

Rules and Guidelines
Examination Boards
Faculty of Social Sciences 2010/2011

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1. Scope of application

Rules and Guidelines, as stipulated in Article 7.12, paragraph 4 of the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, WHW). These Rules and Guidelines apply to the examinations and final examinations in the Bachelor's/Master's degree programme of the Faculty and relate to the Academic and Examination Regulations (OER) that apply to these programmes, to be determined by the Faculty Board.

These regulations apply to anyone following a degree programme during this academic year, irrespective of when he or she started the degree programme.

2. Definitions

Below is a list of key terms and their definitions within the context of this document:

1. Act: The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW)
2. Academic and Examination Regulations: the Academic and Examination Regulations (OER) for the Bachelor's/Master's degree programme(s), as determined by the Faculty Board.
3. Examination Board: the Examination Board for the programmes provided by the faculty.
4. Final examination: all the successfully completed examinations in the components included in the programme, possibly supplemented by an assessment of the student's knowledge, understanding and skills carried out by examiners designated by the Examination Board.
5. Examination: an assessment of the knowledge, understanding, attitude and/or skills of the examination candidate, as well as the evaluation of the results of that assessment. An examination can take various forms and may be referred to in various ways: test, assessment, assignment, thesis, etc.
6. Examiner: the individual designated by the Examination Board to conduct examinations and determine the result, in accordance with Article 7.12, paragraph 3 of the Act.
7. Invigilator: the individual designated by the examiner to be present on his/her behalf during the completion of an examination or final examination.

3. Composition of the Examination Board

1. The Examination Board is made up of three members, all of whom are experts in the subject matter of the degree programme(s). At least one member teaches on the degree programme (or one of the programmes for which these Rules and Guidelines are intended).
2. The members of the Examination Board are appointed by the Faculty Board.
3. The Examination Board appoints a chairperson from amongst its members. The chairperson is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Examination Board. If necessary, he/she will designate another member to deputize during his/her absence.
4. Before appointing a member, the Faculty Board will conduct a hearing with the Examination Board about the proposed appointment.
5. Examination Board members are appointed for three years and may be reappointed once.

4. Responsibilities and powers of the Examination Board

1. The general role of the Examination Board is to administer examinations, constituent examinations and award certificates in accordance with the law, the statutes of VU University Amsterdam and the Academic and Examination Regulations governing the study programme in question.
2. More specifically, Examination Boards are responsible for:

- a. appointing examiners for examinations;
- b. drawing up rules and instructions for assessing examinations and for determining the results;
- c. drawing up rules for proper procedures during examinations;
- d. granting permission, in accordance with the relevant articles in the Academic and Examination Regulations, for students to:
 - deviate from the way in which an examination is held;
 - undergo an oral examination in a non-public session;
 - take optional subjects;
 - sit an examination in a language other than Dutch;
- e. adapting the procedure for an examination to take a student's physical or sensory disability into account;
- f. granting exemptions and substitutions;
- g. testing the Dutch language skills of students admitted to the programme on the basis of a foreign qualification, and testing the English language skills of students admitted to the English programmes;
- h. providing an attendance certificate at the written request of a student who cannot be awarded a degree certificate, stating which examinations the student has passed;
- i. extending the validity of an examination result at a student's request, in accordance with the relevant article in the Academic and Examination Regulations;
- j. issuing a certificate to students who have successfully completed the pre-Master's course;
- k. advising each Bachelor's degree student who has registered for the first year of a full-time programme for the first time on the continuation of his or her studies, in accordance with the relevant article in the Academic and Examination Regulations;
- l. assessing applications for the confidential publication of a Master's thesis in accordance with the relevant article the Faculty's regulations on Master's theses, at the request of a student;
- m. appointing a third assessor at the request of the thesis supervisor, in accordance with the relevant article in the Faculty's regulations on Master's theses;
- n. initiating an investigation in the case of reports of (suspected) academic misconduct by a student and determining the severity of the penalty for fraud within the scope of the relevant article in the Academic and Examination Regulations. The Examination Board compiles a yearly report of its activities.

