



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

# **COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT ON A SCIENTIFIC BASIS**

**– using the Learning Experience  
Questionnaire**

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## Overview

This is a guide for how you as a teacher at the Umeå University can work in a systematic, collegial and scientific way with course evaluation<sup>1</sup> and course development. For this purpose, the Learning Experience Questionnaire (LEQ) is used – a survey tool that examines the prerequisites for your students' learning based on a number of factors that in empirical research have been found to promote learning in higher education (Borglund et al. 2018; Borglund & Olding 2023). The first part of the guide gives a general overview of the working method and the survey tool. Practical instructions for use are then provided. In the appendices the theoretical structure of LEQ is explained in more detail and two forms developed to facilitate your work with course analysis are included.

## Systematic development process

The so-called LEQ-process is illustrated in Figure 1. It consists of the following steps:

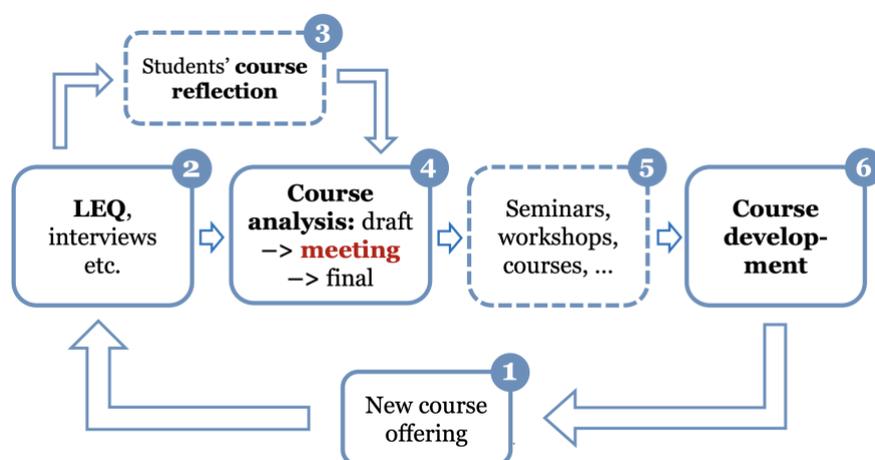


Figure 1. Illustration of the systematic course evaluation process and course development.

1. The process begins on completion of your course. During the course it is advantageous to use formative evaluation to adapt implementation to your students' needs as far as possible.<sup>2</sup>
2. At the end of the course, you carry out a summative *course survey* using the LEQ survey tool. Note that other sources of information, such as your own experiences as a teacher, can also be taken into account in the course evaluation.
3. As a next step, you can share the results of the course survey with your students if possible. A group of students can then meet to carry out a *course reflection*, passing the results on to you.

<sup>1</sup> *Course evaluation* here means a compilation of the students' feedback in the *course survey*, the teacher's *analysis* of the course and any *course data* that should be included in accordance with the university's rules and regulations (i.e. *course survey* + *course analysis* + *course data* = *course evaluation*).

<sup>2</sup> Formative evaluations can also be used to evaluate individual sections of a course, which may be particularly important for longer courses.

4. Based on the data collected you then perform a preliminary *course analysis*. The results are presented and discussed at a *course analysis meeting* with other teachers, after which a final version is confirmed and published.
5. If a common need for competence development becomes apparent during the course analysis meeting, this can be followed up with some form of competence development activity for the teachers.
6. Finally, you carry out the proposals for *course development* that are indicated in the final version of the course analysis. In practice, you will most likely do some of this work during the next course offering.

If you engage in this process in an active, meaningful and sustainable way, it can over time:

- promote a *community of practice*<sup>3</sup> involving you and other teachers,
- help you find new ways to improve your students' learning
- help you identify your own competence development needs,
- increase the meaningfulness of your course evaluation work,
- help your students communicate more relevant feedback,
- promote student participation in your course development work,
- ensure that your development work is founded on a scientific basis.

