Competence profile of a beginning lecturer at a university of applied sciences

A competency is a skill that is expressed in effective behaviour in critical professional situations. The competency consists of a combination of two or more of the following components: knowledge, skills, attitude, and personal characteristics. The LEARN! Academy of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam has identified five core competencies that support effective behavior for a beginning lecturer.

1. Didactic flexibility / Teaching Practice

The lecturer at a university of applied sciences creates a powerful learning environment to facilitate the learning process as much as possible.

Explanation

The main task of the lecturer at a university of applied sciences is to ensure the student learns. The lecturer facilitates this by creating a powerful learning environment: he or she transposes the content of the course into learning activities, preferably in the context of recognizable professional situations. The lecturer uses a wide range of suitable methods for this. As much as possible, these must suit the students' individual characteristics (learning style, learning needs, level of learning, and so on). This must all be done within the context of the programme. In addition to preparing learning activities, this competency also relates to the actual execution of the learning situation, in lectures, seminars, task groups, tutor groups, working on assignments, and so on.

The more open educational forms also rely on lecturers' improvisation skills, meaning they must be able to flexibly respond to situations on the spot. The lecturer must be able to foster students' motivation and must be able to engage in a dialogue with students to achieve the desired learning processes. The lecturer must also be able to offer sufficient support to students for the execution of learning tasks. In this regard he or she must use the available media as efficiently as possible.

Didactic flexibility means:

• taking the characteristics of individual students into account, including their learning style, development level, and learning needs
• taking into account the frameworks established by the programme: learning objectives, assessment policy, and the chosen form of testing
• being able to transpose course content into suitable learning activities (learning tasks)
• being able to vary in methods and activities, depending on the learning situation
• being able to engage in a dialogue with students to promote learning
• being able to guide students so they actively engage with the course and activities
• being able to motivate students and raise their enthusiasm
• being able to use media in an appropriate manner

The aim is to ensure an optimal learning process for students that is geared towards the desired professional profile as much as possible.

As lecturers develop their didactic flexibility, we distinguish between two levels of experience, namely the beginning lecturer and the experienced lecturer.
**Beginning lecturer:**
- can transpose existing course materials into learning activities for his/her own course
- can define and achieve objectives
- is familiar with and understands student behaviour and is capable of striking the right ‘tone’
- can supervise and support common learning processes in groups that are not very heterogeneous or complex
- can motivate students and raise their enthusiasm

**Experienced lecturer:**
- can prepare and execute a wide scale of (multi-disciplinary) teaching methods in collaboration with colleagues
- can adapt his/her teaching to different situations and circumstances
- can supervise and support complex learning processes
- can get difficult groups to learn
- is aimed at interaction and care for students
- can support colleagues

2. **Supportive flexibility / Student Coaching**

The lecturer offers the right assistance and support so students can learn. This can include personal support or related to the content and method of teaching, whether individual or in a group.

**Explanation**

In the four years that students study at a university of applied sciences, they experience a major development, starting out as novices and becoming independent professionals who are responsible for their own professional development. A shift takes place in their education accordingly, from teacher-centered activities to self-steering by the student.

Lecturers at a university of applied sciences are expected to play a variety of roles to be able to support the various learning activities and the self-steering of students. They can be tutors, mentors, coaches, careers consultants, and work placement supervisors. The associated learning activities take place in various circumstances: in the classroom, at work, individually, or in groups. Increasingly, lecturers at a university of applied sciences are also expected to take into account the diversity in the cultural backgrounds of students.

Supporting students therefore requires a lot from lecturers. They must be aware of negative influences on group processes and stagnations in terms of individual learning in a timely manner and be able to adequately respond to this at the right time. The lecturer must also be able to deal with an increasingly heterogeneous student population.

The prerequisite for supporting students is a pleasant and safe learning climate. Lecturers at a university of applied sciences must be able to create this climate.

