

Remote written assessment

This web page describes the rules according to which written tests (that would ordinarily take place in a controlled environment) may be conducted during the period where the university is closed due to the corona pandemic. It is up to the program whether they want to implement these special rules for remote assessment. When they do so, the examination committees cooperate along these lines.

Reasons for imposing special rules

The primary concern in conducting a written test online is its sensitivity to cheating - where by cheating we mean the use of any unauthorised source, especially including input from other people (students or otherwise). A test is meant to measure the degree to which you as a student have mastered the learning goals; cheating is considered unethical under all circumstances, as it subverts the means we have to ensure that you have earned the diploma you will eventually receive.

It is clear that outside the usual controlled environment of a UT-based test room, the available means for detection and prevention of cheating are much reduced. For that reason, in the current circumstances, we have to revert to other means. In some cases, it will be possible to test via other, less sensitive methods than through a written exam. However, where that is not possible, we have chosen to opt for *trust* as a guiding principle. This means that we, as a university, trust you to behave in an ethical fashion.

There are alternatives, which we have *not* opted for. We could have chosen to defer all tests until that time where we can all be back at the university; or we could do our utmost to implement rigid procedures and technical measures that make it harder for you to cheat. However, we consider the negative side effects of those alternatives to be overwhelmingly strong. Hence our decision to go for the high road, so to speak.

Guiding principle: trust

The upshot of the above is that we choose not to place all our trust into technology to try and detect or prevent all forms of cheating. Instead, we place our trust in you, our students.

However, trust does not come for free. To earn it, we will ask you to *pledge yourself* not to cheat. Every written online test will contain one question in which the only required answer is to write down or confirm that pledge. Not answering that question will mean that the test result will not be used for your final grade.

Trust also has its flip side. If you pledge yourself and subsequently break that pledge, we will treat that as a serious offense. It is a violation of trust, which can lead to consequences that are among the most severe that the Examination Board can impose.

Crowned grades

Another measure we will impose, in deviation of the ordinary rules, is that the grades obtained from a test will not automatically be the officially registered, definite grades. Instead, the grades first enter an intermediate stage of “crowned grades”, before becoming “definite grades”. The transition from a crowned grade to a definite grade requires the decision of the examiner of the course, based on whether the outcome is deemed reliable enough.

The examiner may refrain from turning a crowned grade into a definite grade either on an individual basis or collectively, for the entire test. If a crowned grade is not made definite, this means that the test has (with hindsight) served a formative purpose only: you will have learned a lot by studying, and even more by doing the test and getting feedback, but you will not yet receive a definite grade.

Oral follow-up

As a means of determining the reliability, for every test the examiner has the option to ask for an *oral follow-up* of a selection of students, either immediately after the test or after its initial assessment (when the crowned grades have been established). At this occasion, you may be asked to elaborate on or explain your answers. Typically, it will not be possible for all students to be examined in this fashion; however, the students thus selected do not have the option to refuse.

Being selected for an oral follow-up is not a sign of disqualification or distrust: it is part of the system we have decided to set up: it is essential to be able to declare that the test result is valid. The expected outcome is that your grade is confirmed and can be made definite. However, if the oral follow-up shows that you cannot explain your own answers, this may lead to the suspicion of cheating, and at the very least you will not receive a definite grade.

The oral follow-up can never *change* the grade: it engenders a two-way decision, to either confirm or invalidate the grade that has resulted from the original test.

Formal regulations

The current situation calls for unusual measures. We believe our chosen system, described above, to be the best response under the circumstances. It is clear that some of it goes against the standard regulations (in the EER) surrounding testing; instead, emergency regulations are imposed. Moreover, the Examination Boards have given their consent to this way of working.

Exceptional times

As a university, we are dedicated to upholding the quality of our education. That means also upholding the quality of our testing, as without the second, the first falls flat. The policy outlined in this document is the outcome of that dedication. It requires extra effort from both the teachers and from you, the students. With that extra effort, and a call on your collaboration, we are convinced that we will manage to come through these exceptional times as best we can.