



Maastricht University

ASSESSMENT POLICY

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Contributing authors

Version 2017-2018: Giselle Bosse, Marloes Menten, Robin Dirix

Version 2018-2019: John Harbord, Marloes Menten, Sylvia Haerkens

Version 2020-2021: Robin Dirix, Jacob Ward, Diede Diederiks, John Harbord, Joke Spruyt, Josje Weusten

Last update: 11 November 2020

Contents

Introduction	4
1. Moving from an assessment culture of testing toward a culture of feedback and development	5
1.1. Key principles in the UM vision on assessment	5
1.2. Constructive alignment.....	7
1.3. Assessment programmes.....	8
1.4. Student engagement	9
1.5 Development of assessment.....	10
1.6. Revision of the assessment policy	10
2. Designing the assessment programme	11
2.1. Selecting assessment formats.....	11
2.2. Scheduling and planning of assessment	12
2.3. Administration of exams.....	13
2.4. Determining and publishing results	14
2.5. Feedback	14
3. Assessment regulations at the programme level	16
3.1. Education and Examination Regulations; Rules & Regulations	16
3.2. Code of conduct for on-site examinations.....	16
3.3. Fraud and plagiarism.....	17
4. Assessment of final work	18
4.1. Definition of final work	18
4.2. Principles in the assessment of final work.....	18
4.3. Procedures	18
4.4. Final work graders.....	19
4.5. Intervision and third grader	20
5. Quality assurance of assessment	21
5.1. Quality criteria	21
5.2. The assessment cycle.....	22
6. Staff development	25
6.1. Training	25

7. Appendix: policy for online assessment.....	26
7.1. Fraud risks, identity verification and proctoring.....	26
7.2. Alternative approaches to written exams	27
7.3. Turning written exams into another exam format	28
7.4. Exam instructions and integrity statements	29
7.5. Minimum levels of authenticity	31
7.6. Technical difficulties during an online exam.....	31
7.7. University-wide guidelines for online assessment	32
References	33

Introduction

This document provides a framework for all staff involved in assessment, especially course coordinators/responsible examiners and programme directors, to help monitor and improve the quality of assessment at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS).

Assessment of student performance at FASoS is supposed to be reliable, transparent and fair, but also aligned with programme learning outcomes, and with UM policy – in particular the 2020 UM vision on assessment. This policy provides a bird's-eye view of UM's assessment vision, as well as policies and regulations established by FASoS.

This assessment policy comprises six chapters. The first chapter outlines the three pillars of the 2020 UM vision on assessment and their translation to practice. Subsequent chapters present policies, guidelines and procedures related to the design of assessment programmes (Chapter 2), assessment regulations at the programme level (Chapter 3), the assessment of final work (Chapter 4), quality assurance (Chapter 5) and staff development (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 is an appendix created during the corona crisis of 2020, which provides guidelines and considerations related to online assessment.

1. Moving from an assessment culture of testing toward a culture of feedback and development

1.1. Key principles in the UM vision on assessment

As part of the quality agreements, UM has expressed the ambition to further sharpen a clear vision on education and its didactical approach, including assessment. The 2020 assessment vision is based on three key elements:

- *Assessment is meaningful for the learning process of the student;*
- *Assessment supports the principles of PBL: Constructive, Contextual, Collaborative and Self-directed (the 'CCCS' principles);*
- *Assessment is coordinated at programme level.*

The new vision is expected to be implemented at all UM faculties by 2023. The key elements will be introduced through projects and pilots on faculty level. These key elements should facilitate a shift from testing exclusively whether or not a student has learned enough, to an environment in which individual learning trajectories, feedback and development also play an important role. The key elements are discussed further below.

Assessment is meaningful

The best known role of assessment in higher education is to establish whether the student has mastered the intended learning outcomes of the programme (assessment *of* learning or *summative assessment*). It is done at the end of a course to provide evidence of whether or not students have achieved the course goals. Assessment *of* learning includes closed and take-home exams, final papers and the final thesis. Vis-à-vis external stakeholders such as employers and the state, summative assessment remains important at FASoS to ensure the quality of graduates. Assessment of learning is meaningful in the learning process because it informs the prospective employer whether the student has adequately completed the learning goals.

A second, equally important, function of assessment is to help students understand how they are progressing with mastering intended learning outcomes, and what they still need to learn (assessment *for* learning, *formative assessment* or “feedback”). Formative assessment usually takes place during learning, and often several times during a course. The assessor provides information that enables the student either to improve the current assignment (feedback), to perform better on the next comparable

assignment (feedforward) or to extrapolate lessons that can be applied to more complex assignments, such as the thesis (feed up). It often does not involve grading or evaluation on a pass/fail scale.

Assessment for learning is already a very common practice at FASoS. At MA level, for example, many courses use intermediate or draft assignments (and feedback), peer feedback, informal (non-graded) presentations or Q&A sessions to help students learn and improve in view of the final assignment. The same goes for preparatory assignments, such as an ungraded proposal in preparation for a (graded) research paper.

Effective feedback focuses on criteria comparable to those used for the summative assessment of the course. It tells students what they have achieved and where they need to improve, and provides specific suggestions about how improvement might be achieved. Assessment for learning is meaningful in the learning process because it enables both students and tutors to see which learning goals have been achieved and which require further study, practice or support to achieve.

Finally, assessment enables students to monitor their own performance and progress, and to optimise their learning strategies (assessment *as* learning, or reflection). Through this process (guided by the tutor at first) students become aware of how they learn, and how they can learn better. Examples include individual and group reflection on the success of a task (e.g. discussion about the success of a PBL session, or on executive function skills, such as planning or time management), or reflection on what was learned by applying a given method to a case. Reflection is not normally graded. Assessment as learning is meaningful in the learning process because it enables students and tutors to improve the learning process itself.

Assessment supports the principles of PBL (Constructive, Contextual, Collaborative and Self-directed)

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is the central educational model at UM. Learning takes place in small groups where problems are situated in a real-world *context* for the acquisition of knowledge and learning. Students *collaborate* to *construct* a shared understanding (with guidance from the tutor where needed), and *direct their own* learning process.

