



# Guidelines

## 8th European School Student Convention: Education at 360°

### Evaluation and quality assurance of Education

Adopted by the General Assembly, 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2013, Haapsalu

Modified by the Council of Members, 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, Brussels

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2012, Member and Observer organisations of the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) gathered in Bern, Switzerland for a Convention on the topic of evaluation and quality assurance of education.

5 OBESSU feels that this discussion is often dominated by institutions and researchers, and does not include the day-to-day actors of education and training: School Students and teachers. OBESSU believes that education should be democratic and its assessment should be learner-centred: School Students must always be engaged in the assessment and shaping of not only the design of school systems, but also the contents of education and training.

10 Throughout the Convention, OBESSU had the goal to reach a holistic approach to the topic of evaluation with a special emphasis on the evaluation of School Students and their role in evaluation processes.

#### Evaluation and Quality assurance

15 We, as the representatives of School Students in Europe, see the necessity of evaluation in order to identify weaknesses and strengths of our schools and education systems as a whole, as well as to monitor the progress, and improve the quality. In order to be able to define quality, high-achieving schools and high quality education we have to focus on inclusiveness, open access, and the flexibility to adapt to School Students' individual needs. Furthermore, in order to ensure this quality, school systems must be evaluated so that solutions can be found and the appropriate action can be taken.

20 Evaluation and quality assurance must follow the main aim of improving education for the main stakeholders, including School Students and teachers. It should neither be primarily dictated by economic interests, nor by the demands of the labour market. Competition and ranking of schools may lead to a simplification of the situation and may thus set the wrong priorities in the evaluation process. Schools across Europe face different challenges and this  
25 must be acknowledged in the evaluation process.

Evaluation of education must adapt to every single students need and has to be fair. Education systems have a key role in promoting individual development, so when quality in education is discussed, both personal development and the improvement of the system should be taken into account. We believe that education should also promote the development of  
30 social competences and encourage critical thinking.

OBESSU's main recommendations are:



- 35 ● that evaluation should be conducted based on improving education for School Students and teachers, not primarily based on economic reasons or interest based on unhealthy competition between schools. The purpose of education goes beyond employability and this should be recognised by all stakeholders;
- that all stakeholders, including School Students and teachers, must be involved in every step of the process;
- 40 ● that quality in terms of personal development, should allow all School Students to set and achieve their own goals, freely decided according to their interests and their capability;
- that all aspects of quality education should be taken into consideration and evaluated where appropriate. This should be done continuously, individually and in an improvement-oriented way;
- 45 ● that the objectives of a grading system should be recognised, but we strongly support alternative forms of evaluation. A system based on numerical grades should be supplemented with detailed explanatory feedback as it is an insufficient system to fully evaluate School Students performance and therefore should be improved;
- that the main goal of education is learning for life, thus the trend of exclusively “teaching to the test” must be avoided since this is restricting and takes the focus away from developing School Students’ competences;
- 50 ● that education has to be based on cooperation, however, in order to face modern society, healthy forms of competition can be present to further enhance School Students’ motivation;
- to reform evaluation systems using methods by developing the culture of cooperation between schools, teachers and School Students.
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Our recommendations to European Institutions are:

- that European countries should have a comparable grading system, in order to have fair and equal access to higher and further education for all citizens of European countries across Europe.

60 Our recommendation to National decision makers are:

- that evaluation be designed and implemented with a clear purpose so that data collected can be analysed and effectively addressed. This will ensure quality assurance.

**Evaluation of School Students**

- 65 Evaluation is one of the biggest parts in School Students lives. In order to ensure progress and ascertain that students will gain the required skills, to be able to fully develop at a social, personal and professional way, evaluation should be as objective and broad as possible. Evaluation that takes into consideration more than just the results of tests and gives feedback that is more sophisticated than just grading is one of the key aspects of educating a
- 70 successful generation.



75 The purpose of evaluation of knowledge should be to provide constructive feedback to the  
evaluated students. However, we can observe that almost no European country has sufficient  
implementation of progressive evaluation together with fact-based evaluation; the latter  
appearing to be the only approach used in secondary schools at the moment. OBESSU  
recognises that fact-based evaluation can be more objective, measurable and comparable  
80 than the progressive evaluation, but it sees that in most educational systems this  
objectiveness does not take into account many other important aspects such as progress,  
effort, personal capacities and so on. OBESSU is concerned that fact-based evaluation is only  
focused on competitiveness between schools and students, which may fuel and amplify social  
cleavages.

Our recommendations to national decision-makers are:

- to set up evaluation systems which cover all aspects of the learning process and  
recognises the skills and competences acquired through non-formal education;
- 85 ● that standardised tests should not be the major method of School Students  
assessment: there should also be appropriate space and time for individual evaluation;
- that other aspects and data is used in order to evaluate school and education system  
and not only School Students outcome in standardised exams, in order to ease the  
pressure on school systems and get a broader view on the current state;
- 90 ● to use fact-based evaluation in a broader evaluation framework to avoid social  
selection;
- that students should have the right to not only be evaluated by their own teachers but  
also by impartial external bodies.