5. Working method of the Examination Board

1. In principle, the Examination Board meets once monthly, or as often as its chairperson deems necessary. Advance notice will be published of the timetable of meetings. Meetings are not held in public.
2. The Faculty Board is entitled to allocate an official secretary to the Examination Board.
3. The student advisor is an advisory member of the Examination Board who puts forward requests concerning current students.
4. The Examination Board can grant mandates for tasks to be performed by one member, several members, a subcommittee, examiners, the official secretary and the study secretariat.
5. The official secretary of the Examination Board has the mandate to:
 1. adapt the procedure for an examination in order to take a student's physical or sensory disability into account;

2. issue an attendance certificate at the written request of a student who cannot be awarded a degree certificate, stating which examinations the student has passed;
 3. allow enrolment in optional courses and confer exemptions and/or substitutions in accordance with the precedent of previous decisions;
 4. enforce debarment regulations for Bachelor's degree students in accordance with the relevant article in the Academic and Examination Regulations;
 5. deal with amendments to an Individual Programme, in accordance with the precedent of previous decisions;
 6. deal with admission requests, in accordance with the precedent of previous decisions.
6. For urgent matters which concern the current teaching of the non-programme-specific subject Social Research Methodology and which require a solution for several students from different study programmes, a mandate is granted to one member of one of the Examination Boards who is appointed by the Faculty Board. The administrative secretary produces a periodic report of the decisions taken as part of this mandate.
 7. Where necessary, the Examination Board for Sociology acts as the Examination Board for the European Master's programme in Gerontology, for which the Sociology Department acts as secretary. The Examination Board will consult the Director of Studies when handling requests from students of the European Master's in Gerontology.
 8. The Examination Board will consult the co-ordinator when handling requests from students concerning the Master's degree programme in Social Research.
 9. In the event of a request or complaint that involves a member of the Examination Board, this will be handled in the absence of the member involved.
 10. Requests or complaints must be submitted in writing no later than five working days before the date of the meeting. Requests or complaints must in all cases include the reasons for the request or a description of the complaint, the date and the signature of the person who submits it.
 11. The response time for dealing with any requests is thirty working days from the date on which receipt of the request is confirmed, although this does not apply in the months of July and August. During these two months, the response time of thirty working days only applies to requests which cannot wait until the August meeting.

6. Language of examinations or final examination

Examinations or final examinations will be completed in the language of instruction. At the request of the student, the Examination Board may decide to allow another language to be used, in which both the examiner and the student are sufficiently competent.

7. Questions and assignments, subject matter and duration of examinations

1. None of the individual questions or assignments in the examination will relate to anything other than the examination material that is announced beforehand. The material which will be examined will be made known prior to the start of the teaching period for that subject. Details of the materials will be published in full no later than one month before the examination.
2. The Examination Board or the relevant examiner will provide students with the opportunity to consult a written example of the examination together with model answers; these will demonstrate the standards that will apply when evaluating the examination.
3. The Examination Board will supervise the quality of examinations and final examinations.

4. In the event of a resit in a different year of study, the student will be examined on the material set for the examination in that year, unless the Examination Board decides otherwise in the light of a request from the examiner and/or the student.
5. Each examination will be sufficiently long to ensure that students have enough time to answer the questions. In principle, written examinations will typically last a maximum of 2 hours and 45 minutes.

8. Procedure for the completion of written examinations

1. In order to participate in an examination, students must show valid proof of their enrolment.
2. Students are obliged to follow the instructions of the invigilator(s).
3. It is forbidden to take books, notes, portable telephones or other items that may serve as assistance on the table in the examination room, nor to use them, unless this is expressly permitted.
4. Students whose mother tongue is different from the language in which the programme is taught may use a dictionary during written (constituent) examinations. They should, however, submit a request to this effect to the Examination Board for their programme well in advance.
5. Students may be admitted to the examination room up to 30 minutes after the start of the examination. After this time, the examination room is closed to latecomers.
6. Students may not leave the examination room within thirty minutes of the officially scheduled start time.
7. It is not permitted to leave the examination to use the toilet until thirty minutes after the officially scheduled start time.
8. When students leave the examination room, all the examination materials provided, with the exception of the questions of examinations, must be handed in or left with a blank sheet facing upwards.
9. When handing in his/her completed examination, the student is required to sign the list of examinees.
10. In highly exceptional cases, the invigilator can decide to allow an exception to the provisions in paragraphs 5, 6 and 7. This must always be reported to the relevant examiner and/or the Examination Board.
11. Any student who fails to abide by the provisions of this article may be excluded from further participation in the relevant examination by the Examination Board of the examiner.

