



**Academic Affairs  
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# Examinations Board Guide 2017



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## Summary

This guide aims to inform the educational management and the Examinations Boards of the legislative frameworks within which the Examinations Boards should operate and the manner in which they can properly perform their tasks in this context.

'Independence' and 'expertise' have been identified as key requirements in terms of the Examinations Board's performance.

It has been agreed within the University of Amsterdam that every Examinations Board should consist of at least two members, i.e. the chair and a deputy chair. The addition of an external member became mandatory with effect from 1 September 2015. The Examinations Board is required to possess subject-matter expertise and testing and assessment expertise. At least one member should be a lecturer attached to the degree programme(s) for which the Examinations Board has been established. A number of officers are excluded from membership of the Examinations Board, including the College and Graduate School director, the programme director and the chair of the Board of Studies. The members of the Examinations Board are appointed by the dean.

The Examinations Board is required to guarantee the quality of examinations and qualifications. To that end the Examinations Board is entrusted with the following duties and powers:

1. determining in an objective and expert manner whether a student meets the criteria set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations with regard to the knowledge, insight and skills required for obtaining a degree;
2. safeguarding the quality of all examinations;
3. establishing guidelines and instructions within the framework of the Teaching and Examination Regulations as the basis for marking and awarding results for interim examinations and final examinations;
4. granting exemptions from taking one or more examinations;
5. taking measures in the event of fraud;
6. assigning examiners to administer examinations and determine the results;
7. issuing degree certificates, with the diploma supplements appended to them, as proof that the degree programme has been successfully completed;
8. granting students permission to pursue a flexible curriculum, the successful completion of which will lead to the awarding of a degree;
9. issuing transcripts for successfully completed examinations to students who have successfully taken more than one examination, but to whom a degree certificate cannot be issued;
10. drawing up an annual report of its activities;
11. issuing advice to the dean on the Teaching and Examination Regulations annually.

Students should, in the first instance, submit any complaints concerning interim and final examinations either directly or via the digital complaints desk to the Examinations Board of the relevant degree programme, with the exception of objections or appeals. When dealing with the complaint, the Examinations Board will hear both parties.

# 1 Introduction

The Examinations Board plays a key role within the programme organisation. It is responsible for safeguarding the quality of all examinations and is required to assess in an independent and expert manner whether each student meets the requirements defined by the degree programme for obtaining a degree. This means that the Examinations Board fulfils a crucial role in monitoring the quality of the process leading to the awarding of qualifications. After all, students, researchers, stakeholders and supervisory bodies need to be assured that the University of Amsterdam awards qualifications with due care.

The Improved Governance (Higher Education) Act 2010 (*Wet versterking besturing 2010*) represented the first step towards the implementation of an authoritative, independent and expert Examinations Board. The conclusion drawn from reviews conducted by the Inspectorate of Education<sup>1</sup> and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)<sup>2</sup> following on from the above was that ownership of the testing and assessment process had not yet been adequately implemented. These conclusions were reflected in the previous Strategic Agenda for Higher Education<sup>3</sup> and in a tightened procedure for the assessment of final assignments by assessment panels<sup>4</sup>. Under the Improved Quality Assurance Standards (in Higher Education) Act (December 2013) (*Wet versterking kwaliteitswaarborgen*) additional measures were taken aimed at implementing an authoritative Examinations Board. These measures included a mandatory external member and the exclusion of members in roles carrying financial responsibility.

The ability of Examination Boards to perform effectively forms an integral part of the internal and external quality assurance process. In order to perform effectively, it is vital that the institutional management (the dean) ensures that the Examination Boards can operate independently and with due expertise, and that (the members of) the Examinations Boards are familiar with the frameworks within which they are required to perform their statutory tasks. This guide aims to inform the educational management and the Examinations Boards of the legislative frameworks within which the Examinations Boards are required to operate and the manner in which they can properly perform their tasks in this context. To that end, Chapter 2 explains the terms 'independence' and 'expertise' in further detail. Chapter 3 describes how these terms are put into practice at the University of Amsterdam and in the composition of the Examinations Board. In conclusion, Chapter 4 sets out the activities of the Examinations Board. It also sets out the statutory tasks together with an explanation of each task.

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<sup>1</sup> *Alternatieve afstudeertrajecten en de bewaking van het eindniveau in het Hoger Onderwijs*, Education Inspectorate, April 2011

<sup>2</sup> *Rapport van Bevindingen NVAO-Commissie onderzoek Hogeschool Inholland*, NVAO, 26 April 2011

<sup>3</sup> *Quality in Diversity. Strategic Agenda for Higher Education, Research and Science*, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, 1 July 2011

<sup>4</sup> *Richtlijn beoordeling afstudeerwerken*, NVAO, 26 October 2012

## 2 Examinations Boards: independent and expert

With the adoption of the Improved Governance (Higher Education) Act and the Improved Quality Assurance Standards (Higher Education) Act, 'independence' and 'expertise' were identified as the key qualities an Examinations Board is required to possess.<sup>5</sup> Independence and expertise relate to the position of the Examinations Board within the organisation, the composition and appointment of its members as well as its duties and powers.

This chapter describes the position of the Examinations Board within the organisation from the perspective of the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, hereinafter also referred to as the WHW) and examines the terms 'independence' and 'expertise' in further detail. The concrete elaboration of these terms at the University of Amsterdam is set out in the next chapter.

### 2.1 The position of the Examinations Board within the organisation

The degree programme constitutes the central focus of the Higher Education and Research Act.<sup>6</sup> A degree programme is a cohesive set of educational units, aimed at achieving clearly defined learning outcomes. The aim and content of the degree programme are set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations (*Onderwijs- en Examenregeling*, OER), which are adopted by the dean.

In addition to the dean, three parties are directly involved in the quality assurance of the degree programme:

- the programme director
- the Board of Studies
- the Examinations Board.

The institutional management appoints, respectively establishes each of these persons or boards. In the case of universities, 'institutional management' refers to the dean<sup>7</sup>. The programme director, the Board of Studies and the Examinations Board can be appointed for more than one degree programme as long as the activities always concern individual degree programmes. Teaching and Examination Regulations are always issued for each degree programme.

The allocation of tasks between the programme director, the Board of Studies and the Examinations Board is as follows:

- the programme director is *responsible* for the structure and implementation of the degree programme as described in the Teaching and Examination Regulations, and ensures that teaching and the degree programme meet the quality standards;
- the Board of Studies *advises* the programme director and the dean on the Teaching and Examination Regulations and the way in which they are implemented<sup>8</sup>;
- the Examinations Board *assesses the results* of the education provided for each individual student within the framework of the Teaching and Examination Regulations of a degree programme. After all, the Examinations Board is *'the body that determines in an objective and*

#### WHW, Section 7.12. Examinations Board

1. Each programme or group of programmes at the institution has an Examinations Board.
2. The Examinations Board 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 with regard to the knowledge, insight and skills required for obtaining a degree.

<sup>5</sup> WHW, Section 7.12.a. and the Explanatory Memorandum to the Act

<sup>6</sup> WHW, Section 7.3.

<sup>7</sup> WHW, Section 9.15(e).

<sup>8</sup> WHW, Section 9.18(a and b).

*expert manner whether a student meets the criteria set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations with regard to the knowledge, insight and skills required for obtaining a degree.<sup>9</sup>*

Due to its supervisory role, it is important that the Examinations Board can perform its duties and exercise its powers independently and with due expertise. The two terms 'independence' and 'competence/expertise' are examined in further detail below.

#### **Intermezzo: Teaching and Examination Regulations, and Rules and Guidelines**

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 Rules and Guidelines. The Teaching and Examination Regulations are adopted by the dean. They describe the learning outcomes 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 admission 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 Board with regard to examination-related matters. Under the above Act, the content of the Rules and Guidelines is entirely the prerogative of the Examinations Board.

## **2.2 Independence**

### **2.2.1 Independence in respect of the institutional management**

The independent position of the Examinations Board in respect of the institutional management (in the case of the UvA represented by the dean) was confirmed and strengthened under the most recent amendment to the WHW (The Improved Governance (Higher Education) Act - *Wet Versterking besturing*). The Explanatory Memorandum to the Act states the following regarding the independence of the Examinations Board in respect of the institutional management:

*'The independent functioning of the Examinations Board in respect of the Executive Board means that although the Executive Board establishes the Examinations Board, the institution must ensure that the Examinations Boards can carry out their work independently within the institution. This also means, for example, that the Executive Board cannot impose obligations on the Examinations Board relating to the assessment of students. The Executive Board does, however, have final responsibility for the education provided and the award of qualifications<sup>10</sup>; an Examinations Board must act within the boundaries of the Teaching and Examination Regulations. This also guarantees that the way in which examinations are administered is in line with the framework of the degree programme'.*

In other words: the dean approves the Teaching and Examination Regulations and thus has final responsibility for the quality of the education provided. The Examinations Board assesses whether students have met the requirements set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations and, following a positive assessment, the institution awards a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

### **2.2.2 Independence and composition**

In addition to independence in terms of its *position within the organisation* in respect of those responsible for the quality of the education provided (the dean, the College or Graduate School

<sup>9</sup> WHW, Section 7.12.

<sup>10</sup> WHW, Section 7.10a 'Awarding degrees, paragraph 1: The institution awards a Bachelor's or Master's degree to students who have successfully completed a Bachelor's or Master's programme at a research university'.

director and the programme director), the independence of the Examinations Board should also be reflected in its composition. To guarantee the independence of the Examinations Board, the Act currently sets out two conditions.<sup>11</sup>

One condition is the requirement to include one external member on the Examinations Board. The recruitment of experts outside the degree programme increases the external legitimacy of testing and assessment. The external member often comes from the professional field, although this is not a requirement. The external member may also be recruited from within the institution; be they a colleague from another discipline, an expert working for a knowledge institute or an expert in the field of testing and assessment, educational sciences or didactics.<sup>12</sup>

Managers with financial responsibility at the institution cannot sit on the Examinations Board.

The requirement to include an external member on the Examinations Board entered into force on 1 September 2015. The exclusion of managers with financial responsibility within the institution took effect on 1 September 2014.

The concrete elaboration of these two points is discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

### 2.3 Expertise

In its 2015 report entitled '*Verdere versterking*' (literally: 'The further strengthening of Examinations Boards') the Inspectorate of Education noted positive development in terms of the expertise of Examinations Boards. Members of Examinations Boards are usually appointed on the basis of their expertise by the institutional management. There is consensus on what expertise means: subject-matter expertise, expertise in testing and assessment, knowledge of legislation and extensive experience with the degree programme. The Inspectorate of Education underlines the need for developing further expertise, particularly in the area of testing and assessment, and laws and regulations.

The Examinations Board as a whole should cover these various areas of expertise. When composing the Examinations Board, the dean can therefore choose to require each individual member to possess expertise in the different areas or to have the Examinations Board made of up members with different subject-matter expertise and a testing and assessment expert. Every member of the Examinations Board should possess basic knowledge of the legislative framework. The institution is obliged to offer the Examinations Board and the examiners sufficient opportunity for professional development.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.4 In conclusion

The emphasis on the independent functioning of an Examination Board might occasionally be interpreted as the Examinations Board having the power to impose its 'own' quality criteria on a student or a degree programme, with the risk of conflicts arising between the programme management and the Examinations Board. This is, however, not the case; the Examinations Board assesses the quality delivered against the (quality) requirements and provisions set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations approved by the dean. Should the Examinations Board

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<sup>11</sup> WHW, Section 7.12a(3).

<sup>12</sup> Letter from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 23 December 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Policy response to the final reports on alternative final projects, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 20 May 2011.

establish that the requirements or provisions are not being met, it has a number of instruments at its disposal to intervene. In such cases, consultation with the programme director is essential.



## 3 Examinations Boards at the University of Amsterdam

### 3.1 Establishment of the Examination Boards

As stated in Chapter 2, the dean establishes an Examination Board for a degree programme or a group of degree programmes. If an Examinations Board is established for a group of degree programmes, the dean is at liberty to choose which degree programmes fall under a 'group'.

The various options for establishing an Examinations Board are as follows:

1. by degree programme;
2. by group of *subject-matter related* degree programmes, such as a combination of Bachelor's and Master's programmes, but multiple Bachelor's and/or Master's programmes are also permitted;
3. by College or Graduate School;
4. a faculty examinations board.

The key criterion when establishing an Examinations Board is whether its members collectively possess sufficient subject-matter expertise to safeguard the quality of the degree programme(s) that fall under it. Safeguarding subject-matter expertise is generally not an issue for the first two options. However, it could prove to be a problem for the third and fourth options if a wide range of related, but more distant subject-matter related degree programmes fall under a College/Graduate School or a faculty. In this situation a choice can be made to either establish a relatively large Examinations Board with a managing committee appointed from among its members, or a small-scale Examinations Board which seeks advice from subject-matter experts in the field of the degree programme(s). For reasons of clear and consistent decision-making, it would be preferable to work with advisers rather than with relatively small Examinations Boards comprising subcommittees whose chairs have their own powers.

The Examinations Boards and the relevant degree programmes that fall under them are listed in an appendix to the Faculty regulations.

### 3.2 Composition of the Examinations Board<sup>14</sup>

It has been agreed within the University of Amsterdam that every Examinations Board should consist of at least two members, i.e. the chair and a deputy chair. The addition of an external member became mandatory with effect from 1 September 2015. When composing the Examinations Board (so when appointing members), it is essential to review whether it is assured of the required level of subject-matter expertise and testing and assessment expertise. It is also important to comply with the legal requirement that at least one member of the Examinations Board is a lecturer who must be attached to the degree programme(s) for which the Examinations Board is established. It has been agreed within the UvA that both the chair and the deputy chair should be attached to the degree programme, or one of the degree programmes. The reason for this is that in many instances the chair and the deputy chair are the first point of contact in the event of a decision, request or statement. In practice, this role can be fulfilled most effectively if the chair and the deputy chair are close to the degree programme, both physically and in terms of subject matter.

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<sup>14</sup> Based on the decision of the Executive Board of 12 January 2012

### 3.2.1 Profile of the individual members

The Examinations Board as a whole must possess sufficient subject-matter expertise as well as testing and assessment expertise. Although testing and assessment expertise can be assured by adding a testing and assessment expert to the Examinations Board, it is desirable that all members of the Examinations Board have some knowledge of testing and assessment. Subject-matter expertise can be assured by appointing members of the academic staff who are involved in one of the degree programmes. Another important factor is that the individual members have knowledge of the structure of the degree programme; members of the Examinations Board should therefore have been involved in teaching or developing the degree programme courses for a minimum of three years.

In view of the above arguments, the profile for internal members is as follows.

An internal member of the Examinations Board:

1. is a member of the UvA academic staff<sup>15</sup>;
2. has been involved in teaching courses which are part of the degree programme(s) or in developing a new degree programme for a minimum of three years;
3. holds the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) or an equivalent qualification;
4. in the first year of membership follows a professional development module relevant to their duties on the Examinations Board.

Apart from these conditions, the dean may set out additional criteria for the appointment of a member.

Further conditions could be imposed on the chair or deputy chair, such as requiring the chair to be an associate professor or full professor, or has taken additional professional development modules in the field of testing and assessment in addition to the UTQ track.

In view of the 'weight' of the Examinations Board, at least one member, preferably the chair, should be a professor or associate professor who is attached to the relevant degree programme(s). This will elevate the status of the Examinations Board. The lack of a professor or associate professor on the Examinations Boards has been a point of recurring criticism, particularly during quality assurance assessments.

### 3.2.2 The external member

With effect from September 2015 it is mandatory to have an external member on the Examinations Board.

The objective of including an external member, as defined by the legislature, is that attracting external experts from outside the degree programme can increase external legitimacy regarding testing and assessment.<sup>16</sup> The external expert thus adds an external perspective to the quality assurance of testing and assessments of the programs that fall under the Examinations Board.

The same Explanatory Memorandum (2011) states that the external expert can be a fellow subject-matter expert at another institution or from a different discipline within the same institution. He or she could be an expert in testing and assessment, or someone from the professional field (in the Netherlands or abroad).

External members may not be involved as lecturers in teaching the courses of the degree programmes that fall under the Examinations Board. Apart from this condition, no other institution-

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<sup>15</sup> In the case of a joint degree programme, the profile requires an internal member on the academic staff of one of the institutions that jointly provide the programme.

<sup>16</sup> Explanatory Memorandum to the Amendment to the WHW relating to the improvement of quality assurance standards, December 2011.

wide criteria have been set. This means that the dean is free to draw up a profile (possibly for each Examinations Board) that closely matches the nature and needs of the degree programme(s) that fall under the Exam Committee concerned.

It is not the intention for external members of Examinations Boards to be paid a salary. However, it is possible to grant them reasonable compensation which is in line with the compensation for comparable activities.

**Intermezzo: profile of an assessment expert**

- has knowledge of and insight into the (faculty) assessment policy framework;
- has knowledge of and insight into the standard quality criteria for tests (validity, reliability, transparency and workability);
- is able to apply the quality criteria to the usual research university (in Dutch: WO) assessment formats (open questions, multiple-choice questions, essays, papers, theses, etc.);
- is able to assess the quality of formative assessment formats;
- has insight into the quality and shortcomings of the usual assessment formats;
- has insight into the standard methods for determining the marks;
- is able to perform an elementary item analysis (reliability, p-value, Point-Biserial correlation, etc.);
- is able to perform an elementary analysis of assessment results (e.g. linking it to earlier results and course evaluations);
- is able to provide effective feedback.

Preferably:

- teaching experience at research university level (WO);
- is familiar with digital assessment.

### 3.2.3 Exclusion from membership

The Act stipulates that members of the institutional management and staff who otherwise carry financial responsibility within the institution are excluded from being members of an Examinations Board. In addition, there are several officers who are not eligible for membership due to the incompatibility of membership with their other tasks. The University of Amsterdam has therefore decided that the following officers are excluded from sitting on the Examinations Board:

1. members of the Supervisory Board
2. members of the Executive Board
3. a dean and vice-dean
4. a director of a College or Graduate School
5. a programme director
6. a director of operational management/operational managers
7. a research director
8. the chair of the Board of Studies of degree programmes that fall under the Examinations Board
9. the chair of the central and faculty works councils
10. the study adviser.

The first seven officers are excluded from membership due to their line management or financial responsibility regarding the education provided. The research director is a member of the management team at most faculties and in that role is jointly responsible for the policy pursued. The chair of the Board of Studies is excluded from membership due to the incompatibility of the tasks of the Boards of Studies (advisory) with those of the Examinations Board (monitoring the programmes as a whole) regarding monitoring quality. Ideally, all academic staff on the Board of Studies should be excluded from membership of the Examinations Board. However, for small-scale degree programmes with few staff it is not feasible to deploy all staff to both Boards. The chair of the

central and faculty works councils are also excluded, due to the fact that the works council assesses the human resource-related aspects of the Teaching and Examination Regulations. Finally, study advisers are excluded from membership due to a potential conflict of interests between the interests of the student on the one hand, and the decisions of the Examinations Board on the other. In addition to the above officers, the dean may exclude other officers from membership if desired; this will be set out in the Faculty Regulations.

### 3.2.4 Appointment of members

The members of the Examinations Board are appointed by the dean. The term of appointment is three years.<sup>17</sup> A member of the Examinations Board is eligible for immediate reappointment for two terms. To safeguard the continuity of knowledge and decision-making within the Examinations Board, it is essential to maintain a rotation schedule.

Faculties can set out who may nominate candidates for membership. This role could, for instance, be assigned to the College or Graduate School director, the programme director, the department chair and/or the Examinations Board itself. The nomination of a candidate is never binding. The dean subsequently assesses whether the candidate meets the criteria set for subject matter expertise and testing and assessment expertise, and consults the members of the Examinations Board on the nomination via the Examinations Board chair. The Examinations Board has an advisory role in this process.<sup>18</sup> In practice, the College or Graduate School director will only proceed to nominate a candidate after they have consulted with the Examinations Board.

An appointment letter will subsequently be sent to the candidate in question. If the appointment or reappointment relates to a chair or deputy chair, this will be specifically stated in the appointment letter. Should the dean have any reason not to wish to appoint the relevant candidate as a member, the dean will contact the College or Graduate School director for further consultation.

The members of the Examinations Board are entered in the UvA Register of Examinations Boards. Because the chairs and deputy chairs of the Examinations Board are authorised to sign degree certificates (see also 3.4), their signature is also recorded in the register for accountability reasons.

### 3.2.5 Termination of membership

The membership of an Examinations Board member is terminated if:

- a) the term of appointment expires and the relevant member is not eligible for reappointment;
- b) the member will be taking up a position that is incompatible with membership of the Examinations Board;
- c) the member's employment contract is terminated (internal members);
- d) the member will be teaching a course that is part of one of the degree programmes that falls under the Examinations Board (external members);
- e) the member wishes to terminate membership.

In addition to the above reasons above, it is also possible that an Examinations Board member no longer performs satisfactorily. In such cases, the only way to terminate membership is by a decision of the dean, possibly in combination with immediate suspension. When this point was debated in the House of Representatives, the suspension of a member was, however, referred to by the Minister as a "far-reaching measure and this can only take place if this measure is proportionate"<sup>19</sup>. Such a decision should therefore be taken on a case-by-case basis. As a rule, the Examinations Board (the

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<sup>17</sup> Management and Administration Regulations, Article 33

<sup>18</sup> WHW, Section 7.12a(3) and Parliamentary Document 31821, number 7

<sup>19</sup> Parliamentary Document 31821, number 7.

chair) or the programme director informs the dean of any unsatisfactory performance on the part of (a member of) the Examinations Board.

### 3.3 Development of expertise

The institution is obliged to offer the Examinations Board and the examiners sufficient opportunity for professional development.<sup>20</sup> At the University of Amsterdam this obligation is fulfilled as follows:

- On appointment, each new Examinations Board member receives a copy of the Examinations Board Guide and the Teaching and Examination Regulations of the degree programme.
- The basic assessment and testing training module is offered as part of the University Teaching Qualification course (UTQ). The Amsterdam Institute for Lifelong Learning in Education (CNA) also provides a number of in-depth workshops on testing and assessment through tailor-made tracks.
- The CNA provides the workshop on 'Assessing Quality' for new and incumbent Examinations Board members.

### 3.4 Tasks of the chair

Each Examinations Board at the University of Amsterdam has a chair and a deputy chair.

#### 3.4.1 The chair

The chair and the deputy chair are appointed by the dean.

The chair of the Examinations Board:

- a) is responsible for ensuring the independent and expert functioning of the Examinations Board, and is accountable for this;
- b) is accountable for and defends the policy and decisions made in respect of internal and external parties such as the Examination Appeals Board (COBEX) and the Higher Education Appeals Board (CBHO);
- c) signs degree certificates and diploma supplements;
- d) advises the dean, on behalf of the Examinations Board, regarding the appointment of Examinations Board members;
- e) prepares meetings together with the official secretary;
- f) chairs the meetings of the Examinations Board;
- g) approves the annual report of the Examinations Board.

In the absence of the chair, the deputy chair of the relevant Examinations Board can replace the chair. In such cases the deputy chair has the same duties and powers as the chair.

Due to the task of external representation, the chair should preferably be a professor or associate professor attached to one of the degree programmes that falls under the relevant Examinations Board.

