

TEACHING · QUALITY · EVALUATION.

An applied concept. June 2010

Eva Blimlinger · Marcus Bruckmann · David F.J. Campbell · Bernhard Kernegger
Verena Krieger · Susanne Mann · Ruth Mateus-Berr · Barbara Putz-Plecko
Karin Raith · Emma Rendl-Denk · Veronika Schnell · Maria Wiala

The recommendations for a qualitative evaluation culture best suited to our university, which are presented in the paper before you, are the result of an extensive, multilayered, and intense process of discussion.

I extend my warmest thanks to all colleagues in the work group for their constant readiness to reflect upon good teaching and investigate its requirements, and for the constructive examination of the different options in the spectrum of potential evaluation procedures.

Special thanks goes to Verena Krieger, Susanne Mann, and Bernhard Kernegger for their work on the final version of this paper, their extraordinary commitment, and their diligence in the appropriate and precise formulation of the content elaborated in the discussion.

Barbara Putz-Plecko
Vice-Rector

I. Teaching Evaluation Is More Than Course Evaluation

In the June 2009 presentation, the Teaching Evaluation Work Group made it clear that teaching evaluation entails more than just the evaluation of individual courses and identified four thematic fields that are each of equal importance for the evaluation of teaching:

- **courses**
- **curricula**
- **infrastructure and organisation**
- **qualification and further education of teachers**

In the next phase, the work group elaborated the theme "courses" since the development of a corresponding methodical repertoire appeared to be an urgent priority.

II. Requirements for the Successful Evaluation of Courses

In order for the evaluation of courses to achieve the desired goals – namely to improve the quality of teaching – it must be an opportunity for the teachers to reflect on and develop their own teaching skills. It must be clear to the teachers that the evaluation results represent a useful tool for their personal further development as a teacher. The evaluation procedures must be structured in such a manner that they provide information that is relevant to the teachers. Furthermore, it should allow self-determination and not be employed as an instrument of control. Thus, the results should land exclusively in the hands of the respective teacher who is responsible for decisions on their further use and the appropriate response to the students. Additional requirements for a successful evaluation process are the elimination of unnecessary thresholds and ensuring a safe environment in which the teachers, as self-responsible and motivated protagonists, perceive the evaluation as a source of feedback and support in problems that arise.

III. Course Categories Relevant to Evaluation

In order to ensure a qualified course evaluation process, it is necessary to take into consideration the both formally and in practice very different "formats" of courses, in particular their organisational structures. Courses at the Angewandte can generally be classified into two categories:

Format 1

Courses in which a teacher or a team of teachers supervise a fixed group of students throughout the entire duration of the course. Various course types are assigned to this course format, for example lecture, exercise, seminar.

Format 2

Courses in which students under the guidance of an artistic director develop their own projects and can call upon the support of a certain number of teachers as required. These teachers can either be "independent" teachers (artists, scientists, workshop managers, who hold their own courses) or artistic assistants.

In virtually all of the programmes at the Angewandte, the two formats each occupy approximately half of the teaching scope; they comprise a wide range of different constellations and variations. Precisely this diversity in the course formats and types as well as the high amount of individual and intensively supervised project work of the students characterises the unique profile of the Angewandte. Hence, the enhancement of this profile also involves high-quality course evaluation procedures that meet the very different requirements of the two course formats in their respective variations.

IV. Requirements for the Evaluation Methods

For course evaluation to be relevant and appropriate for the actual teaching situation at the Angewandte, a corresponding diversity of methods is required. Different procedures have to be available that are specifically suited to both course formats respectively.

A broad methodical repertoire is required, which can be continuously improved and extended through its usage by the teachers and their own activities. This methodical repertoire must establish a spectrum of evaluation procedures

- which corresponds to the specific status, experience, employment relationship, and area of responsibility of each teacher,
- which corresponds to the two different course formats and their respective types of courses, and facilitates
- the focus to be placed on different levels (overall structure, individual teacher) as required,
- the satisfaction of the individual needs of the teachers (confirmation of their own commitment, feedback on uncertainties in a teaching situation),
- constructive reactions to concrete problems.

This spectrum of evaluation procedures should be flexibly managed and open to the character of the diverse addressees. The teacher chooses the appropriate method. It must, however, accommodate the legal requirement to involve students in the evaluation of teaching. It is a general desire that the teachers approach the evaluation procedures in a creative and experimental manner, that means trying out different methods and strategically employing them in accordance with their own needs and the requirements of different courses.

V. Development of an applied methodical repertoire

The repertoire of evaluation methods must meet the different demands and requirements of course format 1 and format 2 as well as the various course types (lecture, exercise, seminar, etc.). This methodical repertoire will be continuously adapted, extended, and further developed. In general, both qualitative and quantitative evaluation procedures shall be provided.

To date, the following procedures have been considered adequate by the work group and should be communicated and made available to the teachers in the appropriate manner:

1. Questionnaires

In the framework of an online application, there are a number of standard questionnaires, differentiated according to content-based and formal criteria, for the purpose of quantitative evaluation and with qualitative elements added by the students. Each standard questionnaire can be modified and extended to correspond to individual needs and the respective course to be evaluated. Teachers can further individualise the standard questionnaires by formulating the desired teaching result and creating references to the goals of the Angewandte.