Our recommendations to teachers are:

- 95 ● to consider evaluation as a tool to identify shortcomings and intervene to support  
students if necessary;
- to involve School Students in their own evaluation, provide students with methods,  
tools and space both for self- and peer-evaluation: this would increase democracy  
within the evaluation process and develop School Students' ability to give and receive  
constructive feedback and support them in understanding their learning process;
- 100 ● to implement a system of continuous evaluation in support of the acquisition of skills  
and competences and knowledge for lifelong learning;
- to take into consideration in the evaluation also students' effort and progress since  
this would motivate them in their learning;
- 105 ● to encourage teamwork in class to ensure equality and cooperation between teachers  
and students;
- that teamwork must be considered as a basic skill and therefore should be evaluated.

**External evaluation and assessment of Schools and Education Systems**

External evaluation on a national and international level concerns School Students and School  
Student organisations on all levels of education. OBESSU acknowledges the fact that the



110 existence and methods of external evaluation on national level vary greatly between different European countries.

External evaluation that examines the knowledge of School Students is sometimes also used for the evaluation of teachers and national educational systems based on School Student outcomes. This might lead to competition among countries, due to the fact that the purposes and aims of the evaluation are not properly set.

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OBESSU's main recommendations are:

- that assessment of schools and educational systems on national and international level should not only grade academic skills and have to take creative, social and non-formal skills in account;
- that external evaluation on any level is important for all stakeholders if it is orientated to improve the quality of education,
- that national and international School Student organisations must be involved in the process of evaluation of educational systems.

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Our main recommendations to European Institutions are:

- that the purpose of external evaluation has to focus on analysing the situation and creating plan for taking action, instead of just revising and illustrating the present situation;
- to further develop other methods of evaluation than quantitative assessment, and that quantitative assessment should be complemented by qualitative evaluation to provide a more complete assessment and guarantee the involvement of School Students' interest and the evaluation of their well-being.

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Our main recommendations to National decision makers are:

- that educational systems and schools must have concrete tools for analysing and evaluating themselves in a coherent process. Those tools have to be created in cooperation with students, schools and student organisations;
- that policies that follow due to the results of international assessment must always be in coherence with the true interest of stakeholders, and not be an answer to the often populist public discourse (e.g. Teaching for tests, short-term policies).

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### **Evaluation of teachers**

140 If educational institutions are to fulfil their purpose and mission effectively, the persons responsible for the education system and content, foremost the teachers, should be evaluated by students in order to ensure the quality of education provided to them. Feedback should be given to the evaluated teachers in order for them to take this on and improve. In addition, evaluation of teachers could help in the evaluation of the educational system as a whole. Teachers should be evaluated both independently of the success of their students as well as in relation to it. Teachers are to a great extent responsible for the well-being of the student. A good relationship between teachers and students should be based on respect, understanding, and trust as well as constructive criticism, a friendly attitude, wisely used authority, individual equality and cooperation. Since all aspects of a teachers' behaviour

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150 affects their performance and the performance of their students, we believe that all these aspects should be evaluated when evaluating teachers. Just as School Students, all teachers should be evaluated objectively and equally with a variety of evaluation methods. This would be in the interest of ensuring quality in education by evaluating the performance of teachers, and by applying feedback improving it.

155 OBESSU's main recommendations are:

- that the authority of teachers and its boundaries are clearly defined to ensure a productive relationship with their students;
- that more attention is paid to giving students the opportunity to provide constructive feedback to teachers by implementing concrete systems of teacher evaluation;
- 160 ● that evaluation of teachers by students is actually based on the competence and effectiveness of the teacher and not the relationship between student and teacher;
- that teachers' evaluation conducted by School Students is advised to be anonymous to both other students and the teachers themselves to avoid open and/or destructive criticism. This can strengthen the bond between teachers and students and therefore benefit the development of both.

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Our recommendations to European Institutions are:

- that teachers receive adequate initial training followed by continuous training possibilities adapted to the needs of their workplace. Evaluation of teachers should be used to determine the course of further training provided to teachers.

170 Our recommendation to National decision makers are:

- that evaluation of teachers should not be used in the hiring process of teachers or the process of determining their wages;
- that teachers' evaluations should never be made public citing the names of individual teachers or educational institutions.

175 **Who are we?**

OBESSU - The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe. It was founded in April 1975 in Dublin, Ireland and brings together member and observer organisations from more than 20 European countries.

180 All member organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations. We strive to represent School Students as stakeholders of their educational systems, and in issues concerning their lives.