



# Assessment Policy Framework

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# 1. Introduction

It is vital for both educational institutions and their students that institutions can vouch for the exit level of their students. Since the initiation of the Bologna process, the spotlight has focused increasingly on the quality of graduates. More than ever, Dutch graduates are expected to meet the standards of the international market. The exit level is determined based on a series of assessments (summative or otherwise). This has resulted in a great deal of attention for assessment and assessment policy, also within the degree programmes at the University of Amsterdam.

Legislation, the accreditation system and the importance that the UvA attaches to study success and student satisfaction have prompted urgent and regular reviews of our assessment policy. In particular, this entails looking at how Examinations Boards can perform their duties, how the quality of the local assessment policy can be improved at the institutional level, how the UvA can effectively be ‘in control’ of the assessment quality, and which aspects of the assessment policy can reinforce the education provided by the UvA. For this purpose, periodic review of the UvA Assessment Policy Framework is essential for the following reasons:

1. In 2015, the Education Inspectorate conducted a national study into the functioning of Examinations Boards, with particular focus on their success in determining whether students satisfy the desired exit qualifications. In the report *Verdere versterking examencommissies in het hoger onderwijs* (‘Further strengthening of Examinations Boards in higher education’), the Inspectorate concluded that the new, stronger role has been adopted effectively by the Examinations Boards, albeit with a number of areas of concern regarding further safeguarding of the quality of examinations. In 2016, this was followed up with the report *De kwaliteit van de toetsing in het hoger onderwijs* (‘Assessment quality in higher education’). All areas of concern from both reports have been incorporated into this reviewed Assessment Framework.
2. Quality assurance and monitoring with regard to computer-based testing requires a set of specific instructions. For this reason, a new section on computer-based testing has been included in this Assessment Framework.

3. The successful Institutional Quality Assurance Audit in 2013 testified that the UvA Executive Board is ‘in control’ of the institution’s educational quality. A vital element of educational quality is the quality of assessment and testing, meaning continual attention must be paid to maintaining this quality.
4. The Institutional Quality Assurance Audit also pays specific attention to students with disabilities, an aspect that must also be addressed by the assessment policy.

This framework sketches the preconditions for the UvA’s assessment policy: 22 conditions with which all programmes must comply. The programmes are at liberty to decide on their own interpretations of the preconditions if different approaches are possible. The UvA-framework provides tips and tools regarding how the UvA’s basic assessment quality-level can be guaranteed and does not pretend to be able to prescribe the best interpretation for individual programmes. The Examinations Boards are responsible for supervising compliance with and execution of these conditions.

We are very grateful for the many improvement suggestions that have been implemented into this Assessment Framework.

### Reader’s guide

The Assessment Policy Framework is divided into five sections: conditions for the assessment and testing process, from assessment formats to marking (Section 3); conditions for the scheduling and distribution of assessments (Section 4); conditions for the assessment and testing of major course components such as work placements and final projects (Section 5); conditions for rules and regulations concerning assessment (Section 6); and conditions for the quality assurance of assessment and testing (Section 7). Finally, conditions are stipulated for computer-based testing (Section 8). These sections are based on the assessment literature, current UvA education policy, the ever-changing national legislation and regulations that must be complied with and the estimations made by the Education Inspectorate concerning the functioning of Examinations Boards within the higher education sector.

The preconditions stemming from this Assessment Policy Framework are outlined in the body of the text. The conditions that the assessment policy and assessments at the UvA must comply with can easily be found in the text

because they are numbered and italicised. A summary of all the conditions can be found in Appendix 1, including specification of who is responsible for ensuring compliance with each individual condition.

Because this document is intended for a wide audience within the UvA, it seeks not only to explain the Assessment Policy Framework, but also to serve as a guide for possible ways to implement it. Lecturers, examiners, programme directors, directors of Colleges and Graduate Schools, members of the Examinations Boards and Programme Committees are therefore referred – via references to the literature and websites – to possibilities for translating the Framework to their own situation. Any reader who is not primarily interested in these aspects can of course skip these passages, all of which are clearly marked.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Approach

In 2012, the first version of the UvA Assessment Policy Framework was formulated in collaboration with various bodies, drawing inspiration from the strategy adopted by the University of Groningen. The preconditions stemming from the Assessment Policy Framework were not intended as restrictions, but rather as a framework for the assessment policies of each faculty and programme. In addition, each faculty was then tasked with devising its own assessment policy that satisfied the preconditions outlined in the framework.

During the review of the Framework, the following bodies were consulted (sometimes on multiple occasions): the faculty testing and assessment experts; the Advisory Group for Examinations Boards and representatives of the computer-based testing programme; the Senior Adviser for Safety and Security; a number of programme directors and directors of Colleges and Graduate Schools; and the University Committee on Education. The central Legal Affairs department has also conducted a legal assessment of the proposed amendments.

### 2.2. Principles and targets

Two key principles were adhered to in the formulation of the UvA Assessment Policy Framework:

1. The assessment is well-organised for the majority of the programmes, but not all of them, as was shown by the scores awarded for the ‘assessment and testing’ category during the programme accreditation procedures. Of the 137 evaluations carried out in the period 2012-2017, three ratings of ‘unsatisfactory’ were awarded for the ‘assessment and testing’ category and the NVAO identified multiple issues that required management agreements. The accreditation reports and the 2016 report by the Education Inspectorate revealed that there was still room for improvement, particularly with respect to making assessment policy more explicit.

This revised Framework is intended to realise both aims: to improve and clarify the assessment policy.

2. Ownership of assessment policy resides with the programmes. After all, when it comes to assessment and testing, it is essential that the form and content of tests should tie in closely with the objectives and nature of the programmes. This Framework therefore only sets out the minimum requirements for an effective assessment policy. It is then up to the programmes to define and establish the assessment policy for their own needs. In other words:

This Framework sets out what a good assessment policy must contain, but leaves it up to the programmes to decide how to give specific shape to that policy in keeping with their own situation.

### **2.3. Definition of assessment**

Assessments guide student learning and motivate students to make an effort. A good assessment gives students information about which aspects they have or have not mastered. In addition, assessments provide information to examiners and programme directors about the students' level of knowledge, understanding and skills.

In short, there are two ways to assess a student's progress and level:

#### **1. Formative testing**

This type of assessment is intended primarily as a self-evaluation tool to allow students to find out where they stand at a particular moment. The results show what still needs to be done for the student to attain the desired final objective. Sometimes, formative results are included in the final result in order to give students extra motivation to take the tests seriously.

#### **2. Summative testing**

A summative assessment is an examination for the purpose of evaluating the student's level in the form of an interim or final mark. In addition to their interim or final mark, students are also awarded the corresponding ECTS credits (summative testing therefore also includes partial assessments that yield

a mark). At the end of every module – or curriculum unit – a summative assessment must be conducted.

The Assessment Policy Framework sets conditions with which summative assessments must comply. We will not address the issue of formative assessments here. In this regard, we define an assessment as follows:

An assessment is an instrument used by an examiner either during or at the end of a module in order to evaluate the degree to which the student has mastered the knowledge, understanding and/or skills as defined in the educational objectives.

### 3. Conditions for the assessment process

The first part of this Assessment Policy Framework sets out the preconditions that UvA programmes must meet in order to ensure a high-quality assessment process. These preconditions will be partly translated and recorded in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER) and the Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board (R&R), and partly in a formulated Assessment Policy. This aspect will be further explained in Section 6).

A high-quality assessment process begins with clearly formulated educational objectives that assessments must tie in with. An appropriate assessment format needs to be chosen for each course component. In addition, explicit attention should be paid to reliability and validity during the construction of the test. The test needs to be properly administered, as does the marking, the publication of results and the provision of feedback. These aspects are explained in the following sections on the basis of the literature on testing and assessment and are translated into an initial set of preconditions.

