MANUAL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

TEACHING EVALUATIONS

Version 2019
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1 INTRODUCTION

Teaching evaluations are an important tool for quality assurance and improvement in education. That quality rests on the content, organization, facilities, implementation and results of the education provided.

It goes without saying that high-quality teaching is crucial for institutions that provide education. Moreover, in designing their quality assurance systems, institutions of higher education must take into account the requirements of accreditation organizations.

This chapter of the Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning is intended to offer education providers at a faculty and central level an overview of the reasons for carrying out teaching evaluations, what those evaluations involve, different people’s responsibilities within the evaluation process and the requirements that need to be met.

Background documents

This chapter closely aligns with the accreditation system. Comprehensive information with more in-depth explanatory notes can be found on the websites of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie, NVAO; www.nvao.net), and Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities (QANU; www.qanu.nl). A description and explanation of common evaluation tools are available on VUnet.

VU Amsterdam has extensive experience in evaluating teaching. Teaching is systematically evaluated throughout the university as a whole, usually using the methodology, tools and expertise of the department of Educational Policy, Quality Assurance and Process Management (OKP) within the Student and Education Affairs (SOZ) service department.

2 WHY WE EVALUATE TEACHING

2.1 OBJECTIVE

Teaching evaluation is the systematic collection of information with the aim of gaining greater insight into the current quality of the education provided and into potential ways to improve that education. The primary objective of teaching evaluations is to make improvements. In the first instance, this relates to the course or curriculum being evaluated, particularly using the qualitative feedback and suggestions for improvement yielded by the evaluation. Secondly, the teaching evaluations can be used to monitor how trends develop on courses within a programme. Quantitative assessments from the evaluation can help to achieve this aim. Used properly, teaching evaluations can also be helpful at an instructor’s annual interview, when improvement in teaching is a key point for discussion.

Teaching evaluation is cyclical in nature: where necessary, the assessment of the quality of the education provided (quality monitoring) should be followed by concrete measures to improve that quality in practice. Once these measures are in place, it is important to carry out a new assessment to

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1 For proper use of teaching evaluations, see the Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, Chapter 8: Staff Policy.
check whether the desired improvement has been achieved. This makes it possible to follow the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle of quality assurance, with this final step closing the circle.

2.2 QUALITY CULTURE

To successfully improve quality, all those concerned must have the same end in mind, and they must support each other’s initiatives to achieve that end. Constructive communication and collaboration and shared ownership are key pillars of this work.

Together with the Director of Studies, the teaching team plays a crucial role in ensuring high-quality education. In a sense, the instructor is the ‘owner’ of quality in teaching, which naturally means that he or she takes the lead when it comes to programme evaluations. The instructor reflects on the quality of the education provided, and evaluates the teaching in consultation with the teaching team and the Director of Studies and in accordance with the evaluation plan. One way the instructor evaluates the education is by adding his or her own questions to the standard student evaluation questionnaire in order to evaluate – and where necessary adjust – the effectiveness of specific initiatives the instructor has taken; the instructor also offers the students his or her initial reaction to the results of their student evaluations and informs them of adjustments to the course that have been proposed as a result of their feedback. The instructor also organizes a peer review of the teaching and sometimes also a panel discussion to evaluate the teaching.

Of course, the instructor has support with preparing and providing the education, and others contribute to the quality as well. The team supporting the instructor – the course coordinator, programme coordinator, Director of Studies, Programme Committee, Faculty Board, Education Office and support personnel at faculty and central level – all make an indispensable contribution to the quality of the education from the perspective of their various areas of expertise. To reinforce everyone’s contribution to the quality of the teaching, it is crucial to build an atmosphere and culture which prioritizes improvement, in which everyone’s contribution is appreciated and everyone’s role is respected, where people are valued instead of unjustly criticized, and where evaluation and feedback are constructive rather than judgemental.

Students also have an important role to play in this quality culture. Their active participation in the student evaluations is indispensable, and they are even more effective when they can actively and constructively participate in the education and its evaluation, and when they can convey their feedback and criticism in a constructive way, with respect for the instructor. To achieve this, the students must be well informed and their contribution must be valued. They should be informed about concrete ways the student evaluations have contributed to the quality of the teaching and, where possible, they (especially the student councils at faculty and university level) should be engaged with initiatives aimed at improving the teaching and at promoting the quality culture.