The evaluation of the selected questions (e.g., "the course was well-suited to my current level of study.") and the compilation of responses to openly formulated questions (e.g., "qualities in the teaching by person XY:") are done by the Department of University and Quality Enhancement. In this way, the anonymity of the students is also guaranteed. The results are solely at the disposal of the respective teacher.

In addition to this service, also new standard questionnaires can be developed upon request to meet the specific requirements of certain courses. In doing so, the Department of University and Quality Enhancement and the Teaching Evaluation Work Group will ensure the quality of the questionnaire in coordination with the involved teachers.

2. Qualitative Feedback from the Students

There are different procedures to acquire qualitative student feedback, which the teachers can conduct on their own. For this purpose, comprehensible written guides are available and workshops are offered on request.

For instance, student feedback can take the following form:

At the end of a course, each of the participants receives a form with open questions that target concrete aspects of the course:

- What was useful, beneficial, "what did I like about it"?
- What was missing?
- What do I take with me?

The participants personally answer the questions in written form; the forms remain anonymous and are collected. The teacher compiles all of the answers and on this basis formulates the following questions:

- Where am I encouraged, what should I maintain?
- What should be done differently or further developed and how?
- What especially pleases me?

The teacher then adds their own responses to these questions to the answers of the students and makes the complete results available to the students. Upon request, there can also be a discussion.

3. Feedback from Colleagues ("Critical Friends")

This equally qualitative procedure involves the attendance of one or more personally selected colleagues at the teacher's own course for an agreed timeframe. These "critical friends" observe the teaching situation from perspectives and issues agreed upon together with the teacher in advance. In a personal discussion, the critical friends inform the teacher about their observations. A requirement for using this procedure, in the event the observers do not have pertinent experience, is a corresponding introduction for them in the form of a workshop.

The abovementioned evaluation procedures are available to all heads of courses. Optionally, they can also be used by those involved in format 2 courses and adapted to their personal contribution.

4. Peer Review

For the evaluation of format 2 courses, the abovementioned procedures are alone not sufficient since these courses are more complex in their structure and organisation: A larger and alternating number of teachers is involved, each of whom fulfil their teaching function in a different way and have different decision-making leeway and areas of responsibility. Investigating this interplay in terms of strengths and weaknesses is essential for long-term quality enhancement in teaching. The evaluation procedure for this course format must do justice to the multifaceted nature of such a complex system. Systemic analysis is necessary, which looks into the organisational structure, the flow of communication and decisions, etc., in their entirety.

A useful procedure for such systemic analysis is peer review: the investigation of the complete structure of a course by select colleagues who are active outside of the Angewandte and with whom the questions to be investigated are thoroughly discussed with in advance. The aim is to conduct a peer review for each format 2 course every five to six years. The head of the course is responsible for this task.

VI. Requirements for the Successful Establishment of an applied Evaluation Culture – Shared Responsibility between University Management, Teaching Staff, and Students

In general, evaluation is understood as a measure in the context of quality management. The objective is to develop a sustainable culture of independent quality enhancement and professionalisation in teaching. Above and beyond the tasks the university is obliged to fulfil in accordance with the law and the performance agreement, the aim is to develop an evaluation culture that corresponds to the specific situation at the Angewandte and thereby contributes to the enrichment of its profile. This implies the ongoing assessment and advancement of the available evaluation methods with the intense involvement of teachers and students.

The successful establishment of such an applied evaluation culture requires, on the one hand, the necessary framework to be provided by the university management, and on the other the active participation of teachers and students alike.

The University Management

- ensures that the required documentation (information, support in different evaluation procedures, among other things) is available.
- provides the necessary resources, organisational framework, and advice on conducting peer reviews.
- provides consultation and workshops where teachers become familiar with methods regarding the independent conduct of qualitative feedbacks and other teaching evaluation procedures.
- documents the employed procedures.
- records the participation of teachers.
- values active participation in evaluation procedures and the responsible handling of the results as a sign of commitment to teaching.
- offers training in higher education, which teachers can make use of as needed.
- supports internal knowledge transfer.
- facilitates the Teaching Evaluation Work Group's ongoing support of this development process.
- represents the applied evaluation concept in the context of the performance agreement and through reports to the Federal Ministry for Science and Research.
- represents the applied evaluation concept in the context of external quality assurance measures.

Teachers

- conduct independent evaluations in accordance with their personal needs. For the continuous development of the evaluation culture it is sensible and necessary to conduct evaluations at least once every four semesters. In the selection of the procedure, attention should be paid to the fact that student assessment must take place at least one time in five years according to the University Act.
- choose adequate methods in accordance with the requirements for their courses as well as their individual interests and needs. If needed, the Department of University and Quality Enhancement provides assistance with their implementation.
- document the employed evaluation procedures in the form of a report to the university management. It contains the title and number of the course, the number of students, a short description of the chosen method, and the date of the evaluation. The evaluation results remain with the teachers. This report is not necessary when a questionnaire provided by the university was used.
- independently decide on the further usage of their evaluation results.
- give students adequate feedback about the evaluation results and their further usage.
- when needed, make use of training and consultation programmes that serve the advancement of their teaching skills.
- participate in the continuous development of the evaluation procedures in accordance with their interests, needs, and experiences.
- support the Teaching Evaluation Work Group.

Students

- understand their participation in evaluation procedures as a constructive contribution to the enhancement of the quality of teaching.
- enter into a critical dialogue with the teachers and make use of support when needed.