9. Invigilation of examinations

1. In principle, the examiner (with primary responsibility) for the examination will be responsible for invigilating during an examination.
2. Guideline for the number of invigilators present at the examination or constituent examination:
 - a. in rooms with a tiered seating arrangement for 50 persons (00-rooms) the examiner is invigilator, in case of more rooms two invigilators from Uitzendbureau 65+ will be present.
 - b. in rooms with a tiered seating arrangement for more than 50 persons (KC-, M- and FG-rooms) is in addition to the examiner one invigilator from Uitzendbureau 65+ present. In case of more rooms two invigilators from Uitzendbureau 65+ will be present.
 - c. in the examination hall the examiner and one invigilator from Uitzendbureau 65+ will be present in one block; in case of more blocks:
 - 2 blocks: 2 additional invigilators from Uitzendbureau 65+
 - 3 blocks: 4 additional invigilators from Uitzendbureau 65+

- 4 blocks: 6 additional invigilators from Uitzendbureau 65+
 - 5 blocks: 7 additional invigilators from Uitzendbureau 65+
 - 6 blocks: 9 additional invigilators from Uitzendbureau 65+
- d. in the examination rooms on the 6th floor of the W&N building for 90 or 100 persons: in addition to the examiner there will be one invigilator from Uitzendbureau 65+ present; in case of more rooms two additional invigilators from Uitzendbureau 65+ will be present per room.
 - e. In the examination rooms on the 6th floor of the W&N building for 60 persons the examiner is invigilator; in case of more rooms one additional invigilator from Uitzendbureau 65+ is present per room.
 - f. In all other rooms (less than 50 persons) the examiner is invigilator; in case of more rooms one additional invigilator from Uitzendbureau 65+ will be present per room.
3. The invigilators will carry out their duties in accordance with the *Instructions for Invigilators*. The examiner has final responsibility.

10. Results certificate

If the student has reasonable grounds for requesting a separate certificate for an examination, this will be provided.

11. Determining the result of the final examination

1. As soon as the student has met all the obligations of the degree programme, the Examination Board will prepare the certificate for presentation.
2. The certificate will be issued with the date on which the Examination Board determines the result.

12. Registration of the result

1. Examination results are recorded by the faculty's Education Office.
2. Students can access details of the assessment via TISVU through a secure connection.
3. The student is entitled to appeal against the manner in which the assessment was reached. For details of this, please refer to the Student Charter.

13. The assessment of examinations

1. An examination component will be concluded with a final grade. For a number of components it is also possible that an indication for the level of attainment is given, such as 'satisfactory'.
2. The result for subsidiary components will be expressed in whole or half grades, except when the grade is between 5 and 6. If the final result is between 5 and 6, it will be determined in whole points.
 - a. Final grades ending in a fraction below 0.25 will be rounded down, grades 0.25 to 0.74 rounded to 0.5, grades above 0.74 will be rounded up.
 - b. Grades between 5.01 up to and including 5.49 will be rounded down to 5. Grades between 5.5 and 5.99 will be rounded up to 6.
3. Constituent grades will be rounded to one decimal. In the case of an examination component consisting of multiple constituent examinations, constituent grades will be rounded to one decimal place and the final grade will be rounded to whole or half points, except when the grade is between 5 and 6.
4. An examination component is successfully completed when a grade of 6 or higher has been achieved.
5. In the assessment, the marks will have the following meaning:
 - 10 Outstanding
 - 9 Very good

- 8 Good
 - 7 More than satisfactory
 - 6 Satisfactory
 - 5 Unsatisfactory
 - 4 Very unsatisfactory
 - 3 Poor
 - 2 Very poor
 - 1 Extremely poor
6. Examinations will be assessed in such a way that examinees can determine how their examination results were reached.
 7. Until the introduction of the new student information system (supposed at 1/1/2010): If students that have passed an examination takes a resit: the best result counts. After the introduction of the new student information system a resit of a passed examination is only permitted when the examination board agrees.