The process can be scientifically justified in several ways. It can be regarded partly as a cycle of experience-based learning (Kolb 2014) where you as a teacher concretely experience, reflectively observe, abstractly conceptualize and actively try different ways of developing your teaching. The collegial aspect can be justified with the support of theories of socio-cultural learning (Vygotsky 1934/1986, 1978; Wenger 1998). In short, this means that you as a teacher, as well as your students, develop more effectively by working together with and learning from others. This method of working also entails a systematic and explorative approach to your teaching, which is the basis of the Scholarship of teaching and learning (Boyer 1990).

## Learning Experience Questionnaire

The survey tool LEQ has been developed to support your scientific work with course evaluation and course development and to promote a community of practice embracing you and other teachers. This is achieved by using LEQ to evaluate your students' experience of the course's *learning environment* based on a number of factors that in empirical research have been found to promote learning (see Figure 2). If a colleague evaluates another course in the same way, opportunities for dialog and an exchange of experience concerning your teaching are opened. This is how a course analysis meeting works and a community of practice can be developed with the help of LEQ.

The principle of the theoretical structure of the questionnaire is illustrated in Figure 3. Based on 15 different factors for learning taken from literature on teaching and learning in higher education (Bain 2004; etc.), a total of 23 statements have been formulated and validated according to this principle. When your students answer the questionnaire, they take a position on each statement on a 5-degree Likert scale and have the opportunity to comment on each statement. There are also 5 open questions

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<sup>3</sup> By *Community of practice* (Wenger 1998) is meant a collegiality of teachers characterized by 1) a consensus on the importance of teaching in the academy, 2) a social community, and 3) an ongoing exchange of concrete experiences of teaching.

to answer<sup>4</sup>. These questions are very important in order to capture more specific experiences and views of the course. As a rule, no further action is required to evaluate your course, but you may need to use LEQ once to see for yourself that this is the case.



Figure 2. Illustration of the student's learning environment and examples of factors for learning.

An advantage of using LEQ for course evaluation is that the application of learning factors means that the result is not normative in terms of the form of teaching. The important thing is therefore not whether your teaching is based on, for example, lectures or seminars, but whether and how these activities promote your students' learning. It leaves you free to develop your teaching and pedagogical skills in a way that suits you and your students on a scientific basis. Another advantage is that your students' learning takes center stage, instead of, for example, your performance as a teacher or the students' satisfaction with the teaching. It is quite common for course surveys to focus on the latter aspects, which is also the reason why they rarely provide any information that can be translated into course development that promotes learning (Borglund & Olding 2023).

<u>Example of learning factor</u>						
<i>We tend to learn more effectively when we are able to collaborate with and learn from other learners struggling with the same problems</i>						
<u>Example of statement in the questionnaire</u>						
<i>The course activities provided opportunities to collaborate with others and discuss the subject</i>						
Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree				
<u>Example of open questions</u>						
<i>What was the best aspect of the course? What could be improved, and why?</i>						

Figure 3. Illustration of the questionnaire's theoretical construction with learning factors, relevant statements concerning the course's learning environment and open questions.

<sup>4</sup> If you want to review the questionnaire in its entirety, it is available as an appendix in Appendix A. In your practical work with course surveys, there is a ready-made template to use via the course evaluation function in the learning platform Canvas.

## Course analysis and course development

When you have completed a course survey with LEQ, you will receive a report with a summary of the results. To facilitate your work with course analysis, the students' average response to the questionnaire's 22 first statements is presented first in a polar diagram as can be seen in Figure 4<sup>5</sup>. The more students who think a statement is entirely correct, the further towards the edge of the diagram the point will be. Conversely, the more students who think a statement is not true at all, the closer the point is to the center of the diagram. A large circular response thus indicates that the course's learning environment, in terms of the underlying learning factors, has been beneficial.