That does not take away from the fact that each person can and should be accountable for carrying out the responsibilities associated with his or her professional role. This also involves holding each other accountable. A constructive atmosphere in which everyone is focussed on the shared goal of improving the quality of education will make the person being held accountable more open to others’ comments.
3 HOW WE EVALUATE TEACHING

3.1 FORMS OF EVALUATION

3.1.1 DIGITAL STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Digital student evaluations are carried out by means of university-wide standardized questionnaires provided on VUnet; VUnet Teaching Evaluations allows instructors to put together a custom questionnaire to evaluate their teaching, using questions from standardized question blocks supplemented with the instructor’s own questions. Students complete the digital evaluation form on VUnet. VUnet gives both instructors and students access to the results of the evaluations, and instructors can respond to students. Because the questionnaires consist of university-wide standardized questions, the quantitative question scores for courses can be compared with reference values at faculty level and university level. The fact that the questionnaires have been in use for some time means that evaluation results for subjects and curricula can also be compared with previous years, and trends can be revealed.

The student evaluations ask students to assess the quality of various aspects of the education they have received. Student evaluations are a measurement of the student’s perception of the quality of the teaching. For this reason, the results of student evaluations should be very carefully interpreted and compared with other findings, including the evaluation carried out by the instructors themselves, evaluations by fellow instructors and other forms of teaching evaluation. Student evaluations cannot and should not be used to assess instructors.

Course
The digital questionnaires can be used to create an evaluation questionnaire at the end of a course. Aspects considered in this questionnaire include the organization of the course, the quality of the teaching materials, the learning effect, the instructor’s teaching skills, and the extent to which the assessment is a measurement of the knowledge and skills taught. The instructor can use the evaluation results to improve his or her teaching.

It is not necessary to evaluate every course component every year. However, each component must be evaluated at least once every three years, or more often if: the course has changed significantly; it has been demonstrated that a course or instructor has fallen short, to explore what improvements are achievable; the entire curriculum has changed, or the course is now given at a different point during the curriculum, or the learning resources, teaching method or form of assessment has changed (a new textbook, for instance, or the addition of computer-based or multiple-choice examinations).

A phased strategy, in which all courses are evaluated every few years rather than every year, is recommended to avoid students having to fill in too many evaluations, thereby avoiding a decrease in their willingness to contribute to evaluations and consequently a decrease in student responses.

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2 Although in principle the evaluation is carried out using digital questionnaires, for smaller groups there is also the option to complete an evaluation on paper.
3 VUnet Teaching Evaluations has been available since 2013. The methodology used at VU Amsterdam, involving university-wide standardized questionnaires, has been in place even longer. Questionnaires are periodically updated.
Curriculum
In addition to course features, aspects of the curriculum that transcend individual courses are also evaluated. This evaluation concerns aspects such as cohesion between courses, the structure and level of the programme and the level its graduates reach, attainability and study load, facilities, how the programme fits with the final attainment levels/previous education/job market, the teaching and pedagogical aspects, and timetabling. Digital questionnaires can also be entered into VUnet Teaching Evaluations to evaluate these aspects, and be sent to the students at the end of the year or at the end of the degree programme. The curriculum evaluation questionnaires should not be carried out every year either; the recommended frequency is once every three years. These questionnaires concern both students and instructors, and potentially also alumni and the professional field in question. It is advisable to carry out the curriculum evaluation before both the midterm review and the inspection. To ensure a good response, it is advisable to explicitly make the students aware of the curriculum evaluations.

Minor, honours and other ‘mini-curricula’
There are also university-wide student questionnaires available for the minor and honours pathways. Again, non-course-specific aspects are evaluated such as cohesion between courses, level, etc. These evaluations should be carried out once every three years, and instructors, students and wherever possible alumni and the professional field should be engaged with the evaluations.

Work placement and thesis
The nature of the work placement and thesis make these elements important course components to be evaluated using a customized questionnaire. This questionnaire should consider aspects such as the content of the course, organizational factors, guidance, assessment and study load. The one-to-one nature of the student-supervisor relationship means that extra care should be taken to preserve students’ privacy. One way to ensure this is to schedule the evaluation of the work placement or thesis to take place after the instructor has assessed the student’s work.

