

Regulation on Teaching Evaluations at TU Braunschweig

Section I: General remarks

§1 Scope

- (1) This Regulation governs the procedures and the processing of personal data during internal teaching evaluations as set out in §5 NHG (*Niedersächsisches Hochschulgesetz*, Lower Saxony Higher Education Act). It applies to all of TU Braunschweig's Departments and central scientific facilities.
- (2) This Regulation applies to all the undergraduate, consecutive, postgraduate, further education, and doctoral degree programmes offered at TU Braunschweig.
- (3) In accordance with §17 NHG, this Regulation governs the collection, processing and storage of the personal data required for this purpose.

§2 Goals of teaching evaluations

- (1) In evaluating its teaching practices, TU Braunschweig is pursuing the following goals:
 - o continuous quality assurance and improvement of teaching and studying by the Departments and the central facilities;
 - o establishment of a basis for constructive dialogue within the University, as well as for specific measures to advance the courses offered in the various degree programmes, improve the quality of the study experience, and to further the pedagogical and educative training of our teachers.
- (2) Teaching evaluations allow us to assess and appraise TU Braunschweig's fulfilment of its teaching duties as explained in §5(1) NHG.

§3 Components of teaching evaluations

TU Braunschweig's teaching evaluation procedure comprises several components:

- o student class evaluations as defined in §5(2) NHG¹ (please see Section II of the present Regulation), the results of which are presented to the Heads of Academic Affairs in an annual results report (see §11(3) of this Regulation);
- o evaluations of entire degree programmes or specific portions thereof, in particular with a view to re-accreditation (see Section II);
- o the internal and external evaluation process (§5(1) NHG) (see Section V).

If needed, these components will be supplemented by additional evaluation activities (such as shrinkage analyses and surveys of dropouts, freshers, and graduates).

§4 Use of evaluation results

The results of teaching evaluations may be used for the following purposes:

- a) to develop measures to improve the quality of teaching;
- b) to support decisions made by the University's different bodies and committees concerning the quality of teaching;
- c) to document the quality of teaching and to support the University's accountability to third parties;
- d) to create transparency in respect of the quality of teaching and quality assurance measures;
- e) to bolster decisions made on requests for performance bonuses under the W salary scale² which reward outstanding performance in teaching as explained in §4(4) NHLeistBVO (*Niedersächsische Hochschul-Leistungsbezügeverordnung*, Lower Saxony Regulation on Benefits in Higher Education).

Where teaching evaluation results are used as explained in points 4(c) and (d) above, the inclusion of an individual lecturer's personal data is prohibited.

¹ Translator's note (TN): §5(1) NHG is correct.

² TN: University professors in Germany are paid at the W salary scale (*Besoldungsordnung W*).

§5 Nature of the stored data, legal basis, and data subjects

(1) Surveys are conducted to perform the evaluations described in §3. Those surveys may contain questions about the course (transmission of knowledge, structure, use of media, etc.), the lecturer, the coordination of class timetables, the course objectives and their attainability, and the environment (facilities, room furnishings, etc.).

(2) Each survey may also contain questions about the students' personal information (subject of study, number of semesters completed, gender, etc.). Student anonymity must be guaranteed.

(3) The legal basis for this are §5(1) and (2) NHG.

(4) The data subjects are all the University's members and affiliates.

(5) Procedural descriptions, as stipulated in §8 NDSG (*Niedersächsisches Datenschutzgesetz*, Lower Saxony Data Protection Act), are appended to this Regulation as Annexes 1 and 2.

§6 Collection, processing and storage of personal data

(1) For the purpose of teaching evaluation, the following personal data, including the data defined in §17(1)1 NHG, may be collected, processed and stored:

- student management data;
- data from surveys of students and graduates;
- data on doctoral candidates.

(2) Personal data may only be collected through evaluation procedures insofar as this is absolutely necessary in order to carry out the evaluation and fulfil the purpose of the evaluation.

(3) Data collected through evaluations may only be processed insofar as this is allowed by law, another legal provision or this Regulation. As a rule, evaluation results containing personal data may only be transmitted with the written consent of the data subjects. Without that consent, evaluation results containing personal data may only be passed on if allowed by law. Within the University, only the Heads of Academic Affairs may communicate such results for discussion by the relevant Study Commissions without the explicit consent of the data subjects.

(4) All personal data must be anonymised as early as possible. In particular, the University must ensure that no conclusions can be drawn from personal data as to the identity of individual students or graduates.

(5) Personal data collected and processed through other administrative procedures, as set out in §17(1)1 NHG, may be used for the purpose of internal evaluations to the extent that this is absolutely necessary.

(6) People involved in collecting and/or processing evaluation data are prohibited from collecting, processing or disclosing those data for any purpose other than the performance of their tasks. This will continue to apply after completion of each task. Such people must be informed in writing about their duty to maintain data confidentiality before beginning their tasks.