To ensure alignment between what happens in the classroom and how learning is assessed, these four features of PBL should be borne in mind when designing assessment. For example, if class learning focuses around studying cases, the summative assessment should use cases. If tutorials require students to 'construct' knowledge by synthesising and applying the literature to a problem, assessment should

also involve synthesis and application of the literature to construct knowledge. If students' class learning process is self-directed in the sense that they make their own decisions about what to research and how to use it, the summative assessment should also require them to make decisions about what to research and how to use it. If classroom activities emphasise collaboration, at least some assessment formats should include and assess student collaboration.

Assessment is coordinated at the programme level

Programme directors ensure a purposeful mix of formative (*for learning*) and summative (*of learning*) assessment methods. The programme management should review the whole assessment programme to ensure that courses are aligned with each other in terms of the assessment methods they use, as well as their intended learning outcomes. This will enable the design of more longitudinal teaching trajectories and corresponding assessment.

FASoS hosts a broad range of Bachelor and Master's programmes offering interdisciplinary studies in the fields of the arts and social sciences. While each FASoS programme defines its own purposes and methods of assessing the final qualifications, all efforts should be geared towards maximising the alignment of intended learning outcomes with the respective assessment methods and criteria. All programmes should present this overview of assessment (linked to the intended learning outcomes) as part of their education plans.

1.2. Constructive alignment

Constructive alignment means: 1) intended learning outcomes are selected 2) teaching and learning activities are chosen that best enable students to achieve those outcomes, and 3) assessment formats are chosen that match both the intended learning outcomes and the teaching and learning activities. All three stages are aligned when the assessment formats used are those best suited to assessing students' achievement of those outcomes via those activities (Biggs, 2011).

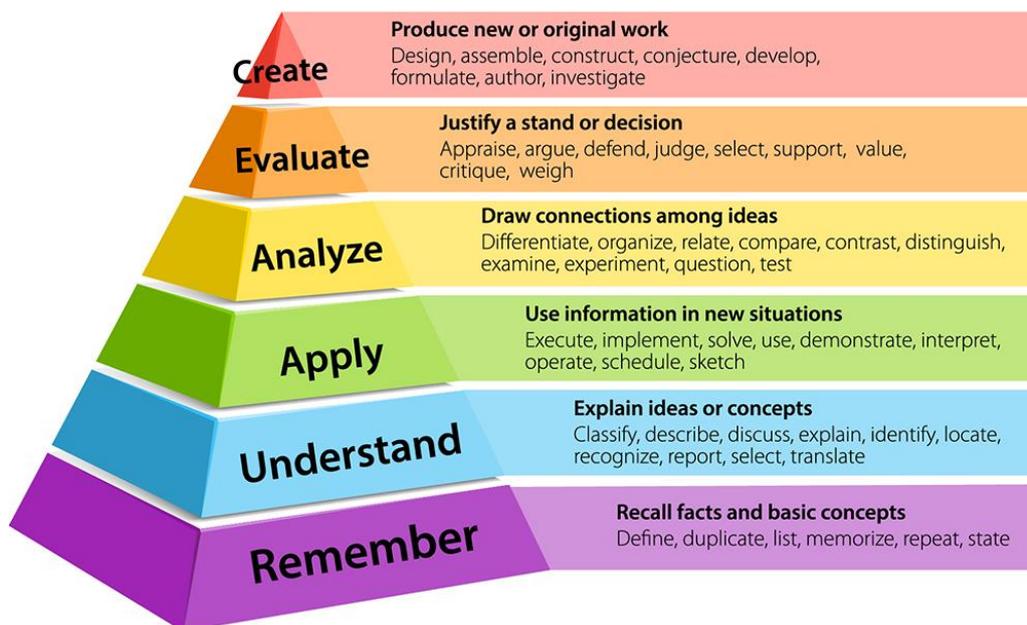
For each individual programme at FASoS, learning outcomes, instructional activities and assessment should be aligned on the programme level to the best extent possible. After the initial constructive alignment projects, all programmes should continue to assess the connection between intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning environment and assessment through the yearly education plans (see chapter 5).

1.3. Assessment programmes

An effective assessment programme uses appropriate assessment instruments to measure the intended learning outcomes in a reliable, valid, and transparent way. In line with the UM vision, assessment design should be embedded in course/curriculum design. Responsibility for ensuring constructive alignment, including assessment, lies at the level of the programme and is regularly monitored at that level. Within the framework of the assessment programme, teaching staff may choose the form of assessment for their own course, as long as these remain aligned at programme level. In addition to alignment, resources, capacities and infrastructure (such as student workload (ECTS), staff workload, financial resources, equipment, facilities or administrative support) should be taken into account when selecting an assessment format.

Assessment should also be based on a good understanding of the nature of learning. One of the most widely used and accepted tools in understanding and categorising different cognitive skills is Bloom's taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002), presented in figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Bloom's revised taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002)



The taxonomy distinguishes six levels of cognitive skills: (1) remembering, (2) understanding, (3) applying, (4) analysing, (5) evaluating, and (6) creating. Each of these levels assumes and builds on the ones preceding it. While the first two levels are commonly associated with 'surface learning', the last four are associated with 'deep learning', that is, interlinking new ideas to known concepts to create an

understanding that can be used to solve problems in new, unfamiliar contexts. Deep learning is central to higher education, but also complex and therefore more difficult to assess.

Just as we expect course learning outcomes at university level to address not only the lower levels of the taxonomy but increasingly the higher ones, assessment formats should be aligned to the levels of the taxonomy that are referred to in the intended learning outcomes. If analysing and evaluating are course learning outcomes, the assessment should involve analysing and evaluating.

1.4. Student engagement

Education at FASoS, in keeping with PBL, should be learning-centred and learner-centred, so that students develop a sense of agency and ownership towards their assessment and critical reflection on their own learning strategies and progress. Four elements foster this process:

1. defining clear and understandable intended learning outcomes;
2. making clear which criteria impact on attaining these desired outcomes;
3. providing students with feedback in relation to the desired outcomes;
4. engaging and empowering students by encouraging them to critically monitor and reflect on the ways in which they construct their learning goals and strategies.