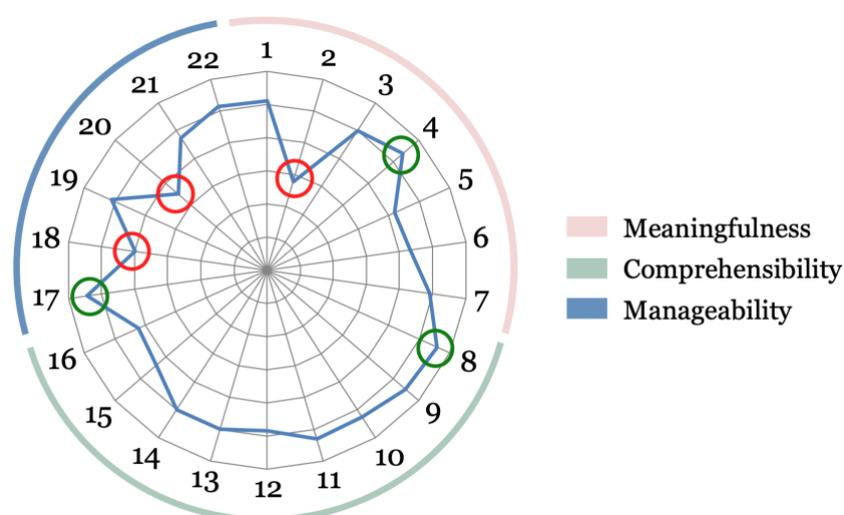


Figure 4. Illustration of a polar diagram showing the students' average response to the questionnaire's first 22 statements.

With the help of the polar diagram, you can quickly identify what appear to be stronger or weaker aspects of the course's learning environment. In Figure 4 examples of this are given using green and red circles respectively. At the same time, you can form an idea of the students' sense of coherence in the course. This is because their experience of different aspects of the learning environment can be attributed to the three dimensions of *meaningfulness* (statements 1–7), *comprehensibility* (8–16) and *manageability* (17–22) in Aaron Antonovsky's sense of coherence theory (Antonovsky 1987). This theory is thus part of the questionnaire's scientific basis.

When we talk about stronger and weaker aspects in the polar diagram, it is important to remember that the result is *not* an evaluation of what should be developed. The result is only intended to be a support for your analysis of the course's learning environment. There may be very good reasons why one aspect is weaker than others, and some aspects are easier to influence than others. Which aspects should possibly be strengthened to promote your students' learning therefore depends on the context and it is up to you as a teacher to assess what is suitable. Whether your development work promotes learning or not will then be seen in your students' results.

<sup>5</sup> The result for the last statement about the student's own work effort is not presented in the polar diagram. This is because a psychometric evaluation of the questionnaire has shown that this aspect of the learning environment should be counted as its own subscale (Gruber & Strömsten 2021).

You can form a more nuanced picture of the results by reviewing more specific feedback in the report – mainly the students' written comments and answers to the questionnaire's open questions. To help you analyze this information and compile a course analysis, an electronic course analysis form has been developed (see Appendix B). For each section that you are expected to write, there are some guiding questions that you can use as a starting point. That way, you can step by step formulate and document your conclusions about which aspects of the course should be developed initially and how it could be done.

After compiling a first version of your course analysis, you can advantageously use it as a basis for a course analysis meeting. At a course analysis meeting, you and some colleagues (who have also evaluated a course using LEQ) meet to exchange concrete experiences regarding your teaching. The starting point for this exchange of experiences is your course surveys and preliminary course analyses. The purpose of the meeting is both to stimulate cooperation regarding course development and to create a collegial context for the promotion of a community of practice.

Sometimes it can be difficult to understand the students' response in a course survey. It can therefore be helpful to discuss it with other teachers during a course analysis meeting. However, you can also ask a group of students for help. If you provide them with the results of the course survey<sup>6</sup>, they can carry out a course reflection meeting to jointly interpret and clarify any difficulties. For this purpose, a simplified course analysis form has been developed (see Appendix C). You can then use this feedback as additional data in the preparation of your course analysis (see Figure 1).

In accordance with Umeå University's quality system for education, you should then make your course evaluation available to students, teachers and any programs affected. Finally, of course, you need to appropriately implement the planned course development. In the following section, instructions for practical work with the topics above will be presented, with a focus on the available support resources developed for this purpose.

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<sup>6</sup> Include only information you consider fit for purpose – remove for example any personal attacks or offensive comments.

## Practical instructions for use

To facilitate your practical work with the LEQ process, UPL and ITS have developed a number of support resources available in the learning platform Canvas, the Survey&Report web service and the video portal UmU Play. This section of the guide provides brief instructions on how to use these resources to carry out a course survey, course reflection and course analysis. In addition to this, there is a description of how a course analysis meeting can be conducted, as well as some general tips and advice.

### Course survey

In Canvas, there is a ready-made LEQ template that you can use to carry out a course survey. How to use the template is demonstrated in the following video:

[Carry out a course survey with LEQ in Canvas<sup>7</sup>](#)

#### Tips and advice

- To increase student engagement, you should inform the students at the start of the course how course evaluation will be conducted and why it is important.
- At the start of the course, you should for the same reason report the results of the previous course evaluation, with a focus on the changes made.
- Avoid inserting additional questions to the LEQ, but feel free to supplement with formative evaluations during the course.
- The course survey should as a rule be carried out after the last examination as the examination is part of the course.
- At least a one-week response period is recommended, and that you also remind your students about twice a week to increase the response frequency.
- In order to increase the response rate, it may be advantageous, despite the above advice, to carry out the course survey during the last teaching session.
- In some cases, it may also be possible to carry out the course survey in connection with the introductory meeting of a subsequent course.
- You can find the user support available in the UmU Play video portal by going to play.umu.se and then searching for "LEQ".

### Course reflection

As the next step in the process, a group of students can carry out a course reflection meeting where they interpret and clarify the results of the course survey. The more information they can access the better, given that the material you (in whatever way you choose) provide the students with does not contain any offensive comments or similar.

To help students understand the purpose of, structure and document their course reflection, there is a support resource in the form of a web form (see Appendix C). As a teacher, you need to create this form in Survey&Report and then provide a web link, username and password for the students. The following video shows how it's done, as well as how you can download the students' answers:

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<sup>7</sup> [https://play.umu.se/media/t/o\\_auiiv7lzx](https://play.umu.se/media/t/o_auiiv7lzx)

## [Carry out a course reflection with LEQ in Survey&Report](#)<sup>8</sup>

### Tips and advice

- If you wish the students to carry out a course reflection, you should present this possibility in connection with the start of the course.
- You can, for example, ask if any students would like to organize a course reflection meeting, where a suitable size for the student group would be 4–6 people.
- If you have specific questions or requests for the students completing the course reflection, you can convey these using the web form (see video).
- As a rule, the students should carry out the course reflection on their own, without the teacher being present at the meeting.

## Course analysis

To support your work with course analysis, there is another web form in Survey&Report. The form contains a number of headings and guiding questions that help you step by step to analyze and document the results of the course survey (see Appendix B). The following video shows how to do this:

## [Carry out a course analysis with LEQ in Survey&Report](#)<sup>9</sup>

### Tips and advice

- Under "Response rate" you can present the actual response rate to the questionnaire, based on the actual number of students who took the course.
- Under "Analysis of the learning environment", it is important that you consider any written comments that can be found in the latter part of the course survey report.
- For the answers to the open questions, a qualitative content analysis is advantageously used, where you identify and highlight the themes that dominate the general picture.
- At the same time, be aware that there may be 'gold nuggets' to grasp in individual comments and responses.
- In accordance with the Higher Education Ordinance, ch.1 § 14, you must make the final version of your course analysis available to the students.

## Course analysis meeting

At a course analysis meeting, you meet with other teachers to exchange experiences about your teaching. The starting point for this exchange of experiences is your course surveys and preliminary course analyses as above.

### Prerequisites

As a rule, the courses presented at the meeting should be different from each other, which increases the possibilities for a meaningful exchange of experience. However, other arrangements may be necessary depending on the context. A course with many

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<sup>8</sup> [https://play.umu.se/media/t/o\\_habmd1z5](https://play.umu.se/media/t/o_habmd1z5)

<sup>9</sup> [https://play.umu.se/media/t/o\\_osja3zcv](https://play.umu.se/media/t/o_osja3zcv)

teachers may, for example, need to have a preparatory meeting where the teachers jointly prepare the preliminary course analysis. Given that each course takes about 30–40 minutes, it may be appropriate for 3–5 courses to be presented during one and the same meeting.

#### Prior to the meeting

Prior to the meeting, everyone has the task of carrying out a preliminary course analysis and, based on this, be prepared to give a brief account of the following aspects:

- A description of the course's pedagogical structure
- Stronger and weaker aspects of the course's learning environment
- Possible course development and possible challenges

Stronger and weaker aspects of the learning environment refer specifically to the results that can be deduced from the polar diagram of the course survey. You can often use the students' written comments and answers to the open questions to form a clearer idea of what lies behind them. If the students have completed a course reflection, this can also be a source of information.

#### During the meeting

*The chairperson's role* is to explain the purpose of the meeting and ensure its implementation. He/she should not present their own course and limit their participation in the discussions. This is to be able to pay attention to what emerges during the meeting, for example common educational challenges.

*The purpose of the meeting* is to offer the participants the opportunity to exchange concrete experiences regarding their teaching and to promote collegiality. The aim is *not* for other participants or the chairperson to solve any problems that are brought to the meeting, even if the meeting can lead to some problems being solved.

*The chairperson should also* remind the participants that LEQ is an aid to the process and not a normative assessment of what should be developed. Which aspects should possibly be strengthened to promote student learning depends on the context and is up to the teacher to assess.

*The meeting is proposed to be conducted* in the form of three rounds with a final reflection according to the following agenda:

1. Presentation of the pedagogical structure of the courses
2. Presentation of the learning environments' stronger and weaker aspects
3. Discussion of possible development of each course
4. Final reflection on the implementation and results of the meeting

In order for the meeting to be as effective as possible, everyone should be brief and general discussions should be avoided during the first two rounds, but it is of course fine to ask questions of whoever has the floor. During the third round, the respective learning environment is then discussed in a freer form. Here it is important that the chairman distributes the time in a fair way between the courses, taking into account that some time should be set aside for the final reflection.

### After the meeting

After the meeting, everyone updates their course analysis as needed and makes their course evaluation available to students, teachers and any programs affected. If necessary, the chairperson conveys what has emerged at the meeting to the pedagogical leader of the department or program.

### Tips and advice

- For the meeting to be meaningful, it is important that you have completed your preliminary course analysis before coming to the meeting.
- As a rule, no notes are taken during a course analysis meeting, but you yourself are responsible for documenting things you want to address later.

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## Appendix A – Theoretical design of the questionnaire<sup>10</sup>

### Learning factors that LEQ is intended to examine

We tend to learn most effectively (in ways that have a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on the way we think, reflect, act or feel) when:

- a) We try to answer questions, solve problems or develop skills that we find interesting, exciting or important (meaningful content: 1)<sup>11</sup>;
- b) We are able to speculate, test ideas (intellectually or practically) and learn from experience, even before we know much about the subject (active trial: 2);
- c) We are able to do so in a challenging and at the same time supportive environment (challenge and support: 3, 22);
- d) We feel that we are part of a community and believe that other people have confidence in our ability to learn (belonging and autonomy: 4, 5);
- e) We are able to collaborate with and learn from other learners struggling with the same problems (collaboration and peer learning: 21, 6);
- f) We are able to try, fail, and receive feedback before, and separate from, each summative assessment of our efforts (practice and feedback: 7, 15);
- g) We understand how the environment is organized and what is expected of us (clear organization: 8);
- h) We have sufficient prior knowledge to handle our learning situation, which is at the same time well adapted to the intended level (sufficient prior knowledge and clear communication: 17, 9);
- i) We understand the meaning of the expected learning outcomes and believe that the work we are expected to do will help us achieve these (constructive alignment: 10, 11);
- j) We believe that our work will be considered in a fair and honest way (constructive alignment: 12);
- k) We are able to learn inductively by moving from concrete examples and experiences to general principles, rather than the reverse (concrete examples: 13);
- l) We are challenged to develop a thorough understanding of key concepts and gradually create a coherent whole from the content (key concepts: 14);
- m) We can reflect on new experiences in the light of previous knowledge and experience (reflective observation: 16);
- n) We have enough time to learn and devote the time needed to do so (enough time and own effort: 18, 23);
- o) We are able to learn in different ways and have opportunities to influence our learning situation (variation and participation: 19, 20);

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<sup>10</sup> Edition 4

<sup>11</sup> The information in parentheses refers to different aspects of the learning environment and the numbering of the corresponding statements in LEQ.

## Learning Experience Questionnaire

In the following, the theoretical design of the questionnaire is presented based on the respondent's experience of meaningfulness, comprehensibility and manageability, more specific aspects of the learning environment, and associated learning factors.<sup>12</sup>

### Meaningfulness – the emotional level

#### *Meaningful content*

1. The course content felt meaningful to me as a person (a)<sup>13</sup>

#### *Active trial*

2. I was able to try out my own ideas about the subject – theoretically or practically – and learn from experience (b)

#### *Challenge*

3. The course felt challenging in a stimulating way (c)

#### *Belonging and autonomy*

4. I felt a sense of community with others on the course (d)
5. I felt that the teachers in the course had confidence in my ability to learn (d)

#### *Peer learning*

6. Collaborating with others on the course helped me to learn (e)

#### *Practice*

7. During the course I was given opportunities to practice what I was expected to learn (f)

### Comprehensibility – the cognitive level

#### *Clear organization*

8. The course was organized in a way that helped me understand what I should do (g)

#### *Clear communication*

9. The course content was communicated in ways I could understand (h)

#### *Constructive alignment*

10. The expected learning outcomes of the course helped me understand what I was going to learn (i)
11. The course activities helped me reach the expected learning outcomes (i)
12. My knowledge and abilities were assessed in a clear and equitable way (j)

#### *Concrete examples and key concepts*

13. I was able to learn from concrete examples that I could relate to (k)
14. The course activities helped me develop a thorough understanding of key concepts (l)

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<sup>12</sup> In the electronic version of the questionnaire, the statements are presented in a mixed order according to: {8, 1, 21, 10, 7, 22, 9, 2, 18, 11, 6, 20, 15, 3, 17, 14, 12, 4, 19, 13, 5, 16, 23}. Further, it is possible to comment on each statement.

<sup>13</sup> The letters within parenthesis (a, b, ...) refer to the learning factors that LEQ is intended to examine.

*Feedback*

15. I received regular feedback from teachers or peers that helped me see my progress (f)

*Reflective observation*

16. The course activities provided opportunities to reflect on what I learned (m)

Manageability – the instrumental level

*Sufficient prior knowledge*

17. My background knowledge and abilities were sufficient to follow the course (h)

*Enough time*

18. The pace of the course was reasonable in relation to what I was expected to do (n)

*Variation and participation*

19. The course activities enabled me to learn in different ways (o)

20. I felt that the teachers were interested in and took into account my experiences of the course (o)

*Collaboration*

21. The course activities provided opportunities to collaborate with others and discuss the subject (e)

*Support*

22. I was able to get support from teachers or peers if I needed it (c)

Own effort

23. I studied to the extent I needed to comprehend the content of the course (n)

Open questions

24. What was the most important thing you learned during the course?

25. What was the best aspect of the course?

26. What could be improved, and why?

27. What advice would you like to give to future participants?

28. Do you want to express any other experiences or views on the course?

## Appendix B – Form for course analysis<sup>14</sup>

Course name

---

User input.