#### 3.1. Clear relationship between descriptors, exit qualifications, educational objectives and assessment

The Dublin Descriptors were drawn up in 2004 by a group of European higher education specialists to determine the level of a Higher Education curriculum (applied/HBO and research university/WO, Bachelor's and Master's). The development of these descriptors was prompted by a desire to align the levels of programmes across Europe, in part to assist students wishing to take part of their study programme at a university abroad. The Dublin Descriptors provide a general description of the level that a student must have attained in five areas:

1. Knowledge and understanding
2. Applying knowledge and understanding
3. Making judgements

4. Communication
5. Learning skills

The Dublin Descriptors are expressed in very general terms. Each programme has to interpret these five areas in a way that is appropriate to the content and culture of the programme and discipline concerned. The programme-specific interpretation of the descriptors must be reflected in the exit qualifications for the programme.

The curriculum is used to implement these exit qualifications into the programme and its modules. The content and design of the curriculum must enable students to attain the exit qualifications of the programme. It is vital that the exit qualifications are covered by the various curriculum components as a whole, or conversely, for the exit qualifications to be developed into concrete, testable educational objectives for each module. For this purpose, the programme formulates an assessment and testing programme: an overview demonstrating that the desired exit qualifications will be assessed.

Educational objectives indicate what students should achieve in a given period and they must be consistent with the level of the module (introductory, basic, in-depth, specialisation). A well-formulated educational objective should satisfy the following criteria:

- The knowledge, understanding, attitude and/or skills that the student must have acquired are expressed as concretely as possible.
- The behaviour that the student must be able to demonstrate is described in terms of observable activities.
- The importance of the educational objective (to the entire curriculum) is clearly described, so students are aware of why they must learn the relevant subject matter.

Subsequently, the assessment must be able to determine whether the student has sufficiently mastered the educational objectives. In other words, assessment and testing should always relate clearly to the educational objectives of the module in question. These are inextricably bound with the content, educational activities and teaching method, as these too must tie in with these objectives. In other words, educational objectives, content, educational activities, teaching methods

and assessment must form an integrated whole. This is also known as *Constructive Alignment*.

### **Constructive alignment: an example**

A team of lecturers that devotes considerable tutorial time in a Bachelor's module to establishing links and helping students form opinions should make sure that this is also reflected in the assessment. Here, a test filled with knowledge details would not tie in well and would give a false impression to students. The reverse also applies: if the emphasis during lectures is on establishing a knowledge base, lecturers should not automatically assume that students are therefore able to write a coherent argument as part of a test assignment. In short, there must be congruence between the targets that lecturers and examiners set themselves, the way they organise their teaching and how they assess the students.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Condition 1**

The programme ensures that explicit and consistent links are made between the Dublin Descriptors, the exit qualifications, the educational objectives of curriculum components and educational/assessment methods.

## **3.2. Assessment format and design**

The assessment format must tie in with the educational objectives, educational content and teaching methods of the module in question. It is one of the key factors driving the learning behaviour of students, who will adopt a different study approach for a multiple-choice test than for an oral exam.

The following criteria play a role in the choice of assessment format, or combination of formats:

- 1) Test validity: the test must measure what it is supposed to test.
- 2) Test reliability: the risk that outcomes are influenced by random factors should be minimised.

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<sup>1</sup> Educational psychologist John Biggs (1999) uses the term 'Constructive alignment' to describe this congruence.

- 3) Test transparency: students must be clear about what will be tested, how it will be tested and how the evaluation will be conducted.
- 4) Test feasibility: in line with group size, available facilities, marking periods, special assessment facilities for students with a disability or chronic illness, etc.
- 5) Test efficiency: weighs up the necessary investment against the information that the assessment obtains.

Choosing a suitable assessment format can be difficult at times, for example in the case of educational objectives relating to academic training, professional competences or complex skills. In such instances, combined assessment formats are often chosen to establish and assess whether a student has achieved all the educational objectives.

### 3.2.1. Validity

Validity is defined as the degree to which the interpretation and the use of assessment scores can be theoretically and empirically supported. In its literal meaning, validity is the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. It is vital that the questions and assignments relate directly to the educational objectives within the module in question and that the evaluation is conducted based on the desired proficiency level. Based on the assessments, the examiner must be able to clearly distinguish students who have sufficiently satisfied the educational objectives and those who have not.<sup>2</sup>

However, within an educational context, distinction is traditionally made between three types of question that could be asked about the validity of assessments:

- Validity of content: is the desired subject matter represented in the assessment?
- Validity of terminology: are the question formats consistent with the desired level? For example, deep-level learning cannot be assessed with knowledge questions.
- Validity of criteria: to what extent is the assessment score linked to other criteria, such as the 'future study success' criterion?

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<sup>2</sup> Borsboom, D., Mellenbergh, G. J., & van Heerden, J. H. (2004). The concept of validity. *Psychological Review*, 111, 1061-1071.

Assessments can also be evaluated in accordance with other validity factors, such as ecological validity: the extent to which the test represents a practical and relevant situation.<sup>3</sup> This type of assessment is becoming more and more feasible due to the rise of computer-based testing. A good example is computer-based testing using 3D radiological images.

A specification table can be used as a tool for demonstrating the validity of a test. It juxtaposes the curriculum content and mastery level in table form. Other functions of a test blueprint include:

- Preventing that too many assignments that target the same subject matter or skill.
- Increasing the equivalence between two tests on the same subject matter (e.g. regular exam and resit) by developing both tests on the basis of a specification table.<sup>4</sup>
- Serving as a rationale for the test content vis-à-vis other stakeholders, such as colleagues, Examinations Board, assessment panel or the Examination Appeals Board.
- The complete set of specification tables taken together provide a good overview of the structure of the programme in terms of level, complexity and knowledge structure, making it possible to assess whether the exit qualifications have been achieved.

### 3.2.2. Reliability

If a test yields the same results when administered repeatedly under the same conditions, it is deemed reliable. The following features contribute to a test's reliability:

*Objectivity:* The questions are worded unambiguously and the response options are sufficiently distinct as to allow for consistency of assessment (in other words, independent of assessment time, assessor, etc.).

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<sup>3</sup> Van Berkel, H., Bax, A., D. Joosten-Ten Brinke (2017) *Toetsen in Hoger Onderwijs* ('Assessments in Higher Education') (Boh, Stafleu, Van Loghum).

<sup>4</sup> Another method of ensuring equivalence is by using overlapping items in both tests to enable statistical monitoring of whether the level is indeed equivalent.

*Differentiation:* It should be possible on the basis of the test as a whole to distinguish between students who have mastered the subject matter well and those who have mastered it less well.

*Test length:* The number of questions is large enough to ensure a reliable test.

### 3.2.3. Transparency

Students know in advance what is expected of them during the test and what they will be assessed on. This means, among other things, that the educational objectives and the form of assessment are announced in advance through the course catalogues, the course handbook or the virtual learning environment. These sources provide students with clear and unambiguous information about the nature and scope of the examination, with the aid of one or more example questions that have been answered in full and in detail.

During the study period, students can learn more about the assessment method by taking a formative mock test or they may be given previous tests or representative example questions.

Proper instructions before and during the test are useful, e.g. via a test cover page. in any case, the test cover page contains:

- course, code, assessment format
- a clear explanation of the test procedure
- where necessary, instructions on how to complete the test
- a description of how the points are distributed across the questions or tasks
- information about the cut-off score
- time allotted for the test (exceptions to the regulation time limit can be made for students with certain types of disability/chronic illness).

