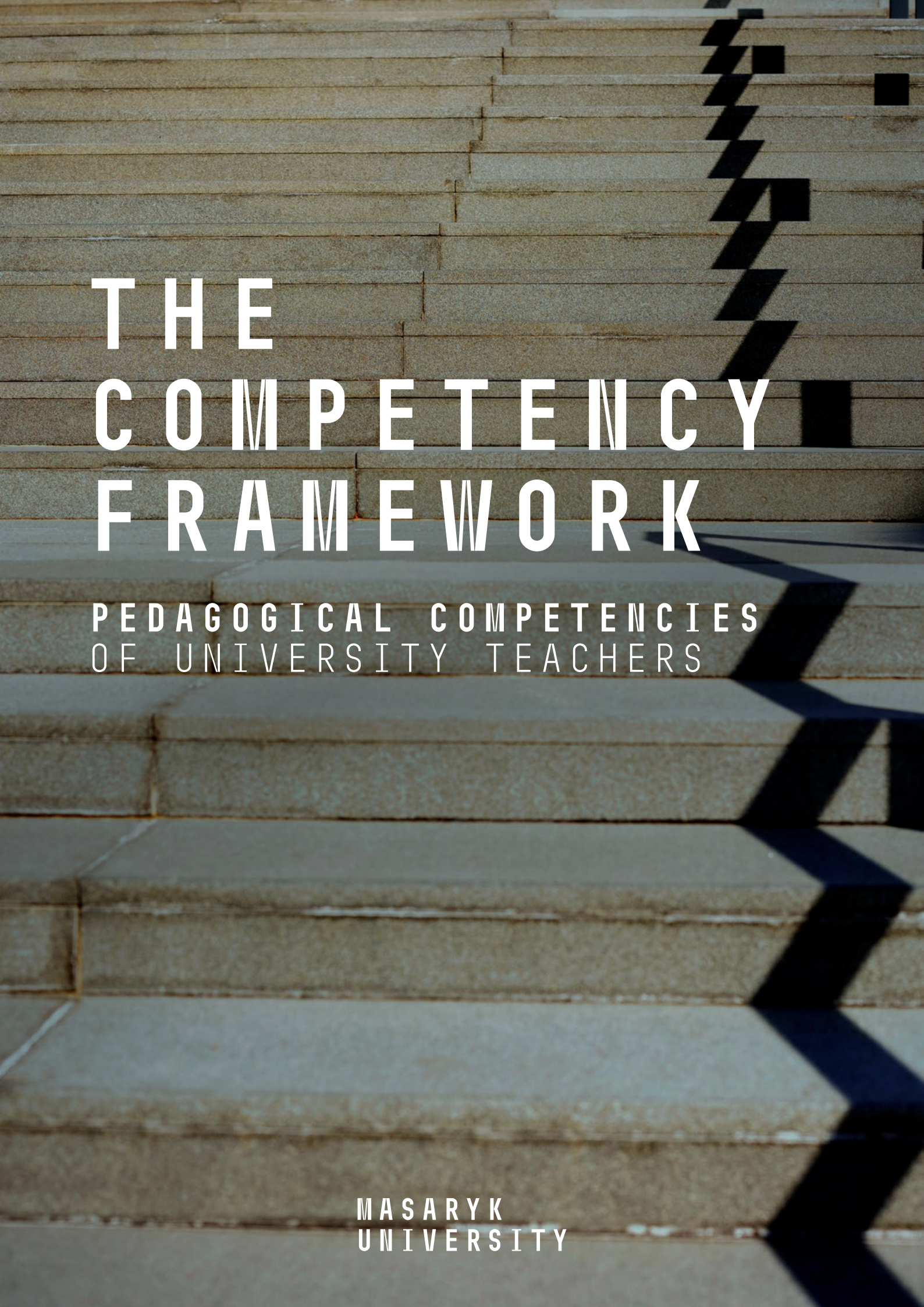


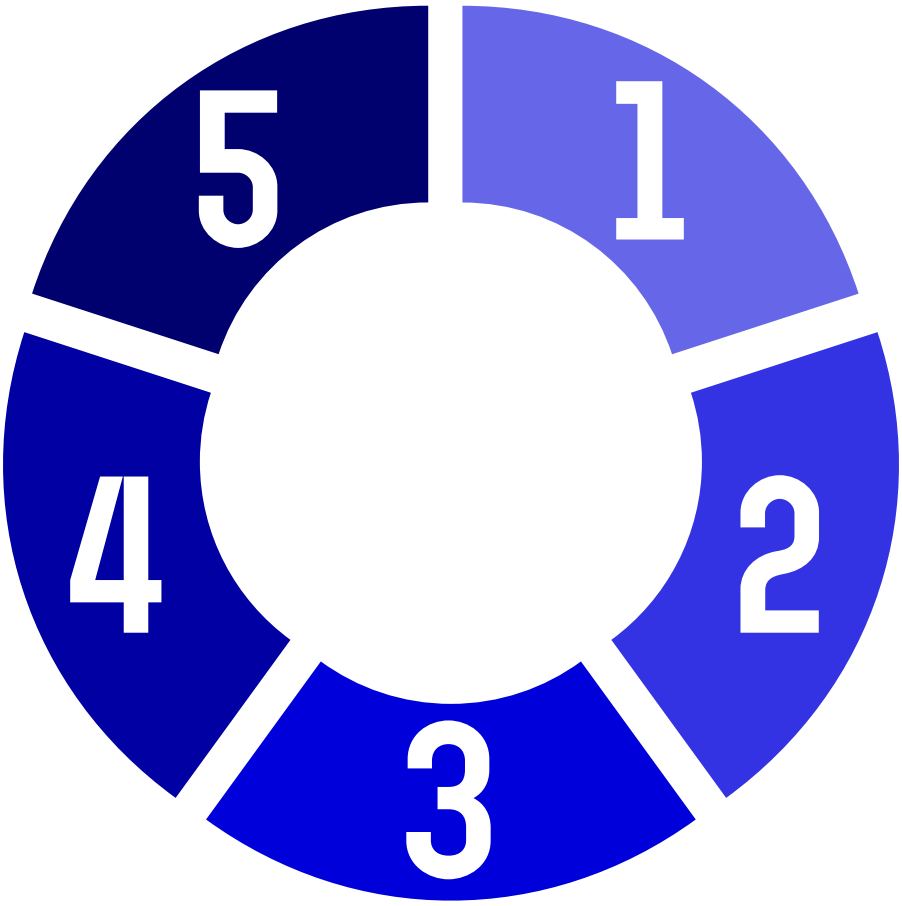
THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCIES OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

MASARYK UNIVERSITY

THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Pedagogical Competencies of University Teachers



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1 THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK: WHO CAN USE IT AND FOR WHAT PURPOSES

The aim of the competency framework is to delineate and define the pedagogical competencies of university teachers and to formulate a vision of teaching quality at Masaryk University.

Pedagogical competencies are transferable and universal abilities and readiness to act, essential for the successful management and implementation of teaching. Specifically, they include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable teachers to effectively manage the tasks and situations they encounter (see Vašutová, 2004).

The use of the competency framework is broad – from a tool defining the quality of teaching to a tool with formative potential in the professional development of teachers. By using the competency framework, it is possible to purposefully transform, support, and care for teaching quality at institutional, organizational, and individual levels. At the institutional level, it is possible to monitor and support the development of teaching quality and incorporate it as a gradual standard that is a natural part of Czech university culture and is anchored in educational policy documents (e.g., the European Qualifications Framework, the Czech Republic's Education Policy Strategy until 2030+) and in the strategic goals of Masaryk University. At the organizational level, the impact of well-planned and implemented teaching, the quality and efficiency of which are thus increased, can be considered. At the individual level, strategies can be employed that lead to satisfaction with the fulfilment of the quality of professional subject didactic competence of teachers and at the same time to the positive experience of learning opportunities, which are realized in a safe and respectful environment that stimulates learning relationships among the participants in higher education.