(7) Committees may only deal with personal data during non-public sessions. In the invitations to such sessions, the participants must be notified in writing about data privacy, in accordance with §5 NDSG.

(8) Personal data must be deleted after seven years. If their continued retention should be required in order to fulfil the purpose of the evaluation, those personal data may be stored for up to 10 years after their collection. The decision and the reasons for extending the storage period must be documented by the Departments or by people authorised to do so by the Departments. Legal requirements in terms of archiving remain unaffected.

(9) Only anonymised evaluation results may be used in communications with the public. However, every lecturer has the right to publish their own evaluation results, as long as the students involved remain anonymous.

Section II: Periodic course evaluations

§7 Goals

Students throughout the University provide course evaluations on a regular basis. The goals of these are as follows:

- a) to provide lecturers with feedback on the quality of their teaching as perceived by the students, so they can continuously improve their classes;
- b) to improve the teaching and learning processes at the class level, as well as improving the coordination and correlations between individual classes;
- c) to enable the rating and appraisal of a given degree programme's classes by the relevant Department, in particular by the relevant Head of Academic Affairs and Study Commission, to assure quality and develop measures to improve the quality of teaching in that degree programme;
- d) to create transparency throughout the University about the quality of teaching as perceived by the students, and to inform the Executive Committee, the Senate, the University Council and the various student committees.

Everybody involved in these evaluations is aware that successful teaching depends in equal measure on the students' willingness to actively engage in the teaching-learning process.

§8 Surveys

(1) Student surveys are conducted for the purpose of course evaluation, either online or on paper. Other forms of evaluations may be authorised on request by the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, so long as the requirements of this Regulation and the principles of data protection are heeded.

(2) For online surveys, students participate by filling out a questionnaire using a web browser. It is necessary to ensure that no student can evaluate a given course more than once (e.g. by introducing a PIN/TAN system).

(3) For paper surveys, students fill out paper questionnaires. These are usually distributed by the lecturer during class. Students then need to be given enough time to evaluate the course.

(4) The Heads of Academic Affairs, after hearing the opinions of the Study Commissions, will determine and announce a timeline for the surveys.

(5) Each lecturer will participate in a student evaluation of each of his or her classes, at least once a year.

(6) For students, participation in the periodic course evaluations is voluntary.

§9 Nature of the collected data and its processing for internal evaluations

(1) To achieve the objectives set out in §7, student surveys include questions on course quality which may vary depending on the type of course (lecture, seminar, work experience, etc.). There may be subject-related and course type-related quality questions. The questions may also encompass teaching and learning conditions (facilities, furnishings, computers, library equipment, etc.). The questionnaire should always include questions about course workload (time needed for preparation and follow-up, homework, term papers, etc.) and about how often the student attended the class. Students may also be asked how many times a class was given by the responsible lecturer(s) and how many times by an assistant. The content of the questionnaire will be discussed in the Department's relevant Study Commissions and adopted by the Department Council. If the relevant Study Commission allows for this, lecturers may formulate questions specific to their classes. Only questions which will foster the achievement of the objectives defined in §2(1) will be included. Paper and online evaluations at the various levels are carried out by means of questionnaires.

(2) Questionnaire analysis and results report generation will be automated.

(3) The responsible lecturer(s) and their teaching assistant(s) will receive the results (usually in electronic form), along with a comparative view of all the courses in the same degree programme or subject (including anonymised student comments) to give them some perspective on their own results. Classes given for students of other Departments are usually assessed by subject, rather than by degree programme.

(4) The Heads of Academic Affairs receive the results reports described under §9(3) for each course in each degree programme in their area of responsibility, usually in electronic form. For classes given for students of other Departments, the result reports are also sent to the Head of Academic Affairs for the lecturer's subject.

(5) In order to perform their duties, the Dean and the Head of Academic Affairs have access to the detailed results. The Executive Board, in order to perform their duties, can request the results from the relevant Head of Academic Affairs, in relation to either the degree programme or the subject.

(6) Based on the results of the course evaluations, the Heads of Academic Affairs report to the relevant Study Commission and implement quality assurance and improvement measures for studying and teaching, on which they also report back to the relevant Study Commission.

(7) Course evaluation results are published throughout the Department, in aggregated form in relation to individual degree programmes and, where applicable, in relation to individual modules, provided this does not enable the identification of individual lecturers. The Department Council, based on a proposal from the Head of Academic Affairs and the Study Commission, will make more detailed provisions on their own authority. The publication of results for individual courses or lecturers requires the consent of the lecturer concerned.

§10 Responsibility

(1) Responsibility for the student evaluations lies with the relevant Heads of Academic Affairs.