National Student Survey
The National Student Survey is a comprehensive questionnaire regarding educational aspects at programme level, and it is conducted by Studiekeuze123 at universities and universities of applied science in the Netherlands. This survey makes it possible to compare and rank the contributing institutions and to publish these comparisons each year. The National Student Survey includes questions about aspects such as general satisfaction, course content, general and academic skills, guidance and supervision, instructors, assessment, study load, study facilities and the provision of information. The findings of the National Student Survey are interpreted using fact sheets and reports in MIVU.

3.1.2 Results of digital student evaluations
The findings of the various teaching evaluation tools make it possible to take measures and reach decisions that contribute to real improvements in teaching. Those in positions of responsibility (the Faculty Board has ultimate responsibility, while instructors have personal responsibility) and students

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4 Studiekeuze123, which carries out the National Student Survey, publishes benchmark reports. The comparative results are also published by Elsevier and the Keuzegids.
are informed of the evaluation results through various channels. For the results of the student evaluation questionnaires, the procedure is:

- The instructor submits a report to the course coordinator via VUnet Teaching Evaluations. In addition to the course evaluation scores, these reports include faculty averages and a university-wide reference interval for the course scores. They also contain students’ written comments in response to the open questions. Reports of course evaluations are sent to the evaluation coordinator, the course coordinator, the Director of Studies, the Programme Committee and the Examination Board. The course coordinator is responsible for distributing the evaluation reports among the teaching team.

- A student report is sent to students through VUnet Teaching Evaluations, including a graphic representation of a selection of results, supplemented by the course coordinator’s response to the results. For reasons of privacy, students’ written comments and scores concerning the instructor(s) are not included in these reports.

- Management reports. A report showing question averages organized by faculty, supplemented with reference scores for Directors of Studies and Faculty Boards both within the faculty and for the university as a whole. These reports make it possible to compare the quantitative question scores both between courses and in relation to the averages for the faculty and for VU Amsterdam as a whole. To this end, the reports define the following faculty indicators relating to the content, the instructor and the assessment, which can be used to monitor both positive and negative developments:
  - the percentage of courses with an average score of 3.5 or higher on the question: “Overall evaluation of the quality of the content of this course component”;
  - the percentage of courses with an average score of 3.5 or higher on the question: “Overall evaluation of the quality of the lecturer’s didactic skills”;
  - the percentage of courses with an average score of 3.5 or higher on the question: “The examination was a good indicator of what I learned from this course”.

Please note: the above are intended to investigate issues at programme or faculty level, not to assess whether individual courses are adequate or inadequate. For this reason it is necessary to compare findings from a variety of sources, including the evaluation of the instructors themselves.

It is important to properly archive the above reports, as they are a primary source when writing self-evaluation reports. The Digital Teaching Dossier (DOD) is available to help with this.

3.1.3 RESPONSE TO DIGITAL STUDENT EVALUATIONS

As the evaluation questionnaires in VUnet Teaching Evaluations are largely carried out online, there is a danger that the number of responses to the questionnaires will be so low as to offer only a limited representation of the evaluation results for the group in question. This is why it is important to consider factors that could influence the response.

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3 In practice, this figure has been shown to be a reliable borderline alerting people to the need to consider ways to improve.
Making the aim and importance clear
First, it is important to clearly explain the objective of the student evaluation questionnaires, namely to improve the education provided. There is often a lack of awareness of the importance of students’ assessment of the teaching they receive. This assessment is valuable, because students are the only group to have actually experienced the teaching provided, meaning that their perspective is not interchangeable with that of any other people concerned. This means that they have vital personal experience to offer. Emphasizing the importance and value of student evaluations can significantly contribute to the questionnaire response rate

Communication of results and instructor response
Another potential reason for a low response rate that is often brought up by students is that they do not know what happens to the results of the student evaluations, and they see no evidence that anything has been done in response to those results. It is not clear what has changed thanks to students taking the trouble to complete a questionnaire.

The system of evaluation questionnaires on VUnet allays this concern, showing the students a summary of the results once the information has been processed. Instructors are also expected to share their impression of the results and what they intend to do in response. The Director of Studies makes arrangements with instructors about this, which they then feed back to the students, and a year later the Programme Committee checks to see whether the proposed improvements have been made and what the fruits of those improvements have been. The idea is that the more effective instructors are at making clear that students’ views are valued and at showing what will change as a result of the feedback, the more willing students will be to complete questionnaires. It will also help students realize that their views are appreciated if the instructor announces at the start of a series of lectures what changes have been made in response to previous evaluations.

