

Education: what can we expect of each other?

About this document

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Purpose of this note

This is an **informal** note about our commitment for education. It was triggered by the fact that in the periodical consultations between faculty board and departments issues about commitment for education frequently arise. For example, some curriculum directors express a lack of commitment from staff for their program. Our faculty has a complex education structure: most curricula have involvement of multiple departments, each with their own concerns and preferences. Most departments are contributing to a range of programs, sometimes in different domains. This note is intended as explication of what we can expect of each other w.r.t. educational activities. Most of it is common sense, but we still think it is worth writing down.

The note is organised around the main stakeholders in education. For each stakeholder we formulate a number of guidelines. These guidelines are not hard rules; they should be

viewed in a “comply-or-explain” spirit. The note is about commitment and should not be understood as a formal description of educational tasks (other documents are dealing with this).

Terminology

Lecturer	Staff member with teaching responsibilities
Faculty staff	Staff member with an appointment as full professor, associate professor (UHD) or assistant professor (UD). Teaching load is formally typically 40%, but varies in practice
Teaching staff	Lecturer who does not have an appointment as faculty staff
Domain	The faculty currently has four domains: (a) Health and Life Sciences, (b) Earth, Ecological and Environmental Sciences, (c) Fundamental Sciences, and (d) Information Sciences. Each domain has a college/school for bachelor/master education.
Educational director	Has the prime responsibility for the educational programs within one or more domains.
Curriculum director	Has the prime responsibility for a particular bachelor or master program within a domain. Synonym: “program director”.
Champion	Informal term to denote a staff member who acts as one of the “voices” of a curriculum in discussions about education. It is essential that the distribution of champions over curricula is not too skewed: each curriculum should have enough “voices”, including at least one from each department (in relevant cases also of other faculties) that has a stake in the curriculum. With 300+ staff members it should not be a problem to have enough champions for each of our 40 curricula, without a need for a staff member to be champion for multiple curricula.

Stakeholders

Curriculum director

1. Each bachelor/master curriculum should have a sufficient number of faculty staff members who act as champions of this curriculum, including a substantial number of senior staff (full or associate professor). A guideline for the lower limit of the number of champions per curriculum is eight for bachelor programs and six for master programs.
2. A curriculum typically has a lecturer meeting of staff active in this program (including program champions). The meeting is organised by the curriculum director. The meeting is an informal but essential element in consensus forming about the nature and the (future) direction of the program. The appendix lists some guidelines for the organization of such lecturer meetings.
3. The curriculum director should balance the needs of the curriculum with the teaching capacity that the department(s) have agreed to offer for the curriculum. Effects on staff/department involvement should be taken in consideration when discussing curriculum changes. On the other hand, lecturers should be willing, within reasonable limits, to adapt their teaching to accommodate necessary curriculum changes.
4. Major changes in staff contributions require a broader discussion, including heads of departments.
5. In general, a proper allocation of staff resources to curricula is the joint responsibility of the curriculum directors, the educational director and the heads of department.

Department

1. Substantial involvement of a department in a curriculum implies that there are also one or more champions of this curriculum within this department.
2. The Strategic Personnel Plan of each department lists the involvement of the department in the curricula through the identification of key staff and champions.
3. Profiles for new staff positions should include a paragraph about the curriculum for which the new staff member is designated to be a champion.

Faculty staff

1. Each member of the faculty staff is expected to play the role of champion for one (and usually not more than one) curriculum.
2. Faculty staff considers lecturer meetings to be an agenda priority (see also the appendix). Regular absence is considered inappropriate.
3. A typical minimum teaching load for a full-time faculty staff member is 12 EC: one bachelor course plus one master course. The bachelor course may be relatively broad in scope and/or be on a topic somewhat outside the direct area of expertise of the staff member.
4. First-year bachelor courses are given by top lecturers, usually senior faculty staff.
5. Acquisition of large (personal) research grants could be a valid reason to discuss with the department a lower load for other tasks, in particular management tasks, but this should not lead to a teaching load below the stated minimum.

Teaching staff member

1. Teaching staff members participate in at least one (and usually not more than two) lecturer meetings. This meeting is an agenda priority.
2. Teaching staff members typically have a “home” in a research group of a department, and have some limited time to attend research meetings such as colloquia and seminars.
3. There needs to be a balance between the nature of the educational tasks of a teaching staff member and his/her career perspectives.

Educational support organisation

1. Administrative procedures are efficient and effective:
 - a. workable timeline for information gathering from staff
 - b. no duplication of information requests
 - c. editing tools used are usability-tested
 - d. reporting formats as concise as possible
2. Response time to staff requests is predictable.
3. Educational rules and regulations are transparent.

Educational director

1. The educational director organizes periodical meetings of the curriculum directors in the domain(s) s/he is responsible for.
2. The educational director is responsible for strategic portfolio of bachelor/master curricula in a domain. The educational director ensures the balance between

required changes in the portfolio on the one hand and the teaching capacity and skills available within departments on the other hand.

3. The educational director is open and transparent towards lecturers and departments about the relevant issues in the domain.
4. The educational director makes proposals for the budget of a domain to the faculty board.

Faculty board

1. The faculty board is responsible for the overall vision and strategy with respect to education.
2. The faculty board decides about budget allocation to domains. The underlying rationale of the allocation must be clear and transparent. The faculty board uses the monthly meetings with the heads of departments to maximize consensus about the budget allocation.
3. The faculty board should ensure that each department has the chance to get a fair share of the educational budget, in line with the agreed-upon Strategic Personnel Plan of the department.

Appendix

Guidelines for the organization of lecturer meetings for a curriculum

- Frequency typically varies from twice a year for a small master program to monthly meetings for a large bachelor curriculum.
- Very large bachelor programs may want to have two separate meetings: for year 1 and year 2+3
- To reduce meeting load staff members who work closely together may divide attendance such that each one attends only the lecturer meetings of one of the curricula s/he is participating in.
- Meeting are planned well in advance for a complete academic year
- Meeting duration is typically one hour, during lunch time, lunch provided.
- Late arrival or early departure of some participants due to teaching duties is unavoidable and should be handled through flexible agenda management.
- Minute keeping is limited to a concise list of action points.
- A mailing list is used for all curriculum communication (avoid bilateral exchanges).
 - Tip: request a mailman (<list-name>@listserver.vu.nl) list. This can be easily configured through a web interface. Also supports message archiving.

Change Log

This section list the main changes in consolidated versions:

Version 24 September 2017

Comments incorporated, in particular from work council:

- Introduction revised to clarify status/role/goal of this document: informal, task description in other documents
- Nuances added to remark about 40% teaching load

- The notion of "champion" explained in more detail.
 - Also added the remark that with 300+ faculty staff it should be possible to have sufficient champions for our 40 curricula.
- Guidelines for lecturer meetings:
 - moved to appendix
 - frequency less prescriptive: range from biannual to monthly
 - remark added about limiting amount of meetings per staff member
 - remark added about overlapping teaching duties
- Added "12EC" to minimum teaching load aantal meetings per staff lid
- Bullet point about "one promotional activity per annum" deleted

Version 29 August 2017

- Initial version, distributed for comments to heads of departments, work council and student council.