Guidelines for the Evaluation of Teaching and Papers

**Responsibility for policy:** Chairperson, Education Quality Assurance Committee  
**Approving authority:** Academic Board  
**Last reviewed:** June 2015  
**Next review:** June 2020

**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 Jade Student Management System (Jade SMS) and must include the relevant set of core questions as established by the Education Quality Assurance Committee and approved by Academic Board. A range of optional extra questions allow the Programme Convenor/Head of School to customise a paper evaluation and each teacher to customise his or her teaching evaluation.

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 Convenors are required to conduct a paper evaluation and a teaching evaluation for at least every second occurrence of each paper for which they are responsible. The University’s Appraisals and Evaluation Team conduct two types of official evaluation:

- **Evaluations of the paper** (Paper Evaluations) explore students’ perceptions of learning objectives, assessment, resources, organisation, timing and overall student experience. Evaluation of the paper can be helpful for planning and development.
- **Individual teacher evaluations** (Teaching Evaluations) are designed to cover students’ perceptions of teaching effectiveness in relation to approachability, interest and engagement, clarity, active learning and enthusiasm.

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, and recommends that quantitative data is read in conjunction with 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. Staff who wish to opt out should do
so in consultation with the Programme Convenor and with other teaching staff linked to the paper who may wish for it and their teaching to be appraised. If a Paper Convenor 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.

A paper convenor will be able to select the dates the evaluation is open to students from within a provided date range. If a paper convenor does not select dates, the system will generate an evaluation that is open during the default open period. The default period is in accordance with the paper end dates entered in Jade SMS. During each evaluation cycle questionnaires are generated automatically for clusters of papers with a range of end dates within close proximity. Information about the date ranges included in each evaluation cycle can be found on the University’s Appraisals and Evaluation webpages.

Mid-semester evaluations
Mid-semester evaluations can only be conducted for individual teachers and operate as an “opt in” system. Individuals who teach during the first half of a semester may, following consultation with the paper convenor, request an official mid-semester evaluation in place of the usual end of semester evaluation. The teacher must notify the Appraisals and Evaluation Team by the end of the second week of semester that a mid-semester evaluation is required. Teachers who opt for a mid-semester individual teacher evaluation cannot conduct an end of semester individual teacher evaluation; however, they are eligible to receive a report of any end of semester evaluation of the paper.

Conducting Evaluations
Only Paper Convenors and teaching staff associated with a paper in the Jade SMS are included in each evaluation cycle. Administrators are advised to enter all staff-paper associations using the Staff Role/Paper Associations Tool, which interacts with Jade SMS.

Opting out
Only a Programme Convenor/Head of School can 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.
- All teaching staff associated with a paper in Jade 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 Convenor/Head of School.
- 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 Programme Convenor/Head of School can add extra questions to the paper evaluation. Individual teachers can add extra questions to their teaching evaluation.
- All teaching staff associated with a paper in Jade SMS will receive an automated email containing a link to the BLUE system where a list a papers may be viewed and extra questions selected.
Once in the BLUE system staff can select up to 8 extra questions per evaluation from the dropdown lists or create and enter their own wording.

- Click on the Submit button at the bottom of the page.
- This will complete the process and students will receive evaluations with the core questions plus any selected extra questions.

**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 other means, e.g. Moodle, QR codes on poster, 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 University’s Appraisals and 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. Each report includes quantitative data and any qualitative comments produced in response to open-questions. Staff members will receive an email notifyifying them when the reports are available.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member of teaching staff</td>
<td>Paper and individual teaching report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Convenor, Course Convenor or equivalent</td>
<td>Paper report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairpersons/Heads of Departments/Schools (or equivalent)</td>
<td>Paper reports and individual teaching reports Aggregated data for all papers and teaching relevant to the department or equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of Faculty/School</td>
<td>Paper reports and individual teaching reports Aggregated data for all papers and teaching relevant to the department or equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education Quality Assurance Committee</td>
<td>Paper reports and aggregated data for each department/equivalent in Faculty/School</td>
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<tr>
<td>University/National reporting</td>
<td>Aggregated data for each Faculty/School</td>
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The Appraisals and Evaluation team will provide Deans and Chairpersons/Heads of Departments/Schools (or equivalent) with reports that outline all paper occurrences and when the last official evaluation was conducted. This ensures Chairperson/Head of Department/School (or equivalent) have the necessary information and data to carry out their responsibilities as stated in the Evaluation of Teaching and Papers Policy.

**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 BLUE database. Members of staff are able to include contextual statements and qualitative students’ comments in the form of a PDF attached to a staff member’s ASP pages.

**Authority Forms**

With the exception of data auto-populated into the ASP, the results of individual teaching evaluations are confidential. An authority form must be completed and returned to the Appraisals and Evaluation Team if you would like to authorise the release of a copy of your results to staff other than your Chairperson/Head of Department/School (or equivalent) or Dean. Please contact the Appraisals and Evaluation Team to obtain the relevant form.

**Student Confidentiality**

BLUE blocks 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 Appraisals and Evaluation 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. 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 Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning staff 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.

**Future developments**
The BLUE system is fully implemented across the University. We can now explore additional features and improved flexibility so as to improve teaching and evaluation processes. Please check for announcements in the Official Circular as evaluations systems across the University continue to develop.

**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>
approved by Academic Board in June 2014>

Other information about Appraisals and Evaluation at the University of Waikato can be found here:
<http://www.waikato.ac.nz/tdu/appraisal/>  

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