Guaranteeing students’ and instructors’ privacy
Finally, how much faith students have in the way their privacy is guaranteed has an influence on the student evaluation response rate. For the student evaluations, this means that the privacy both of the student completing the evaluation questionnaire and of the instructor concerned in the evaluation must be guaranteed. The student’s answers to the questionnaire must not be linked to the student’s identity, unless it can be demonstrated that this is in the legitimate interest of the institution or unless the student grants permission. The scores and comments concerning the instructor must only be accessible to people who need that information to do their jobs, such as the Director of Studies, the Programme Committee and of course the instructor him- or herself. Access to the reports is granted in accordance with the GDPR.6

The way in which the student’s answers and data about the student’s identity are stored, processed and analysed must be clearly communicated to the students.7 This is not simply a requirement of privacy legislation; it is also intended to increase the chance of a high response rate.

6 The General Data Protection Regulation entered into force in May 2018.
7 The system used since 2013 to carry out teaching evaluations at VU Amsterdam, VUnet Teaching Evaluations, anonymizes the student’s answers to the evaluation questionnaire.
What is the ideal response rate?

Research carried out by Nulty (2008) supports the view that the necessary response rate to a student evaluation depends on the number of participants in the group being surveyed. Courses with a relatively large number of participants require a lower percentage of responses than those with relatively few students. Nulty suggests that a group of 10 students should have a 75% response rate; a group of 100 should have a response rate of 21%. These indications are not hard and fast boundaries for use in all circumstances. In general, a response rate is “too low” if it cannot justifiably be generalized to the group as a whole. That is not to say that the views of the students who do complete the questionnaire do not matter. If the assessments of these few students are strongly correlated, which can be determined from the frequency distribution of the assessments, this makes them more meaningful.

That said, even the view of a single respondent can provide the instructor with important or interesting information, as long as the instructor is able to identify with the student’s feedback. It is also preferable to view each evaluation result in context, and to investigate the reasons for a low response rate. In the event that a response rate is “too low”, the instructor is advised to let the few students who did provide feedback know what his or her response is to that feedback.

3.1.4 QUALITATIVE FORMS OF STUDENT EVALUATION

The standard student evaluation questionnaires reflect VU Amsterdam’s extensive experience in evaluating teaching. However, quantitative, standardized evaluation questionnaires can offer only limited suggestions for concrete actions instructors and programmes can take to improve the education they provide. The open comment boxes give students an opportunity to praise the course’s positive aspects and offer suggestions for improvement. However, because that does not always produce sufficiently constructive input,

VU Amsterdam also encourages the introduction of additional, qualitative evaluation methods alongside the online student evaluations. These methods make it possible to ask relevant questions geared towards specific educational components (e.g. the effect of a new teaching method or form of assessment), to ask more far-reaching questions about the background of a person’s experiences and views, and to catalogue opportunities for improvement together with the discussion partners. In addition, the methods can be used during the teaching period: the results can be used while the course is ongoing to make adjustments where necessary, to provide extra support with regard to elements that have turned out to pose difficulties, or to explain more effectively why a particular approach has been taken. A positive side effect of regular discussions and peer review is that they can contribute to the cohesion, the learning and working climate, and the culture of quality within the degree programme.

The next section describes several qualitative evaluation methods and provides suggestions and examples. These methods relate to various levels (such as the course or programme level), various key moments (during or after teaching) and various different partners in the educational process (students,

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instructors, programme committees, alumni). There is a manual on VUnet that provides extra explanatory notes on the various forms.

**Quick online survey of strengths and suggestions**

There are several ways to collect feedback from students, either during or at the end of a course, about the teaching they have received. Online resources such as Mentimeter, Kahoot and GoSoapBox can be useful in this regard, as can simpler methods, such as the Post-it method and paper-based feedback forms.

The online tools give instructors the opportunity to ask students about specific aspects of a course or lecture. The instructor asks students the questions he or she has formulated during the lecture, and the students respond using their mobile phones: the anonymized answers are immediately visible on screen and the instructor can comment on the students’ feedback, either then and there or at a later date.

