

# **STATUTE OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS AT FASOS**

## **mission, role, and the internal rules of procedure of the BoE**

**(revised version approved by the BoE in May 2014 and valid until 1 September 2016)**

### **1. Introduction**

The Board of Examiners (BoE) is an ***independent & qualified committee*** within the higher educational institution according to article 7.12.a. of the Law on High Education of the Netherlands (WHW). The Faculty Board appoints new members of the BoE (having heard the current members of the BoE), and can release them (in case of unsatisfactory functioning), but the BoE members function independently from the Faculty Board and programme management. Moreover, BoE members should not be fulfilling any managerial/financial function within the Faculty (e.g. Director of Studies) again for the sake of preserving the principle of independent functioning.

The BoE is expected to guarantee the quality of examinations within the institution, and to act as a warrant of the Faculty diploma certificates (article 7.12b of the Law on High Education of the Netherlands – WHW). Hence, the BoE has to take part in the formulation of the assessment policy of FASoS. How the responsibilities of the BoE are interpreted in a mission statement, and how the day-to-day work is organised are the main subjects of this document.

### **2. Mission of the FASoS Board of Examiners**

The responsibilities of the BoE can be interpreted as 3 main domains of activity or BoE missions:

- BoE as the 'conscience' (het geweten) of the Faculty
- BoE as the 'guardian' of the examination quality at FASoS
- BoE as a professional organization of the FASoS examiners

#### **1. BoE as the 'conscience' of the Faculty**

In this function the BoE defines the principles and sets the overall framework of standards that are to be followed in the examination practices at FASoS. In other words, the BoE formulates the foundations of the assessment policy at FASoS. Concrete tasks that fall under this function:

- a. policy documents/advisory notes to the Faculty Board and the Faculty academic staff about the way in which assessment practices are to be organized at FASoS (e.g. guidelines about the final examinations such as thesis or internship; procedures for grading of written work; participation in tutorial groups);
- b. reflections on the types of exams and issues of validity and reliability related to the various assessment modes;

- c. annual revision and adoption of the Exam Regulations of the Education and Exam Regulations (commonly known as OERs);
- d. appointment of examiners (formulation of criteria that should be fulfilled by FASoS examiners);
- e. formulation of criteria for assessment of the various learning trajectories in the degree programmes.

## **2. BoE as the 'guardian' of the examination quality at FASoS**

In this function the BoE assures that the endorsed principles and standards are observed in the examination practices at FASoS. In other words, the BoE co-formulates and supervises the assessment policy at FASoS. Concrete tasks that fall under this function:

- a. policy documents/advisory notes to the Dean of Education and the Directors of Study on the way the assessment is to be organized in the various degree programmes with a view to guaranteeing the achievement of the previewed final qualifications;
- b. annual revision of the assessment policy in each of the degree programmes as part of the quality control cycle (organized as a supportive process to the DoS and as preparation for re-accreditation rounds);
- c. appointment of examiners, especially of non-FASoS academic staff (i.e. evaluation of whether external examiners fulfil the criteria applied for FASoS examiner);
- d. (un)solicited advisory reports on various subjects related to assessment policy of the Faculty (e.g. evaluation of the final examinations such as thesis or internship; comparative studies about the annual development of the statistical data about grades per module and programme, etc.);
- e. reviews of the IWIO student evaluations especially of the 2 questions related to the examination of the course (relation to content and learning objectives, and clarity about the assessment mode and exam questions);
- f. evaluation and decision-making with regard to the cases of hardship, fraud, BSA and individual complaints/appeals;
- g. ex-post samples and research into the way exams are organized and grading is accomplished at FASoS (e.g. annual internal audit of the BA and MA final works);
- h. certifies that the final qualifications of the degree programmes are achieved by means of issuing a diploma certificate and the organization of graduation ceremonies (whereby BoE members open and close the ceremony).

