

The Examination Board's Rules and Guidelines 2020-2021

**THE EXAMINATION BOARD'S RULES
AND GUIDELINES**

2020-2021

Examination Boards
Faculty of Science



VRIJE
UNIVERSITEIT
AMSTERDAM

Faculteit der
Bètawetenschappen

The Examination Board's Rules and Guidelines (2020-2021)

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1. Scope of application

The Rules and Guidelines referred to in Article 7.12b, third paragraph, of the Higher Education and Research Act are adopted by the Examination Board and further referred to as the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Board.

These Rules and Guidelines apply to the examinations and final degree assessments in the degree programmes of the Bachelor's Colleges and Graduate Schools in all areas of the Faculty of Science: Health and Life Sciences (HLS), Earth, Ecological and Environmental Sciences (EEE), Information Sciences (IS) and Natural Sciences and Mathematics (NSM).

These regulations apply to all students taking a degree programme during this academic year, irrespective of the moment at which they commenced the degree programme.

2. Definition of terms and general information

1. The terms defined in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER) that apply to the relevant study programme also apply to these Rules and Guidelines. The other terms have the meanings ascribed to them by the Higher Education and Research Act. Below is a list of key terms and their definitions within the context of this document:

- 1) *Examination Board or sub-board*: the Examination Board for one or more of the faculty's degree programmes;
- 2) *Faculty Examination Board*: an overarching Examination Board focused on procedural harmonization of the sub-boards' methods, approving reports of the

Assessment Committee and constructing the Rules and Guidelines. All members of the Examination Board for one or more of the faculty's degree programmes are also members of the Faculty Examination Board.

2. In case that a clause in these regulations conflicts with a clause in the Teaching and Examination Regulations applicable to the relevant degree programme, the provisions of the Teaching and Examination Regulations will take precedence.

3. Composition of the Examination Board

1. The Examination Board is composed on the basis of the Faculty Regulations. The Faculty of Science has two Faculty Examination Boards: the HLS-EEE Faculty Examination Board (encompassing Health & Life Sciences and Earth, Ecological & Environmental Sciences) and the NSM-IS Faculty Examination Board (encompassing Information Sciences and Natural Sciences & Mathematics). The HLS-EEE Faculty Examination Board has nine sub-boards and the NSM-IS Faculty Examination Board has seven sub-boards. The Examination Board for specific degree programmes (or a cluster of degree programmes) consists of a maximum of four members, all experts in the field of the relevant programme(s). At least one member should belong to the teaching staff of the programme or one of the programmes to which these Rules and Guidelines apply. The members of the various Examination Boards together form the Faculty Examination Board. The Faculty Examination Board should contain at least one member who is not affiliated with the relevant degree programme(s). Members of the Executive Board or persons who have other financial responsibilities within the institution are excluded from serving on the Examination Board.
2. The members of the Examination Board are appointed by the Faculty Board.
3. The Examination Board appoints one of its members to act as chairperson (external members are not eligible for this position). The chairperson appoints another member to replace him/her in the case of absence. The chairperson of the Faculty Examination Board should preferably not be a member of one of the sub-boards. The administrative secretary is responsible for the procedural matters of the Examination Board.
4. Before a member is appointed, the Faculty Board will consult the Examination Board regarding the proposed appointment.
5. A member of an Examination Board is appointed for a period of three years and may only be reappointed twice.
6. The Faculty Board is responsible for guaranteeing that the Examination Board operates in a competent and independent manner.

4. Responsibilities of the Examination Board

The responsibilities of the Examination Board are regulated by law. These include drawing up rules for the performance of duties and responsibilities and taking measures concerning:

- a. determining in an objective and competent manner whether or not a student meets the conditions set in the Teaching and Examination Regulations relating to the knowledge, insight and skills necessary to be awarded a degree;
- b. maintaining and assuring the quality of all examinations and final degree assessments;
- c. determining guidelines and instructions to assess and determine the results of examinations and final degree assessments within the framework of the Teaching and Examination Regulations;
- d. granting exemptions for one or more examinations;
- e. Extending the validity period of an examination or an exemption in a motivated

- manner;
- f. fraud;
- g. appointing examiners to conduct examinations and determine their results;
- h. granting degree certificates, including a diploma supplement, as proof that the student has successfully completed his or her degree programme;
- i. granting permission to students to take part in a free-choice study programme and the accompanying final degree assessment which leads to the awarding of a degree;
- j. issuing a transcript of the results attained by students who have successfully completed more than one examination, but are not eligible for a degree certificate
- k. drawing up an annual report on its own activities

5. Working method of the Examination Board

1. The Examination Board normally meets once a month (with the exception of July and August) or as often as its chairperson deems necessary. The meeting schedule will be published in time. The meetings are not held in public. The Faculty Examination Board meets at least five times a year.
2. The Faculty Board can add an administrative secretary to the Examination Board.
3. In the event of a request or complaint where a member of the Examination Board is involved in, this will be dealt with in the absence of the member concerned.
4. The request or complaint must always include a justification of the request or a description of the complaint.
5. The Examination Board will make a decision within six weeks of receiving a request. This period may be extended, if the Examination Board informs all parties concerned in writing.
6. Decisions of the Faculty Examination Board require 1 vote per sub-board member. Decisions of the Faculty Examination Board will be taken only when half of the sub-boards are represented.
7. The HLS-EEE Faculty Examination Board has nine sub-boards for Bachelor's and Master's programmes in the following fields:
 - Earth Sciences
 - Biology and Ecology
 - Biomedical Sciences
 - Biomolecular Sciences
 - Environment and Resource Management
 - Health and Life
 - Health Sciences
 - Management Policy Analysis and Entrepreneurship in the Health and Life Sciences & Global Health
 - Neurosciences
8. The NSM-IS Faculty Examination Board has seven sub-boards for Bachelor's and Master's programmes in the following fields:
 - Mathematics & Business Analytics
 - Chemistry
 - Pharmaceutical Sciences
 - Computer Science
 - Physics and Astronomy
 - Medical Sciences
 - Science, Business & InnovationThe sub-boards of NSM-IS are disjunct..
9. Sub-boards are mentioned accordingly. Every sub-board has at least 2 members and no more than 4 members.

10. In the interest of procedural matters, non-voting members can be added to the sub-board.
11. A chairperson and a secretary are elected by the own members of the sub-board, they will function as the executive board.
12. Day-to-day matters in the Faculty Examination Board are settled in the sub-boards.
13. Decisions of the sub board are taken by majority vote.

6. Registration for examinations

1. Registration for written examinations is subject to rules and regulations¹. The Examination Board can set specific additional rules with regard to the organization and procedures associated with administering examinations and final degree assessments.
2. It is not possible to register after the deadline. A student who is not able to register before the deadline due to exceptional personal circumstances may submit an appeal on the basis of the hardship clause.

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

1. None of the individual questions and assignments in the examination will relate to anything other than the previously announced examination material. The main points of the examination material are announced prior to the start of the programme component that prepares students to sit the examination in question. The exact scope of the examination material is published no later than one month before the exam is administered.
2. In the event of a resit in another academic year, the student will sit an examination based on the material set for that examination in the academic year in question, unless the Examination Board decides otherwise (at the request of the examiner).
3. The Examination Board monitors the quality of examinations and final degree assessments.

8. Completing examinations in other ways

1. At an examiner's request, the Examination Board may permit a different form of examination than that stipulated in the study guide.
2. At the student's request, the Examination Board may permit a different form of examination from that stipulated in the study guide.

9. Oral examinations

1. Unless otherwise specified by the Teaching and Examination Regulations for the relevant educational unit, no more than one student will take an oral examination at the same time.
2. The sub-board or the examiner may decide in an exceptional case that an oral examination is not public.
3. A student may submit a motivated request to the Examination Board to deviate from the requirement for a public oral examination. The sub-board will weigh the student's interests against the interests of administering a public examination.
4. An oral examination will be taken in the presence of a second lecturer/examiner.
5. In order to participate in an oral examination, students must show valid proof of registration and a valid ID.

