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Further information: Rector's staff

[This English translation is for information purposes only. The German version is the legally binding version.]

DIRECTIVE

Teaching evaluation by students at ETH Zurich

The Rector,

pursuant to Art. 9 Para. 2 of the ETH Zurich Organisational Ordinance of 16.12.2003¹,
has issued the following directive:

1 Subject

Students of ETH Zurich regularly evaluate teaching at the institution, in all departments. Teaching evaluation by students is one element of ETH Zurich's comprehensive teaching evaluation strategy². This directive sets out the rules which govern it.

2 Goal of teaching evaluation

2.1 Improve teaching, learning and examinations

Teaching evaluation is primarily intended to help faculty and the departments improve teaching, student learning and examinations. Faculty and students are together responsible for the learning effectiveness of teaching, and it is in the interests of both to create an optimal teaching and learning environment. Teaching evaluation supports this in that participants in it are aware of their responsibility for the teaching and learning process, take it seriously and thus contribute to improving the quality of teaching. Aids to orientation in this context are the documents "Quality Criteria for Teaching at ETH Zurich"³, "Teaching Policy at ETH Zurich"⁴ and "Guidelines on Grading Written Examinations"⁵.

¹ RSETHZ 201.021

² Art. 10b of the ETH Law of 04.10.1991 (SR 414.110) and Art. 3 Para. 1 let. c of the ETHZ-ETHL Ordinance of 13.11.2003 (SR 414.110.37).

³ See [Quality Criteria for Teaching at ETH Zurich](#)

⁴ See [Teaching Policy at ETH Zurich](#)

⁵ See [Guidelines on Grading Written Examinations](#)

2.2 Quality development

Teaching evaluation is an instrument of both quality assurance and development for the degree programmes (Directors of Studies, departmental Teaching Commissions, Department Conference) and the Rector. It supplies detailed information on how course units and examinations are rated by students. This information enables the Rector and the responsible persons in the departments to formulate statements on the quality of teaching at ETH Zurich and in the departments, and to take appropriate measures to plan and implement improvements and innovation in teaching at the institution.

3 Procedure

Teaching evaluation is a three-level procedure, comprising the following:

- a. Semester feedback at the request of students, faculty or the department
- b. Evaluation of course units before the end of the semester
- c. Evaluation of written examinations (end-of-semester examinations and session examinations)

3.1 Semester feedback

Semester feedback is optional and is conducted at the request of students, faculty or the department during the first half of the semester. It guarantees an exchange between students and faculty, with the goal of achieving adjustments during the respective current semester. The Educational Development and Technology (LET) unit assists in the process by coordinating feedback questions and entering them in the EduApp. Here the initiating party either submits their own questions or, if desired, receives help in formulating them. At the beginning of the semester the Rector informs the faculty of the possibility of conducting semester feedback, and describes the procedure.

The initiators of semester feedback are responsible for seeing that students and faculty reflect upon the teaching and learning process and, if necessary, together deduce measures for improvement based upon the results.

Semester feedback is a formative⁶ procedure. No report is written.

For further information on semester feedback see the ETH website⁷.

3.2 Evaluation of course units

Course units and written examinations are evaluated in alternating cycles. During the course unit evaluation cycle no examinations are evaluated, with the exception of first-year examinations.

⁶ A formative evaluation assesses teaching during the respective course. Improvements are undertaken on the basis of the results.

⁷ See [Semester feedback](#)

Student evaluation of course units takes place online towards the end of the respective semester. Faculty normally receive the results seven days before the end of the semester and discuss them with the students during class. Course unit evaluation is summative⁸.

3.3 Evaluation of written examinations (end-of-semester and session examinations)

During the examination evaluation cycle no course units are evaluated. Student evaluation of examinations takes place online and begins on the day of the examination. All students who registered for the respective examination are surveyed. Evaluation of examinations is summative.

4 Mode

The following information refers to the evaluation of course units and examinations:

LET conducts evaluation of course units and examinations on behalf of the Rector and in cooperation with the departments. The department which offers the course unit or examination is the contact party in conducting the survey, and is responsible for the discussion of the results and for any measures derived from them.

All course units of the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes are normally evaluated online during course unit evaluation, provided that the questionnaire for the corresponding course type is available.

Teaching Certificate and Teaching Diploma courses are evaluated at the request of D-GESS (Institute of Behavioral Sciences).

Course units from the programmes offered by the School for Continuing Education (MAS, DAS, CAS, short courses) are evaluated at the request of the School for Continuing Education. Surveys following the graduation of a cohort (final surveys) may also be conducted.

All written end-of-semester and session examinations of the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes are normally evaluated online during the evaluation of examinations. First-year examinations are evaluated every semester.

An evaluation cycle comprises the respective Autumn Semester and the Spring Semester following. Information on the evaluation cycle is published on the ETH website⁹.

Exceptions based on published¹⁰ criteria determined by the Rector are possible.