### 3.5 Support for the Examinations Board

The dean ensures that every Examinations Board is supported by an official secretary. The official secretary is a member of the support and management staff. The official secretary is not a member of the Examinations Board.

The official secretary:

- a) prepares meetings together with the chair and deputy chair;

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<sup>20</sup> Policy response to the final reports on alternative final projects, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 20 May 2011.

- b) convenes meetings together with the chair and the deputy chair;
- c) takes the minutes of Examinations Board meetings and ensures that the minutes and decisions are archived;
- d) draws up the annual report, in collaboration with the chair and the deputy chair;
- e) handles and monitors correspondence on behalf of the Examinations Board;
- f) can, in the event of standard decisions, handle students' requests on behalf of the Examinations Board;
- g) reviews proposed positions and decisions of the Examinations Board against the relevant decision-making frameworks, procedures and statutory provisions (for example, the Teaching and Examination Regulations, the Assessment Policy Framework, WHW);
- h) monitors the procedural progress of decision-making;
- i) manages the files of the Examinations Board;
- j) supervises the filing of documents designated for student files.

### **3.5.1 Independence of the official secretary**

The position of the official secretary is an important point for attention in the context of independence. In order to perform their tasks, official secretaries must be able to function independently of the educational management. Ideally, the official secretary should not be functionally supervised by a College or Graduate School director or a programme director. Moreover, it is inadvisable for a study adviser to perform the duties of official secretary to the Examinations Board. The role of the study adviser is to promote the interests of students where appropriate. This role conflicts with the official secretary's task of conveying a decision by the Examinations Board to the student. The study adviser can, however, serve as adviser to the Examinations Board.

### **3.5.2 Legal Support**

Examinations Boards can contact the Legal Affairs department at the University of Amsterdam with general questions relating to (the interpretation of) laws and regulations (such as the WHW, the Teaching and Examination Regulations and the Fraud and Plagiarism Regulations). In concrete cases (relating to one or more students), the Examinations Board will ultimately need to assess the matter itself.

## **3.6 Meetings**

The plenary Examinations Board meets at least twice a year. The meeting frequency is set out in the Rules and Guidelines<sup>21</sup>. The chair and the deputy chair will consult more frequently on matters such as student requests. The meetings of the Examinations Board are, in principle, closed. However, the Examinations Board can invite guests, such as a study adviser or the programme director, to attend meetings.

The subjects that are dealt with at plenary meetings include advising on the Teaching and Examination Regulations and on the assessment policy of a degree programme, adopting the Rules & Regulations and approving the assessment forms for the final assignments for Bachelor's and Master's programmes.

The official secretary takes minutes of the meetings and is also responsible for recording the decisions and recommendations of the Examinations Board and for communicating them to the parties involved.

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<sup>21</sup> Model Rules and Regulations

## 4 Activities of the Examinations Board

### 4.1 Duties and powers of the Examinations Board

The Examinations Board is required to guarantee the quality of examinations and qualifications. To that end the legislature has entrusted the Examinations Board with the following duties and powers:

1. determining in an objective and expert manner whether a student meets the criteria set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations with regard to the knowledge, insight and skills required for obtaining a degree;<sup>22</sup>
2. safeguarding the quality of all examinations;<sup>23</sup>
3. establishing guidelines and instructions within the framework of the Teaching and Examination Regulations as the basis for marking and awarding results for interim and final examinations;<sup>24</sup>
4. granting exemptions from taking one or more interim examinations;<sup>25</sup>
5. taking measures in the event of fraud;<sup>26</sup>
6. assigning examiners to administer and determine the results of examinations;<sup>27</sup>
7. issuing degree certificates, with the diploma supplements appended to them, as proof that the degree programme has been successfully completed;<sup>28</sup>
8. granting students permission to pursue a flexible curriculum, the successful completion of which will lead to the award of a degree;<sup>29</sup>
9. Issuing transcripts for successfully completed examinations to students who have successfully taken more than one examination, but to whom a degree certificate cannot be issued.<sup>30</sup>
10. Drawing up an annual report of its activities.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, an additional task has been set out in the Management and Administration Regulations as follows:

11. Issuing advice to the dean on the Teaching and Examination Regulations annually.<sup>32</sup>

The duties and powers of the Examinations Boards are explained in further detail below.

There also are a number of tasks that need not have been legally entrusted to the Examinations Board, for which the dean can, however, grant a mandate to the Examinations Board. They include admission to a Master's programme and issuing binding study advice (BSA).

#### **1. Determining in an objective and expert manner whether a student meets the criteria set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations with regard to the knowledge, insight and skills required for obtaining a degree.**

This means that the Examinations Board must assess whether a student meets the learning outcomes of the programme; The assessment of whether a student meets the requirements set out in the Teaching and Examinations Regulations translates, among other things, to approval of the

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<sup>22</sup> WHW, Section 7.12(2).

<sup>23</sup> WHW, Section 7(12b(1a)).

<sup>24</sup> WHW, Section 7(12b(1b)).

<sup>25</sup> WHW, Section 7(12b(1d)).

<sup>26</sup> WHW, Section 7.12b(2).

<sup>27</sup> WHW, Section 7.12c.

<sup>28</sup> WHW, Section 7.11(2 and 4).

<sup>29</sup> WHW, Section 7(12b(1c)).

<sup>30</sup> WHW, Section 7.11(5).

<sup>31</sup> WHW, Section 7.12b(5).

<sup>32</sup> Management and Administration Regulations, Article 30



subjects chosen. If a student has passed all examination components in accordance with the provisions of the Teaching and Examination Regulations and Rules and Guidelines, the degree can be awarded. The aggregate of the learning objectives of the individual components should, after all, lead to achievement of the learning outcomes defined.<sup>33</sup> The Examinations Board can determine that passing the individual programme components will be subject to a final exam.<sup>34</sup> In such cases, this requirement must be set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations.

This task entails that the Examinations Board is also the body that is authorised, in special cases, to derogate from the provisions of the Teaching and Examination Regulations (i.e. the application of the hardship clause). Examples of the above include permitting a modified interim or final examination format, extending the period of validity of an examination result, replacing individual units of study with a different unit of study which has the same learning objectives and deviating from possible mandatory participation in practical training.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the Examinations Board can determine subject to conditions it sets, that not every examination needs to be passed to determine that a final examination has been passed.<sup>36</sup>

The underlying principle is always the same: the Examinations Board must explicitly guarantee that the quality and the level of the interim examination or final examination will be maintained.

## 2. Safeguarding the quality of interim and final examinations

WHW, Section 7.12b(1a) states that it is the Examinations Board's task to safeguard the quality of interim exams and final examinations. This provision was included in the Act based on the findings of the Inspectorate of Education that Examinations Boards spend too little time on 'quality assurance and the quality policy for examinations and tests'.

Drawing up and implementing an assessment policy is an important tool in safeguarding the quality of testing and assessment. For the purposes of the quality policy on assessments, the UvA-wide Assessment Policy Framework was adopted in December 2010.<sup>37</sup> The assessment policy of all degree programmes should be in line with the Assessment Policy Framework. The management of the degree programme is responsible for drawing up the local assessment policy; depending on the organisation within a faculty the assessment policy should be drawn up by each degree programme, by each College or Graduate School or by each faculty. As part of the Examinations Board's tasks, it is desirable that the Examinations Board advises the management of the degree programme on the assessment policy drawn up.

Moreover, the Assessment Policy Framework explicitly states that 'Systematic evaluations of the assessment and testing programmes are conducted at both the module and programme level'. During these evaluations the Examinations Board issues an opinion on the quality of assessment and testing in terms of reliability, validity, transparency and workability (see Appendix 3 for a further elaboration of these terms). The Assessment Policy Framework suggests a number of methods for conducting the evaluation.

An examination component requiring particular attention in the quality assurance of examinations is the final project for a Bachelor's or Master's programme. A thesis or work placement in this context, which is also referred to as the 'aptitude test', usually comprises an assessment of most, if not all, learning outcomes. Because students carry this out individually, many examiners are charged with assessing the exit level. Quality assurance of this component therefore is of the utmost importance. For this reason, under the Assessment Policy Framework every degree

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 3 of the Assessment Policy Framework on the relationship between the Dublin descriptors, the learning outcomes and learning objectives.

<sup>34</sup> WHW, Section 7.10(2).

<sup>35</sup> See also WHW Section 7.13(2k, l, n and t).

<sup>36</sup> WHW, Section 7.12b(3).

<sup>37</sup> Assessment Policy Framework, University of Amsterdam, 9 December 2010

programme is required to have a graduation handbook, which explains the procedures, supervision and assessment of final assignments. Ideally, the graduation handbook should be submitted to the Examinations Board for advice.

Furthermore, assessment forms are required to be used for the assessment of final products of Bachelor's and Master's projects. The Examinations Board approves the assessment form.

The quality assurance of interim and final examinations has a procedural side (are the Rules and Guidelines being complied with, are assessment forms being used, etc.). This, however, does not discharge the Examinations Board of responsibility for the substantive side. The Examinations Board need not do so entirely on its own but can call on advisers. It can, for instance, establish an assessment committee to perform all or a number of these tasks. It is important to note here that, officially, the Examinations Board remains responsible, even though the assessment committee carries out the actual work. The Examinations Board should therefore ascertain that the assessment committee performs its tasks in a manner that meets the requirements imposed by the Examinations Board. During an accreditation procedure, the Examinations Board is accountable for the 'testing and assessment' aspect.

#### **Intermezzo: The Assessment dossier**

An Assessment dossier for each course can be used to assess the quality of an individual interim examination. An example of the contents of the Assessment dossier is as follows:

- the description of the course used in the course catalogue, together with the learning objectives;
- the test itself (and possibly the resit);
- the answer model;
- the pass mark;
- the students' results (fail and pass rates, average mark, distribution);
- results of the questions asked during the course evaluation relating to testing and assessment for the course;
- possibly: the report of the lecturer who provided feedback on the design of the test as a peer reviewer';
- possibly: a statistical analysis of multiple choice questions.

This is based on an evaluation of the test after the results of the test have been determined.

Practical examples of the quality assurance of examinations are available on:  
<https://score.hva.nl/toetscommissie/Paginas/Toetskwaliteit.aspx>

It is important that Examinations Boards report their findings to the examiners, together with concrete recommendations and references to policy, guidelines, etc.

### **3. Establishing guidelines and instructions within the framework of the Teaching and Examination Regulations as the basis for marking and awarding results for interim and final examinations.**

The Examinations Board should establish guidelines in the Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board as the basis for marking and awarding results for interim and final examinations. A model for the Rules and Guidelines has been created to serve as a guideline. A number of provisions in the Rules and Guidelines in this model are binding and are specified in the explanatory notes. It is advisable to apply uniform Rules and Guidelines within a faculty, but particularly within a College or Graduate School. This will be conducive to the equal treatment of students in the same cases and consequently to the quality policy pursued within a faculty.

The Examinations Board can also provide guidelines for the testing and assessment of examination components. This not only includes giving explicit instructions to an examiner, but also creating and approving assessment forms for theses or work placements, etc. (see the above information).

#### 4. Granting exemptions from taking one or more interim examinations.

The Examinations Board is authorised to grant a student an exemption for one or more interim examinations. The procedure for performing this task is set out in the Rules and Guidelines of the relevant degree programme. Whether or not an exemption can be granted is assessed against the Teaching and Examination Regulations. The grounds for granting exemptions are therefore required to be set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations of the relevant degree programme.<sup>38</sup> Section 7.13(2r) of the WHW clearly states that these grounds could lie in interim or final examinations taken earlier during a higher education programme, and in knowledge and skills acquired outside the higher education system<sup>39</sup> Broadly speaking, one condition for granting an exemption is that the replacement component has roughly the same learning objectives as the component of the curriculum for which an exemption is granted. The reasons that constitute the basis for granting an exemption should be set out clearly and archived in the proper manner.

Furthermore, the Examinations Board can have sections of the Teaching and Examination Regulations included (from a sister institution for example) that are frequently used to replace standard components of the curriculum. In such instances, a request for an exemption is 'automatically' approved without an individual decision.

#### 5. Taking measures in the event of fraud

The Examinations Board is the body that must take measures in the event of fraud. Uniform regulations (guidelines) have been drawn up on the advice of the working group for the prevention and combating of plagiarism and fraud by students, and in consultation with the Examination Boards.<sup>40</sup> The regulations form an integral part of a broader fraud and plagiarism policy and above all provide clear definitions of fraud and plagiarism and guidelines concerning possible sanctions and measures to be imposed.

#### 6. Assigning examiners to administer and determine the results of examinations

An important instrument available to the Examinations Board in performing its task of safeguarding the quality of interim and final examinations is the assignment of examiners. Under the WHW, this task is entrusted to the Examinations Board.

##### *Examiners*

The basic principle applied by the University of Amsterdam is that every member of staff with a permanent employment contract and a University Teaching Qualification (UTQ) holding an appointment as professor, associate professor, assistant professor or postdoctoral lecturer 1 and 2, in principle, is eligible to act as examiner for *all* examination components in the Bachelor's or Master's programmes in their area of expertise. This basic principle is underpinned by the following considerations.

- professor, associate professor, assistant professor and postdoctoral lecturer have sufficient knowledge of the field of study and under the current UTQ policy also have sufficient knowledge of testing and assessment;<sup>41</sup>
- professor, associate professor, assistant professor and postdoctoral lecturer 1 and 2 are capable of acting as examiner at all levels (from the first-year Bachelor's programme to the supervision and assessment of final projects in the Master's programme);

Regardless of this basic principle, the Examinations Board must, however, explicitly assign examiners each year (see below) although a minor test will suffice in the event of assignment. For

<sup>38</sup> WHW, Section 7.13(2r).

<sup>39</sup> WHW, 31st Amendment, August 2003, 3.7 Explanatory notes to Chapter 7 (Education).

<sup>40</sup> See: <http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/uva-profiel/regelingen-en-reglementen/onderwijs/onderwijs.html>

<sup>41</sup> For the purpose of applying the UTQ-certified criterion, the same qualifications apply as stated under 3.2.1.

candidate examiners who do not meet the above criteria, the Examinations Board can determine criteria which an individual must meet in order to qualify for an examiner role. A distinction can in such cases be made between assigning an examiner for all components of a degree programme and for a single or a number of specific components of a degree programme.

The task of assigning examiners involves not only the appointment of an examiner but also means that the Examinations Board is authorised to terminate the appointment. Self-evidently, such a decision can only be taken after careful consideration.

#### *Explicit assignment of examiners*

The Examinations Board draws up and approves a list of examiners each year. The list also indicates who is authorised to act as examiner for the modules provided. The programme director provides the Examinations Board with the necessary information.

In any event, the Examinations Board verifies whether the examiner is capable/authorised to act as examiner for the relevant examination component.

For the supervision of work placements and theses, the Examinations Board creates a separate list of examiners who are authorised to assess them. This list can be continuously updated and need not be approved each year.

#### *Informing examiners*

The Examinations Board informs examiners in a clear and comprehensible manner of the tasks and responsibilities associated with the role of examiner, and of the guidelines for examiners adopted by the Examinations Board.

Where possible, each year the Examinations Board should organise a meeting with the examiners to discuss the assessment policy. Such a meeting can also be included in a more general day for lecturers.

#### *Examiner signature register*

The signature and initials of each examiner should be available at the Student Desk of the relevant degree programme. The staff at the Student Desk and the accountant must be able to check whether the examiner is an authorised signatory.

The signature register can be checked for completeness during the annual assignment of examiners. Furthermore, it is advisable to make an appointment with the faculty's P&O department concerning the regular submission of an overview with newly recruited staff, together with the signatures of the relevant individuals if possible. The official secretary to the Examinations Boards can verify in both cases whether examiners still need to be assigned.