A quick way of collecting feedback from students, either halfway through or at the end of a course, is the Post-it method. Students answer two questions on Post-its in two different colours: What should stay the same about this course? and What could be better? One advantage of this method is that everyone has the same opportunity to provide their input, and the quieter students are also included. This method also makes it possible to gain valuable input on other topics, for example by asking students to identify the elements they find most difficult and the areas they would like more explanation on or practice in.9

**Panel discussions**

In a panel discussion, a group of students come together to discuss the education they receive. The discussion may focus on a specific module (course), a semester or a study year, or the curriculum as a whole; a representative selection could be made from the group of students, for instance assembling a fixed group of representatives from a given year or student members of the Programme Committee. Alternatively, specific groups could be identified, such as students for whom the course is a required part of their programme of study or international students taking a given degree programme. A key advantage of a panel discussion is that it opens up the possibility to obtain qualitative input on the teaching, which allows the group to go into greater depth about specific topics. One potential drawback is that it only surveys a limited group of students, and it can be rather labour intensive to conduct the discussion.10

A representative cohort made up of several students from the same academic year can also analyse a specific year of the programme, evaluating all courses provided in that year. The cohort representatives ask the students in that year for their opinion of a course, after which the representatives come together internally to reach a recommendation. A delegation of cohort representatives enters into a dialogue with the course coordinator(s) to discuss the various visions and, if necessary, how the course can be improved.

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9 For more information and examples of this methodology, see the manual on VUnet.
10 For examples of how panel discussions are used, see the manual on VUnet.
3.1.5 PEER EVALUATIONS

Peer review
Instructors’ didactic expertise affords them a unique perspective on the quality and the level of the education. This means that fellow instructors are well placed to offer suggestions to help their colleagues improve their teaching. They can do this in several ways, including by reviewing and commenting on each other’s teaching materials, course descriptions, assessment, etc. Instructors can also attend a lecture and provide feedback. Peer review is one of the pillars of the VU Assessment Framework\textsuperscript{11} for safeguarding quality in assessment. The fellow instructor takes on the role of sparring partner to continually improve the method and content of assessment and to supplement the reflections of the instructor receiving the feedback.

Peer review methodologies
Peer review centres around giving instructors the opportunity to learn from each other. There are two basic ways to do this:

1. Observation during lectures: the instructor receives feedback from a fellow instructor who attended a lecture. The feedback may be structured using an assessment form.
2. A structured peer-review session between instructors who discuss work-related issues they face. This makes it possible for the instructor to gain personal insights and to improve the effectiveness of his or her actions.

Observation and feedback
Attending one or more lectures enables teaching staff to provide valuable feedback on each other’s lectures and courses. In principle, all instructors have the opportunity to attend one class a year taught by a colleague. A timetable can be drawn up for this purpose at the start of the academic year.

To ensure a helpful follow-up discussion, it helps if the observer notes a few key points in advance, for example on a standard feedback form.\textsuperscript{12} The University Teaching Qualification provides a useful instrument for specific points of focus during the observation.

Peer review
In peer review, rather than identifying points for improvement or providing solutions, fellow instructors help their colleague to analyse a specific problem and explore possible solutions. One such problem might be: “The students in my seminar are so passive, and I can’t seem to get them motivated”. Or: “Attendance at my second-year lectures is dwindling by the week”. Or: “Students always get surprisingly low scores on part x of the test”.

There are several methods to help ensure that peer review participants explore the problem systematically and do not immediately fall back on their own solutions (“What I always do...”). One of the best known and most basic is the incident method. This streamlined method involves the instructor and his or her colleagues coming together for 90 minutes to investigate a concrete, recent, work-

\textsuperscript{11} The current university-wide assessment framework entered into force in 2018.
\textsuperscript{12} For examples of how feedback forms are used, see the guide on VUnet.
related situation suggested by one of the participants, on which he or she would like to reflect and receive recommendations.\textsuperscript{13}

3.1.6 ALUMNI EVALUATIONS AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

The alumni policy is an important pillar of quality assurance in teaching and learning. The current accreditation system distinguishes between the assessment of institution-wide quality assurance measures (Institutional Quality Assurance Audit) and the assessment of individual programmes (limited programme assessment). According to the standards of the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit, the institution is aware of the extent to which its view on the quality of education is achieved and regularly measures and assesses the quality of its programmes against the views of students, alumni and representatives from the professional field.

