

## 9. Toolkit module: Students co-evaluating courses

### 9.1. Overview

In order to maintain a high quality of educational provision and to meet the changing requirements of students, there is a need for continuous evaluation of the courses and curricula provided. All stakeholders, in particular students, should participate in this process.

### 9.2. Objectives

This toolkit aims to present tips and advice for organising events where students participate in co-evaluating courses. The purpose of this material is to empower students as participants in this process.

### 9.3. Analysis of workshop conclusions

The following issues were discussed during the "Workshop for modular training toolkit for students engaged in ENHANCE activities" organised at the Warsaw University of Technology on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

#### 9.3.1. Encouraging students

When discussing the issue of encouraging the students to participate in co-designing courses and curricula, the following questions should be addressed.

- What are potential **incentives** for a student to participate in the co-creation activities?
- How to **encourage** students to co-create university activities?
- What can **discourage** students from participating in the co-creation process?

It is obvious that to make the course evaluation process possible and effective, the curricula should be transparent. A quantitative assessment is desirable, if only for statistical or comparative reasons. However, the solid qualitative feedback often motivates the teacher to improve and develop the course. The assessment should include, inter alia, the students' attitude to the course, whether his/her knowledge and skills have developed and whether the assumed learning outcomes have been achieved. The anonymity of the ratings is critical together with also the constant access to the ratings. Course designers, professors, and all teaching staff should be familiar with the evaluation criteria.

#### 9.3.2. Costs and benefits

To address the problem of costs and benefits of the students' participation in co-assessing, the following questions should be addressed.

- **Do we need** co-creation at a university?
- What are the **costs** (not necessarily financial) of co-creation?
- What are the **benefits** (for whom) of co-creation?

Both students and teachers will benefit from a correctly conducted assessment. However, certain conditions must be met. Students should be aware and assured that their comments are taken into account and that they actually have an impact on the development of courses and curricula. Fulfilling this condition is difficult and requires ensuring and maintaining mutual trust of the student community and academic staff, in particular the university authorities.

#### 9.3.3. The organisation of the co-creation process

Analysing the organisation of co-designing courses and curricula by students incurs a need to answer the following question.

- How to organise the co-creation process to engage a small selection of participants and /or the whole community?

A frequently used method of evaluating courses is to use anonymous questionnaires (digital or paper) that contain standardized questions. They are suitable for all courses and all students. Processing the results of all surveys can be a challenge, especially when they contain descriptive feedback.

Another solution may be the participation of a small group of students selected by students themselves in the evaluation of the course. They gather the feedback on the course through (often informal) conversations with their colleagues. The opinions obtained in this way will be more reliable. Then students can collaborate with professors and discuss desirable changes to the courses.

## 9.4. The examples

### 9.4.1. Evaluation feedback

Apart from the routine evaluation of courses at Warsaw University of Technology which takes place every semester using a standardised and relatively simple questionnaire, some teachers encourage students to provide more comprehensive feedback and design their own course questionnaires. Taking part in a survey based on such an extended questionnaire can be seen as an exercise in students' developing critical thinking and formulating assertive statements. Therefore, bonus points are sometimes awarded to those who fill out and submit the questionnaire (1 or 2 extra points with the 0-100 course grading scale) to additionally encourage students to provide their feedback. However, it is worth pointing out that explaining how the previously received comments were used to enhance the quality of educational provision is the most effective incentive for students to present their opinion.

The example of this approach is the survey conducted for the "Methodical aspects of engineer's activity" course intended for first-semester students of the Internet of Things Engineering undergraduate degree programme offered at the Faculty of Electronics and Information Technology. The objective of the survey and sharing experience with using results of similar surveys carried out in previous years were explained by the teacher in class. Following that, a comprehensive on-line questionnaire (20 questions on this specific course and the entire curriculum) was filled out at home by almost all students (return rate of 90% was achieved) and the group of ca. 20 students provided more than 10 pages of comments on various issues related to the closed questions. The complete outcome of the survey (anonymised and randomised) was made available to the students, so that they could see the opinions (incidentally, quite diversified) of their peers. This is perceived by students as an additional incentive to take part in future surveys.

## 9.5. Suggested scenario

The scenario presents a **discussion** of the results of questionnaires with the participation of students.

### 9.5.1. Overview

The scenario describes a joint discussion of the results of the anonymous feedback submitted by the participants of a course. Its aim is the continuous development of the course, taking into account the development of science and the changing needs of students.

### 9.5.2. Objectives

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the results of the questionnaires received from students constructively. The concrete proposals for changes and modifications to the course, jointly agreed by the team of teachers conducting the course, alumni and future participants should be the result of this discussion.

### 9.5.3. Target participants

- A moderator: a person not related to the course (e.g. a student, a doctoral student or a professor)
- Students:
  - alumni of a course,
  - potential future participants of the course,
- The team of teachers.

### 9.5.4. Format

A moderated discussion.

#### 9.5.5. Duration

Suggested duration: 90-120 minutes

#### 9.5.6. Resources

- The opinions from the questionnaires, categorized in terms of similarities.
- A projector.
- A whiteboard and markers.

#### 9.5.7. Description

At the beginning of the meeting, the moderator should present the students' opinions (possibly selected). They should be divided into categories, e.g. proposed changes to the lecture, new ways of assessment, etc.

Each category should be jointly discussed in terms of relevance, feasibility, required resources to implement, etc. Implementation of each category may require time, resources, syllabus changes, arrangements with university authorities, and more.

After a joint selection, it is necessary to make a proposal (the team of teachers) on which changes to implement and when it can be possible.