### **7. Issuing degree certificates, with the diploma supplements appended to them, as proof that the degree programme has been successfully completed.**

The Examinations Board is the body that awards the degree certificate to the student once it has determined that the student has met the requirements (see 1). The Examinations Board can initiate the procedure the moment a student submits a request for a degree certificate, but it can also take the initiative to award a degree certificate if all obligations have been fulfilled. Should the Board of Examiners take the initiative, students may submit a request to the Examinations Board to postpone graduation because they, for instance, plan to pursue an additional course which they would like to include on the diploma supplement.

The degree certificate and the diploma supplement must be signed by the chair of the Examinations Board, or in the chair's absence by the the deputy chair or a member of the Examinations Board on behalf of the chair. In any event the official secretary or a staff member who is not member of the Examinations Board are NOT permitted to sign the degree certificate and the diploma supplement.

## **8. Granting students permission to pursue a flexible curriculum, the successful completion of which will lead to the award of a degree.**

Under the WHW, students have the right to compose their own curriculum. They must obtain the approval of the Examinations Board to determine whether the (flexible) curriculum meets the required level, the workload is sufficient and is in line with the learning outcomes of the degree programme.

The Examinations Board that approves the flexible curriculum determines to which degree programme the curriculum is deemed to belong for the application of the WHW. It can only be a degree programme which falls under the responsibility of that particular Examinations Board.

Given that in some cases an Examinations Board may be of the opinion that it is not the most appropriate Examinations Board to decide on granting approval for a flexible curriculum due to its composition, it has been agreed that the dean will, if necessary, appoint the Examinations Board that should make a decision on granting approval. It may not be possible to pursue a flexible curriculum for certain degree programmes in view of the professional requirements. In such cases, this should be included in the Teaching and Examination Regulations.

## **9. Issuing transcripts for successfully completed examinations to students who have successfully taken more than one examination, but to whom a degree certificate cannot be issued.**

The Examinations Board is authorised to issue a transcript to students who have successfully completed more than one examination, but to whom a degree certificate cannot be issued, for the examinations they have passed. This is important to students, for instance, if they transfer from one degree programme to another and based on a transcript can be granted exemption in view of previous results attained. The Examinations Board should specify in the Rules and Guidelines who is authorised to sign the transcript.

In such cases students may also be offered the option of obtaining from the Student Desk / Programme Administration an authenticated list of marks stating the examinations they have passed. The Examinations Boards should ascertain that these lists of marks have been prepared in the proper manner.

## **10. Drawing up an annual report of its activities.**

Each year, the Examinations Board should submit a report of its activities in an annual report to the dean within six weeks of the end of the academic year. A model UvA annual report has been drawn up for this purpose (see Appendix 4). The annual report serves several purposes:

- 1) rendering an account of the Examinations Board's activities to the dean;
- 2) providing the programme director, College/Graduate School director and dean with input for any improvements to teaching quality;
- 3) generating management information, which is often requested in degree programme accreditation procedures.

Additionally, in accordance with the PDCA cycle, a description of and a reflection on the specific areas of concern relating to the given academic year should be provided in the annual report.

The dean provides comments on the contents of the annual report, for instance during an annual meeting with the Examinations Board(s).

The annual report is available to the public and is published on the faculty website.

## **11. Issuing advice to the dean on the Teaching and Examination Regulations annually.**

An additional task included in the Management and Administration Regulations entails that the Examinations Board issues advice to the dean on the Teaching and Examination Regulations. This enables the Examinations Board to monitor proactively the quality of the assessment and testing programme of the degree programme. The procedure for adopting the Teaching and Examinations and the times at which the various bodies will be approached for advice are set out by faculty.

## 4.2 Decisions

The Examinations Board may take decisions on many different matters. Examples of decisions set out in the WHW include the following:

- decisions to approve a flexible curriculum;
- decisions to grant exemptions;
- approval of the testing and assessment programme for students;
- decisions to award a degree. In other words, the decision that a student has achieved the learning outcomes of the degree programme;
- decisions to award a distinction, such as Cum Laude;
- decisions to allow a different form of testing for a student with a disability;
- decisions involving the general assessment policy of a degree programme, for example, approving an assessment form for final projects;
- drawing up guidelines for examiners;
- imposing sanctions for fraud and plagiarism;
- assigning examiners;
- decisions on requests for an extension of the period of validity of an examination;
- decisions on permitting additional opportunities to take an examination;
- determining alternative tracks (for example, where a curriculum revision is concerned);
- approval of education units successfully completed abroad.

Not every decision needs to be made by the full Examinations Board. A number of the above decisions can also be taken by the chair and/or the deputy chair. The decision-making process, however, must be transparent. It is therefore up to the Examinations Board to set out in the Rules and Regulations who is authorised to make what types of decisions. The guidelines below can be used for this purpose:

- the gravity of the decision. In the event that an appeal may be lodged against a decision, for example, against the imposition of sanctions for fraud or plagiarism, it is desirable that the decision is made by the full Examinations Board;
- decisions involving the assessment or examinations policy of a degree programme (determining alternative final projects, guidelines for examiners), should always be made by the full Examinations Board;
- a request that has never arisen earlier, will in any case be submitted to the chair and the deputy chair;
- the official secretary can, in the event of standard decisions, handle students' requests on behalf of the Examinations Board, provided that the decisions concerned and the consistent policy line that applies in finalising these decisions are clearly defined in advance. The Examinations Board carries responsibility for the decision, and the signature should show that the decision was issued by the Examinations Board.

In the event that a decision must be made by the full Examinations Board, the decision will be taken by a majority vote. If the vote is tied, the chair will have the casting vote. If the decision is communicated to the parties involved in writing, the chair is required to sign the decision. In the

event of so-called 'standard decisions', a scanned signature of the chair will suffice for communications confirming that the request has been granted, or the official secretary can sign the decision on behalf of (for) the chair.

### **4.3 Handling complaints concerning examinations**

Students should, in the first instance, submit any complaints concerning interim and final examinations either directly or via the digital complaints desk to the Examinations Board of the relevant degree programme, with the exception of objections or appeals. When handling complaints, the Examinations Board applies the principle of hearing both sides of the argument: both the student and lecturer will be heard. At least one member of the Examinations Board, in addition to the chair or deputy chair, should be involved in handling complaints. If a student submits a request or complaint to the Examinations Board that concerns an examiner who is a member of the Examinations Board Committee, the examiner concerned may not take part in handling the request or complaint.<sup>42</sup>

### **4.4 Assessment and testing in the accreditation process**

Testing and assessment is an aspect of the quality of education which is assessed during the accreditation process.<sup>43</sup>

#### **4.4.1 Degree programme assessments**

Testing and assessment is a key topic in the NVAO framework for the assessment of degree programmes. Under the Improved Quality Assurance Standards (in Higher Education) Act the topic of 'testing and assessment and the achieved exit qualifications' was divided into two standards: 'Testing and assessment' and 'Exit level achieved'. During the degree programme assessments, the Examinations Board will need to account primarily for the first topic.

The corresponding standard states that the degree programme should have an effective testing and assessment system in place. This means that the tests and the assessment of tests are valid, reliable and clear to students, and that the Examinations Board of the degree programme safeguards the quality of examinations,

During the site visit the assessment panel inspects reports of the Examinations Board meetings as well as examples of examinations and the corresponding answer models.

The standard relating to the achieved exit level requires the degree programme to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. The level achieved is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programmes. The assessment panel will study a representative sample of final projects for this purpose, and conduct interviews with the Examinations Board concerning its findings.

The degree programme must receive a satisfactory score in order to qualify for re-accreditation. An unsatisfactory assessment on this topic will result in a negative judgement from the accreditation panel. Depending on the extent of the identified shortcoming, the NVAO can allocate an improvement period of a maximum of two years or decide against granting accreditation.