14. Designation ‘Cum laude’

1. The Examination Board may award the designation ‘cum laude’ when the following requirements are met:
 - a. the average of all grades is an 8.00 or higher, and the thesis grade is at least an 8.00;
 - b. if additional courses have been followed, these will not be included in the average;
 - c. if exemptions have been granted for no more than 60 EC of the total of the Bachelor’s degree programme, or no more than 10 EC of exemptions have been granted on the total of the Master’s degree programme;
 - d. during the candidate’s study there has been no question of fraud.

The above applies to students starting from 2010/2011 onwards. For students started in September 2010 or before, the requirements are:

 - a. the student’s weighted average mark for all assessments in which a mark is awarded is an 8.000 or above and a mark of at least 8.0 has been obtained for the thesis
 - b. The results of any extra subjects taken by the student are not included when calculating the average mark
 - c. the student has not been found guilty of academic misconduct during his or her studies.
2. The designation ‘cum laude’ will be marked on the diploma supplement in pen.

15. Standards

When making its decision, the Examination Board and the examiner will apply the following criteria as guidelines, and, in the event of any conflict, weigh these criteria against each other:

- a. the quality and selection requirements of a final examination or examination must be upheld;
- b. examinations must serve a purpose; this means, among other things, that an attempt must be made to prevent any unnecessary wasted time for students when preparing for examination or final examination;
- c. leniency with regard to students if their studies have been delayed as a result of circumstances beyond their control.

16. Approval of the choice of subjects for the free-choice components and additional courses

1. Students need to request approval for their choice of subjects for the free-choice components and additional courses, in accordance with the instructions on the faculty website.
2. Justification will be given for any decision to withhold approval and students will receive written notification.

17. Exemption from an examination

1. Any request for exemption from an examination must be submitted to the Examination Board before the start of the relevant component.
2. After consulting the relevant examiner, the Examination Board can grant an exemption from an examination or practical based on the following considerations:
3. The successful completion of an examination or practical in higher education, in the Netherlands or elsewhere, which is equivalent in terms of its content and study load to the component from which exemption is being sought. Prior approval is required from the Examination Board if a student wishes to meet the requirements for specific examinations by studying at a different faculty or university, in the Netherlands or abroad.
4. The Examination Board will take a decision (with its justification of that decision) within one month of receiving the request (or, if this period falls completely or entirely during a period when there are no academic classes, within one month of the end of this period). This period can be extended if the required information is not received in time. The person making the request will be informed of this delay.
5. The person making the request will be informed of the decision in writing.

18. Departures from regular programmes

1. Arrangements around facilities (including top-class sport) can be found at the Student Charter.
2. Any request to depart from the curriculum must be submitted to the Examination Board in writing and with a justification. The Examination Committee will make a decision within one month of receiving the request. Requests will be declined in all cases where the proposed replacement component followed is not at least the same level and scope as the component it replaces.
3. Any request to complete a component of the degree programme at another university in the Netherlands or abroad must be approved by the Examination Board before education at the other university commences.
4. The Examination Board has drawn up the following rules for examining a Free Programme in one of the Bachelor's degree programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences:
 1. The study load amounts to 180 credits
 2. The first year (60 credits) is the first year of one of the programmes of the Faculty.
 3. During the second and third years, the following requirements need to be met:
 - a. 5 credits from Philosophy;
 - b. at least 20 credits from Social Research Methodology;
 - c. 30 credits from courses providing more in-depth content courses from one of the faculty's Bachelor's degree programmes;
 - d. 10 or 15 credits from a thesis for one of those courses corresponding with the Bachelor's programme.
 4. The remaining credits will be acquired from courses of the student's choice.
 5. The entire programme should form a consistent whole.
 6. Approval for the programme should be requested in advance from the Examination Board.