Given these levels, the competency framework fulfils several functions. It has an informative and formative function, which allows for the recognition and development of teachers' pedagogical competencies and the shaping of teaching quality. It also enables speaking a common language and clearly and understandably naming pedagogical situations. It is universal and does not take into account the specificities of individual degree programs. It presents transferable cross-disciplinary pedagogical competencies and is intended for teachers with varying degrees of teaching experience. It contains generally defined competencies that can be broadly interpreted. The diversity of interpretation is related to the professional self-understanding of teachers, their experience, approach to teaching, the nature of the subject matter, and their current level of pedagogical competencies. This diversity of interpretation is a common part of the development of pedagogical competencies. With their gradual development, teachers can think about teaching in greater detail and have a clearer idea of what they do in teaching, what they want to do, and what impact it has on students. The competency framework allows for mapping professional development opportunities and supports lifelong learning. The description of each competency is a goal towards which teachers can aim. When working with the competency framework, everyone can say how close they are to the goal and plan their professional growth accordingly. It is entirely natural that in some areas teachers are currently doing better than in others, and it should be equally natural to choose which competencies they want or need to focus on at any given time. The competency framework is a starting point for creating a range of development activities at the university, as well as a basis for creating university-wide tools used in supporting, caring for, developing, shaping, and evaluating teaching quality.

The competency framework is based on the Masaryk University Strategic Plan 2021-2028, which speaks of teaching as a prestigious part of the academic mission with the aim of providing students with excellent education not only in terms of content but also in terms of its forms. The Strategic Plan declares an increased interest in the area of care for teaching quality and the development of pedagogical competencies, as well as the evaluation of teaching quality. It also assumes consideration of teaching quality within the pedagogical career, e.g., in habilitation and professorship procedures. This direction is in line with the intentions of the National Accreditation Office for Tertiary Education and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in this area.

The competency framework will continue to evolve based on the needs of the teachers and trends in higher education pedagogy, as well as the social situation and educational policy at both national and international levels. Its form will be continuously innovated and supplemented with various levels of competencies' development.

THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK CAN BE USEFUL TO INDIVIDUALS IN THESE ROLES:

- **teachers** in their teaching, reflection, and within peer support,
- **degree programme guarantors** in managing the quality of teaching in degree programmes, in the processes of evaluating degree programmes, and in preparing strategies for preventing student dropout,
- **heads of departments and HR departments** in establishing requirements for teaching positions and in recruitment processes,
- **members of the Internal Evaluation Board** in overseeing the quality of educational activities and supporting the quality of degree programmes,
- **members of programme boards** in the internal evaluation of teaching quality,
- **managers in the agenda of teaching quality** in managing, monitoring, and establishing the quality of teaching at the university,
- **staff of development centres** in analysing the educational needs of teachers, creating support offer, and planning further education for teachers.

At the institutional level, the competency framework can be processed and integrated into the following areas (their order does not indicate the temporal sequence or prioritization):

- **employee evaluation,**
- **student evaluation of teaching,**
- **habilitation and professorship procedures,**
- **accreditation of degree programmes and their internal evaluation,**
- **surveys for graduates,**
- **awarding outstanding teachers,**
- **creating educational offers of development centres.**

All possibilities of implementing the competency framework aim at defining, mapping, and developing pedagogical competencies as well as at creating tools used in supporting, caring for, developing, and shaping teaching quality. All these efforts should also have a positive impact on students' academic success, which is influenced by many factors, one of which is the quality of teaching.

2 EXPERT FOUNDATIONS OF THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The development of the competency framework was preceded by a detailed review of academic studies and an examination of selected competency frameworks from universities abroad, such as the framework created by the international organization Advance HE (2023), the Technical University of Munich (Fleischmann et al., 2015), the National University of Ireland (2015), and Danish universities (Universities Denmark, 2021). The analysis included various lists and classifications of teaching competencies for university teachers, which mirrored the teaching process, reflection work, technology use, and an active approach to educational innovation (see Cao et al., 2024, Kremnická & Rovňanová, 2024, Marenticová Pozarniková & Lavricová, 2015, Moreira et al., 2023, Peréz & Torelló, 2012, Semrádová & Hubáčková, 2014, Tigelaar et al., 2004). The review results showed that teaching competencies are a key aspect of ensuring teaching quality and they impact student success (Dervenis et al., 2022, Patfield et al., 2022, Zhou et al., 2024).

The content, as well as the structural design of the competency framework for Masaryk University was particularly inspired by an overview study presenting a synthesis of competency frameworks used at various universities (Van Dijk, 2020). This study managed to group teaching competencies into five broad areas:

1. Teaching and learning support (e.g., creating a safe environment, providing accurate instructions, explaining, using activating methods, supporting the development of students' learning strategies, etc.)
2. Educational design (e.g., defining teaching goals, course structure, innovations in teaching, etc.)
3. Assessment and feedback
4. Pedagogical leadership and management
5. Research and professional development

Based on the findings above, the competency framework captures the entire teaching process, i.e., areas one to three. At Masaryk University, the fourth area is specific to department heads and guarantors. Research and professional development comprise an overarching point that forms the professional and value basis of all teachers at Masaryk University.

