has enhanced EPFL’s profile in the wider community?
Appendix C – Consultation process on draft proposals

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.