## **3. BoE as a professional organization of the FASoS examiners**

In this function the BoE provides supporting infrastructure to FASoS academic staff members who are involved in the formulation and execution of exams. Concrete tasks that fall under this function:

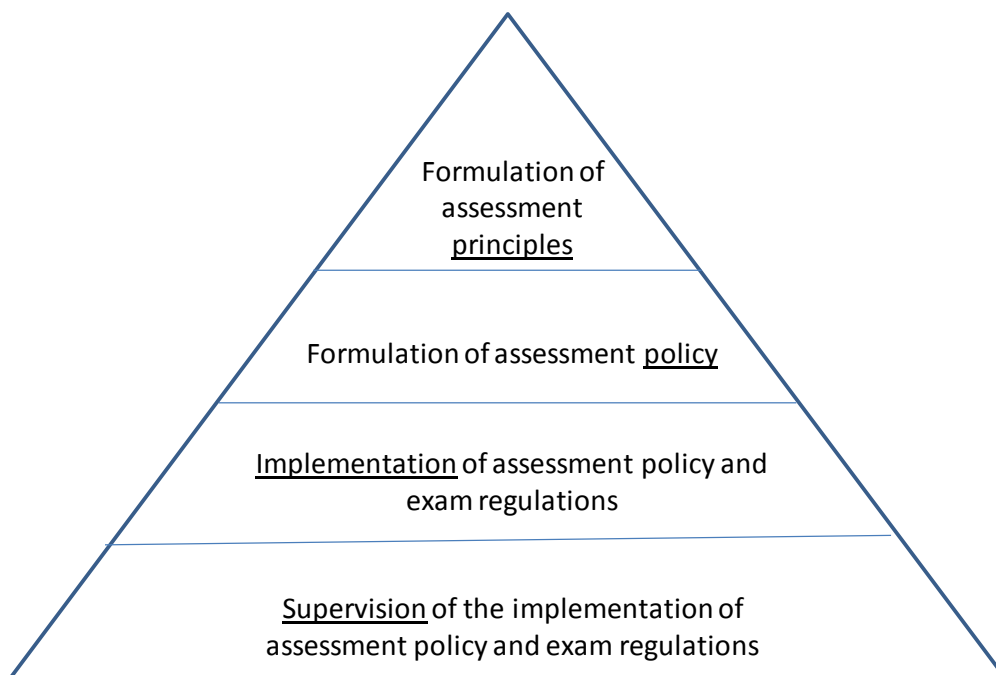
- a. provision of guidelines and standard procedures by the organization of exams and especially highlighting of good practices that exist at

- FASoS (e.g. establishment and maintenance of a “FASoS resource centre on assessment and grading”, where the colleagues can find examples of grading forms, procedural guidelines on how to organize exams for small, medium and large classes of students, etc.);
- b. information provision and diffusion of the norms, principles and sets of standards that are to be followed in the examination practices at FASoS (e.g. via the BoE website on the FASoS Intranet, organization of BKO reflection sessions);
  - c. training of (new) staff (e.g. thematic workshops on assessment and on the Dutch grading system);
  - d. ‘keeper’ of the main assessment forms and development (and maintenance) of a Resource Centre on Assessment (on the FASoS Intranet);
  - e. guidelines about the ethics of grading: for example, what does fair, consistent, reliable and valid grading mean in the context of the exams and assessment forms of FASoS? Should grading be based on delivered work only (grading of ‘academic products’) or also on the process of academic work (grading of ‘products’ but also of learning processes).

### 3. Spheres of activity of the FASoS Board of Examiners

The work and tasks of the BoE can also be positioned in terms of 4 groups of activity (see Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1** The spheres of activity of the BoE



1. Formulation of **assessment principles** coincides with the function of conscience (see above). The principles of assessment stem from the legal requirements and widespread academic standards (e.g. two grades of final work of Master programmes), from customary practices at FASoS, and reflect the educational vision and policy of the Faculty. The BoE has the responsibility to make these principles explicit (in policy notes, opinions, decisions, etc.), and to act as a 'keeper' of these norms and principles of professional behavior i.e. to evoke and remind about them in concrete situations when assessment policy is discussed.

2. Formulation of **assessment policy** is a continuous process of cooperation with the FASoS Management team (FB and DoSs) and the Office of Student Affairs, whereby the main principles are translated into concrete rules, procedures and exam regulations. These should materialize in policy papers about concrete subjects (for example a policy document on the assessment and archiving of the final work: theses or internships; a policy document on assessment of participation in PBL groups, etc.)

3. The BoE should in principle not be involved in the **implementation of assessment policy**. This is seen as the *domain réservé* of the FASoS Management team (FB and DoS) and the Office of Student Affairs (cluster Exam Administration). Nevertheless, the BoE can participate in this process indirectly: in its function as 'professional organisation' it can facilitate implementation by pointing at good practices or effective procedural approaches. Also the online Assessment Resource Centre (with examples of grading sheets and assessment forms) that will be progressively developed on the FASoS Intranet will be useful during the implementation stage.

4. One of the primary responsibilities of the Board of Examiners (BoE) is to **monitor the implementation of the FASoS assessment policy** and concretely of the application and execution of exam regulations (OERs). It is a BoE obligation to report to the FASoS Management team (FB and DoS) the various cases of violation or of cumbersome implementation of the existing rules and procedures. The BoE is, however, not an enforcement body. The BoE can alert or point out at a violation or any other problem with implementation, and to the pathway toward improvement but any follow-up activities and/or sanctions have to be undertaken by the FB.

The law prescription to 'guarantee the quality of examinations' at FASoS poses a serious responsibility and a heavy load on the organ of the BoE. Clearly, this legal obligation could be interpreted as an all-encompassing package of tasks. The BoE is however not able to set by itself such a comprehensive system in place. This is why the functions above (see Section 2 and 3) should be realized as a process of cooperation and mutual support between the BoE, the Faculty management (Board and DoSs) and the Exam Administration, while the BoE preserves its independent status at all occasions. The main objective is that all parties cooperate in the formulation of the FASoS assessment policy, so that potential and existing problems are brought into the spotlight and acted upon.

#### **4. Vision**

The principal vision that leads the work of BoE is guaranteeing high quality of assessment and diplomas at FASoS. In addition, the BoE will also adhere to the following principles in the accomplishment of its role and various functions (in no particular order):

1. Collegiality and facilitation
2. Transparency and clarity
3. Principle-driven decisions
4. Efficiency

#### **5. Quality assurance measures**

The primary goal of the BoE is to improve the quality of exams and the assessment policy of the FASoS educational programmes, and to warrant the final qualifications and degree certificates. This is done via several mechanisms:

##### ***5.1. Yearly recommendations on assessment practices via the TER/OER trajectory***

This is the principle route and the main tool which the BoE has at its disposal in order to influence the assessment policy of the degree programmes. Every year, the executive Secretary of the BoE collects all requests for changes in the exam regulations, and upon discussion, the BoE proposes them with an advisory commentary to the FB. In addition, a general advisory letter suggesting FASoS-wide changes is drafted. The letter proposes overarching quality assurance measures as for example procedural requirements applicable for the grading of final work; plagiarism instructions for staff members; harmonized qualitative grading scale for Skills trainings – pass, fail, excellent, etc.

##### ***5.2. Establishing rules for the appointment and responsibilities of examiners***

Due to the competence to appoint examiners, the BoE is able to warrant the quality of assessment in individual courses. Moreover, the BoE approves the appointment of external to FASoS examiners. This involves a check and an entry into the FASoS Register for External Examiners.

##### ***5.3. Co-formulation of the FASoS assessment policy***

This mechanism relies on the continuous evaluation of the assessment practices at FASoS, and consequent BoE proposals of policy measures. The BoE is primarily busy with the definition and interpretation of assessment principles (such as fairness, transparency, consistency of grading). These are transformed into concrete quality assurance (procedural) guidelines per case or as a FASoS-wide

policy. Upon approval by the Faculty Board (FB) they become part of the FASoS assessment and exam policy. It has to be underlined that the BoE is not in charge of implementation of the quality assurance measures. This is a domain reserved for the FASoS Management team – the Vice-Dean of Education and the Directors of studies (respectively module coordinators).

#### ***5.4. Annual revision and approval of assessment forms for final work***

According to the procedure for approval of assessment forms for final work the grading forms for all formats of final works (thesis, internships, projects, etc.) have to be revised and approved by the BoE once a year (in April). Upon approval the BoE acts as a 'keeper' of the forms on its pages at the FASoS intranet. In this way the BoE has a practical 'check' mechanism whether the formulated final work policy and requirements are observed in the concrete degree programmes.

#### ***5.5. Internal audit on final works***

These are sample-based checks that the BoE organizes on already graded final works in order to verify the achieved final qualifications, the granted grade, and to check whether the procedural requirements have been met.

#### ***5.6. Monitoring of the IWIO scores***

The BoE monitors the IWIO student evaluations especially of the 2 questions related to the examination of the course (relation to content and learning objectives, and clarity about the assessment mode and exam questions).

#### ***5.7. Quality cycles of the degree programmes***

According to the Quality Handbook of FASoS, the DoSs of each programme draft and propose to the BoE their annual plan/report on assessment. Commenting and providing recommendations on aspects of assessment is therefore part of the annual programme evaluation. This process facilitates the preparation of the annual OER revisions and supports the re-accreditation cycles in the medium-term.

#### ***5.8. Advice to programme directors or course coordinators***

This is a very ad-hoc and irregular instrument. Yet, when the BoE advice is solicited regarding the organization of exams (or exam formats, assessment forms, etc.) in concrete courses, this provides the opportunity to explain the quality assurance principles pursued by the BoE and to also contextualize them for the concrete course.

### **6. Participation of the BoE in FASoS-wide (policy) processes**

The BoE takes part in various ongoing FASoS educational initiatives:

#### ***6.1. Re-accreditation trajectory***

The BoE actively supports the re-accreditation trajectories of the degree programmes by taking part in various preparatory meetings (for discussion of the

self-studies and the QANU visits), and by meeting the visitation panels in its full composition.

### ***6.2. Training sessions on assessment***

The BoE aims to be active and to provide training on assessment for the FASoS examiners. This happens during specifically designated training sessions or during the FASoS BKO trajectory. The topics cover: assessment formats (validity, reliability, fairness and efficiency thereof), concrete examples of exam constructions and/or assessment forms, etc.

### ***6.3. Education Days and curriculum review meetings***

The BoE takes part in the annual FASoS Education Day, in Student Representatives initiatives and in the coordinators' curriculum development/revision days of the degree programmes. In addition, and wherever necessary the BoE's Chair takes part in various meetings where curriculum re-design is discussed.

### ***6.4. Graduation Ceremonies***

The Graduation ceremonies are special sessions of the FASoS Board of Examiners and are formally chaired by a BoE member.

## ***Maastricht, May 2014***

G. Bosse  
E. Radulova (Chair)  
M. Stoffers  
Ch. van Leeuwen

## **INTERNAL RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS AT FASoS**

### **(huishoudelijk reglement Examencommissie FASoS)**

#### ***Article 1. Nomination and appointment of BoE members***

- The BoE is composed of at least 5 members, whereby as of 1 September 2015 at least one member is external to FASoS.
- The Faculty Board nominates all members of the BoE, including the Chair, and appoints them after hearing the opinion of the current members.
- BoE membership is not compatible with other managerial functions whereby (with a view to assuring its independent functioning). The Chair bears the financial responsibility of the BoE budget.
- BoE members are appointed for 2 years. Re-appointment is possible.
- Given the need to ensure continuity and the preservation of the available expertise it is not advisable to replace more than two BoE members at once.
- It is advisable to formulate a profile of expertise for the recruitment of new members.

#### ***Article 2. Composition and portfolios of tasks***

- The BoE is composed of Chair, Vice-chair, General members and is supported administratively by an Executive Secretary (formally not a member of the BoE). The FASoS BoE therefore consists of at least four members of the FASoS academic staff. They should be involved with FASoS examinations and/or possess expertise in the field of assessment policy.
- The Chair is the final responsible for the activities of the BoE: the overall organization and functioning. The Chair sets the agenda of the monthly meetings, drafts position papers, opinions and reports, organizes communication within and outside the faculty, represents the BoE, takes part in the quality cycle assessments of the degree programmes, advises on the exam regulations, etc. The Chair is furthermore responsible for the information supply of the BoE. To that end it relies on input from the Exam Administration, the Faculty Board, the FASoS educational advisors. In fulfillment of this function, the Chair may attend (selected) sessions of the management committees of the BA and MA (i.e. the OMTs). The Chair will then not take part in the discussions and will not vote. The Chair meets on a monthly basis with the FASoS Vice-Dean of Education (portofolielehouder Onderwijs) with the objective of mutual exchange of information and discussion of the FASoS assessment policy priorities. The Chair represents

FASoS at the 3-monthly meetings of the UM-wide committee<sup>1</sup> of the Chairs of Board of Examiners. In his work the Chair is assisted by the Executive Secretary.

- The Vice-Chair holds the portfolio of tasks related to the so-called individual cases (i.e. evaluation and decision-making on cases of fraud, hardship clauses, appeals, etc.) In case of conflict of functions (e.g. an appeal against his grading or his plagiarism decisions) the Vice-Chair will be replaced by another BoE member. In his work the Vice-Chair is assisted by the Executive Secretary. In cases of need, when the Chair is not available, the Vice-Chair represents the BoE. Furthermore, he acts as a general member of the BoE.
- The General members of the BoE take part in the deliberations: prepare opinion statements according to the agenda and the background materials of the monthly meetings, present reasoned arguments and views during the BoE debates, advise on the advantages and disadvantages of certain courses of action, and provide input for the BoE policy documents and formal positions. Furthermore, they chair graduation ceremonies, (may) take part in hearings regarding individual cases, and organize staff training sessions.
- The Executive Secretary:
  - Provides interpretations of the OERs and takes operational decisions on individual requests from students and staff that can be derived from the OER and other existing FASoS or BoE regulations and decisions;
  - Advises the BoE during its deliberations about the feasibility and practicality of implementation with a view to the organization of the exams;
  - Assists for as far as this is necessary the graduation procedure that is mandated to the Exam Administration (establishment of the accomplished credits, the Cum Laude designation, and the issuing of the diploma certificate);
  - Monitors that the organization of exams and the submission of results is in line with the calendar and FASoS policy and informs irregularities to the BoE and the Faculty Board;
  - Handles and supports administratively the BoE research activities (e.g. evaluation of IWIO reports; ex-post sampling of graduate theses; re-grading of examinations; statistical reports of study achievements and grade distribution, etc.);
  - Implements all OER changes in the UM database SAP-SLM so that the programme is visible on the website and the academic structure is ready for the registration of education, exams and results;
  - Advises the Office of Student Affairs on requests for late enrolment;
  - Processes the incoming and outgoing mail (electronic and paper);
  - Maintains the archive (in electronic and/or paper form);
  - Takes minutes during the BoE meetings;

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<sup>1</sup> This is a UM organ with advisory functions that has as a primary objective the exchange of opinions and good practices regarding the activities of the various BoEs at Faculty level.

- Assists administratively the process of drafting of BoE reports, letters, opinions;
- Assists the Vice-Chair in the evaluation and decision-making regarding the individual cases, and drafts the respective documents;
- Assists the Vice-Chair in the handling of appeals against decisions of the BoE and the writing of defense notes for the Board of Appeal for Examinations;
- Maintains a list with all annual BoE decisions that have implications for the Exam regulations of the FASoS degree programmes (OERs). During the annual revision of the OERs the Executive Secretary introduces them in the respective OERs;
- Assists the Faculty Board in the Binding Study Advice Procedure: prepares the draft-documentation (including information on intranet and leaflets, warning advises, draft-decisions on Positive and Negative Binding Study Advice) and organizes the hearings for students who request dispensation from the NBSA;
- Assists the FASoS Vice-Dean of Education (portofolielehouder Onderwijs) in the submission of proposed Teaching Regulation changes and formulates a draft-opinion of the BoE regarding the annual revision of the OERs.

### ***Article 3. Proceedings***

- The BoE has 2 formations:
  - Board of Examiners (encompassing all members)
  - Executive Committee of the BoE (Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary)
- The BoE will discuss mainly assessment principles and assessment policy issues.
- The Executive committee will discuss all other issues and particularly issues of operational character (related to implementation of BoE decisions) or of urgent nature that can't wait for the regular monthly BoE session.
- The BoE convenes on a monthly basis (10 times per academic year).
- The Executive committee convenes ad-hoc depending on the need for BoE reactions/decisions.
- Agenda, background materials and minutes will be prepared by the Chair and the Executive Secretary, and will be distributed in the week preceding the BoE meeting.
- The Executive Secretary will take minutes/notes of the meeting and will process them within a week from the meeting. The minutes will include a list of decisions and follow-up activities (actiepuntenlijst).
- Each meeting starts with approval of the minutes of the previous BoE session, review of the actiepuntenlijst, and information/announcements (e.g. from OMT, Faculty Council, incoming letters/enquiries from Faculty Board, the FASoS Vice-Dean of Education, academic staff or UM Central offices).

- 'Opinion topics' on the agenda indicate that the question/ issue is going to be discussed in greater detail and depth.
- During the meetings English and/or Dutch is spoken, but the written output of the BoE is predominantly in English.
- The BoE issues decisions, positions, opinions, reports, guidelines, recommendations, letters, notes, etc. in both English and Dutch.
- The BoE works according to the principles of transparency, collegiality, equal treatment, professionalism, and objectivity. Individual cases and privacy information of students is treated confidentially.

#### ***Article 4. Decision-making***

The BoE aspires to achieve decision-making by consensus. In rare cases when unanimity is not attainable, decisions are taken by simple majority whereby the chair has the casting vote.

#### ***Article 5. Delegation and mandate***

- The Chair represents the BoE and signs the official documentation of the BoE.
- The BoE mandates its Vice-Chair to evaluate and decide on his own on all individual cases (fraud, appeals, hardship clause, etc.) He is able to decide without consulting the rest of the BoE unless his discretion demands otherwise. He is able to sign on behalf of the BoE. In case of conflict of functions (e.g. an appeal against his grading or against a plagiarism decision) the Vice-Chair will be replaced by another BoE member.
- In the absence of the Chair and in all cases where urgent BoE decision is needed, signature of the BoE is allowed to lay also the Vice-Chair. In absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, any of the General members may sign BoE-related documentation.
- Issues related to the organization and execution of exams, administration of grades, archiving of exam results and diploma certificates, etc. are delegated to the exam administration of FASoS.