In addition to carrying out an assessment according to the standard of the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit, the programme accreditation determines whether the curriculum meets the requirements set by the professional field in terms of both the final attainment levels and the programme itself. Alumni feedback offers both valuable input for better insights into the programme and concrete suggestions for potential adjustments to the education provided. Alumni are asked how the programme responds to the needs of the professional field. In addition to the focus on professional competences, it is relevant to clarify how the academic core contributes to our students’ academic development. Coordinating aspects such as programmes’ final attainment levels and the requirements of the professional field ensures that graduates are sufficiently prepared to enter the job market.

National Alumni Survey
One of the sources used is the biannual National Alumni Survey. This nationwide instrument surveys recent Master’s graduates and promotes a better understanding of how graduates enter the job market and how their programmes help them do this.

VU Amsterdam Alumni Monitor
In addition to this survey, it is desirable to gain insight into the course of a person’s career and the relationship with the programme he or she took; it is also helpful to discover how many of our alumni are academics who act in the way promoted by the vision for education. A VU Amsterdam Alumni Monitor has been developed to provide faculties with insights into graduates’ career patterns. Faculties can add specific questions to this survey. Alumni could be approached six months before writing the self-evaluation report, or the survey could take place a few years after implementing wide-ranging adjustments to the curriculum.

An annual report on the findings of the National Alumni Survey, Alumni Monitor and other surveys among alumni is included with the teaching annual report and the programme annual report.

Professional field advisory board
Professional field advisory boards take on an advisory role in safeguarding the quality of the programme and the way it prepares students to meet the needs of the job market. Bringing the professional field into contact with the people who shape the education students receive produces a useful outline of the developments in the various sectors of the field. This gives faculties an understanding of the wishes and potential requirements of the various professional fields as they

\textsuperscript{13} For an example of a peer review session, see the guide on VUNet.
relate to recent graduates. In their turn, the programmes can take these insights into account when designing their curricula.

A faculty creates a professional field advisory board for each programme or cluster of programmes. These boards evaluate Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes in terms of how they prepare students for the job market. The following aspects must be considered in all cases:

a. how well the programmes prepare graduates for the professional field;
b. the wishes and requirements the field has in relation to graduates, and how well the programmes suit these wishes and requirements;
c. potential workplaces for graduates.

Recommendations for professional field advisory boards

- Professional field advisory boards should have a minimum of five and a maximum of ten members.
- Professional field advisory boards should convene once a year.
- It is advisable to decide in advance that a minimum of five members should be present at each board meeting.
- The Faculty Board appoints the chair for a period of three years, with the option to extend this by up to a further three years.
- The faculty appoints a staff member to function as the faculty point of contact for the chairs of the advisory boards and Directors of Studies.
- The faculty appoints a secretary to be responsible for initiating the meetings, carrying out support tasks and taking minutes.
- It is advisable to organize a faculty meeting with all advisory boards once every two years to share knowledge and experience. Instructors, Directors of Studies and the Portfolio Holder for Teaching should attend these meetings.
- The documents laid before the professional field advisory boards may include: curriculum plans, findings of alumni surveys, self-evaluation reports, reports of midterm reviews, programme annual reports, National Student Survey scores, sector plans, etc.
- Areas for improvement identified by the professional field advisory boards are reported annually in the programme annual report.

3.2 EVALUATION PLAN

The evaluation plan sets out how and when the above teaching evaluations should take place. The Director of Studies and the Programme Committee help to draw up the evaluation plan, within the framework established by faculty and university policy.

The evaluation plan:

- determines for each programme which course components will be evaluated during the upcoming academic year; courses should be evaluated at least once every three years.
- determines for each programme which tools will be used to evaluate the courses and the curriculum as a whole; one of these tools is a questionnaire for students, but staff are encouraged to use additional evaluation methods, panel discussions or interim evaluations.
• indicates that the proposed measures are to be taken, with a view to monitoring the teaching quality.
• determines for each programme when and how often curriculum evaluations will take place; the curriculum should be evaluated at least once every three years.
• determines for each programme which aspects of the curriculum are eligible for evaluation, and which objectives and criteria will be used in the evaluation;
• also focuses on evaluating work placements, theses and faculty and university minors.
• determines for each programme when, how often and in what way alumni surveys will take place; the alumni should be asked at least once every three years to give their opinion of the quality of the programme and how it relates to the professional field, particularly as regards the programme objectives and the final level of proficiency achieved.
• determines for each programme how and how often the professional field should be engaged with the evaluation; the professional field advisory board is convened to share its opinion at least once a year.
• describes how the findings of the teaching evaluations will be reported, and to whom (and to which body).
• describes the procedures which support the proper cyclical progression of the evaluation process.
• determines the timeline in which the above activities will take place, and who is responsible for implementing and monitoring the decisions taken.