⁸ A summative evaluation assesses teaching towards the end of the respective course unit examination (outcome evaluation).

⁹ See [Teaching Evaluation](#)

¹⁰ See [Teaching Evaluation](#)

5 Process

The course unit and examination evaluation process is described in the “QMS Lehre Prozessdiagramm 2-01-37 Unterrichtsbeurteilung” [teaching quality management system process diagram; in German].

6 Instruments

6.1 EvaSys evaluation software

Course units and examinations are evaluated online using EvaSys evaluation software. The EvaSys service operates according to the respective pertaining terms of use¹¹ and the current service description¹².

6.2 Standard questionnaires

The evaluation involves standard questionnaires developed on behalf of the Rector for the various course types and for written examinations.

The department offering a course may add three departmental questions, or the degree programme receiving a course may add three degree programme questions. This also applies to continuing education programmes.

Course unit questionnaires are available in both German and English, even though German is the standard language of Bachelor's degree course units and English is standard in Master's degree course units. The examination questionnaires are in German, but students may adjust the language.

To view the current questionnaires and the corresponding instructions, see the ETH website¹³.

7 The department receiving a course vs the department offering it

Course units and examinations are always evaluated by the department which offers the respective course unit or examination. The offering department is responsible for the quality of the course units and examinations it offers, even if these are service courses mainly attended by students who are not enrolled in a degree programme in that department.

If at least five students from a department receiving a course complete the survey, their department will receive the results. In critical cases the department offering the course will seek a dialogue with the receiving department, discuss the results with the responsible faculty, take appropriate measures and inform the receiving department.

¹¹ See [Nutzungsbestimmungen](#) [terms of use; in German]

¹² See [Servicebeschreibung](#) [service description; in German]

¹³ See [Basis questionnaires](#)

8 Response rate and evaluation burden

To keep response rates high, the general evaluation burden on students is kept in mind. Other surveys (e.g. on innovation) are coordinated with teaching evaluation and integrated into it if possible. Faculty can increase response rates if they conduct teaching evaluation online during class.

9 Results

9.1 Format of results

Evaluation results are available in various formats:

- a. **PDF report with comments**
- b. **Means comparison:** This is an overview of the averages of the scale questions¹⁴ in the questionnaire (available as an Excel file per questionnaire and per department). Both offered and received course units/examinations are displayed.
- c. **Overview of indicators:** Indicators are the weighted averages of a group of questions in the questionnaire (available per questionnaire and per department). Both offered and received course units/examinations can be displayed.

9.2 View rights

Rights to view the results of teaching evaluation are as follows:

	Students ¹⁵	Faculty	Directors of Studies ¹⁶	Study programme coordinators/ educational developers ¹⁷	Rector
PDF report with comments		X	X	X	X
Overview of indicators			X	X	X
Overview of average values	X	X	X	X	X

¹⁴ Scale questions serve to make statements on something according to an ordinal scale (of (e.g.) 1 to 5). Likert scale questions with symmetrical labelling (e.g. ranging from “not true” to “absolutely true”) serve the perception of a scale range and make possible the computation of average values.

¹⁵ Auditors have no right to view the results.

¹⁶ In the context of continuing education programmes the programme director is equivalent to the Director of Studies.

¹⁷ Version according to the Rector's resolution of 04.12.2023, in force since 01.01.2024.

In justified cases, the Rector may grant view rights to additional employees of the departmental Student Administration.¹⁸

9.3 Ways to view results

Ways to view results are regulated as follows:

	Students	Faculty	Directors of Studies	Study programme coordinators/ educational developers ¹⁹	Rector
By email		X			
Teaching evaluation results platform		X	X	X	X
Sharepoint platform ^{20, 21}	X	X			

Results (without comments) may be drawn upon by the Rector or the Rector's staff in the context of appointments, promotions, re-election, teaching appointments and reports on teaching (e.g. for tenure procedures).

10 Definition of critical course units and examinations

10.1 Course unit

A course unit is defined as critical if the average score it receives for general satisfaction or the average scores it receives for at least three individual scale questions (scale from 1 to 5) lie below 3.0.²² Median and standard deviation can be taken into account in course unit evaluation if the average score for general satisfaction is >2.85 and there are no further critical values.

¹⁸ Added according to the Rector's resolution of 04.12.2023, in force since 01.01.2024.

¹⁹ Version according to the Rector's resolution of 04.12.2023, in force since 01.01.2024.

²⁰ Central, password-protected publication by LET.

²¹ Results pertaining to the School for Continuing Education and its programmes are an exception and are not published. Students of continuing education may view the results on request.

²² For exceptions see [Basis questionnaires](#)

10.2 Examinations

An examination is defined as critical if the average score it receives for the questions listed below or the average scores it receives for at least three individual scale questions (scale from 1 to 5) lie below 3.0.²³ Median and standard deviation can be taken into account in evaluation of examinations if the average score for general satisfaction is >2.85 and no other values are critical.