¹ Registration deadlines for educational activities and examinations 2017-2018

10. Right of inspection and post-examination discussion

1. When a student is hindered to take note of his assessed work within the period where the TER allows this for, he will get an opportunity to inspect this at another moment.
2. In case the student appeals against the way his examination was assessed, he will have the opportunity to receive a copy of his assessed work.

11. Quality assurance

1. Quality is assured in accordance with the provisions of the Guide for Examination Boards (Handreiking Examencommissies).
2. The Examination Board applies the Assessment Policy Framework (Kader Toetsbeleid) to ensure the quality of examinations and final degree assessments.
3. Each exam will have such length as to ensure that students to reasonable standards have enough time in order to answer the questions.

12a. Procedure for components of written exams

1. In order to participate in an examination, students must show a valid proof of registration (university registration card) and a valid ID with a signature and a photo that resembles the individual in question.
 - a. If a student cannot produce valid proof of ID, as stated in paragraph 1, the student will be excluded from the exam, or the exam submitted by the student will be declared invalid afterwards.
 - b. Participating in a digital exam is not possible without the personal VUNetID and password of the student. The student is responsible him- or herself for having these available.
2. The Examination Board ensures that enough invigilators are appointed for the written examination and that these individuals will ensure that the examination is conducted properly.
- 2a. The examiner may, when using a common examination room, ask the central organization unit to ensure that there are enough invigilators present.
3. Students are obliged to follow the instructions of the invigilator(s).

12b. Procedure for practicals

1. The member of teaching staff responsible for the practical, the fieldwork, field trip or for managing the research group ensures that, for the practical experiments and practical sessions, assistants will be appointed where necessary to monitor that the practical, fieldwork, field trip or research activity goes well.
2. At the request of the Examination Board or someone acting on the Examination Board's behalf, students are obliged to identify themselves by presenting a valid proof of registration.
3. Students are obliged to follow the instructions given by the person in charge of the practical, both before and during the practical.
4. Any student who fails to follow up the provisions included or intended in paragraphs 2 and 3 may be excluded from further participation in the relevant practical by the Examination Board or someone acting on the Examination Board's behalf. As a consequence of this exclusion, no result will be issued. Before the Examination Board decides on exclusion, the student in question will be given the opportunity to be heard.
5. If a risk assessment was drawn up for the practical exercise, the student must sign this document before the start of the course. A student who does not sign this may be excluded from the course.

13. Graduation

1. The Examination Board will determine the result of the final degree assessment once it has established that the student has passed all of the educational units in the

programme. The final degree assessment takes place on the date on which the final examination has been successfully taken, unless the final degree assessment includes an administrative procedure to be carried out by the Examination Board itself.

2. The student can make a substantiated request to the Examination Board not to proceed with issuing a degree certificate. Any such request must be submitted within 10 working days of the student having been informed of the intended graduation date or has met the requirements to graduate. The Examination Board allows graduation to be postponed by up to one year from the original date of graduation, in response to a substantiated request.

14 Free curriculum

1. Subject to certain conditions, the student has the option to compile his own educational program that deviates from the educational programs prescribed by the study program.
2. The composition of such a program requires the prior approval of the most appropriate Examination Board.
3. The free curriculum is composed by the student from the educational units offered at the VU University or another higher education institution and must at least have the size, breadth and depth of a regular bachelor's program. The student must ensure that the proposed bachelor's program allows admission to at least one master's program. In doing so, the student is not obliged to take the relevant master's programme.