An example of a format for a test cover page can be found in Appendix 4.

#### **Condition 2**

Examiners ensure that the learning objectives and the type of assessment for a curriculum component are communicated before classes start and that the assessment instructions are clear and comprehensive.

### 3.2.4. Marking the test

Once the test has been devised, it is important to obtain some idea of the quality of the individual questions and of the test as a whole before it is administered. Although it is not possible to truly ascertain the quality of a test until it has been marked, some test features can nevertheless be evaluated in advance. These include relevance, clarity, objectivity, specificity and representativity in relation to the subject matter covered.

Having a second lecturer cast an eye over the test can help to filter out any unclear formulations and other imperfections. However, to obtain the most objective judgement possible, the examiner should submit the test to an assessment coordinator, an assessment expert or a peer who is not involved in the course. This is particularly recommended for new courses and new assessment formats.

#### **Condition 3**

Examiners apply the four-eyes principle during the creation of tests – at the very least for new courses and new assessment formats – in order to optimise the quality of the test.

### 3.3. Administering the test

The conditions under which a test is administered can have a major impact on the result. This is particularly the case for students with disabilities or chronic illnesses who have been allocated specific assessment facilities.

#### 3.3.1. Infrastructure

A sound infrastructure is indispensable when implementing an assessment policy that involves a wide variety of assessment formats. Different formats call for different facilities, such as display monitors, computers, or an adequate supply of chemicals, or simply a room with enough desks and chairs. To administer a test properly, these facilities have to be present and available in sufficient numbers and must meet certain quality standards. For example, the exam rooms must be accessible, peaceful and quiet and preferably only one test should be taken in the room at the same time. The Executive Board is responsible for ensuring a sound infrastructure surrounding the implementation

of assessment. The programme director is responsible for providing adequate facilities to administer the test, e.g. by making solid agreements with the Teaching Logistics Office. The Examinations Board must safeguard the quality of the organisation and procedures relating to all examinations<sup>5</sup>.

**Condition 4**

The programme director ensures that there are adequate facilities for administering the test by making timely agreements with the departments responsible.

**3.3.2. Invigilation of written examinations**

Invigilators play a vital role in maintaining order during the administration of written exams. They are the first point of contact for students during the exam, they are responsible for admitting students to the examination room or denying them entry, and they play a role in detecting fraud. It is therefore important for invigilators to be well prepared for their duties in advance. Given the high rate of turnover among invigilators and the fact that they are sometimes hired in from outside the university, the programmes need to draw up clear instructions for this group. An example of a protocol for invigilators can be found in Appendix 5. The Examinations Board is responsible for formulating an invigilation protocol for written and digital examinations. Examiners are subsequently responsible for ensuring the invigilation is conducted within the frameworks stipulated in this protocol. At least one examiner should preferably be present during examinations.

**Condition 5**

The Examinations Board establishes an invigilation protocol outlining the preconditions for exam supervision (the number of invigilators per room or student, requirements for invigilators) and the duties, powers and responsibilities of the examiners and invigilators.

**3.3.3. Observers during oral exams**

Unless determined otherwise by the Examinations Board, a second examiner shall be present at the administration of oral examinations or an audio recording shall be made of the examination. The Examinations Board can also appoint a random staff member as an observer, or even another student. In this case, the observer's role is not so much to co-assess but rather to monitor the course of the

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<sup>5</sup> WHW, Section 7(12b(1e)).

oral exam. Observers play an important role in preventing incidents and in the handling of complaints regarding the examination.

### 3.3.4. Students with particular needs, e.g. students with a disability or chronic illness

If applicable, any cases in which assessment and testing is affected by a student's personal circumstances (including pregnancy/childbirth and exceptional family situations) will be resolved via a made-to-measure solution. Students with a disability or chronic illness will be given specific attention in the assessment policy framework. Some of these students require tools, facilities and adjustments to the regular teaching programme.<sup>6</sup> When it comes to assessment, it is important that some flexibility is possible with regard to sitting examinations without compromising the exit qualifications and/or required competences. As there is such a huge variety of possible disabilities and chronic illnesses, a made-to-measure solution may be required. When creating this kind of made-to-measure solution, it must be ensured that certain students are not disproportionately disadvantaged or favoured.

The assessment format must not hinder the students sitting the test, and the feedback on the test must be accessible to all students. For this reason, additional facilities can be allocated to students with a disability or chronic illness such as time extensions, provision of an alternative exam room or the use of larger and/or adjusted fonts. In extreme cases, alternative assessment formats can be offered.

Students with particular disability or chronic illness could benefit from taking computer-based tests. For other students, computer-based testing can prove to be an obstacle, although these hindrances can sometimes be partly or fully resolved by using alternative software such as speech recognition software for students with visual impairments. However, this software can be a problem if images, photos or tables are included in the test, as these cannot always be effectively described using words alone.

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<sup>6</sup> Commissie Maatstaf (2010) *Meer Mogelijk Maken: Studeren met een functiebeperking in het hoger Onderwijs* ('*Making More Possible: Higher education for students with a disability*').

Before any extra assessment facilities can be allocated, an evaluation will be conducted regarding whether the facility is specific and relevant to the disability in question. In this regard, ‘specific’ means that the facility can only benefit students with this particular disability: a good example of such a facility is adjustment of the font size. ‘Relevant’ in this context refers to the relationship between the facility and the disability: for example, a student with dyscalculia may be granted a facility for an examination involving a lot of arithmetic, although the same facility would not be provided for examinations involving no mathematical skills.

Other adjustments to the regular assessment and testing programme that may be required include:

1. In extreme situations, it may be necessary to deviate from the criteria specified by the educational objectives. Deviation from these criteria is permitted provided there are compelling grounds to do so and it can be guaranteed that the student will still satisfy the programme’s exit qualifications.
2. If – for compelling reasons of which notification has been given – a student is incapable of participating in a particular teaching method, then to a reasonable extent, the content of the test taken by this student must not be based on the subject matter involved in this teaching method. If this teaching method enables results to be obtained that count towards the final mark, then alternative opportunities to attain similar compensation for these results must be offered.
3. If the student is incapable of sitting the test during the regular assessment period due to a disability or chronic illness, then the student can resit the test. If the student is incapable of sitting the test and the resit due to a disability or chronic illness, then the student can submit a request for an additional resit to the Examinations Board.
4. Certain students with a disability or chronic illness will not be able to fulfil their assessment obligations during the regular assessment/teaching period. In such cases, the Examinations Board can determine that bonus points and results achieved for assignments, partial tests and midterm tests remain valid.

The Teaching and Examination Regulations and the Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board specify what students must do in order to make use of alternative assessment methods, who makes the final decision in such cases and

how examiners and/or invigilators are informed regarding this matter. Normally, the dean – or, on his/her behalf, the College or Graduate School director or the programme director – decides on requests for adaptations to teaching facilities, and the Examinations Board makes decisions regarding requests for adaptations to assessment and testing. The Examinations Board must explicitly guarantee that the quality and the level of the test will be maintained. This can be specified in greater detail in the Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board.

In any event, decisions regarding the aforementioned adjustments must be based on a sufficient level of knowledge of the disability and the available testing and assessment opportunities.<sup>7</sup> Agreements between the institution and the student concerning adjustments must be complied with and adequately executed. The supervising lecturer and invigilator must be adequately informed of the adjustments and the facilities allocated (also see Appendix 5: Example protocol for invigilators).

#### **Condition 6**

The Teaching and Examination Regulations and the Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board specify how and by whom decisions are made regarding alternative assessment opportunities for students with a disability or chronic illness.

### **3.4. Marking the test**

For tests with open questions, as well as assessment formats involving essays/ short essays, etc., it is useful to formulate an assessment model prior to the administration of the exam. The use of an assessment model boosts both intra-rater reliability and – in the event more than one person is involved in marking the test – inter-assessment reliability.<sup>8</sup> The examiner does not need to formulate an assessment model containing full answers: keywords can be used to refer to elements that the answers must contain. The assessment model can

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<sup>7</sup> For more information, you can consult the expertise centre Handicap + Studie. The following publication can also provide additional info: Handicap + Studie Expertise Centre (2013) *Toetsen, niet minder maar anders* ('Testing: Different method, same validity').

<sup>8</sup> See Van Berkel, Bax and Joosten-Ten Brinke (2017, p.325).

also be in the form of a rubric. Generally, full answers result in higher interpersonal reliability.

A scoring form will suffice for the marking of a test containing closed test questions.

Marking a test or statistically analysing the scores may reveal that it has failed to meet the quality criteria on a number of points, or in the most extreme cases, that it has failed to meet any of them at all. This could be in relation to the level of difficulty, the extent to which the test questions have a discriminating aspect, or shortcomings relating to content. It is preferable to check the test for these aspects before marks are allocated. If this is not feasible due to a short marking period, then the examiner will evaluate the test at a later date in order to improve the quality of future versions of the course.

#### **Condition 7**

An assessment model is formulated for every test. The test and the test results will then be evaluated retrospectively by the examiner in light of the teaching provided.

#### **3.4.1. Allocating marks**

##### *Cut-off score*

The cut-off score for a test is the score that marks the boundary between a pass and a fail. There are two ways of determining the cut-off mark for a written test:

1. Absolute cut-off score: this indicates which part of the curriculum students need to master in order to attain the cut-off mark, for example 55% (taking into account the chance of guessing).
2. Relative cut-off mark: the boundary between a pass and a fail is determined on the basis of the performance of the group as a whole.

Both methods have disadvantages. An absolute cut-off mark does not take into account the quality of a test or contingencies because the mark is fixed prior to the administration of the test. Using a relative cut-off score means that students who did not adequately prepare for the test can influence the performance of the group, which could result in undeserving students passing.

A mix of an absolute and relative cut-off score can mitigate both disadvantages.<sup>9</sup> For example, an absolute cut-off score could be used, which is then modified if more than, say, 40% of students fail. This option could be chosen if the test is new and its level of difficulty has not yet been sufficiently established.

The method for determining the cut-off score is primarily the responsibility of the examiner or the programme director. The Examinations Board is authorised to set guidelines for the examiners concerning determination of the cut-off mark. It is important to inform students about which method will be used. If it emerges, for example, that a test item was open to multiple interpretations, a stipulation can be added that the pass mark can be adjusted to account for these types of situations.

### Grading schemes

At the UvA, the following grading schemes are used to determine students' results/final results:

- a. 1-10
- b. 1-10, whole and half numbers
- c. 1-10, to one decimal point
- d. Dutch letter grade
- e. International letter grade A-F, with + and –
- f. NAV/AVV (i.e. requirements fulfilled/requirements not fulfilled).

For the numerical grading schemes (a, b and c), a score of 5.5 or above is defined as a passing mark.

In addition, there are general, non-numerical annotations, namely:

AVV/VOL = Requirements met/pass

NAV/ONV = Requirements not met/fail

NAP = Not in attendance

VR = Exempt

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<sup>9</sup> J. Cohen-Schotanus, C.P.M. van der Vleuten and W. Bender, *Een betere cesuur bij tentamens: de beste student als referentiepunt* ('Better cut-off scores for examinations with the highest scoring student used as a reference point'), *Onderzoek van Onderwijs*, 1996 (25-3): 54-55.

– = Not yet completed

The examiner can add the annotation ‘–’ (‘not yet completed’) to indicate that a final mark calculated outside the administration system will not yet yield a result (e.g. because not all the partial results are known and the calculation cannot be made). Appendix 6 contains the UvA Grading Scheme, in which different grading schemes can be compared to each other, particularly for the purposes of international student mobility.

#### **Condition 8**

The examiner clearly explains to students how cut-off scores are determined and which grading schemes are used to determine interim and final results. The Examinations Board can set guidelines for the assessment and marking of examinations in accordance with the Teaching and Examination Regulations.

### **3.5. Publication of results and the validity period**

Responsibility for publishing the official final results (in SIS) rests with the relevant administrations. The programme administration will ensure the meticulousness, accessibility and availability of the results. Students must be informed accurately and in a timely manner of the period in which their final result will be published.

Students can only derive rights from results processed within the Student Information System (SIS). If examiners post results elsewhere, e.g. via the virtual learning environment, then these results must be anonymised.

#### **3.5.1 Feedback on tests**

Every test that a student does not learn from is a missed opportunity. While all results that students obtain are already a form of feedback, a mark alone is not enough to give students an idea of the extent to which they have mastered the material. Marking a test should involve qualitative feedback that is useful for students. It is not enough to simply cross something out or add a comment like ‘unclear’. Marking needs to be substantiated in such a way that students can use it to improve their performance.

After every test, students must be given an opportunity to discuss and/or inspect the test, for which purpose they will be provided with the assessment model. Allowing them to inspect assessment models is not an optional matter: jurisprudence has established that students have a right to view the answer key.

Exactly how and when feedback is given is not laid down. It is not mandatory to post the correct answers (multiple-choice) or model answers (open questions, essay questions, etc.) after the exam. To enable good questions to be reused and to combat commercial exploitation of educational materials, programmes may choose to restrict these inspection rights to post-exam discussion meetings.

### 3.5.2 Procedures for the publication of test results and validity period

The procedures for publication of test results are established in the Teaching and Examination Regulations and are usually described in greater detail in the Course Catalogue and the module handbook, with specific attention paid to the issues of publication, right of inspection and post-exam discussions. In some cases, the validity period of successfully completed examinations can be extended. Any such cases will be organised in the Teaching and Examination Regulations of the individual programmes.

#### **Condition 9**

Tests are assessed within a predefined time period and made available for inspection. The procedure complies with the rules for the protection of personal data. The programme will ensure the students are provided with adequate feedback.

## 4. Conditions for the scheduling and distribution of assessments

### 4.1. Continuous assessment of modules

Improving study success rates is a policy priority at the UvA. The first and second reports issued by the Study Success working group (*Rapport studiesucces 2.0'*) recommends that learning ought to have a 'now or never character'. The aim is to encourage students to study throughout the entire study period and not just towards the end when the assessment occurs. The examination and resit policy have to tie in with this endeavour. Given that students tend to match their study activity to the scheduled assessments, this is a way of promoting the desired study habits.

There is also a need for a different study culture. It should be considered normal that courses are passed in the first instance and that resits are an exception. This can be encouraged via the use of assignments and compensatory partial tests during the course, as well as a stricter resit policy. The following sections outline ways in which this can be achieved.

In the 'enrol on time = participate actively = complete successfully' system, active student study habits are primarily encouraged by means of midterm tests and assignments. Having these count towards the final mark and permitting some degree of compensation encourages students to study throughout the course, thereby ensuring that they are better prepared for the final test. There are of course many ways to achieve this, such as introducing partial tests or take-home assignments.

The important point is that students are rewarded for studying hard during the course. Assignments and midterm tests therefore need to be substantial and representative (i.e. they should produce a result and students need to know what is expected of them) and there should preferably be some degree of compensation (especially for partial tests). In addition, it has to be clear that these opportunities are only offered during the course. As a rule, assignments,

partial tests and midterm tests cannot be retaken or resubmitted and preferably no longer count towards the final mark in case of resits.