Assessment practices in combination with teaching and learning activities help students develop an increasingly self-directed learning approach. Activities such as self-assessment, formative (peer) feedback, mentoring and portfolio-based assessment help students engage and stimulate self-directed learning and critical reflection on their own learning progress. In general, engaging students in formative assessment processes, for example through peer-feedback or Q&A sessions, helps them understand the formal requirements in syllabi. Exam criteria and regulations translate into a learning trajectory where they have agency. It also helps them to reflect critically on their own learning experience and progress, and becoming self-managing, independent learners (Rolls et al., 2018)

Students should be effectively and regularly informed about why they are learning, how teaching/learning activities contribute to that learning, and how assessment evaluates their mastery of the intended learning outcomes. They also need a facilitated understanding of how goals, activities and assessment of any individual course relate to those of courses that precede or follow. To this end, course books should make clear the learning outcomes of each course and how these are related not only to the assessment rubrics but also to the outcomes of preceding and following courses. The inter-alignment of courses should thus closely be monitored.

Students can be included in formative assessment processes in various ways. One is by involving them in formative assessment of the work of their peers. Well-designed peer assessment with a clear rubric for students to use and asking them to come up with arguments to underpin their assessment can be reliable, especially if multiple students are asked to assess a piece. Group discussion and/or marking a sample assignment from a previous year can also engage students in understanding assessment better. Related ways are to ask students to develop criteria for evaluation, then compare them to those that will be used and reflect on the differences.

1.5 Development of assessment

It is important to continuously reflect on innovation of learning, teaching and assessment practices. Feedback from staff and students, changing requirements of educational authorities, and broader developments in the educational landscape, and in society as a whole, will have an impact on study programmes and thus on their assessment. For these reasons, FASoS conducts a periodic review of its programmes, adapting learning outcomes where necessary to the world into which students will graduate. In turn, this entails periodic reconsideration and, where appropriate, revision of assessment programmes. The process of formal evaluation of constructive alignment occurs yearly through the education plans and is led by the programme director together with the coordinators of the individual courses. This ensures that the exams become elements of a continuing cycle of assessment construction and evaluation.

1.6. Revision of the assessment policy

The Faculty Board has mandated the Assessment Support Team to update this FASoS assessment policy document regularly in case of relevant internal and external developments. The Assessment Support Team will discuss any change with the Board of Examiners, and the revised policy will be submitted to the Faculty Board for their approval.

2. Designing the assessment programme

The assessment programme should be as closely aligned as possible with the intended learning outcomes of a programme's courses and with the teaching activities. This chapter provides support and guidance to staff, particularly programme directors and course coordinators to make underpinned decisions in designing the assessment programme. We acknowledge that besides alignment, other factors such as logistics, group size, legislation, and budget may influence the choice for an assessment format. The assessment plan should be an integral part of the education plan. To this end, the programme director should oversee the coordination and administration of all aspects of an ongoing programme, so as to ensure that not only the teaching and learning activities but also assessment methods contribute to realisation of the intended learning outcomes.

2.1. Selecting assessment formats

The term 'assessment format' refers to forms and ways used to assess student performance (e.g. written exam, oral exam, written assignment, presentation). Selecting assessment formats is a complex process, whether it is done for a whole programme or course or for a single component of a course. It is important to take account of the learning and teaching context, and consider the influence of various variables. Most importantly, an assessment format should be selected that aligns well with the intended learning outcomes of a course, which in turn should be aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the study programme, and focus the overall design for assessment on encouraging, enabling and supporting learning—that is, on assessment as learning.

Most FASoS assessment formats are written. These can include closed exams taken on a computer; take-home exams and research papers/essays; as well as less conventional formats, such as contributions to blogs or websites. The format of all assessment tasks that contribute to the final grade of a course should be made clear in the course book. It should also be made clear how these formats successfully evaluate achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and if there are multiple tasks, how these contribute to the final grade.

All assessment should contain both formative and summative elements. As students are usually young and can be expected to do more writing and thinking in the future than they have in the past, the value of a 'feedforward' type of feedback provision, such as an opportunity to submit an essay draft or proposal, that helps them become better thinkers, writers and creators of new knowledge cannot be underestimated, and should play an important role in all assessment.

The course coordinator decides on the appropriate assessment method(s) in consultation with the programme director, and may, in case of doubt, consult the Assessment Support Team. The aim is to ensure a mixture of assessment methods that enables students to build a more holistic picture of their learning, integrating the diverse strands of their study programme.

In planning the type and length of written assessment tasks, coordinators should take careful account of the workload involved and how this relates to the ECTS of the course, as well as the relative difficulty of assessment tasks for preceding and subsequent courses.

Regarding overall alignment, particularly in BA courses, learning outcomes of earlier courses (if successfully achieved) will equip the student with skills and knowledge that will enable success in achieving the more advanced learning outcomes of later courses. Thus later assessment formats and tasks will inevitably entail the (re)assessment of some learning outcomes from earlier courses, even though these may not explicitly appear as learning outcomes of the later course. In other situations, a learning outcome of a later course may specify the acquisition of skills or knowledge to a higher level. In this case, care should be taken that the assessment format chosen for the later course will accurately assess the learning outcome at the level required for that course.

Guidelines on constructing, conducting and grading various exam formats (closed-book exams, papers, oral exams, etc.) have been drawn up by the Board of Examiners. These guidelines provide information on the current best practices and quality assurance measures per assessment format. Additionally, guidelines on how to grade BA internships and literature exams are provided to staff teaching in the BA programmes.

2.2. Scheduling and planning of assessment

Students generally perform best when the scheduling of assessment gives them enough time to focus on each task. Assessment moments should be coordinated so as not to disadvantage students and cause unnecessary stress.

The student may be assessed for the completion of a given course twice a year: the first exam sitting and the resit option. The first assessment will be carried out during or directly after the course period (first sit). Submission dates and times are approved by the Faculty Board. If a student fails (receiving a grade lower than 6.0) or does not complete the assessment for a course, that student may make one attempt to resit the assessment task(s) in the same academic year on a date and at a time determined by the Faculty Board (resit). A course passed (marked 6.0 or higher, or assessed with at least a pass) on

the first sit cannot be retaken; a student can only retake an exam insofar as is needed to pass the examination (see Article 6.1 of all three FASoS EERs).

Exam dates and times are published in the Academic Calendar. In exceptional cases, the Board of Examiners can decide that an exam may be taken at a different date and time than specified in the Academic Calendar. Exam dates can only be modified up until eight weeks prior to the initial exam date.