15. Degree classifications (*judicia*)

1. If a student completes the programme with outstanding results, the classification 'cum laude' may be awarded.
2. Cum laude on the Faculty of Science Bachelor's programme
The classification 'cum laude' is awarded to students who have met the following conditions:
 - a. all grades must be 7.0 or higher;
 - b. the weighted average of all degree components must be 8.0 or higher; for NSM-IS, the grade for the final Bachelor's project does not count towards the weighted average. Extracurricular grades do not count towards the average.
 - c. for NSM-IS, the grade for the final project on the Bachelor's programme must be 8.0 or higher;
 - d. at HLS-EEE, exemptions are granted up to a maximum of 60 credits and at NSM-IS, exemptions can make up no more than 20% of the standard number of credits to be obtained.
 - e. all grades must be obtained within four years of starting the programme.
 - f. Students who started their studies before the first of September 2018 have to meet the requirements of the cum laude classification of their starting year
3. 'Cum laude' on the Faculty of Science Master's programme
The classification 'cum laude' is awarded to students who have met the following conditions:
 - a. a grade of 7.0 or higher for all components;
 - b. the weighted average for all degree components must be 8.0 or higher; at NSM-IS, the grade for the final Master's project does not count towards the weighted average. Extracurricular grades do not count towards the average.
 - c. at NSM-IS, the grade for the graduation project must be 8.0 or higher;
 - d. at NSM-IS, exemptions make up no more than 50% of the standard number of credits to be obtained.
 - e. at HLS-EEE, exemptions are granted up to a maximum of 20% of the total number of credits;

- f. for a two-year Master's, all grades must be obtained within three years after starting the programme, while for a one-year Master's all grades must be obtained within two years after starting the programme.
 4. No additional degree classification (e.g. cum laude) will be awarded if a student is guilty of fraud.
 5. As long as it presents arguments for its case, the Examination Board may deviate from the criteria stated in paragraphs 2 and 3, either to the advantage or the disadvantage of the student.
- 16. Degree certificate and statement**
1. The Examination Board grants a degree certificate as proof that the student has passed his/her final degree assessment. The Examination Board will add a diploma supplement to the degree certificate, which will provide information on the nature and content of the completed degree program. The diploma supplement is drawn up in Dutch or English and complies with the European format. Extra-curricular courses that have been passed outside of the VU, will not be included in the diploma supplement.
 2. A degree certificate will only be issued once the Executive Board has certified that the student has met all procedural requirements, including payment of tuition fees.
 3. Those who have passed more than one examination but who are not entitled to a certificate as referred to in paragraph 1 may, on request, receive a statement issued by the relevant Examination Board which at least states the examinations passed, and is accompanied by a specification of the educational units involved, the number of credits thus obtained and when the examination results were achieved.
- 17. Exemption (supplementary to the Teaching and Examination Regulations) and replacing assignments**
1. A request for exemption from an examination must be submitted to the Examination Board before the start of the relevant degree component.
 2. After consulting the relevant examiner, the Examination Board can grant exemption from an examination, practical or fieldwork based on the following:
 - a. a successfully completed examination, practical or fieldwork project in higher education in the Netherlands or elsewhere, which corresponds in terms of content, level and study load with the component from which an exemption is being requested; or
 - b. knowledge and/or skills of a similar content, level and scope gained outside higher education.
 3. 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. Students can request that the Examination Board grant them exemption from participation in practical components or give them a replacement assignment. The grounds for granting such exemptions include conscientious objections. The Examination Board determines in consultation with the examiner which supplementary requirements the student has to meet. Student must always meet the learning outcomes for the programme.
 5. An exemption based on a course from the programme that gave the student admission to the degree programme cannot be granted.
 6. No exemptions can be granted for theses or final projects.
- 18. Exemption from practical training and tutorials**
- In exceptional cases, the Examination Board can, upon request, exempt a student or partially exempt a student from the obligation to participate in a practical training or tutorial. The Examination Board decides how the student can demonstrate that he / she

has the required academic skills.