It is especially important in the first year of the Bachelor's programme to teach students an active approach to studying by regularly administering tests. Students who learn good study habits at an early stage and thus have a good study pace maintain this attitude and pace for the remainder of their educational career. This can be achieved through both formative and summative assessments.

When scheduling midterm assignments and partial and final tests, it is essential that there is coordination between the various curriculum components. Competition between the different tests must be avoided: where such competition does exist, students will decide which test takes precedence, thereby devoting less attention to other tests, which may result in a study completion delay.

**Condition 10**

Assessment of a unit of study, particularly in the first year of a Bachelor's programme, is evenly spread out across several assessment times during a study period.

**Condition 11**

When scheduling the various assessment times, clashes between assessments for different units of study should be avoided.

## 4.2. Numbers of final assessments and compensation

The report by the Study Success working group ('Rapport Studiesucces 2.0') criticises the 'cross-country model' ('*veldloopmodel*'), in which students have to pass many exams in order to successfully complete the year. While a large proportion (e.g. about 70%) pass each particular interim test, there are other students who fail that test. When this model is used, there is a risk that students will be disadvantaged by evaluation mistakes, as the reliability of tests is never optimal.

Another way to encourage students to complete a full year is to introduce a compensation system. There are various ways of doing this. Some programmes operate by the rule that a 'fail' (e.g. a mark of 5) can be compensated by higher

marks in another course (this is the method used for final exams at secondary school). This approach can certainly be defended for the first year of a Bachelor's programme because of the broad range of courses on offer.

Another option is to make the results in certain related courses (e.g. research methods and statistics) eligible for mutual compensation in order to create larger assessment entities and reduce the number of final assessments. The Study Success working group recommends using a compensation model with a maximum of eight final assessments per year.

**Condition 12**

When scheduling the tests, the programme ensures a limited number of final assessments per year.

### 4.3. Resits

The number of resit opportunities must be limited to discourage postponement behaviour, especially as study success for resits is substantially lower than for first attempts. The resits are primarily intended for students affected by bad luck or force majeure, and they are explicitly not intended to increase the student's mark. This is also the reason why the UvA Teaching and Examination Regulations includes a regulation that the most recent mark counts.

Just as with regular assessments, it is also a good idea to prevent overlap between the resit and the contact moments scheduled in the regular teaching/assessment timetable of the programme in question. Making resits unattractive increases the chance of success during the regular assessments. This can be done via the system of midterm assessment described in the previous section, whereby assessments within a module can be mutually compensated or students can earn a bonus. As a rule, assignments, partial tests and midterm tests cannot be retaken or resubmitted. In an arrangement of this kind, resits are unattractive because bonuses, midterm tests and final tests lapse if the student does not gain a pass. Students who fail the course are obliged to repeat the entire exam and they lose bonuses and partial results.

**Condition 13**

Each unit of study allows for no more than one resit per academic year, organised at a time that does not overlap with the regular study programme or regular assessment times.

**Condition 14**

In consultation with the examiners, the programme schedules the assessments and assessment times for each year in a way that encourages students to sit the assessments at the regular assessment times.

## 5. Conditions for assessing work placements and final projects

Key components of the final phase of most programmes are the work placement, thesis, literature thesis and final project. Depending on the structure of a programme and the practices within a particular discipline, these can be separate programme components, or, the final project could comprise a work placement (report), and/or a thesis.

The final project marks the completion of an academic programme, and in that sense, it is a test of academic competence. Given the importance of this component and the specific circumstances involved in its assessment, separate attention is devoted to final projects. The primary focus here is the concluding component of a programme (often a Bachelor's or Master's thesis), but most points also apply to a work placement or thesis that is programmed elsewhere in the curriculum.

Although a final project culminates in a single mark in the vast majority of cases, students are in fact assessed on many aspects at the same time. Moreover, assessment of progress needs to occur at several different times in order to detect potential problems or stagnation at an early stage. This begins with the choice of topic (assessing the academic content of a topic) and progresses via midterm evaluations (is the student on schedule? Is the learning process running smoothly?) to the final assessment (is the final result at a satisfactory level?).

During the final project, the student must obtain the results as independently as possible. Supervision of the student is primarily the responsibility of the supervisor. Naturally, students can consult each other, but no components of a student's final project must be performed by another student. The assistance of thesis agencies is also undesirable. Students must recognise that engaging such forms of support will disadvantage them in the long run.

Due to the nature of the project, detection of third-party involvement is particularly facilitated by regular consultation between the supervisor and the student and mixed assessment of the product and the process. Statistical analyses should be

discussed during interim meetings with the supervisor to give him/her a good impression of the student's ideas. A verbal defence can also give insight into how independently the student obtained the results.

Many factors play a role during the assessment and it therefore needs to be clear in advance which requirements the students and supervisors – as well as the midterm and end products – must meet. The most appropriate way to establish these requirements is by means of a 'graduation handbook' (also referred to as graduation regulations, work placement regulations or thesis regulations). A graduation handbook sets out the information about the final project for each programme as clearly and comprehensively as possible. This information is also made available to external stakeholders, e.g. for final projects conducted outside the UvA.

The graduation handbook addresses the following:

- the scope of the final project and how it fits into the curriculum;
- the admission requirements applicable to the final project;
- the requirements applicable to the topic and how students should go about choosing a topic;
- the requirements for the plan of action, if applicable;
- the final deadline for completion of the examination and procedures for handling extensions;
- agreements concerning supervision and interim evaluations;
- the requirements applicable to end products (report length and structure, layout, duration of presentation, etc.);
- the method used to assess the end product, including the assessment criteria;
- the procedure in the event of complaints or problems.

**Condition 15**

Every degree programme has a graduation handbook that specifies requirements for the final project and agreements concerning the supervision and assessment of the final project.

Because the Bachelor's or Master's project is such an important assessment tool for testing whether a student sufficiently meets the programme's exit qualifications, the NVAO established a separate standard that evaluates the

achieved exit qualifications and – by extension – the quality of the final projects (also known as final assignments). The degree programme must describe how it assesses this exit level. In many cases, the Bachelor's or Master's thesis constitutes the programme's final project. Sometimes, other products can replace the final thesis, such as an examination, a portfolio, a professional product or a combination of the above. The main underlying criteria on which the NVAO focuses during assessment of the final projects are as follows:

- The presence of a graduation handbook and assessment forms: these forms must contain assessment criteria that relate directly to the educational objectives of the final project.
- The practice of having the final project evaluated by at least two people in order to boost reliability. Master's theses are always assessed by more than one person, although for major Bachelor's programmes, regular assessment by a second assessor has proven infeasible. In these cases, the reliability of the final assessment must be safeguarded in a different way, such as by regularly organising calibration sessions with the assessors involved or by randomly conducting double assessments.
- The final project or set of final projects will demonstrate that the graduates satisfy the exit qualifications of the programme.
- The Examinations Board will perform quality checks of random final projects (see Section 7 for more information).

**Condition 16**

The degree programme uses assessment forms for the marking of final projects, in which criteria are specified that are linked to the programme's exit qualifications.

**Condition 17**

Master's theses are always assessed by more than one person. Bachelor's programmes also strive to engage two assessors when establishing the final assessment, or establish a marking method suitable to the degree programme in question in order to boost the reliability of the final assessment.

## 6. Regulations

Each programme must have Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER) and Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board (R&R). There are also statutory provisions that apply to the archiving and storage of test-related documents. This section addresses these matters in turn.

### 6.1.1 Teaching and Examination Regulations and Rules and Guidelines

Students must at all times be fully and clearly informed about the assessment schedule for the programme. The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) refers to two documents in which the rules and regulations regarding testing and assessment should be set out: the Teaching and Examination Regulations and the R&R for the Examinations Board.