(2) The Department Council of the Department offering the course is responsible for creating the questionnaires, with advice from the relevant Study Commission. Classes offered by one Department for one or several other Departments undergo a single course evaluation. In that case, the subject's Study Commission of the Department offering the class is responsible for creating the questionnaire and conducting the evaluation.

§11 Use of results and implementation

(1) Lecturers will inform their students of the results of the course evaluation by means of statistics. They will give the students the chance to discuss the results. They should address any shortcomings as well as opportunities for improvement. If such a discussion is not feasible, for example in the case of block seminars, the lecturer and his or her Head of Academic Affairs will decide on how the results will be discussed. If the relevant Study Commission makes a decision on this and defines the procedure in a regulation, the results of that discussion can be taken into account during course evaluations.

(2) The relevant Study Commission convenes at the start of the following semester to discuss the results of the survey and to compile a report for the relevant Department Council based on the results and additional information.

(3) Once a year, the relevant Head of Academic Affairs compiles a course evaluation results report for each degree programme or subject. These results reports contain the aggregated results of course evaluations, a comparison against results from previous years, the results of any additional evaluation measures, each with an explanatory statement, as well as the planned study reform measures for purposes of quality assurance and improvement. The results reports are to focus on facts rather than on individuals. They are discussed and adopted by the Study Commission and the Department Council and then presented to the Executive Board. Written statements from members of the Study Commission or the Department Council may be added to the report. The fulfilment of the teaching responsibilities and tasks defined under §16 *Lehrverpflichtungsordnung* (Teaching Responsibilities Regulation) must be documented along with the evaluation results.

(4) If evaluations which are far above average for a degree programme or subject should emerge during the questionnaire analysis (by comparison to all the University's other classes and modules), or if at least two consecutive evaluations of a particular class or module are well above average, the central Commission for Studying and Teaching³ may invite the relevant Head of Academic Affairs or lecturer to speak about those examples of best practices. In-depth student interviews may be conducted in preparation for this.

(5) For quality assurance purposes, the Executive Board and the Department offering the course or module may come to a binding target agreement.

Section III: Student evaluation of degree programme sections and graduate evaluations of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes

§12 Goals

The purpose of evaluating specific programme sections and entire degree programmes is quality assurance, and an advancement of all the aspects of a given programme relating to more than a single class. This includes modules in module-based bachelor's and master's degree programmes, programme feasibility, coordination of the curriculum in respect of acquired and assumed knowledge and skills, an assessment of the qualifications earned during the programme with a view to possible career paths, and the services of the University's central facilities.

§13 Responsibility

(1) The relevant Study Commissions are responsible for creating the evaluation procedure and formulating the questions. Responsibility for the evaluation of degree programme sections and graduate surveys lies with the Head of Academic Affairs responsible for the degree programme in question. The Department's Administrative Office will collect the data according to specifications defined by the relevant Head of Academic Affairs.

§14 Procedure and nature of the collected data and its processing

(1) Degree programme sections can be evaluated as needed and, if appropriate, according to the specifications of external accreditation agencies.

(2) Degree programmes are evaluated by means of graduate surveys. The provisions of §§9 and 11(2) apply.

(3) The data protection regulations set out in §§5 and 6 of this Regulation must be heeded.

§15 Use of data and implementation

(1) The results may be used for the following purposes:

- a) to develop and improve quality in teaching;
- b) for external course evaluations;
- c) to document teaching quality;
- d) in re-accreditation procedures.

(2) The Study Commission assesses the surveys and discusses any necessary and planned follow-up. The survey results are appended to the results reports described in §11(3). The provisions of §1(3) apply.

³ TN: This commission has been renamed the Commission of Studying and Continuing Education.

Section IV: Internal and external evaluations

§16 Internal and external evaluations

(1) The Departments are responsible for internal evaluations, conducted at the subject level. The different subjects organise their internal evaluations and provide their support for external evaluations. All the different status groups must be involved. The University Administration and the Departments' Administrative Offices support the subjects by providing them with the relevant data.

(2) With the help of the Department, the subjects summarise the results in a self-evaluation report. If there is an external evaluation, the report must follow the formal and content-related specifications of the external evaluation agency.

(3) Once it has been discussed by the responsible Study Commission and any affected Study Commissions, and adopted by the Department Council, the self-evaluation report is presented to the relevant Executive Board Member for comment. The Executive Board then forwards the report to the external evaluation agency.

(4) The Department issues a written statement on the results of the external evaluation. After consulting with the affected Study Commission(s), the Department Council adopts that statement. It is then forwarded to the external evaluation agency through the official channels.

(5) After publishing the evaluation results, the Study Commission(s) and the Department Council deliberate on the conclusions to be drawn and, if appropriate, will adopt a quality improvement plan. The quality improvement plan is forwarded to the external evaluation agency through the official channels. The University's public are also informed about the quality improvement plan.

Section V: Final provisions

§17 Entry into force

This Regulation will come into force on the day following its University-wide publication.