Course code

---

User input.

Start date

---

User input.

End date

---

User input.

Course coordinator (name)

---

User input.

Course coordinator (e-mail)

---

User input.

Course analysis completed (date)

---

User input.

### In relation to the university's quality system

Mark the perspectives that permeate the course and motivate your positions in a comment.

- Research connection
- Internationalization
- Gender equality
- Collaboration with society and connection with working life
- Sustainable development
- Student participation and student-centered learning

---

User input.

### Implemented changes

Describe any changes that have been implemented since the last course offering.

---

User input.

### Outcome

How well have the course participants succeeded on the course? Are there significant differences compared with previous course offerings? If so, what could be the reason?

---

User input.

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<sup>14</sup> Edition 3. The purpose of this Appendix is only to explain the content of the form. In your practical work with course analysis, there is a ready-made template to use in the Survey&Report web service.

## Response rate

What is the response rate on the course survey? Can it be considered high or low? If so, what could be the reason?

---

User input.

## Analysis of the learning environment (statements 1–22)

What is your overall impression of the response to the questionnaire's statements? Can you identify some stronger or weaker aspects of the learning environment? Is there an explanation for these? Are there any effects that can be attributed to implemented changes?

---

User input.

## Own effort (statement 23)

Do the participants consider that they have studied to the extent they needed to comprehend the content of the course? If not, what could be the reason? How does this relate to the teachers' perspective?

---

User input.

## Most important learning (question 24)

In summary – what were the most important things the participants learned during the course? How does this relate to the expected learning outcomes?

---

User input.

## Best aspects of the course (question 25)

In summary – what were the best aspects of the course? How does this relate to the teachers' perspective?

---

User input.

## Suggestions for improvement (question 26)

In summary – what improvements do the course participants propose and why? How does this relate to the teachers' perspective?

---

User input.

## Good advice (question 27)

Is there any good advice that is worth passing on to future course participants? Why has this particular advice been chosen?

---

User input.

## Remaining viewpoints (question 28)

Do the participants express any other experiences or views concerning the course that should be documented?

---

User input.

## Prioritized course development

What aspects of the course should primarily be developed? How could these aspects be developed in the short or long term?

---

User input.

## Revision of syllabus

Does the course syllabus need to be revised due to the planned course development? If so, in what way?

---

User input.

## Comments on the course analysis

Is there anything else you would like to add?

---

User input.

## Appendix C – Form for course reflection<sup>15</sup>

The purpose of your meeting is to help the teachers in the course to interpret and clarify the results of your feedback in the course survey. Among other things, to facilitate their work with course analysis, and contribute to the course being developed in a beneficial way. The teachers automatically get access to your course reflection when you have sent the form, but you can always save and, if necessary, edit your answers afterwards.

*Please notify the course coordinator when the course reflection is completed.*

### Specific questions

Here, the teachers can choose to communicate specific questions or wishes to the meeting.

Course name

---

User input.

Course coordinator (name)

---

User input.

Date of the meeting

---

User input.

### Learning environment (statements 1–23)

Start by reviewing and discussing the course participants' answers to the questionnaire's statements. What do you think is particularly important and/or interesting to highlight, and why?

---

User input.

### Open questions (questions 24–28)

Then continue with the answers to the questionnaire's open questions. What do you think is particularly important and/or interesting to highlight, and why?

---

User input.

### Specific questions

Have the teachers conveyed any specific questions or wishes to consider during the meeting?

---

User input.

### Suggestions for course development

What do you think should be prioritized regarding course development? Feel free to motivate how it can promote the course participants' learning.

---

User input.

### Comments on the course reflection

Is there anything else you want to add?

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User input.

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<sup>15</sup> Edition 2. The purpose of this Appendix is only to explain the content of the form. In your practical work, there is a ready-made template to use in the Survey&Report web service.



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