They describe the exit qualifications and content of the degree programme. They also regulate the following matters regarding testing and assessment:

- the number and order of tests
- the assessment method
- exemptions and entry requirements
- the announcement of results and the right of inspection
- resit opportunities
- the validity period of examinations
- provisions for students with a disability

The Rules and Guidelines set out procedures for the Examinations Boards with regard to interim and final exams. These serve as a supplement to the Teaching and Examination Regulations. By law, establishing the R&R is the exclusive prerogative of the Examinations Boards. Naturally, Examinations Boards can always ask for advice on the R&R, for example, from the Programme Committee.

Other matters can be included in the assessment policy, which is generally determined at the Faculty level within each college/school.

The Programme Committee and the Faculty Student Council have right of approval on components of the Teaching and Examination Regulations. The Programme Committee has the right to be consulted on components in which it does not have the right of approval.<sup>10</sup>

The UvA has drawn up a model for both the Teaching and Examination Regulations and the Rules and Guidelines. Some of the provisions in the model Teaching and Examination Regulations are binding. The models can be downloaded from the UvA website.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Condition 18**

The programme ensures that students are kept well-informed regarding the content of the Teaching and Examination Regulations, the Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board and the assessment policy.

#### **6.1.2. Fraud and plagiarism**

Standard regulations for UvA students governing fraud and plagiarism apply at the University of Amsterdam. These regulations, which are set by the Executive Board, contain clear definitions as to what constitutes fraud and plagiarism, as well as which measures and sanctions can be imposed.<sup>12</sup> In addition, a website with information on fraud and plagiarism has been set up for students. The website and the relevant regulations can be found on the A-Z list on the students page.

Plagiarism detection software is used in order to check for plagiarism by comparing the submitted work to a wide range of sources. If there is any cross-over with existing texts, the extent of the similarity is expressed as a percentage. More information about detecting plagiarism can be found via the A-Z list on the staff page, under the heading 'Plagiarism checks'. Here, you can also find information on the key users of this software within each faculty.

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<sup>10</sup> The right of approval and the right to be consulted are described in the explanatory notes to the Model Teaching and Examination Regulations.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/organisatie/juridische-zaken/reglementen/reglementen.html>

<sup>12</sup> These regulations can be found via the A-Z list on the staff and students pages on the intranet.

## 6.2. Documentary evidence and archiving

A number of rules and various retention periods, which are specified in the Educational Documents Matrix, apply to the archiving of teaching and assessment documents. To demonstrate the quality of the assessments to internal and external committees, it is advisable to also archive other assessment material (e.g. peer consultation, quality analysis and possible ideas for

### Educational Documents Matrix

Process	Author	Document	Time frame
Appointment of examiners	Examinations Board	Decision to appoint an examiner	30 years
Examinations	Examiner	Examination questions and answer keys	7 years
	Examiner	Test/examination	2 years
	Student	Examination assessment model	2 years
	Examiner	Signed list of test results	7 years
Practical tests	Student	Reports of work placements, practical training and excursions of uitspraak	2 years following graduation
	Examiner	Assessment	2 years following graduation
End products (theses)	Students	Theses or other end products	Permanent (digital documents), paper documents (if not stored digitally) 7 years
	Examiner	Assessment	2 years following graduation
	Examinations Board	Assessment form for end product	7 years, if digital, in PDF format
	Programme director	Graduation handbook	Permanent
Assessment evaluations	Programme Committee	Reports of assessment evaluations	2 years
	Examinations Board	Random evaluations of final assignments	2 years
Fraud and plagiarism checks	Student	Fraud and plagiarism declarations	2 years following graduation
	Examinations Board	Decisions concerning handling of fraud/plagiarism reports	2 years for temporary sanction, 30 years if the sanction is expulsion

<b>Process</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Time frame</b>
Appeals concerning examinations	Student	Replies to appeals	6 weeks following decision
	Examinations Board	Defences or settlements	6 weeks following decision
	COBEX	Requests for defence or decisions	Permanent

improvement). Many documents have a retention period of seven years, a term partly established in compliance with accreditation frameworks.

The degree programme is responsible for managing the relevant assessment material. These management activities are the responsibility of the relevant programme administration, who can also request assistance in this matter from the DIV department.

More information about retention periods can be found via the A-Z list on the staff page, under the heading ‘Records and Information Services’.

#### **Condition 19**

The programme ensures an appropriate archiving system for all the relevant assessment material.

## 7. Conditions for the quality assurance of assessment and testing

A good assessment policy and good assessment procedure will not be effective unless there is proper involvement at all levels in implementing the policy. For this to happen, tasks and responsibilities need to be clearly defined and an effective evaluation system must be in place.

### 7.1 Responsibilities

The tasks and responsibilities with respect to the assessment process, as assigned within the UvA, are outlined below.

#### **The Executive Board:**

encourages a teaching and testing culture that embraces a ‘now-or-never’ approach;

- provides frameworks that the assessment policy of a faculty/programme must comply with;
- supports examiners so that they are able to perform their testing and assessment duties in a professional manner. This means incorporating into staff and training policy the principle that examiners can gain qualifications in the area of assessment. To this end the Board will ensure a suitable range of training courses;
- is responsible for a sound infrastructure surrounding the implementation of assessment;
- supports Examinations Boards by providing information and organising knowledge sharing.

The training of new examiners in, for example, the area of assessment and testing is incorporated (and hence the basis of this training is defined in) the various Basic Teaching Qualification (BKO) programmes. Many other training and refresher courses in the field of assessment and testing are also available.

**The dean:**

- establishes the Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER) annually, bearing in mind the provisions contained in the model Teaching and Examination; Regulations and the guidelines of the Executive Board;
- sets up an Examinations Board for each programme or cluster of programmes;
- appoints the members on the basis of their expertise (on the recommendation of the College or Graduate School director/programme director);
- ensures that the independent and expert functioning of the Examinations Board is guaranteed.

**The College or Graduate School director/programme director:**

- is responsible for formulating the exit qualifications for the programme and ensures that these satisfy the relevant criteria, i.e. that they conform to the Dublin Descriptors and to requirements from the national and international discipline/professional field;
- is responsible for the content of the programme – which courses, which scope, which period;
- ensures that an examiner is involved with every module;
- ensures – in consultation with the examiners – that the stated exit qualifications are achieved by means of the content of the curriculum (courses, educational objectives, etc.);
- establishes the assessment policy, incorporating recommendations from the Examinations Board;
- establishes a graduation handbook.

**The Examinations Board:**

The tasks of the Examinations Board outlined below are confined to those aimed specifically at the assessment of course components or the programme as a whole. An overview of all the statutory duties of the Examinations Board can be found in Appendix 7. The Examinations Board:

- is responsible for the final assessment as to whether a student has fulfilled the exit qualifications of the programme;
- ensures the quality of assessments and exams via evaluations (random or otherwise);
- grants exemptions from taking one or more examinations;
- safeguards the quality of the organisation and procedures relating to examinations;

- appoints examiners to administer the tests and determine the results;
- can set guidelines and instructions for the assessment and marking of examinations in accordance with the Teaching and Examination Regulations;
- determines the rules and guidelines.

If necessary, the Examinations Board can delegate some of its tasks to an assessment committee under its jurisdiction. The Examinations Board must possess a sufficient level of subject-matter expertise and testing and assessment expertise.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the Examinations Board must possess knowledge of all relevant rules and regulations.

#### **The Programme Committee:**

The Programme Committee has the right of approval on components of the Teaching and Examination Regulations and the right to be consulted on other components. In addition, the Programme Committee reviews the implementation of the Teaching and Examination Regulations annually. More specifically, this means that the Programme Committee will give advice regarding the effect of the assessment and testing programme on the degree programme's study load and quality. The Programme Committee can use the teaching evaluations made available to them in order to identify problems relating to assessment and testing.