The implementation of the evaluation plan is monitored annually by the Director of Studies and the Programme Committee. The Director of Studies discusses the relevant findings with the Faculty Board and takes appropriate measures as regards the teaching and/or the curriculum.

4 THE PEOPLE WITH A ROLE TO PLAY IN TEACHING EVALUATIONS

Many different people and bodies are involved in the process of teaching evaluation. The Faculty Board is ultimately responsible for the evaluation.

4.1 PARTICIPANTS AND DUTIES WITHIN THE FACULTY

The faculty staff involved in the process are14:

• **Course coordinator** – conducts the teaching evaluation in accordance with the evaluation plan, decides the content of the evaluation questionnaire (with the support of the evaluation coordinator where required), organizes peer evaluations together with fellow instructors, takes part in any panel discussions, discusses the results of the various evaluation tools with the other instructors and responds to the students. In consultation with the instructors and the Director of Studies, the course coordinator implements any necessary adjustments to the education provided.

• **Instructors** – reflect on their teaching and take measures to improve it; draw students’ attention to the importance of student evaluations and explain how the previous evaluation has been used to update the course. Instructors also explain to students that comments on student evaluations are most effective when they are constructive and tactful. Afterwards, the instructors receive the

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14 The duties of the people mentioned in this section are the responsibility of the people referred to. The duties may also be carried out either solely by another party or together with another party.
evaluation reports from the course coordinator, who discusses with them the results and the potential improvements to the course.

- **Students** – complete the student evaluation questionnaires and receive a selection\(^{15}\) of the findings of the evaluation, together with a response from the course coordinator.

- **Faculty Board** – commissions the evaluation and authorizes the Director of Studies to finalize the evaluation plan and to take measures to promote high-quality education.

- **Director of Studies** – finalizes the evaluation plan and discusses the teaching evaluation results and, where necessary, measures to improve the teaching with the Programme Committee and with instructors. The Director of Studies also supervises the implementation of the proposed measures.

- **Programme Coordinator** – supports the Director of Studies in his or her duties relating to the teaching evaluations.

- **Programme Committee** – assesses the teaching-related aspects of the evaluation reports and recommends any desirable measures to the Director of Studies. To assist in its task, the Programme Committee must receive the necessary information, including the full versions of the evaluation reports.

- **Examination Board** – safeguards the quality of assessment; if required, the Examination Board may be granted access to the assessment-related aspects of the evaluation reports and discuss these with the Director of Studies and/or the instructor.

- **Evaluation coordinator** (within the Education Office) – supports processes related to the evaluations, including drafting and adjusting questionnaires and collecting reports for the Director of Studies, Programme Committee and Examination Board.

### 4.2 PARTICIPANTS AND DUTIES OUTSIDE THE FACULTY

Other people concerned with the teaching evaluation are:

**VU Alumni Relations**
Together with Communications & Marketing, VU Alumni Relations (VU AR) maintains the quality of alumni data and provides management information about the target group. In addition, VU AR is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with alumni by way of (career-oriented) services, offering collective advantages, stimulating and facilitating (online) networks and communities and targeted communication through both online and offline media channels. VU AR is active

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\(^{15}\) Students receive a visual representation of the evaluation results relating to the questions about the substantive quality of the course, the extent to which the course was well organized, the learning effect and the validity of the assessment. Students do not receive scores from the assessment of the instructor; neither can they read the textual comments the students made on the evaluation questionnaire.
throughout the institution and also advises on faculty alumni policy and supports faculties in drafting and implementing this policy.