In the scheduling of resits, FASoS aims to adhere to the following principles:

- Resits should not compete with other exams or educational activities.
- Resits should not lead to extra workload for staff (i.e. summer holidays, faster grading).
- Resits should not be an attractive option to students (e.g. not taking the first sit because the resit is at a more convenient moment).
- Resits should be planned in a logistically feasible way.
- Resits should be organized within UM exam weeks, with a view to feasibility of exam-related logistics and rental costs for exam locations.
- The time between the first and second sit should not be too short.

2.3. Administration of exams

UM-wide appointments about large-scale written exams taking place at e.g. the MECC exam halls are laid down in the Rules of Procedure for Examinations. The administration of all other assessment formats (e.g. written assignments to be handed in through the online learning environment or oral exams) are organised by the course coordinator and the Exam Administration.

Exam registration

The faculty registers each student for a course, including registration for the first sit of the course assessment. If a student is entitled to take an exam, but failed or did not participate, s/he will be registered for the resit by the Exam Administration.

Provision for student disability

Upon request, a student with a disability may be assessed in a manner that accommodates his or her specific disability as much as possible. If necessary, the Board of Examiners will obtain expert advice before taking a decision in such matters. It will ensure that the adaptations of the exam format are in line with the generic requirements to pass the course(s) and to graduate.

2.4. Determining and publishing results

Students care about their results, and the Faculty should inform them of these in a timely manner. This is especially true if a student has failed an exam and needs time and feedback to improve and have a fair chance of passing the resit. UM-wide regulations stipulate the time periods within which students must receive their results. FASoS policy is based in all cases on UM central requirements.

For all formal assessment except the thesis, the examiner must determine the result of the assessment task(s) and provide the Exam Administration with the necessary information to publish the result, including feedback, within 13 working days of the date on which the exam was taken, not counting that day. The Exam Administration will publish the results of the assessment, including feedback, within 15 working days of the date on which it was taken, not counting that day.

In case of an oral exam, the examiner must inform both the student and the Exam Administration within 24 hours. If more than one student takes the same exam, one after the other, this period may be extended by up to five working days. The Exam Administration will publish the result of the oral exam, including feedback within two working days of receipt of the result.

For the thesis, the first and second reader must determine the result and provide the Exam Administration with the assessment form and grade within 16 working days of the final work submission deadline, not counting that day. The Exam Administration will publish the result of the final work within 18 working days of the submission deadline, not counting that day.

2.5. Feedback

Feedback is one of the few direct, person-to-person learning relationships with university teachers that many students experience and can make a profound impact on the student experience. To become self-directed learners with ownership of their learning, students need constant guidance. Particularly in the case of assessed tasks, this means clear indication both of what they have done well, so they can use those strategies again, and what they should have done better. Where improvement is needed, students can learn from effective feedback both how to correct the weaknesses of the present work, and to write future works without those weaknesses. Research shows that – of the variables that are within universities' control – good-quality, individualised feedback is the most reliable predictor of student success (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 84).

Tutors and examiners should therefore always provide a sufficient quantity of feedback that is sufficiently clear for the average student (easily legible, preferably typed, and grammatically coherent)

to fully understand what was lacking and how it can be made good. Feedback should also be forward-looking, so that it helps the student to improve future performance. FASoS requires all examiners to provide clear, explicit formative feedback on all forms of assessment. Course coordinators/responsible examiners should also ensure that within their course, roughly the same amount of feedback is provided by the various tutors who assist with grading.

3. Assessment regulations at the programme level

Regulations indicate the framework within which programmes operate. All regulations on programme level must comply with legal provisions on national level and policies on university level.

3.1. Education and Examination Regulations; Rules & Regulations

As of September 2020, FASoS has three sets of Education and Examination Regulations (EERs). One EER applies to the Bachelor's programmes European Studies; Arts & Culture; Digital Society; and to the minors and pre-master's programmes FASoS offers. A separate EER was created for the interfaculty Bachelor's programme Global Studies. Finally, one set of EERs applies to all Master's programmes. The Faculty Board is accountable for these regulations; it determines and adopts them annually.

The Education Plan is the tool used at FASoS to accommodate the annual update of the EERs. Any envisioned changes to the EER should be proposed and explained in this document. The relevant Educational Programme Committee, the Faculty Council, the Board of Examiners and the Office of Student Affairs issue an advice on the intended changes. Depending on the EER article the proposed change refers to, the Faculty Council and Educational Programme Committee may have the right of consent or right of advice on the change, in accordance with Dutch law. In case of a negative advice, the Faculty Board can either reject the programme management's proposal, or argue that they disagree with the advice, for good reasons. However, if consent is needed, the proposal must be rejected by the Faculty Board.

The Board of Examiners checks the correct application of the Education and Examination Regulations and determines the Rules and Regulations (R&R). The R&R provide guidelines and instructions for examiners in order to ensure quality of assessment. The document also contains information about fraud and plagiarism, grading scales, and cum laude regulations, among other topics.

3.2. Code of conduct for on-site examinations

The Code of conduct for on-site written assessment (e.g. in the MECC exam hall) is included in the document "Rules of Procedure for Examinations", and addresses topics such as use of the examination room; how to hand in the examination; permitted refreshments during the exam; and toilet visits. Where applicable, supplementary or different regulations may be appended for examinations administered in computer labs or faculty rooms.

3.3. Fraud and plagiarism

Fraud, including plagiarism, means actions or omissions by a student that make it impossible in whole or in part to properly evaluate his/her knowledge, understanding and skills. Plagiarism means the presentation of ideas or words from one's own or someone else's sources without proper acknowledgment of the sources. Further provisions about what constitutes fraud and plagiarism in general, and which disciplinary measures the Board of Examiners can impose, are set out in Chapter VII of the Rules and Regulations.

If the Board of Examiners concludes that a student has engaged in fraud with respect to an exam or exam component, it can declare the results of the relevant exam null and void, and impose: (a) a reprimand; (b) exclusion from participation or further participation in one or more exams in the programme for a maximum of one year. In serious cases of fraud, it can propose to UM's Executive Board that the student(s) concerned be permanently deregistered from the programme. Before the Board of Examiners imposes a suitable measure or makes a proposal to the Executive Board, the student concerned is given the opportunity to be heard.

