

Recommendation for students on writing free-text evaluations

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Significance of the topic

In both Neptun and POTEcho feedback, students have the opportunity to give their opinion in the form of a **free text response**, firstly for the teacher, secondly for the subject leader, thirdly for the institute and fourthly for the faculty. In the POTEcho system, this is a particularly important feature, as students can give feedback on all compulsory classes during the semester. It is also important to note that a summary of the answers given within the POTEcho system is automatically available to the instructors, which they can read **before their next class**.

Based on student feedback, the course director is required to publish the **educational development measures** taken and planned for the subject once a year in a form that is accessible to students. The Neptun and POTEcho feedback is also part of the management information system of the UPMS, so that the feedback on the subjects is provided to the heads of the departments and all data is provided to the faculty leadership.

A key aspect of any feedback process is that the completion of the form is **voluntary and anonymous**, the student's identity cannot be traced, and it is not suitable for registering the student's attendance.

Properly formulated and contented, free-text evaluations can **significantly help the instructor to deliver better classes in the future and the course director to improve the subject**. Conversely, opinions written in an inappropriate style can undermine the instructor's motivation to teach and his/her confidence in the students, thus hindering the improvement of teaching overall. This significance has led to this short recommendation, which summarises the aspects that students should look out for when giving text responses.

The instant student feedback in POTEcho does not eliminate the need for **face-to-face consultations**, requests and questions to the instructor, which are the most effective way to get student feedback while maintaining trust.

Aspects of an appropriate free-text evaluation

It is advisable to use a **neutral and respectful tone** of voice when expressing opinions, which does not judge or condemn the teacher. Comments that contain profanity will be deleted during data processing.

A very important aspect is that the opinion should relate to some **observable behaviour of the instructor**, i.e. a specific aspect of the lesson/session/the course material, namely the instructor's current "performance". These **descriptive responses with examples** can easily show what was good or what was not as appropriate. In this way, students can highlight



aspects that the instructor can change or improve later - what could be used in another lesson, or what would be better if the instructor changed or dropped for the following classes.

By giving a descriptive answer, you can **avoid** that the opinion is about the personality of the instructor. Unfortunately, this kind of feedback (whether good or bad) usually does not lead to progress, as it is about something that may not be changed by the instructor.

If something was not appropriate in the lesson, it may be worthwhile to use **constructive criticism**, i.e. to include suggestions for solutions and alternatives in the feedback.

In case you feel that the instructor's behaviour was not appropriate (for example, discrimination on ground of gender, religion or ethnicity), please **describe in detail** exactly what happened.

Examples of feedback that is not recommended:

- *"It was a terrible lecture, I'd rather you didn't teach at all."* (judgmental tone of voice, offensive style, not related to observable behaviour, not constructive)
- *"He is a very good lecturer."* (refers to non-observable specific behaviour, too general)
- *"What a pity he has a wedding ring."* (not educational content, non-professional, refers to an aspect of private life)

Examples of feedback that is recommended:

- *"I really liked that the lecturer shared personal stories with us."*
- *"The interactivity of the class and the way the instructor made use of the technical possibilities was very positive."*
- *"There could have been more information about the subject and the practical part of the course."*
- *"The structure of the slides is not always clear, I don't think it is as clear from the student's point of view as it is from the instructor's point of view."*
- *"Organising the categories into a simpler format, such as a table (as at the end of the presentation) would make it easier to understand the topic."*
- *"There were a lot of unfamiliar terminology in the lecture that had not been covered in other subjects, so it was difficult to follow the presentation. Defining these concepts would help."*
- *"I liked the group work because it got everyone actively involved in the lesson, but the exercises were too difficult and we couldn't solve them on our own. Next time it would be better to have a bit easier tasks or more supporting material."*