When supporting students or groups of students, and their learning processes, they must:
- help students to gradually take responsibility for their own learning processes and personal development
- strike the right balance between guidance and monitoring and between correcting and stimulating
- be able to play a variety of roles as a lecturer
- be able to manage and supervise group processes
- be able to adapt this support to the current situation
- be able to define the limits of his/her own responsibility as a lecturer
- be able to create a pleasant and safe learning climate
- be able to maintain order and set standards, be able to deal with resistance
- be able to ‘let go’
The aim is to provide optimum stimulation for students in their own learning process, and teaching them to manage this process themselves.

As lecturers develop their supportive flexibility, we distinguish between two levels of experience, namely the beginning lecturer and the experienced lecturer.

**Beginning lecturer:**
- can distinguish between the various roles of a lecturer and knows which roles the programme employs for specific learning activities
- can reflect on group learning processes and define points for improving his/her own behaviour
- creates space for interaction between students
- has sufficient conversation skills to be able to identify the core of a problem with one more students
- can create a pleasant and safe learning climate
- indicates an interest in students' input with his/her behaviour and attitude
- has an idea of how students think and perceive their environment and takes this into account during learning activities

**Experienced lecturer:**
- can effortlessly implement the various lecturer's roles which the programme employs and can apply his/her own variations
- is aware of the impact of his or her behaviour and attitude on students and can adapt accordingly
- can swiftly improvise in unexpected situations
- establishes and monitors the group rules for treating one another with respect, and plays an exemplary role in this regard and can discuss negative behaviour within the group
- can assess how a group will react
- creates a friendly and cooperative atmosphere
- promotes students' independence

### 3. Course design

The lecturer at a university of applied sciences develops study programme components in order to facilitate activating, competency-based education.

**Explanation**

The professional field requires capable, well-equipped graduates. They must be able to adequately operate in both familiar and new situations. They rely on a multitude of competencies for this.

The task of the lecturer at a university of applied sciences is to transpose the professional profile into a study programme that is organized in such a way that students are effectively prepared for their future as professionals. The various study components that make up the study programme (projects, modules, learning pathways, supportive education) all contribute to this. Moreover, the teaching to be developed must tie in with the programme's didactic concept.

The lecturer at a university of applied sciences must be capable of assessing the relevance and utility of existing educational material for a specific study programme component. However, he/she is increasingly also tasked with developing new material. This may include study guides with clear instructions as well as integrated assignments and tests. This material must help students develop competencies and be designed in such a way that it encourages students to learn independently.
Sometimes teaching is developed independently, but most of the time this is done in multidisciplinary teams. Finally, lecturers at a university of applied sciences must also be capable of developing complete study programme components within a short time, what is known as ‘quick design’.

*With course design, the following factors are involved:*

- being able to transpose professional competencies into course objectives
- utilizing the course objectives to develop a didactic design that encourages students to work independently
- being able to develop various types of assessment and assessment materials
- understanding the relation between the various study programme components
- being able to justify the choices made during the entire design process
- being able to use students as a sounding board when developing a study programme and organizing assessments.

The aim is to ensure that the entire study programme is consistent, is feasible, and ties in with the expectations of the professional field. As such, the lecturer ensures that the graduate fulfils the qualification requirements.

As lecturers develop their course design skills, we distinguish between two levels of experience, namely the beginning lecturer and the experienced lecturer.

**Beginning lecturer:**

- develops course components for a known discipline
- develops course components for the curriculum, implementing a particular educational vision
- uses various sources of information
- designs a course component and can justify the choices made
- is capable of adapting a course component based on experiences and assessment data
- develops assessments for course components in his/her own field

**Experienced lecturer:**

- develops course components for familiar and unfamiliar disciplines
- develops various related course components within a curriculum
- offers guidance to colleagues for developing course components and assessment materials
- advises colleagues and managers on course components that have been designed or are to be designed
- develops entire tracks as well as course components within the curriculum
- develops a wide variety of assessments

### 4. Cooperation

In order to ensure that lecturers in an institution coordinate their work as much possible and maintain contacts with stakeholders outside the institution, the lecturer at a university of applied sciences cooperates with others.