All written work that is submitted digitally should be checked for plagiarism by the examiner. In the CANVAS online learning environment, plagiarism-checker Urkund can be used for this. Students submit the documents to an upload point, after which the plagiarism check is performed automatically. If the outcome of the check prompts a suspicion of plagiarism, examiners should report their findings to the Board of Examiners by filling out the plagiarism reporting form.

If a student is suspected of fraud during an on-site exam, the invigilator will report to the Board of Examiners by filling out the Irregularity Report Form. An investigation will be initiated, and all correspondence about the alleged fraud will be included in the student's dossier.

4. Assessment of final work

This chapter summarises the principles in the assessment of final work at FASoS.

4.1. Definition of final work

The final work (afstudeerwerk) is defined as an extended piece of independent academic work which constitutes the definitive test for the acquired final qualifications. It should be closely aligned with the respective educational programme curriculum and the requirements of the final qualification. At FASoS the final work always takes the form of an academic thesis, sometimes in conjunction with other educational units (e.g. internship work, project work, fieldwork report) as in the MA programmes EPA, GDS or MSDC. When the final work is composed of several deliverables (next to the academic thesis) the term ‘graduation package’ is used. Where the final work is composed only of an academic thesis, it is referred to hereafter as “thesis”.

4.2. Principles in the assessment of final work

FASoS adheres to the following basic principles in the assessment of final work:

- Two graders perform the assessment; they apply the same assessment criteria.
- Minimisation of potential supervision bias.
- Application of the ‘four-eyes principle’.
- The final product (and not the process) is assessed.
- Assurance of validity and reliability of assessment.

4.3. Procedures

The hand-out “Procedure for the grading and archiving of FASoS final works”, annually updated and re-published by the Board of Examiners, together with the EERs, provides the basis of the procedures for final work.

The thesis should administratively be organised as a course. It should have:

- a course code in SAP;
- a course coordinator (hereafter “thesis coordinator,” see also section 4.3);
- CANVAS/Student portal pages and SafeAssign submission points; and
- a first examination date and resit date.

In case of graduation packages, each element of the final work package must be organised administratively as a separate course.

The thesis and any related components of the final work should be submitted through CANVAS. It is the responsibility of the thesis coordinator to create and activate an upload point. The submission of hard copies of the thesis is not allowed in order to assure that the work is checked for plagiarism and that it is identical to the archived digital version.

The archive is administered by the Office of Student Affairs. All theses (and any related components) must be archived, including (i) a digital copy of the thesis submitted by the student; (ii) the SafeAssign report and (iii) the assessment form as submitted by the responsible examiner.

A designated assessment form must be used that specifies the grading criteria for the final work in that particular programme. The thesis coordinator must submit the final work assessment form to the Board of Examiners for formal approval before it is shared with the examiners. The Board of Examiners must ensure that the assessment form complies with the formal requirements (such as standardised first page) and that it meets the basic quality standards (e.g. no criteria assessing progress or evaluating the final outcome in comparison to earlier versions of the thesis).

Annual calibration sessions per programme take place for all thesis graders in order to ensure that they concur on the requirements for achieving a particular grade and hold similar conceptions of the grading scale. The sessions bring together junior and senior examiners. They assess an anonymised sample thesis and explicate and harmonise their considerations in the grading process. For example, during these sessions necessary and sufficient conditions for passing a thesis can be discussed. There is no Faculty-wide harmonised policy on these conditions; these are tailor-made for each programme. A representative of the Board of Examiners is supposed to be present in every calibration session.

4.4. Final work graders

The programme director appoints (a) coordinator(s) of thesis-related courses: Thesis proposal, Thesis, Internship thesis etc. The thesis coordinator suggests a first and second grader per final work, and requests the Board of Examiners to formally approve the list of suggested graders. The coordinator should ensure that the same two staff members are not paired in assessing multiple theses more often than is necessary given the availability of staff.

Formally, the second grader is the responsible examiner for the thesis. This is because the first grader is the student's supervisor, whereas the second grader has no link with the student.

For the assessment of final work in MA programmes, the Board of Examiners requires that the examiner hold a PhD.

In order to safeguard the quality of the assessment process, the Board of Examiners applies the following quota per grader per academic year.

- Maximum number of BA theses for supervision: 10.
- Maximum number of BA theses for second grading: 10.
- Maximum number of MA theses for supervision: 5.
- Maximum number of MA theses for second grading: 5.

4.5. Intervision and third grader

The two graders exchange views and discuss their assessment of the final work, and the envisioned grade. Both graders need to agree on the grade and on the content of the assessment form. This process is referred to as intervision. The two graders are independent, and the responsible examiner (second grader/reader) provides a draft assessment and suggests a grade to the supervisor.

In case of unsurmountable disagreement between the two graders, the thesis coordinator must appoint a third grader who is an experienced senior staff member (an associate professor or full professor). Having read/heard the opinion of the two graders, the third grader takes a majority decision, agreeing with or convincing at least one of the previous graders, to come to a final grade. In such cases, the third grader takes on the role of responsible examiner, completes the assessment form (harmonising all comments which justify the agreed-upon grade), and sends it to the Exam Administration.

5. Quality assurance of assessment

Adequate quality assurance is essential to ensure effective assessment, and to address any potential weaknesses in the assessment system appropriately. To this end, section 5.1 below outlines what quality in assessment means. Section 5.2 outlines the stages of the assessment cycle through which quality can be maintained and improved, and 5.3 details the responsibilities of various staff and committees in the quality assurance process.

5.1. Quality criteria

Based on the accreditation framework, quality of assessment is defined here in terms of reliability, validity, transparency and fairness.

Reliability

Reliability indicates how certain we can be about the information obtained through the exam results. It refers to the consistency or repeatability of the assessment method: 'If we do this exam again, would it lead to the same result?' To what extent are the exam scores consistent when measured multiple times? Inconsistent scores may, for example, be attributed to external factors – such as tiredness, absent-mindedness or excessive noise – or may result from the fact that the examiner's judgment has, for instance, been influenced by the student's handwriting. In sum, an exam with high reliability means that students who have mastered the intended learning outcomes succeed in the exam, while those who have not do not.

Validity

Validity means that the exam measures knowledge, skills and attitudes in an appropriate and balanced way. A valid exam should be based on assessment criteria that clearly match the assessment task(s) of that course to its intended learning outcomes. If, for example, the intended learning outcome is that students should understand ethical traditions in the history of Western civilisation, then the exam is valid if a student who scores a good mark on this exam does indeed have the requisite knowledge of these ethical traditions.