19. Certificate, list of marks and diploma supplement

1. The Executive Board will issue a degree certificate as proof that the student has successfully passed his/her examination after the Executive Board has confirmed that the procedural requirements for issuing the certificate have been met. The certificate will be signed by the chair of the Examination Board and the Dean of the Faculty.
2. The Examination Board will append a diploma supplement to the certificate, outlining the nature and content of the degree programme.
3. The diploma supplement will give details of the components included in the final examination and their study load, along with the results achieved. In addition, the certificate will include reference to components that are not included in the final examination but in which the student was examined at his or her request before the result of the final examination was determined, providing that these components have been passed.
4. The certificate will be presented in accordance with the procedure stated on the Faculty website.

20. Academic misconduct in examinations

a. Academic misconduct

The term 'academic misconduct' is understood to mean any actions which a student takes or fails to take which make it completely or partly impossible to assess his/her knowledge, understanding and/or skills adequately.

b. Academic misconduct during written examinations

If academic misconduct is identified or suspected during a written examination, the invigilator will indicate this immediately on the answer sheet in the presence of the student. After the examination, the invigilator will compile a written report on the academic misconduct that was identified or suspected. In this, the examiner or invigilator is authorized to seize the materials or equipment used for the academic misconduct as evidence, and to keep these for as long as is necessary to carry out investigations.

c. Academic misconduct in preparing assignments

1. An assignment is understood to mean any written, audiovisual or digital product submitted by the student in order to be assessed as part of the curriculum.
2. Without prejudice to the stipulations of the Act, it is forbidden to include any file in an assignment, whether in processed or unprocessed form, such as a text, an illustration, a digital or audiovisual file, without acknowledging the author and the original location of the file, or, if it is impossible to identify an author, without acknowledging the original location of the file (also referred to as plagiarism). Additionally, including (sections of) text from previously completed assignments or documents by the student without acknowledging the source, will be considered plagiarism.

d. Academic misconduct identified after completion of the examination

1. If academic misconduct is identified or suspected after a written examination has been completed, the examiner will report this to the Examination Board immediately and submit evidence.
2. The Examination Board will launch an enquiry into the alleged academic misconduct, based on the evidence submitted by the examiner.

e. Procedure and Sanctions

1. If the examiner ascertains, or has good reason to suppose, that academic misconduct has taken place, he or she must report this to the Examination

- Board in writing immediately. The Examination Board will inform the student of this report in writing.
2. The Examination Board will invite the student to present his or her case and decide whether fraud has been committed on the basis of the evidence and, as far as possible, the information provided by the student. Further information may be required from the examiner.
 3. If the Examination Board is convinced that academic misconduct has been committed, a sanction will be imposed.
 4. With due regard to the principles of legal fairness and proportionality, the Examination Board can declare the examination or the assignment to which the academic misconduct relates to be invalid and also exclude the student from the following relevant examination.
 5. In the event of serious or repeated academic misconduct, the Examination Board may exclude the student from participating in any one or more examinations or final examinations at VU University Amsterdam for a maximum of one year.
 6. If serious academic misconduct is identified, the Examination Board can advise the Executive Board that the student's enrolment be terminated permanently.
 7. The student can appeal directly to the Examination Appeals Board against the decision by the Examination Board.
 8. In urgent cases relating to academic misconduct not covered by these rules and guidelines, the Examination Board will make a decision with due regard to the principles of an appropriate procedure.

21. Annual Report

No later than 1 December, the Examination Board will compile a report on its activities during the preceding academic year. The Examination Board will send the annual report to the Faculty Board. On request, the annual report or parts of it can be made available to interested parties.

22. Amendments to these Rules and Guidelines

No amendments are made in relation to the current academic year, unless there is a reasonable expectation that this will not damage the interests of the students.

23. Unforeseen circumstances

In any circumstances not covered by these Rules and Guidelines, the decisions of the Examination Board will be final.

24. Date of commencement

These Rules and Guidelines take effect as of 1 September 2010.

Adopted by the Examination Board on the fifth day of July, 2010.