Guidelines for the Evaluation of Teaching and Papers

Responsibility: Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning
Approving authority: Academic Board
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Purpose
These guidelines outline official university-wide processes for staff members to obtain feedback from students about their papers and teaching. The guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Evaluation of Teaching and Papers Policy. They support the policy's dual purpose of promoting the University's commitment to the achievement of excellence in teaching and learning through the conduct of regular student evaluations and demonstration of a commitment to continuous improvement.

Types of Official Teaching/Paper Evaluations
All official teaching/paper evaluations are conducted in accordance with data held in the Student Management System (SMS). Evaluations must include the relevant set of core questions approved by the Academic Board. A range of optional extra questions allow Paper Conveners to customise a paper evaluation and each teacher to customise his or her teaching evaluation.

The University's Evaluations Team conduct two types of official evaluation:
- Evaluations of the paper (*Paper Evaluations*) capture students' perceptions of learning objectives, assessment, resources, organisation, timing and overall learning experience. Evaluation of the paper is helpful for planning and development.
- Individual teacher evaluations (*Teaching Evaluations*) are designed to capture students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in relation to the ability to generate interest and engagement, approachability, clarity, providing opportunities for active learning, and enthusiasm for the subject and for teaching.

All evaluations are generated automatically using BLUE, the University's web-based, fully automated, evaluation survey system. As stated in the Evaluation of Teaching and Papers Policy, Paper Conveners are required to conduct a paper evaluation and teaching evaluations for at least every second occurrence of each paper for which they are responsible. Staff teaching on a paper are required to undertake a teaching evaluation for at least every second occurrence of each paper on which they are teaching.

Evaluation data is obtained via self-selected sampling and cannot be assumed to have a high degree of statistical accuracy. Data may be less reliable when the number of responses is small and are not necessarily comparative across subjects from different disciplines. The University values both qualitative and quantitative evaluation data. It is recommended that quantitative data is read in conjunction with students' qualitative comments.

End of Semester Evaluations
End of semester evaluations operate as an "opt out" system. Evaluation questionnaires are generated automatically for all papers and teaching staff; however, staff can choose to opt out in accordance with the University's Evaluation of Teaching and Papers Policy. If a Paper Convener chooses to opt out of the evaluation of a paper, all teaching staff will automatically be opted out of all evaluations associated with that paper. Therefore, Paper Conveners who wish to opt out must do so in consultation with the Head of School or equivalent and with other teaching staff linked to the paper who may want their teaching to be evaluated. The dates during which evaluations are open to students are set for all papers in accordance with the paper end dates entered in the SMS.

Information about the date ranges included in each evaluation cycle can be found on the Evaluation webpages.

Mid-Semester Evaluations
Mid-semester evaluations can be conducted for individual teachers and operate as an "opt in" system. Typically, mid-semester evaluations would only be requested by individuals who teach during the first half of a semester, following consultation with the Paper Convener and in lieu of an end-of-semester evaluation. The teacher must notify the Evaluations Team by the end of the second week of semester that a mid-semester teaching evaluation will be required.

Other teachers could request a mid-semester evaluation. We would encourage teachers instead to conduct formative evaluations of their teaching; assistance in designing and administering such evaluations can be obtained by contacting the Evaluations Team.

Teachers who opt for a mid-semester individual teacher evaluation are eligible to receive a report of any end of semester evaluation of the paper.

Conducting Evaluations
Only Paper Conveners and teaching staff associated with a paper in the SMS are included in each evaluation cycle. Before each semester, administrators must enter/update all staff-paper associations using the Staff Role/Paper Associations Tool, which interacts with the SMS. Assistance with using the tool can be provided by the Evaluations Team upon request.

Opting out
Only a Head of School or equivalent can authorise a Paper Convener to opt out of a paper evaluation. No other teaching staff are authorised to do so. [Individual teachers can opt out of an evaluation of their own teaching only for every second occurrence.]
- All teaching staff associated with a paper in the SMS receive an automated email containing a link to the BLUE system where a list of their papers can be viewed.
- Staff are able to select the "opt-out" button by the publicised opt-out date.
- Staff who wish to opt-out of an evaluation must seek approval from their Programme Convener/Head of School or equivalent.
- If a member of teaching staff opts out of a teaching evaluation, he or she will still receive a report of the evaluation of the paper.

Adding extra questions
Only a Paper Convener can add extra questions to the paper evaluation. Individual teachers can add extra questions to their teaching evaluation. After the customisation period closes, only in extraordinary circumstances and after receiving approval from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, will change requests be accepted and facilitated.