#### **Examiners:**

- are primarily responsible for test content, format and quality;
- ensure that a test satisfies the quality criteria of validity, reliability and transparency;
- ensure that there is clear communication to students about assessment and testing;
- are responsible for giving effective feedback to students on their performance.

Monitoring the academic content of curriculum components is a recurring point of discussion in the various degree programme assessments. This relates primarily to work placements and final projects that are conducted externally

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<sup>13</sup> Unless this expertise is present within the assessment committee under the jurisdiction of the Examinations Board.

(rather than at one of the UvA's research institutes), but sometimes also to courses that are given mainly by guest lecturers. In such cases, the supervisor or guest lecturer is often not an examiner employed by the UvA. To guarantee the academic content of these curriculum components, an examiner appointed by an Examinations Board must always carry final responsibility for the module. Further qualification criteria for examiners can be found in the Examinations Board Guide.

### **Department chair:**

The department chair is responsible for implementing staff and training policies with respect to examiners in his or her department. This mainly involves the planning (content and weight) of tasks, training, and assessing a lecturer's performance. In this regard, he/she liaises with the College or Graduate School director.

## **7.2 Evaluation of assessment quality**

One of the tasks of the Examinations Board laid down in the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) is to monitor the quality of assessment and testing. To this end, it is important for the Examinations Board to regularly take note of the tests administered in the programme. After all, it is 'the body that determines in an objective and expert manner whether a student meets the criteria set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER) with regard to the knowledge, understanding and skills required for obtaining a degree'.<sup>14</sup> This paragraph describes a number of methods in which quality assessment can be organised.

Often, a separate assessment committee containing a testing and assessment expert regularly evaluates the quality of the assessments. This arrangement could offer a solution, provided that the committee functions under the umbrella of the Examinations Board, since the Board carries ultimate responsibility for monitoring quality.

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<sup>14</sup> Higher Education and Research Act (WHW), Article 7.12 (2).

### 7.2.1. Evaluation of tests, work placement reports and theses

The Examinations Board guarantees the level and quality of the examinations. The Examinations Board can fulfil this responsibility in a number of ways, such as assessing the quality themselves (based on random samples or otherwise) or having such assessment prepared by an assessment committee or a testing and assessment expert. The Examinations Board will provide reports on these quality guarantee duties to the programme director, but is not responsible for actively improving assessment quality.<sup>15</sup>

It is advisable to create an evaluation timetable that ensures all individual assessments and the entire assessment and testing programme is periodically evaluated at least once every six years.

The Examinations Board or the assessment committee must be able to use an assessment record to evaluate the assessment quality. Normally speaking, the assessment record consists of:

- the course manual (including the assessment criteria, submission deadlines for assessment work, weighting of assessment components, etc.);
- the tests and test instructions;
- the assessment model;
- the marks for the various assessment components (partial marks and final marks);
- the pass/fail threshold (cut-off score);
- any evaluation results and the lecturer's self-assessment;
- (if applicable) adjusted assessments, criteria, or deadlines, or an alternative assessment model for students with a disability or chronic illness.

In order to help safeguard the assessment quality, assessment records can be maintained for each module. In this regard, examiners must be sufficiently facilitated to create and store the assessment records. To limit the administrative burden involved, requests to access assessment records can be limited to modules that are actually evaluated.

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<sup>15</sup> Van de Veen, Pol and Moerkerke (2018). *De toetscommissie: borgen of zorgen? De rol en positie van de toetscommissie in het bekostigd hoger onderwijs*. ('Assessment Committees: The role and position of assessment committees in publicly funded higher education') *Hoger Onderwijs Management*, 2, 11-14.

The evaluation looks not only at the validity, reliability and transparency of an assessment, but also at the content. An evaluation of content is mainly important for course components in which the focus is on the testing of skills (essays, theses, work placement reports, etc.), because the validity and reliability of these components are generally more difficult to establish than for a written exam.

The evaluation of assessment can occur in a more targeted fashion if the programme takes into account information about pass/fail percentages and average marks when selecting the tests. This latter information is available at the UvA through UvAdata.

External assessments often emphasise the involvement of Examinations Boards in the assessment of Bachelor's or Master's theses. Checks of final projects are increasingly preferred by Examinations Boards, as individually supervised theses increase the risk of subjectivity during assessment of the theses. In this regard, Examinations Boards must not assume the role of assessor; they must arrive at an assessment of the quality of the final projects and/or whether final projects have been correctly allocated a pass. Examinations Boards do not allocate marks: they simply verify (based on random samples) whether the final projects have been correctly marked.

### **7.2.2. Regular teaching evaluations**

The regular teaching evaluations (i.e. course evaluations) within UVA Q often focus on testing and assessment within a course. Although the appraisal of course evaluations is first and foremost the job of the Programme Committee, the Examinations Board may use the information contained in the evaluation as input to look more closely at how a course is assessed. Another option is to agree on a procedure whereby the Programme Committee involves the Examinations Board in its recommendations in cases where an evaluation reveals that the aspects of assessment and testing have scored below par.

### **7.2.3. Survey of examiners**

Some Examinations Boards have had positive results with surveys conducted among examiners, the purpose of which is to paint a clearer picture of assessment policy. Naturally, more interactive methods can also be employed for the same purpose, such as intervision meetings or focus group discussions, possibly combined with training courses in the field of assessment and testing.

#### 7.2.4. Evaluation of complaints and appeals

Evaluations of complaints and appeals lodged with the Examinations Board can also yield information about the quality of testing and assessment within the programme. If this evaluation reveals a downward trend, improvement measures can be taken where necessary.

#### 7.2.5. Evaluation of the entire assessment and testing programme

As well as evaluating and safeguarding the quality of individual assessments, the Examinations Board also monitors the quality of the assessment and testing programme as a whole. In such cases, it focuses on the coherence and comprehensiveness of the entire package of assessments and whether they sufficiently assess the established exit qualifications.

Examinations Boards can fulfil this responsibility in a variety of ways, such as asking the programme director to systematically link exit qualifications to curriculum components. This is primarily the responsibility of the programme director, who must ensure the coherence and logical structure of the knowledge, understanding and skills taught as part of the curriculum. Subsequently, the examiners determine how the exit qualifications will be assessed, and the quality of these assessments will be evaluated during the regular assessments conducted by the Examinations Board as described above. Assessment days or lecturer days can be used effectively to examine – by means of peer review – whether the exit qualifications have been properly crystallised into the assessment formats.

Another way to do this more directly and flexibly is for the Examinations Board to request the formulation of an assessment plan that clarifies – at the curriculum level – how the exit qualifications will be assessed at certain moments. Assessment plans give Examinations Boards an overview of the various assessment formats used to evaluate the exit qualifications, the complexity of these formats and their consistency with the logical structure of the programme.

#### **Condition 20**

The Examinations Board guarantees the quality of the assessment and testing programme at both the programme level and at the level of the individual modules.

## 8. Computer-based testing

Assessments can be administered in a variety of ways. The Assessment Policy Framework sets out the conditions that apply within the UvA to summative assessments, regardless of whether they are administered orally or in writing. All conditions in this framework are thus also fully applicable to computer-based testing.<sup>16</sup> Special situations can arise with regard to computer-based testing, which may require additional policies. For this reason, different preconditions apply than those described later in this section. This section is based on testing applications used within a summative setting, which enable assessments to be conducted in a controlled manner.

Computer-based testing is employed for a number of different reasons: It offers new opportunities, such as the use of high-quality audio and visual material. It has been found that students give better formulated answers to essay questions (as they are used to being able to edit their text), and legibility of the submitted work is no longer a problem. Combining the testing software with tools such as Excel or SPSS enables digital skills to be assessed in a more authentic manner.