The validity of an exam can be guaranteed by using an assessment matrix, and by specifying which tasks or parts of tasks assess the reproduction of knowledge, comprehension of knowledge, or application of knowledge (cf. Bloom's taxonomy), and which assess the application of which skills, if those skills are intended learning outcomes.

Transparency

Assessment is transparent when all the information regarding the assessment is made clear in a form that the student can understand and a location that the student has access to. For example, the types, dates and the duration of the exam and task(s), should be clearly stated as well as what needs to be achieved by the student in order to succeed. Transparency also means that any exam questions or statements are clearly understandable by a student who has attended the course, as is the level of detail expected in the answer. Further, the use of rubrics or standardized assessment forms is a good way to achieve transparency for both students and multiple assessors within a course.

Fairness

Fair assessment provides equal opportunity for all students to demonstrate the extent of their learning. Students should get a fair chance to demonstrate their competences and this involves considerations about workload (linked to amount of credits), timing and complexity of the task. In addition, assessment practices need to be as free as possible from gender, racial, cultural or other potential bias, and provisions need to be made for students with disabilities and/or special needs. The teaching and learning activities must provide students with sufficient opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills before assessment. Fairness also includes concerns such as providing reasonable and sufficient time to complete a task, or not setting tasks that require resources that are not available to some or all students. The timing of feedback in relation to the resit date is also important.

5.2. The assessment cycle

Assessment is subject to a constant cycle of improvement. Following the steps of the assessment cycle helps to ensure the effectiveness of the assessment process. Good assessment follows an intentional and reflective process of design, implementation, evaluation, and revision. The assessment cycle developed by Manchester Metropolitan University (2015) – see figure 2 below – includes eight steps. Results at one stage guide activity at the following stage.

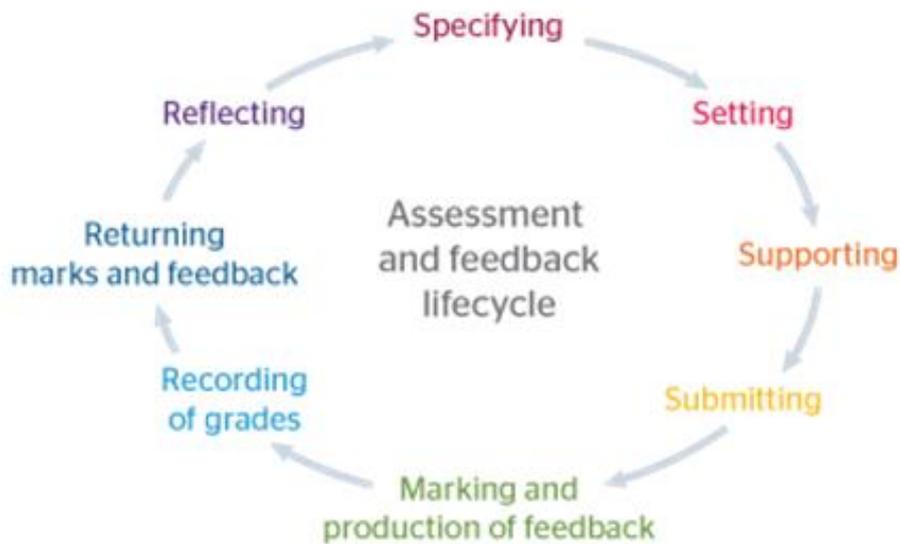


Figure 2. The assessment cycle.

Specifying

Specifying involves choosing for a format and number of assignments/exams that best allows students to demonstrate achievement of the course and learning objectives.

Setting

Setting refers to the details and instructions of assessment tasks, such as the grading criteria, and instructions on submission and guidance on the size of submissions.

The course book for each course should present in the chapter 'Assessment':

- a clarification of all assessment methods used and their relative weight in the overall assessment;
- detailed information on what students are expected to do and when; word limits; and any other specific requirements, such as the number of sources required;
- all criteria by which student output will be assessed, including, where possible, indication of what standard or fulfilment constitutes a pass;
- where there is more than one assessment task, which learning outcomes are assessed by which task.

Supporting

Supporting refers to measures to engage students in learning, such as providing feedback on intermediate assignments and delivering a mixture of structured activities and independent study.

Submitting

Submitting refers to ensuring that students have clear information about submission arrangements and that submission procedures are fair and accessible.

Marking and provision of feedback

This step requires that marking and feedback procedures are established before the assessment is done and that decisions made regarding marking and feedback are straightforward and consistent.

Recording of grades

Recording of grades refers to the process in which examiners/coordinators establish the final grades and submit these to the Exam Administration.

Returning marks and feedback

Returning marks and feedback regards the way students are informed about their grades and the way they will receive feedback, for instance during the exam inspection hour.

Reflecting

Reflecting is the final stage of the assessment and feedback lifecycle. This step has two parts. One part is to encourage students to reflect on their own performance. Student reflection on the outcomes of an assignment/exam should influence how the student approaches an assignment/exam in the future. The second part involves the reflection of the examiner on the effectiveness of the whole assessment cycle. Reflection of the examiner or coordinator on the results of a cohort should influence the next iteration of the course, and if needed, should result in modifications of the assessment.

6. Staff development

To allow teaching staff to develop their talents in an optimal way, a diverse range of materials and activities both for new incoming as well as experienced teaching staff is related to assessment. This chapter presents an overview of these.

6.1. Training

The internal staff development training sessions are provided in line with the basic principles behind PBL. Staff can participate in formal training activities both inside and outside FASoS.

The initiatives at faculty level include, amongst others, the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ). All teaching staff with at least one year of teaching experience and with a teaching load of at least 10% are expected to start the UTQ trajectory. Participants choose a coach who guides them through the process. The qualification requires that staff participate in a workshop about assessment. Those who have completed this qualification should be:

- Acquainted with the assessment policy, the EER, and the R&R of the Faculty and able to apply these.
- Acquainted with the assessment cycle and able to justify the choices made in each step.
- Able to choose and implement an appropriate assessment format based on the principles of constructive alignment.
- Able to use relevant assessment methods which meet the quality criteria of validity, reliability and transparency.
- Acquainted with the difference between summative and formative assessment and able to apply them effectively.
- Able to define criteria for different assessment formats in order to assess students.
- Able to provide constructive feedback to students on the basis of the formulated assessment criteria.