#### ***Article 6. Annual programme and annual report of activities***

- The BoE functions according to its mission statement and annual programme.
- On the basis of the strategic programme, and depending on the yearly plans in the FASoS educational and assessment policy, an annual programme for the BoE is prepared (after consultation with the FASoS Vice-Dean of Education). The annual programme is sent to the Faculty Board and to the Faculty Council.
- The BoE issues an annual report of its activities and submits it to the Faculty Board and to the Faculty Council.

### ***Article 7. Transparency and confidentiality***

The BoE functions in the spirit of transparency and openness when it comes to its assessment policy positions and advisory notes. Policy docs are open to the larger FASoS community and to designated external parties (e.g. Onderwijs Inspectie, NVAO or QANU committees) by means of publication on the FASoS Intranet (BoE webpages).

In its work on individual cases (plagiarism, appeals against the grade, etc.) the BoE operates under strict confidentiality, and only the members who need to take a decision are informed.

The Chair speaks on behalf of BoE in public debate (representative function).

### ***Article 8. Budget***

- The Faculty Board approves of the amount devoted to the annual BoE budget. The structure of the budgetary expenditures are a BoE prerogative (to ensure independent functioning).
- The financial means are spent on education of BoE members, remuneration of external to the BoE experts, grading studies and exam analytics, acquisition of books for the BoE library, internal audits (e.g. of final works), representation costs, etc.

## APPENDIX II

Provisions of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) concerning the Board of Examiners and the examiner

### **Article 7.12 Board of Examiners**

1. Each programme or group of programmes at an institution has a Board of Examiners.
2. The Board of Examiners objectively and professionally determines whether a student has met the conditions outlined in the Education and Examination Regulations in terms of the knowledge, insight and skills necessary for obtaining a degree.

### **Article 7.12a Appointment and composition of the Board of Examiners**

1. The Board of the institution is responsible for setting up the Board of Examiners and appointing its members based on their expertise in the field of a particular programme or group of programmes. At least one of its members is a teacher associated with the programme or one of a group of programmes.
2. The Board of the Institution ensures the independent and professional functioning of the Board of Examiners.
3. Before appointing any member, the Board of the Institution consults the members of the relevant Board of Examiners.

### **Article 7.12b Tasks and responsibilities of the Board of Examiners**

1. In addition to those outlined in Article 6.2, paragraph 2, the Board of Examiners has the following tasks and responsibilities:
  - a. ensuring the quality of examinations and exams without prejudice to article 7.12c of the Act;
  - b. setting guidelines and instructions within the framework of the Education and Examination Regulations, as outlined in Article 7.13 of the Act, to assess and determine examination and exam results;
  - c. for the most appropriate Board of Examiners: granting a student permission to follow a programme compiled by himself as outlined in Article 7.3d of the Act, the exam of which will lead to the award of a degree, as well as indicating of which of the institution's programmes this programme, for the purposes of this Act, is to be considered a part, and
  - d. granting exemptions for one or more examinations.
2. If a student or external student plagiarises or commits fraud, the Board of Examiners may deny that student the right to sit one or more examinations for a period of no more than one year, to be determined by the Board of Examiners. In a case of serious fraud, the Board of the Institution, on a proposal of Board of Examiners, can terminate the student's enrolment in the programme.
3. The Board of Examiners sets rules regarding the way tasks and responsibilities are to be carried out, as mentioned in paragraph 1, subparagraphs a, b, and d, and paragraph 2, and the measures it is authorised to take in this context. The Board of Examiners can decide that under certain conditions, to be specified by the Board of Examiners, it is possible to determine that for passing the exam not all examinations have to be passed.
4. If a student submits a complaint or a request to the Board of Examiners that involves an examiner who is also an active member of the Board, that examiner does not take part in dealing with the complaint or request.
5. The Board of Examiners annually draws up a report of its activities. The Board of Examiners submits the annual report to the Board of the Institution or the dean.

### **Article 7.12c Examiners**

1. The Board of Examiners appoints examiners for conducting examinations and determining the results of the examinations.
2. The examiners provide the Board of Examiners with requested information.