In relation to the described findings, the competency framework is based on the following key theses:

- **Learning is an active process**
  The core of quality teaching is student activity. This assumes the use of teaching strategies that activate students' cognitive processes. Teachers focus primarily on ensuring that students understand the material, can grasp it conceptually, think about it in a broader context, and apply it. This corresponds to their role as facilitators of students' learning activity (e.g., Hattie & Clarke, 2019).

- **Teaching is student-centred**
  Teachers focus on creating an environment, conditions, and learning tasks that enable students to learn actively (see Esteve-Mon, 2020; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Peréz & Torelló, 2012; Tigelaar, 2024; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996).

- **Speech is linked to thinking and learning**
  Speech is linked to thinking so students actively participate in teaching communication. Teachers' tasks include encouraging student activity and stimulating their thinking. Students can express their thoughts during teaching, which can then be purposefully worked with (Lehesvuori & Viiri, 2015). When students are communicatively active in teaching, higher-order cognitive operations dominate (Alexander, 2006).

- **Timely and constructive feedback is essential for quality teaching**
  To provide timely and constructive feedback, the principles of formative assessment (William & Leahy, 2020) or responsive teaching (Fletcher-Wood, 2021) can be relied upon. Formative assessment occurs during learning and provides useful information to both students and teachers about how students are doing and what they can do and what type of support they need to do better.

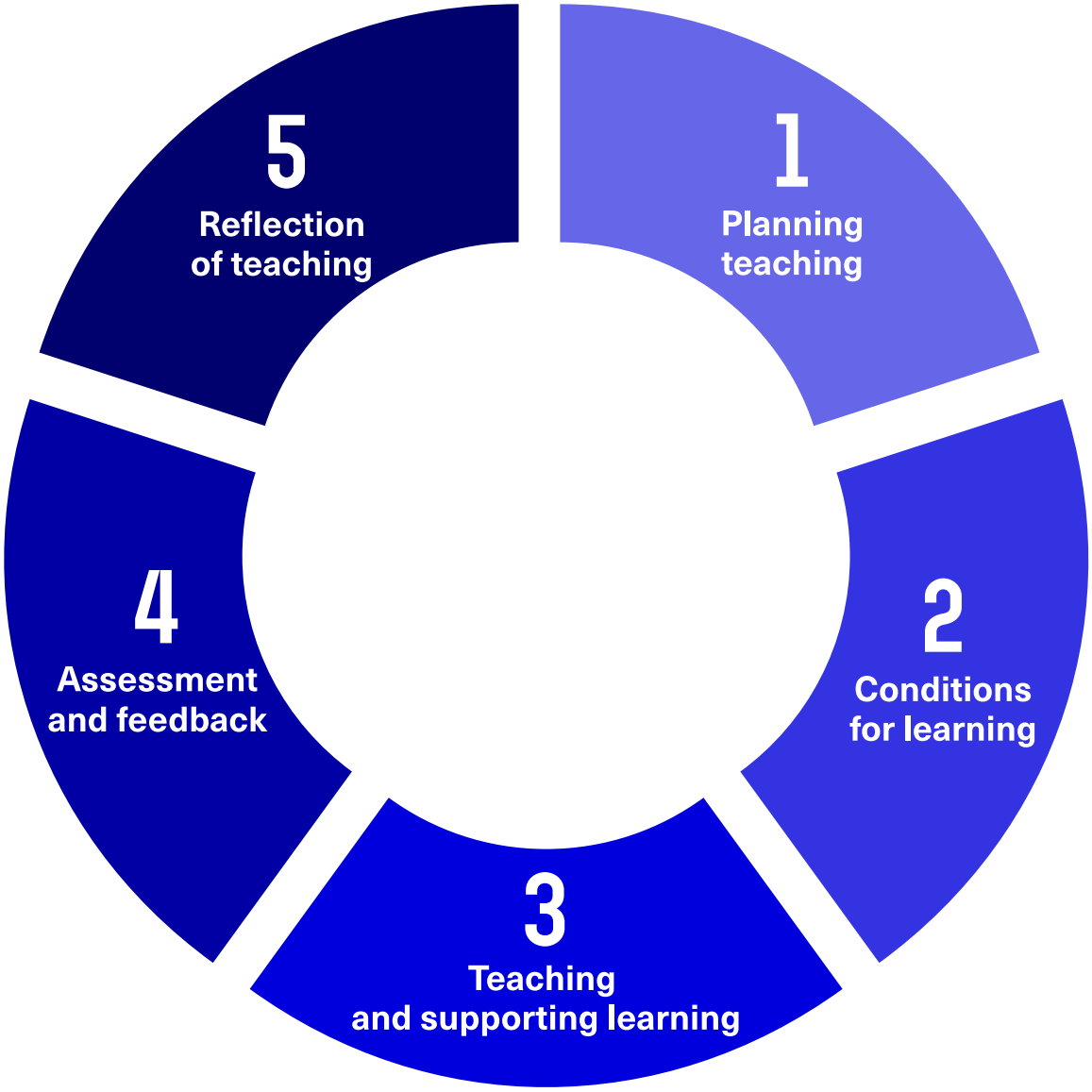
- **Quality teaching also focuses on developing students' competencies**
  Students' competencies are subject-specific and broadly applicable, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and so on (many of them are defined by Applied Educational Systems, see Stauffer, 2022).

