Good practice of teaching

The good practice of teaching includes the principles and values based on which the members of the University of Tartu can evaluate and develop excellent teaching. The compilation of the good practice began in the teaching communities of practice, was further developed by the committee of good practice of teaching and had additional input from the conference “From teacher to teacher 2016: good practice of teaching”, during which the participants complemented the prior work. The good practice of teaching has been prepared in accordance with the definition of the quality of teaching: “Teaching quality assesses how well we support the development of the learner in the direction relevant for the learner and for the society.”

Excellent teaching is learning-centred. In learning-centred teaching the students are involved in the learning process during the design, conduct as well as the evaluation and feedback stages of studies. It uses purposefully chosen teaching methods that allow active participation of students. The chosen grading method supports deep learning and provides students with relevant and meaningful feedback. The learning process is effective. The coherence of the curriculum is monitored so that the sequence and content of the courses in the curriculum is logical and enables the learner’s comprehensive development.

Excellent teaching is based on a scientific way of thinking. In science-based teaching, members of the teaching staff are aware of the latest trends and achievements in their field, and their teaching is based on both the professional and teaching-related research results. The development of the students’ scientific way of thinking (e.g. discussing different or opposing views, credibility of sources) is supported. Students are encouraged and guided to work with scientific literature and participate actively in research.

Excellent teaching is based on cooperation. Cooperation is founded on mutual respect and honour. Cooperation is conducted between members of the teaching staff, students, practitioners, as well as all other actors who support and develop studies. Excellent teaching is collaborative with definite objectives: strengthen the integrity of the curricula and the connections between courses, support the development of general competence (including cooperation skills), converge academic education and practice, support the development of academic culture. There is cooperation when performing various educational tasks as well as during practical training and increasing the efficiency of work organisation. Effective cooperation within the curriculum contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes of the curriculum.

Excellent teaching supports creativity and entrepreneurship. Creativity develops based on knowledge and supports orientation in different situations, coping with the unexpected and finding new solutions. Excellent teaching encourages creative thinking and purposeful action. For teaching that supports students’ creativity and entrepreneurship, the teaching staff skillfully use teaching methods that sustain and shape learning creativity and student initiative. Excellent teaching is based on the teacher’s creativity in his/her own field. The planning of learning activities, conducting studies and evaluation of the students’ creative and innovative thinking values risk taking and purposeful action. Feedback is provided in a manner that enriches the students’ understanding of creativity and entrepreneurship and does not inhibit it.

Excellent teaching leads to self-analysis and supports individual development. In the process of excellent teaching both the teacher and the student are involved in the self-reflection and personal development process. Both learn during the learning process. Members of the teaching staff are engaged in active reflection, develop themselves and are a role model of a lifelong learner. The
personal development and self-analysis skills of the teaching staff are strengthened by reflecting on one’s activities, career planning and developing necessary knowledge and skills to achieve the set targets. Similarly, excellent teaching supports diverse student development. Students are encouraged to set learning goals and plan their careers, their self-analysis is instructed and they receive feedback. Attention is paid to the development of the students’ learning skills and shaping a lifelong learning mind-set.

**Excellent teaching links learning to real life.** Excellent teaching seeks a balance between theory and practice, proceeding from the actual needs and opportunities to apply the acquired knowledge. Teaching methods and assignments support and develop the skill to build and detect connections, offer sufficient opportunities for self-expression and enable to associate what has been learned with real-life. The teachers themselves see and direct their students to see their profession as a part of society and reflect and interpret both on their own and the students’ experiences. Excellent teaching supports learning in such a way that the graduate is prepared for working life and contributing to society.

The University of Tartu values, recognises and supports excellent teaching. Teachers are offered opportunities to acquire the necessary skills for excellent teaching and are encouraged to participate in teacher trainings so that they can pass on their professional skills to the students in the best possible way. The teacher’s workload is reasonable and takes into account preparation, giving feedback, supervision and e-learning activities. The support system of the teaching staff is further developed in the university, including a wide range of activities carried out to ensure that all participants are satisfied with teaching at the University of Tartu.