

Second statement regarding the official evaluation of teaching (Lehrevaluation)

June 2011

The official evaluation of teaching is still inadequate to a severe extent and in part even contradicts the underlying Evaluationsordnung. Pressing problems which need to be resolved were also evident when teaching was evaluated in winter term 2010/2011.

Please note: In the following excerpts from the Evaluationsordnung are roughly translated trying to transfer the main contents to the best of our knowledge. We demand to always refer to the original German version if possible to avoid any misconception.

1 Insufficiency regarding content

1.1 Evaluationsordnung

The following paragraphs and passages are criticized:

- §1 (2) b) The evaluation is used to inform all university affiliates about the quality of teaching as perceived by the students.
The results are referred to student representatives only in the Studienkommission.
- c) The evaluation is used to inform the head of the university in order to provide a basis for suggestions for improvements.
The members of the faculty decide themselves whether the results of the evaluation are published or not. The Fachschaft thus fears especially poor results to remain unpublished. Consequently, no suggestions for improvements would be possible.
- §2 (1) The students' personal information are collected anonymously in the evaluation.
As in the evaluation personal information is collected as well, the students' anonymity cannot be ensured.
- (6) Subject to each faculty member's consent their evaluation results are made available to the Studiendekan.

Following such a procedure, publication of the results is not promoted. An improvement would be not to publish the data only in case of the faculty member's disapproval.

- Appendix 2 (1) Each semester 25% of all lecture courses in every major are evaluated. It has to be ensured that within two years all courses given on a regular basis are evaluated.

In view of courses only offered once per year (as usually done in the Fakultät V) it is not possible to fulfill the demand for one evaluation every other year.

1.2 Insufficiency regarding the realization

- §3 (1) The survey should be paper-based and should be carried out during the last four weeks of term.
- (2) In case the requirements of this guideline cannot be fulfilled in an online-survey, the survey has to be paper-based.
- (3) The procedure has to be chosen such, that results are meaningful. Results are considered meaningful, if at least 50% of the students take part in the survey, however not less than five. To calculate the ratio of students taking part in the survey the number of students attending the course on a regular basis is used.

In the Fakultät V an online-survey according to paragraph (2) was carried out during winter term. As the ratio of students taking part in this survey was only 34% the need for a paper-based survey is evident. Moreover, the ratio of students evaluating courses was below the minimum ratio demanded in paragraph (3). Thus even faculty were unable to obtain the results for their own teaching and consequently had no possibility for further improvements.

Furthermore, it has to be noted, that the procedure of calculating the ratio of students taking part in the survey was changed during the evaluation in winter term 2010/11. First, the calculation was based on the number of actual participants in the online-survey, later it was changed to the „number of tokens given to the students“. Such an approximation might in fact be more sensible, however no criteria supposed to ensure the students' anonymity may be changed in such manner by the officials.

- (5) The questionnaires are developed by officials responsible for teaching. Student representatives or the Fachschaft will take part in choosing questions and developing questionnaires.

As conceived by the Fachschaft Physik this guideline demands our participation in the process of conceptualizing the survey. However, we are currently not given any chance to do so at all. Neither our first statement (13. January 2011) was taken into account, nor were our critics in the Studienkommission. Even worse, our suggestions for improvements were unappreciated and blocked consequently. Despite the severe insufficiency remarked by the Fachschaft Physik,

it was emphasized that the Evaluationsordnung as well as the corresponding questionnaire had to remain unchanged for the upcoming evaluation in summer term 2011.

- (6) For the paper-based evaluation within a course, the corresponding faculty member is responsible.

To empower the faculty members with evaluating their own courses is unpleasant in various ways. Firstly, this endangers the students' anonymity, secondly it offers rich possibilities for manipulation, lastly the faculty members have to be protected from such accuses in advance.

1.3 Insufficiency regarding the questionnaire

According to Appendix 1 the following personal information may be collected:

- major and final degree

In our discretion these information are unnecessary for the evaluation AND infringe the students' anonymity.

- motivation for studying and expectations

We do not see any plausible explanation why such questions should be asked during an evaluation of teaching.

- recommendations for further evaluation

We consider this question insensible as we expect the probability for publication of results mainly containing positive answers concerning question 6.2 on the current questionnaire very little. Thus we also consider Appendix 2 paragraph 2 impractical.

A further point of criticism is the fact that it is only available in German. Some of the international courses offered at the University of Oldenburg are given in English. Those also have to be evaluated in English as some students do not have sufficient knowledge in German language.

2 Reactions of the Fachschaft Physik

2.1 Own survey

In order to ensure that quality of teaching is monitored according to the senate's decision in the Institute of Physics, the Fachschaft Physik has been conducting an own survey (so called Profprüfstand) for many years. The Fachschaft means to continue this survey until our issues regarding the official evaluation are taken into account in an improved Evaluationsordnung.

The Profprüfstand is conducted according to our own Evaluationsordnung, which can be obtained from our homepage.

2.2 Call to boycott

Due to the points of criticism raised and our suggestions for improvement which were both not taken into account by the officials we hereby call all physics students to boycott the official evaluation.

This way we hope to send a signal and make clear that the official evaluation has to be improved by far. We also hope to prevent the officials in charge of the evaluation from further ignoring our criticism and suggestions.

The Fachschaft Physik does not mean to take chances of a sensible evaluation from students of any other major. Thus we do not directly suggest them to take part in the boycott. We do however strongly recommend to make up your mind, whether you really wish to make an effort to take part, as we do not consider the official evaluation useful.

Oldenburg/Iffens 8th June 2011