#### **4.4.2 Institutional Quality Assurance Audit**

During the Institutional Quality Assurance Audit, the NVAO also assesses the duties and

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<sup>42</sup> WHW, Section 7.12b(4).

<sup>43</sup> Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, NVAO December 2014.



positioning of the Examinations Board as part of the topic 'Organisation and decision-making structure'. The standard states: 'The institution has an effective organisation and decision-making structure with regard to the quality of its programmes, which clearly defines the tasks, authorities and responsibilities and which encompasses the participation of students and staff. Standard 3 of the Institutional Audit states that the institution has insight into the extent to which its vision on the quality of its education is realised. The sections of this vision relating to the activities of the Examinations Board have been specified in further detail in the Assessment Policy Framework, the Quality Assurance Framework for Teaching and in this guide. Based on audit trails, the NVAO can subsequently assess how these frameworks have been implemented in, or adopted by the degree programmes.

## Appendix 1: References

The following sources were used when drawing up this guide:

### Legislative framework

- Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en wetenschappelijk Onderzoek*, WHW)
- The Improved Governance (Higher Education) Act (*Wet Versterking Besturing*), Bulletin of Acts and Decrees 119, 2010
  - Explanatory Memorandum
  - Parliamentary Document 31821, number 7
- Improved Quality Assurance Standards (in Higher Education) Act (*Wet Versterking Kwaliteitswaarborgen*), Bulletin of Acts and Decrees 558, 2013

### Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation

- 'Quality in Diversity' (*Kwaliteit in verscheidenheid*). Strategic Agenda for Higher Education, Research and Science, 1 July 2011

### Inspectorate of Education

- *Boekhouder of wakend oog*, May 2009
- *Tussenrapportage alternatieve afstudeertrajecten in het hoger onderwijs*, October 2010
- *Alternatieve afstudeertrajecten en de bewaking van het eindniveau bij Hogeschool InHolland*, April 2011
- *Alternatieve afstudeertrajecten en de bewaking van het eindniveau in het Hoger Onderwijs*, April 2011
- *Intern toezicht op onderwijskwaliteit in het hoger onderwijs: een bijdrage aan de evaluatie van het wetstraject Versterking Besturing*
- *Verdere versterking: onderzoek naar het functioneren van examencommissies in het Hoger Onderwijs*, March 2015

### Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)

- *Rapport van Bevindingen NVAO-Commissie onderzoek Hogeschool Inholland*, April 2011
- Assessment frameworks for the higher education accreditation system of the Netherlands, December 2014

### Education Council of the Netherlands (Onderwijsraad)

- *Advisering over Examinering, een stand van zaken*, August 2008

### University of Amsterdam

- Assessment Policy Framework, University of Amsterdam, 9 December 2010
- Management and Administration Regulations, December 2012
- Model Teaching and Examination Regulations 2014-2015:
- Model Rules and Guidelines for the Examinations Board 2014

### Other

- *GESLAAGD! Handreiking examencommissies*, HBO-Raad, February 2011

## Appendix 2: Sections of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) relevant to examinations boards

Text applicable on 12 November 2015

### **Section 7.10 Examinations and final examinations**

1. An interim exam represents an investigation by the examiner into students' knowledge, insight and skills, together with an assessment of the results of that investigation.
2. If the examinations for units of study that belong to a degree programme or the first year of a Bachelor's programme have been successfully completed, the final examination has been taken, insofar as the Examinations Board has not determined that the final examination also consists of an investigation that it must conduct as referred to in the first paragraph.
3. The institutional management is responsible for the practical organisation of examinations.

### **Article 7.11 Degree certificates and transcripts**

1. As proof that an examination has been passed, the examiner(s) concerned issue the relevant document.
2. As proof that a degree programme has been successfully completed, the Examinations Board awards a degree certificate after the institutional management has declared that all procedural requirements for the award of a degree certificate have been met. One degree certificate is awarded for each degree programme. The final examination passed is listed on the degree certificate together with the relevant information that includes but is not restricted to:
  - a. the name of the institution and the name of the degree programme as stated in the register referred to in Section 6.13;
  - b. the units of study included in the final examination;
  - c. where appropriate, the related competences, taking into account Section 7.6(1);
  - d. the degree awarded as referred to in Section 7.10a, first or second paragraph, and the date on which the degree programme was most recently accredited, or the date on which the degree programme successfully concluded the assessment relating to new degree programmes, as referred to in Section 5a.11(2);
  - f. where a joint degree programme or a joint major is concerned as referred to in Section 7.3b, the name of the institution, or in the event of a joint degree programme, the institutions that jointly provided the programme or major.
3. In accordance with the rules determined by institutional management, the person entitled to a degree certificate can request the Examinations Board to postpone the award of the degree certificate.
4. The Examinations Board adds a diploma supplement to the degree certificate. The aim of the diploma supplement is to provide insight into the nature and content of the completed degree programme, in part with a view to the international recognition of degree programmes. The diploma supplement includes at least the following information:
  - a. the name of the degree programme and the name of the institution providing the programme;
  - b. whether the degree programme falls under research-oriented higher education or higher education with an applied emphasis;
  - c. a description of the the academic content of the degree programme;
  - d. the workload involved in the degree programme.

The diploma supplement will be written in Dutch or English and complies with the agreed European standard format.

5. Students who have passed more than one examination and to whom a degree certificate as referred to in paragraph two cannot be presented can request a transcript from the relevant Examinations Board indicating which examinations they have successfully completed.

### **Section 7.12 Examinations Board**

1. Each programme or group of programmes at the institution has an Examinations Board.
2. The Examinations Board 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 with regard to the knowledge, insight and skills required for obtaining a degree.

#### **Section 7.12a: Appointment and composition of the Examinations Board**

1. The institutional management establishes the Examinations Board and appoints its members on the basis of their expertise in the field of the degree programme or group of programmes concerned.
2. The institutional management ensures that the Exam Committee has the required expertise and that its independent functioning is properly assured.
3. When appointing members of the Examinations Board, the institutional management ensures that:
  - a. at least one member is a lecturer attached to the relevant degree programme or to one of the degree programmes that make up the group of programmes;
  - b. at least one member is not attached to the relevant degree programme or to one of the degree programmes that make up the group of programmes;
  - c. members of the institutional management or staff who otherwise carry financial responsibility within the institution will not be appointed.
4. Before appointing a member, the institutional management will hear the members of the relevant Examinations Board.

#### **Section 7.12b. Duties and powers of the Examinations Board**

1. In addition to the duties and powers set out in Sections 7.11 and 7.12(2), an Examinations Board has the following duties and powers:
  - a. safeguarding the quality of all examinations, without prejudice to Section 7.12c;
  - b. establishing guidelines and instructions within the framework of the Teaching and Examination Regulations, as referred to in Section 7.13, as the basis for marking and awarding results in interim and final examinations;
  - c. granting permission, by the Examinations Board most eligible to do so, to a student to pursue a degree programme composed as described in Section 7.3d, the final examination of which leads to the award of a degree, whereby the Examinations Board also indicates to which degree programme at the institution this programme is considered to belong in terms of the application of this Act;
  - d. granting exemptions from taking one or more examinations;
  - e. safeguarding the quality of the organisation and procedures relating to all examinations.
2. If a student or external student commits fraud, the Examinations Board can withdraw that person's right to take one or more interim or final examinations indicated by the Examinations Board for a period determined by the Examinations Board that does not exceed one year. In cases of serious fraud, at the proposal of the Examinations Board, the institutional management can terminate the enrolment of the person concerned in the relevant degree programme.
3. The Examinations Board sets rules for performing its duties and exercising its powers referred to in the first paragraph under a, b and d, and in the second paragraph for the measures it can take in this regard. The Examinations Board can determine, subject to conditions it sets, that not every examination needs to be passed to determine that a final examination has been passed.
4. If a student submits a request or complaint to the Examinations Board that concerns an examiner who is a member of the Examinations Board Committee, the examiner concerned may not take part in handling the request or complaint.

