October 17, 2017: minutes of the meeting


Excused: Volkan Cevher, Simone Deparis, Drazen Dujic, Carlotta Guiducci, Christof Holliger, Félix Naef, Jamie Paik, Paule Soubeyrand, Irène Vogel Chevroulet, Invited guest: Roland Tormey (CAPE)

Agenda of the meeting:
1) 12:15-13:00 discussion with Roland Tormey to discuss the idea of conducting an evaluation of EPFL Master students having completed their Bachelor also at EPFL regarding how useful they consider their undergraduate studies retrospectively. This could be an effective way to measure student satisfaction in addition to existing standard evaluations.
2) 13:00-13:45: Reflect on possible questions for Sarah Springman.
3) Collect ideas for possible topics of discussion for the upcoming CCE Meetings.

Minutes:
The meeting is opened by Cécile Hebert at 12:15 PM.

1) The agenda is approved.

2) The minutes of the meeting of 27 September 2017 are approved.

3) Participants at the meeting briefly introduce themselves so that CCE members get to know each other.

4) Roland Tormey (RT) points out that EPFL is very active in the field of evaluation. Courses are evaluated mid-term and sometimes a more detailed evaluation at the end of a course follows. Programs and cycles are so far not systematically evaluated. Teachers are now requesting program evaluation. CAPE will make a proposal and submit it to CDS soon. Discussion ensues whether it makes sense to ask Master students about the value of Bachelor studies and 3rd year Bachelor students about their first year studies. RT proposes that maybe an evaluation every 6 years with EPFL alumni might be most useful. Everyone agrees that evaluating 1st year Bachelor studies by 2nd year Bachelor students does not make much sense. On the other hand, evaluating Master students in particular regarding the relation between practice and theory and the usefulness of their studies is considered to
provide valuable insight (e.g. done by the Chemistry section that considered it very useful). This could/should be done every three years. Furthermore, AAQ requires this evaluation, and an evaluation rhythm of every 3 and 6 years makes most sense. Ideally, the respective sections ask for this evaluation and backs it up, as this encourages the use of the collected data and implementation of necessary changes, as opposed to imposing such an evaluation.

A discussion follows regarding the value of evaluating first year studies (by 2nd year students) or first year students during their first year which may allow calibration of a course during the semester as VG points out. CH puts forward that the key question must be “What do we do with the evaluations?” RT reiterates that the indicative evaluations are not ideal and cannot be considered as an evaluation of the teacher. GF adds that the results of the indicative evaluation in the 8th week is available too late to the teacher for effective adaptation of the course that is almost over by this point in time. NM points out the importance of sharing the 8th week evaluation with the students. RT clarifies that the interest of having an evaluation of programmes for sections needs to be decided by the CDS. He adds that if a section wants a certain evaluation done and has the resources for it, CAPE will do it. As an additional comment RT recalls that the evaluation is called “feedback” because the teacher is, and should be, the ultimate decision maker. Evaluation of sections can be done quite easily, at Master level it is more challenging in order to include only students who have done their Bachelor studies at EPFL (sample size approximately 60 Master students). GF asks whether we have enough evaluation or more is needed? RT replies that indicative evaluations should not be used for promotions, this is where EPFL could/should do better. Can CCE do something to change this? RT replies that not really, that this is very difficult for many different reasons. In the past, 3 criteria were identified to more effectively evaluate teaching competence: 1) Clear learning goals and teaching aligned with those goals; 2) Teacher needs to integrate feedback and; 3) Course needs to have impact. But the entire process ground to a halt. In order to arrive at evaluations that are useful for promotion, this process could be relaunched, RT is happy to start this discussion again. CH points out that it would be really important to have Pierre Vandergheynst present during these discussions in order to be able to discuss such ideas immediately and see whether there is any sense in going further.

Various comments:

- For some time, students had developed a site called www.courseadvisor.ch which was subsequently taken down.
- GF thinks that CCE might have been too reactive in the past and ponders whether CCE could not be more proactive in the future. CH fully supports this idea.

13:00-13:45 Second part of discussion: CCE General Assembly taking place on Nov 6, 11:45 AM in CE 6

Schedule (as a reminder):
- 11:45-12:15 : apero (sandwiches)
- 12:15-12:20 : short intro by the CCE president
- 12:20-12:40 : speech
- 12:40-13:30 : discussion

The GA will be video recorded.
Invited guest speaker: Sarah Springman, rector of ETHZ responsible for education within the ETHZ Executive Board.

Suggested topic for her 30 minute presentation: “Innovation in Education @ ETHZ”
(What are the ETHZ flagship projects in education for the next 5 years? What are the main challenges ETHZ currently faces in the field of education?)

Questions to break the ice for the Q & A session following the presentation compiled by CCE Board:

- “Who are you observing/following for inspiration and as a source of innovation in the field of education at the international level? Universities/think tanks/individuals?”
- “What is the ETHZ strategy for digitalisation of education and education on digitalisation?”
- “What is the ETHZ policy on the language in which courses are taught at ETHZ?”
- “How does ETHZ manage/facilitate the transition of students between gymnasium and ETHZ?”

Additional questions put forward by various CCE members:

- “How do you manage growing student numbers at ETHZ?”
- “Are you happy with the level of preparation Swiss students have, seeing how well the international students are prepared?”
- “How do you see the role of ETHZ in global teaching (e.g. MOOC)?”
- “What do you do to promote female scientists at ETHZ?”
- “What do you think about computational thinking?”

CCE members indicate that they will be present at the GA and help break the ice by asking some of these questions they propose.

Future topics for CCE meetings?

1. Special regulations for students with special needs and in particular how the teachers can be involved in the elaboration of the special rules that are not always clear and/or easy to implement (e.g. “the student should get 30%-50% more time during an exam” this should be much clearer either 30% or 50%).

2. Establishment of a working group on “computational thinking” involving also teachers who are not from IC.

3. Teaching language: Can we / should we teach in English in first year or second year Bachelor courses?

4. MAN impact on 2nd semester.