Staff who have obtained their UTQ have to take part in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities every year. These may be related to assessment as well. In addition, the faculty encourages and supports (teaching) staff to participate in externally provided education workshops and trainings.

7. Appendix: policy for online assessment

From March 2020 onwards, FASoS had to switch to large-scale online assessment due to the outbreak of covid-19. This appendix to the assessment policy summarises the principles FASoS aims to adhere to for online assessment, for the duration of the covid-19 crisis and thereafter. The appendix is to be understood as a set of guidelines to FASoS examiners, and presents an overview of good practices that responsible examiners can consider during the design of their online exams.

Note: before covid-19, FASoS already experimented with online exams on a smaller scale. For these small pilots, MECC-exams were transferred to TestVision: software for digital testing. Currently, the use of TestVision is becoming more and more common.

7.1. Fraud risks, identity verification and proctoring

Due to the absence of on-site invigilation, online assessment is more prone to fraud than traditional assessment settings. Authentication and identification are major challenges in this context. Ghost-writing and posing as someone else while taking an exam are common cheating methods. Online assessment also opens up new possibilities of information exchange during the exam, e.g. through WhatsApp.

Some Dutch universities and the UM faculties SBE, FHML and FSE attempt to counter this higher risk by applying proctoring, i.e. remote invigilation by monitoring students digitally. Proctoring does raise considerable difficulties, though — including an increasing workload for teaching and support staff, issues with privacy, unreliable internet connections, lack of webcams or microphones, the need for a second webcam to prove that no other person is in the student's room, different time zones in which students may be located, and the need for a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) that governs the use of proctoring software. In addition, proctoring does not always fully guarantee the identity of the student. For example, if students were asked to hold their ID-card in front of the camera at the start of the exam and the rest of the exam would not be proctored, they could always let another student do the work for them later on during the exam.

The UM's experiences with proctoring in exam period 1 of academic year 2020-2021 were not very favourable. Proctoring turned out to be stressful for both students and staff, while fraud hazards could not fully be excluded and privacy concerns still existed.

We are convinced that our students are smart enough to bypass proctoring systems. Rather than trying to develop FASoS proctoring policy, we are presently convinced that it is better to develop a way of

working where we check the authenticity of students' work. This approach is in line with the Faculty's assumption and expectation that its students will take their examinations with integrity.

For all of the above reasons, FASoS strongly discourages the use of proctoring, and will apply it only as a very last resort, when all other alternatives have turned out to be infeasible.

7.2. Alternative approaches to written exams

For courses normally concluded with a closed-book written exam (e.g. multiple choice or MECC-exam), we urgently advise coordinators to look out for alternative exam formats, or to tweak the way in which the written exam is administered.

If a coordinator prefers to stick with a written examination format, it is possible to minimise the risk of fraud to some extent.

First of all, coordinators could consider requesting (additional) intermediate assignments during the course. Sudden deviations in a student's writing style, language proficiency level etc. between the various intermediate tasks, and between these tasks and the final exam, can then become apparent. A variation on this suggestion is to build in (small) group assignments throughout the course. A controlled exchange of information between students can contribute to minimize oversharing of information.

Secondly, students should ideally be asked to apply, analyze, synthesize or evaluate information, and questions should be unique, meaningful and authentic, requiring higher-order critical thinking. There should be less focus than usual on knowledge reproduction and memorization. Exam questions could, for example, be phrased in the following, open-ended ways:

- Describe in your own words how...
- Explain how... / explain the relationship between...
- Give concrete examples of...
- Give an example of a situation from your own life where you witnessed...
- What example could you provide to illustrate...
- What are the (conflicting) arguments and which argument is the strongest...
- Why/to what extent are ... and ... different
- What would happen if...
- How would you solve...
- Which method is best suited to...

- Work out one or more alternatives to...
- Work out the theory by applying it to...

Thirdly, for written online exams taken on the spot (i.e. exam formats other than papers to be submitted by a certain deadline), it is advised to organise the exam in TestVision. Examiners should ensure that the following preconditions be set:

- TestVision should be able to draw unique samples per student by programming a large item bank of questions in the system;
- The assignments need to be formulated in such a way that it would be difficult for students to search for information, or to communicate with others about the assignment;
- A random order of questions (and, in case of multiple choice exams, also a random order of answer options) per student;
- Installing a time limit per question and keeping the overall time for the exam limited (up to 2-3 hours maximum, so that there is little possibility to exchange work).

In addition to the four measures presented above, some other UM faculties set the TestVision software in such a way that it is not possible to navigate through the exam, i.e. the option to move back and forth between questions is disabled for students. The FASoS Assessment Support Team is against installing this measure, since an addition to an already given answer may come to one's mind while answering a following question.

TestVision allows for downloading students' answers to an Excel file, in which the examiner can place his/her feedback. The file containing the feedback can be re-uploaded to TestVision, after which it is visible for students when they logon to the dedicated exam review page. It is strongly recommended to formulate clear and elaborate model answers, so that students have ample opportunity to verify where their answers deviated from the desired answer. This will help decrease the number of objections against grades.

7.3. Turning written exams into another exam format

There are various alternatives to written exams. For skills courses, the use of (live) online (group) presentations could be a solution: this exam format is 100% identity-proof. A Q&A-session at the end of the presentation could be added to render this exam format more interactive. For courses outside of skills tracks, individual oral exams are a good way of guaranteeing authenticity. To diminish workload, peer exams/'duo exams' could be considered: two (or even three) students could be asked to discuss a

subject with each other, and the examiner assesses their conversation. This kind of format would be in line with PBL, as it resembles a debate. The exam could also take the form of group work / team work, after which a group presentation is given and every student needs to indicate which part (s)he contributed to the final product.

Oral exams could also be administered *in addition to* a written exam or another examination format, to validate the answers students gave. This could for example take the form of an oral defense of a submitted paper, whereby the content of the document is probed by the examiners.

