Doktorandråd EES: seminar on course administration

Part II: Course evaluations

It was recently decided to use a course development platform called Kursutveckling (initiated by Jan Scheffel) for all courses at EES.

The goal of this tool is to provide teachers with improved possibilities for continuous course development in terms of the individual characteristics of the course, how it fits into different degree programmes and what requirements the course must fulfil as a result.

For students, the Kursutvecklingspaket provides a whole new level of insight into courses; how they are developed, the most recent changes, how a course fits into a programme, how the course examination works and the grading statistics for each year.

Why is this necessary?

Until now, when a new teacher takes over a course and will most likely want to change part of the course content or structure, there is a significant risk that not enough consideration will be paid to the course’s history, students’ prior knowledge from other courses, synergy with programme goals and timing of examination in parallel courses. If not done properly, this can negatively affect the number of students completing the courses and the programme.
Why do these problems occur? It happens because a particular course’s role in a programme becomes unclear, the teacher has an own interpretation of how the course should be structured while previous course analyses (as defined in [1]) are not effectively used as a course development metric. The programme coordinator’s life becomes much simpler if new teachers can avoid creating surprises by redoing courses so that they no longer fit into the programme.

**How does it work?**

The Kursutveckling tool can in principle help with all of the problems mentioned above. The tool package has four components which are posted on KTH Social, see [2]. These are:

- Course data
- Course analyses
- Course PMs
- Course plans

A complete course development profile will provide this information from 2007 (or as early as possible) to the present making all this information available in one place.

Course data is a focused document with essential data about the course which the teacher is responsible for updating every year.

Course analyses, which are obligatory for all courses held at KTH, should naturally be included here. Before the inclusion of these in the course development profile, teachers’ motivation to write course analyses was very low due to there not being any clear recipients/readers. The course analysis template is shown in [3]. The course analysis should also include feedback from the students. Feedback can be collected using surveys/questionnaires and meeting with class representatives.

The work required for an individual teacher after each iteration of the course thereby becomes a straightforward and rewarding experience; the course PM and course analysis need to be done in any case, course plans should be contiguous with previous years and course data can be processed with information easily at hand. Teachers can effectively adapt content from earlier iterations of the course. In the last academic year, three courses have applied this tool:

- SF1661 Perspectives on Mathematics 6.0 credits
- ED1100 Engineering Science 7.5 credits
- EH2010 Management of Technology 7.5 credits
At the moment most of the material is still in Swedish but these 3 courses provide some good examples of how to organise and upload the information. These are also good examples of how to write each of the expected documents or indicate changes and developments from previous years.

**What does this mean for PhD students with teaching duties?**

Organising your course development process in this way will most likely become a requirement for all courses at EES, the sooner you get your courses on-board the better. It is important to realise that course analyses will be easily accessible public documents and will be used by students, programme responsibles and other teachers.

Also, importantly for you individually is that your teaching effort is clearly and accurately reflected in these documents as they will be reviewed in considerations for tenure etc. if you pursue an academic career at KTH.

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Links: