EVALUATIONS OF DEGREE PROGRAMS – CONCEPT SUMMARY

CONTEXT
The constant determination to improve in all areas and the growing need for accountability and involvement in the Bologna process have placed the issue of quality at the heart of the University of Lausanne's (UNIL) priorities for several years now.

New ideas concerning the evaluation of teaching and research, both nationally and within UNIL, invite us to pay particular attention to the development of study degree programs. It appears necessary, within UNIL, to set in motion systematic procedures for the evaluation of degree programs.

These latter will be associated with the procedures for evaluating faculties. In the interval between two faculty evaluations, several degree programs will be evaluated, according to a concept and recommendations drafted by the Committee for Teaching and Research Enhancement (COVER).

This process and its inherent considerations are also an excellent opportunity for the faculty to familiarise itself with the "National Qualification Framework for Swiss Higher Education" (nqf.ch-HS) and use it to systematically describe the learning outcomes for each degree program.

VALUES
UNIL has its own modus operandi and institutional culture. In terms of quality, this culture is based on a set of values, such as involving the people concerned or taking into account the special characteristics of the object being evaluated. These values, considered to be essential, underlie all the quality assurance measures developed at UNIL.

OBJECTIVES
The evaluation of degree programs provides an opportunity to focus on learning outcomes, to identify the program’s strengths and areas for improvement, to assess the current situation and then define new priorities.

SCOPE AND PLANNING

Scope
The intended focus of the evaluation is degree programs (Bachelor's and Master's degree). However, according to its special features and internal organization, each faculty is free to focus the evaluation on individual disciplines or specific degree programs.

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1 See "frequency" below for more information.

2 The countries involved in implementing the Bologna reform must develop and implement their national qualifications framework for the higher education area by 2010. A qualifications framework is a systematic description of the training system based, in particular, on the qualifications that are acquired by the graduates at each level of studies.
**Frequency**

The plan is to conduct the first evaluation of half of the degree programs at UNIL between 2010 and 2015, and the second one by 2020. Each degree program will repeat this process every ten years; two intermediate assessments are planned (during the faculty evaluation, and three years after the faculty evaluation).

**Planning**

The degree program evaluation is planned by the Dean. This proposal has been approved by the Rectorate.

COVER, as guarantor of this process, is informed of the choice made by the faculties and any subsequent adjustments.

**TERMS OF THE APPROACH**

**Responsibilities**

The Dean is responsible for the whole process; he/she may appoint a person in charge of the self-evaluation (Vice Dean for teaching, Head of the degree program, Director of the unit responsible for the degree program, etc.).

**People and structures involved**

In order to promote the involvement of the groups of people involved in the degree program, the Dean/person in charge of the self-evaluation is supported by an existing advisory committee within the faculty (teaching committee, study plans committee, subject area committee, etc.) or by an ad hoc committee (hereinafter “degree program self-evaluation committee »). At UNIL these committees usually include representatives of the four university corpora (teaching staff, intermediate staff/assistants, students and administrative staff).

**Execution**

The evaluation process consists of five steps.

1. **Self-evaluation**

   This first step allows internal reflection on the degree program based on the opinions of the stakeholders involved (teaching staff, intermediate staff/assistants, students, study advisers, graduates and representatives from the world of business, etc.). It leads to the writing up of a self-evaluation report and the drafting of a development plan that contains concrete proposals for developing the degree program.

   The Dean ensures that the self-evaluation report and the development plan are presented to the Faculty Council. These documents are then forwarded to the experts.

2. **External evaluation**

   Two groups of experts are involved in this process to strengthen the legitimacy and credibility of the evaluation:

   - two experts from outside UNIL, specialists in the discipline and proposed by the faculty, express their opinion of the degree program (content, interconnection of subjects taught, relevance of the degree program in relation to what is done elsewhere, etc); they express their opinions on developments envisaged by the faculty for the degree program and make proposals to foster its development;

   - two members of UNIL university community, from outside the faculty, express their opinion on how the self-evaluation process was conducted; they are drawn from a pool of experts composed of representatives of all UNIL faculties; each internal expert is made aware beforehand of the specific nature of the evaluation process by means of a workshop which will reflect upon the evaluation of degree programs..
The experts base their judgement on an analysis of the documents and a meeting with members of the self-evaluation of the degree program commission during an on-site visit.

Finalisation of the development plan by the faculty

The Dean/person in charge of the self-evaluation examines the experts' report.

He or she then writes a short letter to the Rectorate stating the faculty's position in relation to comments made by the experts and whether they entail any adjustments to the development plan.

The Rectorate adopts a position in writing on documents generated by the process. The final version of the development plan incorporates comments made by the Rectorate.

Communication of results

The Dean/person in charge of the self-evaluation drafts a summary of the results, which is published on the website of the faculty concerned and on the COVER website, after the latter has approved it.

Monitoring the process

In order for this process to have a real effect on the quality of the degree program and in order to capitalise on the investment in time and energy involved, it is important to ensure its follow-up.

The dean, supported by the units and different consultative authorities concerned with the degree program, is responsible for implementing the development plan.

Every three years following the faculty evaluation, the Dean is responsible for submitting to the Rectorate an assessment of all degree programs that have been evaluated. Members of the faculty and UNIL Rectorate can thus monitor the progress of the various development plans relating to evaluation of degree program.

SELF-EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

A self-evaluation framework has been prepared to facilitate the process of evaluating degree programs.

Questions concerning the quality of degree programs have been identified to underpin the reflection that will need to be carried out within the faculty. These questions have been grouped into five topics: 1. Contextual relevance of the degree program; 2. Content and organization of the degree program; 3. Working of the degree program and pedagogical approaches; 4. Human, material and financial resources; 5. Results and effects of the training.

It is important to underline that the self-evaluation report does not consist of answers to all questions raised, but of a summary of the framework’s five topics.

SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

The self-evaluation report is the result of an analytical approach. It describes the degree program, its structure, its development since the last evaluation or in recent years, as well as the context in which it is placed. It contains a summary of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities to be taken and difficulties to be overcome, to ensure the future of the degree program. This summary serves as the basis for preparing a development plan.

Development Plan
The development plan contains concrete proposals for development of the degree program. The aim firstly is to consolidate what has been achieved so far, and secondly to improve the quality and relevance of the degree program.

**RESOURCES SUPPORTING THE PROCESS**

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CSE) and the QA cell support the Dean / person in charge of self-evaluation in this process.

The CSE may provide support in identifying and developing methods of data collection and also processing.

The QA cell provides support as and when required to the person in charge of self-evaluation and the degree program self-evaluation committee, particularly at the start and end of the process.