- a. Alignment: In terms of the specialist knowledge tested and the level required, the examination was well aligned with the teaching.
- b. Implementation/fairness: Everyone was subject to the same conditions in the examination.
- c. Validity: The examination was fair.
- d. Overall satisfaction with the quality of the examination.

11 Responsibilities, rights and delegation

11.1 Rector

The Rector is responsible at the Executive Board level for the quality of teaching and its periodic review. At the beginning of the semester she/he informs the Directors of Studies and faculty about teaching evaluation. The Rector may order further evaluation tasks.

11.2 Departements

It is the responsibility of the Directors of Studies to conduct the departmental side of the evaluation, initiate any corrective measures and report to the Rector.

The responsibility involves the following tasks in particular:

- a. Determination of the person (contact person) operatively responsible for conducting the evaluation
- b. Discussion of the results and any matters arising (positive and negative) with the faculty responsible and in department bodies (particularly the departmental Teaching Commission)
- c. Initiation of any measures for improving course units or examinations
- d. Dialogue with departments supplying/receiving service lectures
- e. Reporting to the Rector
- f. Informing the student representatives about the measures taken on the basis of the teaching evaluation

²³ For exceptions see [Basis questionnaires](#)

11.3 Faculty

Faculty provide information to the students in their courses and motivate them to participate in teaching evaluation. To improve response rates they may conduct course unit evaluation in class. Where possible, the faculty discuss the results with the students.

Faculty who do not wish results from their course units or examinations to be made available to students and other faculty should submit a written request for deletion to the Rector.²⁴

11.4 Students

Students should answer the questions on course units fairly and honestly. By doing so they are helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

12 Department reports for the Rector

All course units and examinations rated as critical are listed for the Rector on the teaching evaluation results platform. The following points must be addressed:

- a. **Conclusions on teaching evaluation**
- b. **Measures:** Critical course units and examinations are listed. Causes and any measures taken in response are described in the context of all the course units and examinations offered by the respective department. If a repetition examination with few participants was rated as critical but the previous main examination was not, causes and measures need not be reported.

The department must submit its report to the Rector on the teaching evaluation results platform by the deadline provided there.

13 Data archiving, processing and protection

13.1 Classifying of data

Teaching evaluation results are classified as CONFIDENTIAL in Art. 22 Para. 1 let. c of the directive "Information Security at ETH Zurich"²⁵.

13.2 Viewing rights

Faculty whose course unit(s) were evaluated are informed by their departments that the results have been stored on the teaching evaluation results platform. They receive the results by email, and can also download them from the platform. LET publishes the results centrally by department for password-protected viewing by students and faculty.

²⁴ See [Publication of results for student viewing: Request for exception](#)

²⁵ RSETHZ 203.25

13.3 Usage rights

The results may only be actively deployed by the Rector, the Rector's staff and responsible persons in the departments for their purposes in accordance with this directive. Special analyses are possible on request and if capacity is available at the LET. Using the means comparison to create rankings is not recommended.

13.4 Data provision, archiving and deletion

LET is responsible for the secure storage of evaluation results according to the prevailing data protection rules²⁶. Personal data is stored on the teaching evaluation results platform in principle only as long as absolutely necessary, and concretely for no longer than seven years. Decentral storage in the departments is not permitted.

LET deletes the means comparisons on the password-protected Sharepoint platform after two years.

LET deletes evaluation data relevant to individual persons after seven years at the latest. It anonymises the means comparisons (by removing names) and passes them to the ETH Library²⁷ for long-term archiving in the university archive. Viewing of the archived results is subject to rules. The data are governed by the Federal Act on Archiving²⁸ and subject to a retention period of 30 years. The Rector rules on requests to view data; the university archive will make results accessible if the Rector approves a request.

Storage of any teaching evaluation results in any location other than EvaSys and the ETH Archive is not permitted.

14 Aids

The following aids are available in conducting the evaluation of course units and examinations:

- a. ETH website information on teaching evaluation: [Teaching Evaluation](#)
- b. EvaSys and teaching evaluation results platform portal: [EvaSys service](#)
- c. Support: evasys@ethz.ch

²⁶ Federal Act on Data Protection of 25.09.2020 (SR **235.1**); Data Protection Ordinance of 31.08.2022 (SR **235.11**); Art. 36a and 36b of the ETH Law; Verordnung über die Bearbeitung von Personendaten, die bei der Nutzung der elektronischen Infrastruktur des Bundes anfallen [ordinance on processing of personal data arising while using federal electronic infrastructure; no English version] (SR **172.010.442**).

²⁷ See the Directive for the Archives of ETH Zurich of 03.12.2002 (RSETHZ **420.1**).

²⁸ SR **152.1**

15 Final clauses

15.1 Rescindment of the previous directive

The directive “Teaching evaluation by students at ETH Zurich” of 1 September 2014 is rescinded.

15.2 Entry into force

This directive enters into force on 1 December 2021.

Zurich, 1 December 2021

Rector, ETH Zurich
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