The Student Experience
- Students receive an email from the BLUE system (containing a link) inviting them to provide feedback. Students are also able to access BLUE via a variety of means, e.g. Moodle or a link on the student intranet.
- Within the BLUE system students complete questionnaires online for the semester's papers and teachers.
- Students receive two automated reminders to complete evaluations and reminding them of the confidentiality of the process.
- Staff members are encouraged to use a range of techniques to encourage students to provide feedback. The [Evaluation webpages](#) include suggestions and resources to help enhance student response rates.

Evaluation Reports

Evaluation reports are available after the Boards of Examiners meeting and once confirmed results are available to students. Reports include quantitative data, and in some cases (as detailed in the table below) will also include qualitative comments produced in response to open questions. Staff members will receive an email notifying them when the reports are available.

The reporting process at each level of the University is shown in the table below:

Table 1: Evaluation Report Recipients

Recipient	Report
Member of teaching staff	Paper and individual teaching report: quantitative data and qualitative comments
Paper Convener or equivalent	Paper report: quantitative data and qualitative comments[1]
Head of School or equivalent	Paper reports and individual teaching reports (qualitative comments provided on request). Aggregated data for all papers and teaching relevant to the School or equivalent
Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Division and Associate Dean Academic or equivalent	Paper reports and individual teaching reports (qualitative comments provided on request). Aggregated data for all papers and teaching relevant to the Division or equivalent
Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning	Paper reports and individual teaching reports (qualitative comments provided on request). Aggregated data for all papers and teaching relevant to the Divisions or equivalent
Academic Quality Committee	Paper reports (quantitative data only) and aggregated data for each Division
University/National reporting	Aggregated data for each Division

The Evaluations Team will provide the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor of Division and Heads of School or equivalent and the Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning with reports that outline all paper occurrences and when the last official evaluation was conducted. This ensures line managers and other relevant staff have the necessary information and data to carry out their responsibilities as stated in the [Evaluation of Teaching and Papers Policy](#).

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[1] When the convenor for a paper changes, the Evaluations Team will provide the previous year's paper report to the new convenor.

Evaluation Data and the Academic Staff Portfolio

In accordance with the University's requirements regarding applications for academic staff promotion/salary advancement, each applicant's Academic Staff Portfolio (ASP) is auto-populated with selected quantitative data direct from the appraisal database. Members of staff should include contextual statements and qualitative students' comments in the teaching commentary field within their personal ASP pages.

Staff Confidentiality

With the exception of data auto-populated into the ASP, the results of individual teaching evaluations are confidential to the individual staff member. A member of teaching staff who wants to authorise the release of a copy of their results by the Evaluations Team to staff other than the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Division or Head of School or equivalent must complete an authority form, and return it to the Evaluations Team before the data will be released.

Student Confidentiality

BLUE prevents teaching staff from seeing which evaluations came from which student. Students can be confident that teaching staff will not be able to associate any specific student with particular feedback.

Evaluating Papers with Small Groups of Students

For papers with fewer than six enrolled students, the University's official paper and teaching evaluation questionnaires will not be automatically included in the regular cycles for evaluations conducted through BLUE. There is an option, however, for staff members who teach on such papers to "opt-in" to an evaluation. Staff members will receive an email from the Evaluations Team to which they need to reply by the specified date in order to be included in the evaluation cycle for that semester. There are also various alternative options to gather formative student feedback from small groups, although that feedback will not automatically be included in the ASP; it is the teacher's responsibility to upload it. Options for formative feedback include engaging in peer review, using group interviews, collecting student opinions through Moodle data collection tools, or engaging in structured self-reflection and analysis.

Other Student Feedback

For evaluation to be most useful, it needs to be embedded in the day to day context of teaching and learning. There are a number of approaches that can be used to inform teachers about the quality of the students learning and can indicate possible modifications and adjustments. Incorporating feedback from peers and academic developers can also enrich the feedback on teaching and learning and enhance practice. Please contact the Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning for strategies for obtaining student feedback around self-evaluation and peer feedback.

Ethical Use of Evaluation Data

All data gathered during evaluations is collected expressly for the purposes of the improvement of teaching and learning and quality assurance. Staff who wish to conduct research into teaching and learning must do so in accordance with the University's [Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations.](#)

Closing the Feedback Loop

As with any evaluations, it is important to communicate the results and any consequent actions to students. In addition to any informal feedback mechanisms, the [Evaluation of Teaching and Papers Policy](#) requires Paper Outlines to include a summary of any changes that have been made in response to student evaluations.

Useful Links

The Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching and Papers can be found at:
http://www.waikato.ac.nz/official-info/index/docs/evaluation-of-teaching-and-papers-policy

Other information about Evaluations at the University of Waikato can be found at:
https://www.waikato.ac.nz/teaching-and-learning/teaching-development/paper-teaching-evaluations

Contact

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