5. The Examinations Board draws up an annual report of its activities. The Examinations Board submits the report to the institutional management or to the dean.

#### **Section 7.12c. Examiners**

1. The Examinations Board assigns examiners to administer and determine the results of examinations
2. The examiners provide the Examinations Board with the requested information.

#### **Section 7.13 Teaching and Examination Regulations**

1. The institutional management draws up Teaching and Examination Regulations for each degree programme or group of degree programmes offered by the institution. The Teaching and Examination Regulations contain adequate and clear information on the degree programme or group of degree programmes.

2. Without prejudice to the other relevant provisions of the Act, the Teaching and Examination Regulations set out the applicable procedures and rights and obligations relating to teaching and examinations for each degree programme or group of degree programmes. This at least includes the following:

- a. the content of the degree programme and of the associated examinations;
- b. the content of majors within the degree programme;
- c. the knowledge, insight and skills which a student is expected to have acquired upon completion of the degree programme;
- d. where necessary, the organisation of practical training;
- e. the workload of the degree programme and of each of the units of study it comprises;
- f. further rules, referred to in Sections 7.8b(6), and 7.9(5);
- g. which Master's degree programmes apply Section 7.4a(8);
- h. the number and order of examinations and the times at which they are administered to students;
- i. whether the degree programme is full-time, part-time or work-study;
- j. where necessary, the order and time periods in which and number of times per academic year that students will be given the opportunity to take interim and final examinations;
- k. where necessary, the length of time for which a passing mark on an examination remains valid, subject to the Examinations Board's authority to extend the validity period;
- l. whether the examinations are oral or written or of another nature, subject to the Examinations Board's authority to decide otherwise in special cases;
- m. the arrangements to be made within reason to enable students with a physical disability or chronic condition to take examinations;
- n. the public nature of oral examinations, subject to the Examinations Board's authority to decide otherwise in special cases;
- o. the period within which the results of an examination will be announced, and the circumstances in which this period may be exceeded, if at all;
- p. how and within what period a person who has taken a written examination may obtain access to their assessed work;
- q. the manner and period in which questions and assignments that formed part of a written examination and standards on which the examination was assessed may be inspected;
- r. the conditions under which the Examinations Board may exempt students from taking one or more examinations on the basis of examinations or final examinations that the student has already passed in higher education or of knowledge or skills acquired outside higher education;
- s. where necessary, that a student must pass certain examinations before having the option of taking other examinations;

- t. where necessary, the obligation to complete a practical component in order to be allowed to take an examination, subject to the Examinations Board's authority to grant an exemption from such an obligation, with or without imposing substitute requirements;
  - u. monitoring study progress and individual student counselling;
  - v. where applicable, the method by which students are selected for a special track within a degree programme as referred to in Section 7.9b; and
  - x. the actual form and structure of teaching.
3. The Teaching and Examination Regulations set out how a person can invoke their right to pursue a Bachelor's programme at a higher professional education institution as referred to in Section 7.8a(5), and the criteria that apply.

## Appendix 3: Quality of tests: explanatory notes on reliability, validity, transparency and workability

QUALITY CRITERION	RELEVANT QUESTIONS
Validity	1. How was the test designed in relation to the learning objectives? 2. Has a test design been used (e.g. a test matrix)? 3. Does the test measure the objectives set to a satisfactory degree? 4. Does the test sufficiently reflect the course material? 5. Does the test sufficiently reflect the material covered during lectures?
Reliability	6. Does the test contain sufficient components to obtain a reliable picture of the student's competence? 7. Are the questions formulated clearly and unambiguously? 8. Are the assessment criteria formulated clearly and unambiguously?
Transparency	9. Has it been made sufficiently clear at the start of the course what form of testing will be used? 10. Have the assessment criteria been made sufficiently clear to students? 11. Has it been made clear how the final mark is calculated? 12. Has the minimum level of performance required to to pass the test been made sufficiently clear to students? 13. Has the expected level of performance for the test been practised sufficiently during the course?
Workability	14. Is the test a workable tool for students in relation to the available time for studying and testing? 15. Is the test a workable tool for lecturers in relation to the available lecturer hours?

# Appendix 4: Model Annual Report for Examination Boards

## **Model Annual Report for Examination Boards**

*Report spanning one academic year, to be issued within six weeks after it has ended.*

*This model is structured so that the resulting annual report of the Examinations Board can serve several different functions:*

- 1 render an account of the Examination Board's activities;*
- 2 provide the programme director, College/Graduate school director and dean with input for any improvements to teaching quality;*
- 3 yield management information, which is often requested in degree programme accreditation procedures.*

*In addition, this model is designed in accordance with the PDCA cycle, by asking for a description of and reflection on specific areas of concern relating to the given academic year*

### **1 Composition, scope and operation of the Examinations Board**

Specify the composition of the Examinations Board over the past academic year or attach an appendix listing changes and the composition. Give the names of the chair and vice-chair. Also specify the degree programmes for which the Examinations Board is responsible.

Briefly also describe the operation of the Examinations Board.

### **2 Number of meetings + main agenda items**

Indicate how often the Examinations Board met and the most important items on the agenda. Important agenda items are primarily those that involved a discussion of new policy or supplementary regulations.

A number of faculties schedule regular Examinations Board meetings to address student requests and plenary meetings (usually at a higher aggregation level) to focus on the more policy-oriented items. In that case, specify how many regular meetings took place and how many 'plenary' meetings.

### **3 Reflection on identified areas of concern**

Provide a brief description of the state of affairs regarding items that were cited as areas of concern in the previous year's annual report.

### **4 Quality assurance of tests and examinations**

Overview of the way the quality of tests and examinations has been evaluated, including findings and recommendations.

### **5 Assigning and instruction of examiners**

Description of the way in which examiners have been assigned, and the way they are informed about guidelines.

### **Fraud**

Measures taken to prevent fraud and the way compliance with these measures is supervised.

### **Other decisions/findings of the Examinations Board**

Summarise the Examination Board's principal decisions and/or findings with an application at a higher level than that of the individual student. Refer here only to decisions and/or findings that were not already addressed under 3, 4, 5, and 6 Any new topics of interest may also be mentioned.



### 8 Recommendations regarding the Teaching and Examination Regulations

Provide a brief summary of recommendations issued in respect of the Teaching and Examination Regulations, if possible also stating whether or not the recommendations were implemented.

### 9 Overview of requests/cases handled

Provide an overview of all of the requests handled by the Examination Board. A sample overview is provided below for reference purposes. If any trends or divergences can be identified, please also provide an explanation, if possible. Admission requests should be included in a separate table.

Category	2016		2017	
	Submitted	Granted	Submitted	Granted
Component obtained abroad				
Exemptions				
Curriculum				
Course outside degree programme				
Requests for admission to honours programme				
Extension of validity period of end-of-term exams				
Complaints regarding end-of-term exams				
Objections and appeals against awarded marks				
Requests for dispensation/additional resit in connection with 'Bachelor-before-Master' rule				
Reports of fraud/plagiarism				
Requests to the appeals committee for dispensation from binding (negative) advice regarding continuation of studies (BSA)				
Other				

#### Admission requests

	2016		2017	
	Submitted	Admitted	Submitted	Admitted
Total number of admission requests				
- university of applied sciences (HBO)				
- other Dutch research university (WO)				
- previous education abroad				

### 10 COBEX cases

Provide an anonymous overview of cases handled by the Examination Appeals Board (COBEX) and the decisions, as well as any appealed COBEX cases that were brought before the court or the Higher Education Appeals Board and the decisions.

### 11 Areas of concern according to self evaluation tool Examination Boards

Provide the outcomes of the self evaluation tool (zelfevaluatie), and indicate what actions shall be undertaken to meet the requirements not (yet) met, or otherwise explain how the matters are arranged in a different fashion.

### 12 Areas of concern for the new academic year

Summarise areas of concern for the academic year ahead.