**Department of Educational Policy, Quality Assurance and Process Management (OKP)**
The Department of OKP plays an important part in conducting teaching evaluations. OKP:

- is responsible for managing the VUnet teaching evaluations and university-wide standard questionnaires.
- supports the faculties in carrying out the teaching evaluations.
- at least once every six years, evaluates the quality and usefulness of the evaluation tools and how they are used in practice.
- reports on the evaluation results and, if required, uses these results to formulate targeted recommendations.
5 QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

Quality requirements have been established for both teaching evaluation at faculty level and for the input of the Department of OKP. These requirements are structured according to the Plan-Do-Check-Act phase of the evaluation process. The professional field advisory board also has to meet certain quality requirements.

5.1 QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

Programme evaluation quality requirements

Plan:

1. The Director of Studies draws up the evaluation plan, in consultation with the Programme Committee; this plan includes information on which courses will be evaluated and when, as well as on when a curriculum evaluation will take place.

2. Courses should be evaluated at least once every three years.

3. An evaluation of the entire curriculum as it stands is carried out at least once every three years. This evaluation concerns both students and instructors, and potentially also alumni and the professional field in question, particularly when the curriculum evaluation precedes an inspection or accreditation.

4. At least once every three years, each programme or cluster of programmes should ask its alumni to give their views on the quality of the programme and its connection to the professional field as part of the quality assurance cycle for the programme objectives and the final level of proficiency achieved.

5. Instructors draw students’ attention to the importance of student evaluations during the course of the module. At the start of a course, instructors inform students about how the previous evaluation has been used to update the course. Instructors explain to students that hurtful comments have no place in student evaluations and do not help to improve teaching.

Do:

6. Students’ privacy when completing questionnaires and in the reports is guaranteed by the procedures selected and the careful implementation of those procedures.

Check:

7. The course coordinator receives the full versions of the evaluation reports and discusses them with the instructors concerned. Where necessary, the course coordinator formulates measures for improvement and discusses these measures with the Director of Studies. The course coordinator also produces a response to the students regarding the course evaluation and the measures that have been proposed as a result of the evaluation.
8. The Programme Committee discusses the evaluation results with the Director of Studies and advises on measures to be taken. To assist in this task, the Director of Studies provides the Programme Committee with all necessary information, including the full versions of the evaluation reports.

9. The Director of Studies discusses the results of a course evaluation with the instructors concerned, and involves them in interpreting the results and formulating measures to be taken. The Director of Studies also consults with the course coordinator regarding the question of whether the course coordinator has given the students feedback on the evaluation results.

Act:

10. Students receive a report containing a visual representation of a selection of the course evaluation results, together with a response from the course coordinator regarding the evaluation results. This report does not include specific scores for the instructor; neither does it include literal quotations from students’ comments.

11. After discussing the evaluation results with the Programme Committee and the Director of Studies, the course coordinator finalizes the measures for improvement.

12. The implementation of the evaluation plan is monitored annually by the Director of Studies and the Programme Committee. The Director of Studies discusses the relevant findings with the Faculty Board and takes appropriate measures as regards the teaching and/or the curriculum.

13. Where the evaluation results come up in annual interviews, in combination with other sources of information, the main focus is on making improvements to the teaching. Student evaluations are not used to assess instructors.

14. An annual report on the professional field advisory board and the alumni network is included in the teaching annual report and the programme annual report (summary of the professional field advisory board’s recommendations and the findings of the National Alumni Survey, Alumni Monitor and other surveys among alumni).

15. At least once every six years, the Department of OKP evaluates the quality and usefulness of the evaluation tools and how they are used in practice.

Quality requirements for professional field advisory boards

1. A professional field advisory board is set up for every programme or cluster of programmes; its members include representatives from the professional field.

2. An advisory board is put together based on professional fields and job roles that are relevant to the programmes in question. The composition of the board takes into account the diversity of the student cohort both on these programmes and in the professional field.

3. The faculty itself determines the number of members; at least one member of each advisory board must be an alumnus, ideally a recent graduate who can share recent experiences.
4. The agenda and the documents to be sent are drawn up in consultation between the chair and the secretary based on input from the programmes.

5. The board sends a written report of its recommendations to the Director(s) of Studies. These recommendations are then included in the relevant programmes’ annual report. Having considered the recommendations, the Director of Studies sends reasoned feedback to the board regarding the actions that will or will not be taken.

6. The meeting of the professional field advisory board forms part of the preparations for the midterm review, and the report of this meeting is included with the report of the midterm review.
6 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Guide to qualitative methods of evaluating methods

Appendix 2 Feedback form teaching session