Please note that oral examination is a time-consuming and work-intensive examination format. The FASoS EERs prescribe that oral exams in the strict sense (i.e. a classical oral exam in a Q&A-setup between student and examiner) should always be held in the presence of two examiners, and that the result of an oral exam needs to be announced within 24 hours. For (group) presentations and cases in which a small oral *element* is added to the assessment of a course, it is not necessary to abide by the 24-hour deadline. However, the presence of two examiners is still strongly preferred. If workload and staff planning do not allow for the involvement of a second examiner, an audience (e.g. of peers) should be present, with a view to possible proof required during an appeal procedure. In cases where there is no audience, audio and/or video recordings could be made as a last resort. Recording will pose new challenges, though: similarly to proctoring, there are privacy concerns, and students will at least need to give permission for being recorded.

No matter which choice for an alternative exam format is made though, coordinators should take into account that a change in examination format needs to be announced to both the students and the Exam Administration well in advance – preferably even before the start of the course period, so that the changed exam format can already be described in the course book. The formal deadline for announcement is 15 working days before the exam. In all cases, the exams should still cover the course ILOs that would have been tested in the original exam format under normal circumstances.

Advice from the Assessment Support Team about (alternative ways of) digital assessment can always be sought. The first point of contact for any such questions is coordinator Robin Dirix:

r.dirix@maastrichtuniversity.nl

7.4. Exam instructions and integrity statements

Online exams should be accompanied by instructions to students that set the parameters for their behaviour during the exam. Such instructions can be included in the course book or announced on the

CANVAS pages of the course, but it is strongly recommended to also include them in the exam itself, e.g. at the start page of a TestVision exam or above the description of the exam assignment.

It is advised to include at least the following instructions:

- Whether or not any discussion or consultation about the exam with peers is allowed (note: the longer the timespan between publication of the questions and the submission deadline of the answers, the more likely it gets that students will exchange some kind of information);
- Whether or not it is allowed to look up information on the internet and consult books and/or dictionaries while formulating the answers;
- What to do in case of technical issues: report to ... / call ..., and take a screenshot of the issue(s) you are faced with.
- Whether or not an integrity statement needs to be included in the submission of exam work (see below).

The expectations towards students can differ depending on the type of exam. Additional instructions or warnings can be included, such as a time limit per question in a multiple-choice exam.

Currently, three UM faculties request integrity statements from their students: statements such as “I declare that this work is my own...” or “I declare that this assignment was an individual project...”, that are to be submitted with every exam. Similarly to the exam instructions, these statements could be included on the front page of every exam. Currently, there are no standard UM or FASoS templates available for such statements. It is advised to discuss the need for these statements, and to agree on a fixed template, on programme level. The impact and legal status of such statements are unclear though. Furthermore, given the online setting, it is not very likely that authentic signatures can be requested – these would need to be replaced by a box that should be ticked on an online form.

For inspiration, the FASoS Assessment Support Team has suggested the following integrity statements, which programmes can modify as they wish:

Example 1)

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the fraud sanctions as stated in the Education and Examination Regulations (EERs) and Rules and Regulations (R&R) of FASoS, and that except where specifically acknowledged, the work contained in this assignment/project is my own work. It has not been copied from other sources or been previously submitted for award or assessment, and has not come about in consultation with any person other than my tutor/supervisor.

Example 2)

By ticking the box below, I declare that the submitted exam was produced independently by me, without external help. Wherever I paraphrase or cite literally, a reference to the original source (journal, book, report, internet, etc.) is provided. I explicitly declare that I am aware of the fraud sanctions as stated in the Education and Examination Regulations (EERs) and Rules and Regulations (R&R) of FASoS.

7.5. Minimum levels of authenticity

It is urgently advised to maintain a certain minimum level of guaranteed authenticity of exam work across a programme's curriculum. Identification and authentication are crucial for the issuing of diplomas, even more so during the Covid-19 crisis. While there is no legal threshold in place, under normal conditions the FASoS Board of Examiners applies the rule of thumb that 30 percent of assessment in a degree programme should consist of exam formats in which authenticity can be checked (i.e. where there is no possibility for ghost-writing, identity fraud or any other kind of outsourcing of exam work). Most programme abide to this threshold by referring to presentations and/or MECC exams.

Under the current Covid-19 circumstances, the BoE strongly recommended that on certain moments in each academic year, there need to be possibilities to test whether an individual student meets the requirements of set ILOs and relevant parts of the final qualifications. On these occasions, the identity of the student making the exam should fully be warranted, without any doubt. Only then there is reassurance that the student who passes the test, indeed meets the requirement for the diploma. The BoE therefore advises to employ, as long as the Covid-19 circumstances continue, more oral exams than usual – e.g. one or two oral exams/presentations per semester in each programme (depending on the availability of sufficient/adequate administrative and academic staff capacities). This urgent advice holds if no other alternatives for fully identity-proof examination, for instance proctoring, are considered feasible.

7.6. Technical difficulties during an online exam

Before the start of an online exam, students should be informed what to do in case of technical difficulties (a suboptimal or interrupted wifi connection; jammed software; submitted answers gone lost etc.). It is advised to instruct students that they should take screenshots of the occurrence, so that the Board of Examiners can judge afterwards if the student could/should be granted an extra exam opportunity given the situation. Furthermore, coordinators should consider providing students with contact details of an administrator or themselves, so that students have a contact person and can flag technical troubles immediately when they occur.

7.7. University-wide guidelines for online assessment

The pointers presented in this appendix are primarily meant for the FASoS context. The university has published general guidelines for online assessment, too. These include an FAQ section on the use of TestVision, and can be found at the Digital exams portal:

<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/education/online-education-um/students/learning-assessment-online>

The above page is complemented by a central UM information point about all issues related to proctoring:

<https://umlib.nl/proctoring>

References

- Biggs, J. B. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of educational research*, 77(1), 81-112.
- Krathwohl, D. R. (2002). A revision of Bloom's taxonomy: An overview. *Theory Into Practice*, 41 (4), 212-218.
- Rolls, N., Northedge, A., & Chambers, E. (2018). *Successful University Teaching in Times of Diversity*. Red Globe Press.
- SURF (2020). *Whitepaper online proctoring: Vragen en antwoorden bij surveilleren op afstand*.
<https://www.surf.nl/whitepaper-online-proctoring-surveilleren-op-afstand>

All internal FASoS documents (EERs, R&R, Procedure for the grading and archiving of FASoS final works, task descriptions, etc.) are available on the staff intranet, through the A-Z Education pages.