19. Fraud and plagiarism in examinations and final degree assessments

1. Fraud and plagiarism are defined as any act or omission by a student that partially or entirely precludes an accurate assessment of their knowledge, understanding and skills, or those of another student.
2. Fraud includes:
 - a. being in possession of tools or resources (pre-programmed calculator, mobile phone, books, syllabi, notes, etc.) which are not explicitly permitted during the examination;
 - b. copying from or exchanging information with another student during the examination;
 - c. assuming someone else's identity during the examination;
 - d. allowing someone else to assume your identity during the examination;
 - e. obtaining the examination questions before the date or time when the examination is scheduled to take place;
 - f. changing, extending or amending a section of the examination after it has been submitted for a final assessment.
3. Plagiarism includes the following:
 - a. using or copying another person's written work, data or ideas without providing full and appropriate source references;
 - b. not indicating clearly in the text, for example through the use of quotation marks or a particular layout, that text is being cited directly from another author, even where correct source references have been included;
 - c. paraphrasing the content of other people's texts without sufficient referencing of sources;
 - d. submitting a text (wholly or in part) that has previously been submitted for an earlier assignment for a separate degree component;
 - e. copying work from other students and presenting this work as one's own;
 - f. submitting assignments that have been obtained from a commercial agency or that have been written by someone else (whether or not in exchange for payment).
4. Electronic detection software programs may be used to detect plagiarism in texts. When submitting a text, the student implicitly consents to the text being entered into the database of the detection program concerned.

20. Procedures and penalties

1. If the examiner ascertains, or has good reason to suppose, that plagiarism or another form of fraud has taken place, he/she must report this to the Examination Board in writing immediately.
2. The Examination Board will inform the student of this report in writing and invite the student to a hearing about the alleged plagiarism or other form of fraud, and will take a decision based on the documentary evidence and, if possible, the information provided by the student at the hearing. Further information may be required from the examiner.
3. If the Examination Board is convinced that plagiarism or another form of fraud has been committed, a penalty will be imposed.
4. In cases of plagiarism and other forms of fraud, the Examination Board can – with due regard to the principles of legal fairness and proportionality – declare the examination or the assignment to which the misconduct relates to be invalid or assign a grade of 0, and may also exclude the student from the next examination opportunity for that particular course or subject.
5. In the event of serious or repeated academic misconduct or plagiarism, the Examination Board may exclude the student from participating in one or more examinations or final degree assessments at VU Amsterdam for a maximum of one year.
6. If very serious fraud or plagiarism is identified, the Examination Board can advise the

- Executive Board (through the Faculty Board) that the relevant student's registration should be terminated permanently.
7. The Examination Board grants no exemptions from examinations which are taken at another faculty during the period when the student is debarred from sitting examinations.
 8. The student can appeal directly to the Examination Appeals Board against the decision made by the Examination Board within six weeks of the announcement of the decision.
 9. In urgent cases relating to fraud and plagiarism which are not covered by these Rules and Guidelines, the Examination Board will make a decision with due regard to the principles of an appropriate procedure.
 10. If a student takes a course at another degree programme and fraud is detected or suspected, the Examination Board responsible for the course in relation to which the fraudulent conduct has been detected, will investigate the suspected fraud by the student. The Examination Board of the degree programme that the student is enrolled in, will be informed of the findings. The latter Examination Board determines whether, and what measure is imposed on the student, in the event of fraud or plagiarism.

21. Irregularities

If the Examination Board concludes that an examination or one or more components of an examination were not completed in the prescribed manner, or that an examination or examination component was not administered correctly, it can declare the examination, or the relevant component, invalid.

22. Retention periods

1. Bachelor's and Master's theses and final assignments are retained for a period of at least seven years.
2. Exam question will be retained for a period of at least 7 years, counting from the first of January thereafter. Solutions written by students (including assignments and other written materials for which a full or partial grade has been given) and examination results are retained for a period of at least two years after deregistration of the student.
3. For the re-accreditation of the degree programmes a random pick of solutions written by students will be retained for seven years.
4. The Examination Board will follow the Retention Period List of the VU University for any other documents.

23. Annual report

By the first of November, the Examination Board will compile a report on its activities during the previous academic year. The Examination Board will send the annual report to the Faculty Board. On request, the annual report or parts of the report can be made available to interested parties.

24. 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 infringe the interests of the students.

25. Unforeseen circumstances / hardship clause

In any circumstances not covered by these Rules and Guidelines, or in circumstances where the provisions in these regulations are unreasonable or unfair to the student, the decisions of the Examination Board will be final.

26. Date of commencement

These Rules and Guidelines take effect as of 1 September 2020.

Adopted by the NSM-IS Examination Board on May 28th,
2020

Adopted by the HLS-EEE Examination Board on May 25th,

2020