**Explanation**

Lecturers at universities of applied sciences increasingly work in teams. Lecturers are no longer individually responsible for organizing education, but instead are held accountable as a team. These teams work together for a variety of reasons, including to develop educational materials and tests, organize education, and assess results. The teams are usually multidisciplinary. When cooperating to develop an education product, the joint output must be more than the sum of its parts. There is margin for personal input and the input of others in this cooperation. The cooperation is designed to stimulate each other so that progress can be made together. Cooperation is designed to ensure that the work of lecturers is aligned amongst each other.

Cooperation takes place both within and outside the organization. Lecturers often cooperate in professional
and other networks and with organizations where students are in work placements or combine work with learning. The lecturer must always take into account different interests when working together. These include the interests of the programme, of the student, and of the organization that facilitated the work placement.

When cooperating with colleagues within and outside the educational organization the lecturer:

• helps create a stimulating work environment in the institution
• makes a constructive contribution to the various forms of consultation and cooperation within and outside the department
• creates a joint output with colleagues
• shares and aligns information with colleagues and use the information of colleagues
• contributes to development tasks in multidisciplinary teams
• serves as a link between the university of applied sciences, colleagues, and external organizations that organize work placements

The aim is to ensure that the education in the institution is as effective, efficient, and satisfactory as possible and to facilitate optimal relations with external stakeholders.

As lecturers develop their cooperation skills, we distinguish between two levels of experience, namely the beginning lecturer and the experienced lecturer.

Beginning lecturer:

• able to listen to colleagues and take a constructive approach to the ideas of others
• able to put his/her own point of view in words and ensure that it is consistent with objectives
• able to organize activities with others
• able to represent the institution externally
• able to exchange learning resources with colleagues

Experienced lecturer:

• able to take initiatives and think from the point of view of the organization
• take responsibility for the process and be able to manage processes
• serve as a coach for colleagues
• take responsibility for maintaining contacts outside the institution

5. Conscious lecturership

In order to serve as an example for students, be supportive to colleagues, and be a valuable resource for the educational institution, the lecturer at a university of applied sciences consciously focuses on his/her own professional development.

Explanation

A lecturer at a university of applied sciences must be able to observe and analyze the development of his/her students. Based on this, the lecturer draws up a development plan with the student. In order to be able to do this, lecturers must be able to make this analysis and draw up this development plan for themselves too. A lecturer must be conscious of the fact that students look to lecturers as an example to be followed, both as a professional and as an individual who can guide his/her own development.

The idea is not to be a model example, but to be a learner, who is always progressing and thinking about the next step in his/her own development, how an existing situation can be improved or optimized, and his/her concept of the profession and professional aptitude. The lecturer relies on the feedback of others for this. By using feedback from and giving feedback to students and colleagues the lecturer acts as a sounding board for others. As such, the lecturer contributes to the educational institution's development into a learning organization.
When consciously developing one’s lecturership, the following factors are relevant:
• be aware of the exemplary role that a lecturer has as a practitioner
• be able to express personal opinions and ideas about the profession
• strike a balance between the role of lecturer and professional specialist
• be able to manage personal development by systematically reflecting on personal actions
• act as a sounding board for students and colleagues
• be able to justify personal actions on the basis of educational, learning-psychological or social principles
• be conscious of being an indispensable link in the educational organization as a whole and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the organization

The aim is to ensure continuous develop of the teacher’s skills, thus contributing to the institution’s development and progress as a whole.

As lecturers develop their conscious lecturership, we distinguish between two levels of experience, namely the beginning lecturer and the experienced lecturer.

**Beginning lecturer:**
• can put into words which beliefs about teaching he/she is applying and what is important in this context
• can list his/her strengths and weaknesses, formulate learning questions, and work on this as part of a personal development plan
• can systematically reflect on his/her own experiences and find solutions to problems in his/her practice
• can regularly assess his/her own approach and discuss this with colleagues
• is open to feedback from colleagues

**Experienced lecturer:**
• takes a plan-based approach to develop solutions, both in his/her own practice and also within the section or institution as a whole
• can plan and justify his/her own development
• knows exactly what he/she is capable of and coordinates tasks according to this
• can offer support to colleagues and students
• notices relevant developments and relates these to his/her own development
• takes advantages of opportunities to further his/her own development, such as reading professional publications, attending conferences, and following training
• participates in projects to innovate teaching and takes the initiative to develop new tasks