3 PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCIES OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

The competency framework introduces five pedagogical competencies that focus on the teaching process and cover areas such as lesson planning, the teaching itself, and supporting student learning, assessment, feedback, and reflection. These competencies are broken down into sub-competencies.

The pedagogical competencies outlined below are based on the professional and value foundations of the teachers and are derived from the thesis that teachers at Masaryk University are experts in their fields and continuously deepen their expertise along with the development of their disciplines. Teachers are also role models for their students, conveying not only knowledge, skills, and competencies but also their attitude towards their professional development. It is the professional development of university teachers that is one of the key elements that co-create quality teaching at Masaryk University. Therefore, teachers should receive adequate care and support and have enough space for reflection on their practice and self-care.

If these competencies are adequately and continuously developed and cared for, they will enable teachers to teach effectively and efficiently in line with their personal characteristics, motivation, and working conditions, which positively impacts teachers' job satisfaction and student learning and academic success. Other contributing factors are teachers keeping up with educational trends, collaborating with specialized departments, and with colleagues within and across disciplines



THE TEACHER SYSTEMATICALLY PLANS THEIR TEACHING

1. The teacher formulates the objectives of their teaching in accordance with the graduate profile of the degree programme.
2. Based on the teaching objectives, the teacher determines verifiable learning outcomes for the respective teaching unit.
3. The teacher structures the teaching so that its individual parts follow each other, and it has a clear beginning, a comprehensible progress, and a meaningful conclusion.
4. The teacher selects teaching methods that are suitable for achieving the set objective and best convey the content of the teaching to the students under the given conditions.
5. When creating teaching content, the teacher takes into account the teaching objectives and the initial level of knowledge, skills, and competencies of the students.
6. The teacher prepares or provides accessible and functional study materials that effectively support self-study.

THE TEACHER CREATES APPROPRIATE AND SAFE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

1. The teacher sets clear and meaningful rules and transparently informs all students about them.
2. The teacher consciously creates and maintains a safe environment in their teaching to ensure mutual respect.
3. The teacher strives to engage students in learning activities during the lessons.

THE TEACHER CONDUCTS TEACHING WITH ATTENTION TO THE STUDENTS' NEEDS

1. To stimulate students' learning activity, the teacher uses learning tasks or questions of appropriate difficulty that fulfil the teaching objectives and correspond to the nature of the subject matter.
2. During the lessons, the teacher responds to the needs of the students, adjusts their teaching strategies, and provides constructive feedback.

THE TEACHER USES VARIOUS METHODS TO ASSESS STUDENTS' RESULTS

1. The teacher uses various assessment methods appropriate to the teaching objective, the purpose of the assessment, and the educational needs of the students.
2. The teacher works with transparent criteria for assessing students.
3. The teacher plans how and when to provide students with constructive feedback, considering the conditions available.
4. The teacher creates opportunities for self-assessment and self-reflection for students during the lessons.

THE TEACHER REFLECTS ON THEIR TEACHING AND INNOVATES IT ACCORDINGLY

1. The teacher uses feedback from students, colleagues, and the outcomes of (self)reflection to support the quality of teaching.

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