Computer-based also solves handwriting-related problems (legibility is no longer an issue and marking is therefore easier). It also enables students to edit their work, just as they are able to do for assignments conducted in non-exam conditions. Furthermore, the digital creation of item banks enables randomisation of the order of the questions and – if desired – the answer options, in order to generate different variations of the same test content. In theory, it is also possible to randomly select questions from the item bank in accordance with the test blueprint. This is however a tricky process and must therefore be done with great care and consideration.

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<sup>16</sup> Formative computer-based testing can be conducted time-independently and location-independently and can be more solidly integrated into study programmes thanks to the quick processing time. Due to the objective of the Assessment Policy Framework, the formative assessments will not be addressed here.

In some cases, computer-based testing can also facilitate the assessment of students with a disability (large font size, speech recognition, etc.).

When large numbers of students are involved, computer-based testing saves time during the marking and feedback processes and enables results to be communicated to students quicker. The nature of the feedback can be quantitative, e.g. by giving students an overview of the questions they answered correctly or incorrectly, but it can also contain further recommendations regarding the content of their answer, perhaps with reference to additional literature.

Computer-based testing also provides greater analysis opportunities: when results are available online, it is easy to create an item analysis to assess the quality and reliability of the test questions and to quickly implement corrections.

The UvA has set up computer-based testing rooms at the REC and in the IWO building, among others. In these computer-based testing rooms, the right conditions have been created for administering summative assessments, such as suitable computers and software, fraud prevention measures and the ability to make back-ups and archive files. It is preferable that summative computer-based tests take place in these centralised testing rooms. Tests can also be organised locally using the assessment facilities supplied by the service provider (special laptops).

Examiners can call on expert support staff for the preparation and administration of computer-based tests. It is vital that the support staff are involved in this process in a timely manner.

Computer-based testing also demands particular skills from examiners, students and invigilators. For certain testing applications, a brief training course is required before the examiner is granted authorisation to use the application. These training courses can be provided by the local contact person for computer-based testing. Examiners are granted a large number of authorisations for the use of certain testing applications, which can pose risks if the examiner in question is not sufficiently trained (for example, the risk of unintentionally adjusting vital settings).

The students must have had sufficient training, and must have tried out the test application (e.g. for a formative test). In any event, the students should not be using the testing tool for the first time during a summative test. Invigilators must have a basic working knowledge of the technology that will be used during the examination, as this will enable them to recognise undesirable actions/fraud and distinguish them from technical issues. Regular identity and fraud checks are by no means redundant with computer-based testing. It is advisable to make sure that sufficient support staff are available on call while the computer-based test is being run.

Only testing applications that have been approved for use within the UvA may be used for computer-based testing. Examiners can request permission to use an alternative testing application via the local contact person. This approval process will firstly examine whether the desired functionalities are already offered via one of the existing testing applications, before shifting the focus to whether or not the application complies with the security criteria. The process of assessing an application takes approximately eight weeks.

You can find additional information at: <https://medewerker.uva.nl/content-secured/az/digitaal-toetsen/digitaal-toetsen.html>

This page specifies all of the testing applications approved for use within the UvA as well as a list of the faculty contact persons. These staff members can help and advise you to engage the right support staff and to register for training courses/workshops.

### **Additional criteria for computer-based testing**

All assessment criteria specified in the Assessment Policy Framework apply equally to online testing. However, online testing involves a number of aspects that require specific additional conditions.

Naturally, these conditions apply to summative online testing.

**Condition 21**

The examiner only administers computer-based tests via the applications approved for use within the UvA, using the assessment facilities provided by the service provider.

**Condition 22**

Examiners making use of computer-based testing must be given sufficient support in using the application designed for this purpose.

It is important that every test version administered is archived, including any adjustments.

## Attachment 1.

# Overview of conditions

## Condition

## Responsibility

### Condition 1

The programme ensures that explicit and consistent links are made between the Dublin Descriptors, the exit qualifications, the educational objectives of curriculum components and educational/assessment methods.

**Programme director**

### Condition 2

Examiners ensure that the learning objectives and the type of assessment for a curriculum component are communicated before classes start and that the assessment instructions are clear and comprehensive.

**Examiner**

### Condition 3

Examiners apply the four-eyes principle during the creation of tests – at the very least for new courses and new assessment formats – in order to optimise the quality of the test.

**Examiner**

### Condition 4

The programme director ensures that there are adequate facilities for administering the test by making timely agreements with the departments responsible.

**Programme director**

### Condition 5

The Examinations Board establishes an invigilation protocol outlining the preconditions for exam supervision (the number of invigilators per room or student, requirements for invigilators) and the duties, powers and responsibilities of the examiners and invigilators.

**Examinations Board**

**Condition****Responsibility****Condition 6**

The Teaching and Examination Regulations and the Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board specify how and by whom decisions are made regarding alternative assessment opportunities for students with a disability or chronic illness.

**Programme Director/  
Dean/Examinations  
Board**

**Condition 7**

An assessment model is formulated for every test. The test and the test results will then be evaluated retrospectively by the examiner in light of the teaching provided.

**Examiner**

**Condition 8**

The examiner clearly explains to students how cut-off scores are determined and which grading schemes are used to determine interim and final results. The Examinations Board can set guidelines for the assessment and marking of examinations in accordance with the Teaching and Examination Regulations.

**Examiner/Examinations  
Board**

**Condition 9**

Tests are assessed within a predefined time period and made available for inspection. The procedure complies with the rules for the protection of personal data. The programme will ensure the students are provided with adequate feedback.

**Examiner/ programme  
director**

**Condition 10**

Assessment of a unit of study, particularly in the first year of a Bachelor's programme, is evenly spread out across several assessment times during a study period.

**Programme director**

**Condition 11**

When scheduling the various assessment times, clashes between assessments for different units of study should be avoided.

**Programme director**

**Condition****Responsibility****Condition 12**

When scheduling the tests, the programme ensures a limited number of final assessments per year.

**Programme director****Condition 13**

Each unit of study allows for no more than one resit per academic year, organised at a time that does not overlap with the regular study programme or regular assessment times.

**Programme director****Condition 14**

In consultation with the examiners, the programme schedules the assessments and assessment times for each year in a way that encourages students to sit the assessments at the regular assessment times.

**Programme director****Condition 15**

Every degree programme has a graduation handbook that specifies requirements for the final project and agreements concerning the supervision and assessment of the final project.

**Programme director****Condition 16**

The degree programme uses assessment forms for the marking of final projects, in which criteria are specified that are linked to the programme's exit qualifications.

**Programme director****Condition 17**

Master's theses are always assessed by more than one person. Bachelor's programmes also strive to engage two assessors when establishing the final assessment, or establish a marking method suitable to the degree programme in question in order to boost the reliability of the final assessment.

**Programme director/  
examiner**

**Condition****Responsibility****Condition 18**

The programme ensures that students are kept well-informed regarding the content of the Teaching and Examination Regulations, the Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board and the assessment policy.

**Programme director****Condition 19**

The programme ensures an appropriate archiving system for all the relevant assessment material.

**Programme director****Condition 20**

The Examinations Board guarantees the quality of the assessment and testing programme at both the programme level and at the level of the individual modules. opleidingsniveau.

**Examinations Board****Condition 21**

The examiner only administers computer-based tests via the applications approved for use within the UvA, using the assessment facilities provided by the service provider.

**Examiner/ programme director****Condition 22**

Examiners making use of computer-based testing must be given sufficient support in using the application designed for this purpose.

**Programme director**

**Colophon**

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