



rijksuniversiteit
 groningen

Manual for Board of Examiners

Applies to all University of Groningen Bachelor's, Master's and Research Master's degree programmes

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Table of contents

1 Introduction	3
2 Boards of Examiners: independence and expertise	5
2.1 The position of the Board of Examiners within the organization	5
2.2 Independence	6
2.3 Expertise	7
2.4 Conclusion	7
3 Boards of Examiners at the University of Groningen	8
3.1 Appointing Boards of Examiners	8
3.2 Profile of the members of the Board of Examiners	9
3.3 Development of expertise	11
3.4 Duties of the Chair and Deputy Chair	12
3.5 Support for the Board of Examiners	12
3.6 Meetings	13
4 Duties of the Board of Examiners	13
4.1 Duties and powers of the Board of Examiners	13
4.2 Decisions	20
4.3 Handling of-appeals	21
4.4 Testing and assessment in the accreditation process	22
Appendices	23
Appendix 1: Differences between OER and R&R	23
Appendix 2: Profile of an expert in the field of testing	24
Appendix 3: WHW articles relevant to Boards of Examiners	25
Appendix 4: Explanatory notes on test quality	30
Appendix 5: Format for the Board of Examiners annual report	31
Appendix 6: Model decision concerning rejection of request	33

1 Introduction

The Board of Examiners has an important task to fulfil within the educational organization. It is responsible for the quality of examinations and final assessments, and thus that of degree certificates. In addition, the Board of Examiners monitors compliance with the Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER: *Onderwijs- en Examenregelingen*). It is the Board's responsibility to determine in an independent and expert way whether each individual student has satisfied the requirements set by the degree programme for being awarded the relevant degree.

The Board of Examiners has been allocated more substantive tasks under the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW: *Wet op het Hoger onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk onderzoek*), whereby it is of essential importance that the board of an institution (Faculty Board) guarantees that the Board of Examiners can operate independently and expertly. It is also important that the Board of Examiners and its members as well as the Faculty Boards are familiar with the legal frameworks within which they are expected to act – and act accordingly. The performance of these substantive tasks will guarantee improved quality assurance for degrees conferred in Dutch higher education and more transparent value and validity of degrees and certificates for both students and the general public. Students, researchers, supervisors and other external parties must be able to trust the University of Groningen to award its degrees carefully.

The accreditation system recognizes the important role played by the Board of Examiners. Review committees will devote attention to the role of the Board of Examiners, the extent to which the Board of Examiners is facilitated and how it performs its legal duties. The NVAO accreditation frameworks contain statements concerning both the role and the position of the Boards in relation to a number of standards.¹

Aim of this manual

This manual aims to inform the curriculum management (i.e. Faculty Boards, Directors of Education, Programme Directors) and Boards of Examiners of the legal frameworks within which the Boards of Examiners must operate, and discuss how the relevant processes can be implemented.

Chapter 2 will discuss the concepts of 'independence' and 'expertise' in more detail, following which Chapter 3 will describe how these concepts can be fleshed out in the context of the institution and the composition of the Boards of Examiners. Finally, Chapter 4 will discuss the activities of the Boards of Examiners, listing their legal duties and providing explanatory notes to each of these duties.

¹ See this link:

https://www.nvao.net/files/attachments/.89/Beoordelingskader_accreditatiestelsel_hoger_onderwijs_Nederland_2018.pdf.

This manual is based on the WHW and the decisions of the Board of the University. We have tried in this context to tie in with the working methods of the University of Groningen faculties wherever possible.

This manual will be revised, if necessary, in response to findings from the Boards of Examiners, experiences from visitation and accreditation procedures, or implementation of regulations imposed by NVAO and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The appendices include among other things relevant WHW articles, an explanation of test quality, an annual report template and an example of a decision regarding a rejected request.

2 Boards of Examiners: independence and expertise

A Board of Examiners is an independent body within the University, which is assigned its rights and obligations directly by the WHW. This is known as ‘attribution’. The work of the Boards of Examiners is strongly judicial in nature. The WHW provides the main framework for the legal actions performed by the Boards of Examiners. It should be noted that Boards of Examiners operate as administrative bodies in an administrative law context. They can only take decisions based on an authority assigned to them by law. If a Board of Examiners is not authorized, then the decision in question will be annulled.

The law explicitly assigns to the Board of Examiner the task of ‘guaranteeing the quality of examinations and final assessments’ (Article 7.12b.1.a WHW); the most important characteristics of a Board of Examiners are its ‘independence and expertise’ (7.12.a WHW). This independence and expertise relate to:

- a. the position of the Board of Examiners within the organization
- b. the appointment and composition of the members of the Board of Examiners
- c. the duties and powers of the Board of Examiners.

This chapter will describe the position of the Board of Examiners within the organization from the perspective of the WHW and further discuss the concepts of ‘independence’ and ‘expertise’. The next chapter will discuss how these concepts are fleshed out within the context of the University of Groningen.

2.1 The position of the Board of Examiners within the organization

The WHW focuses on degree programmes (Art. 7.3 WHW). A degree programme is a coherent set of course units focusing on well-defined learning outcomes. The aims and content of each degree programme are set out in the OER, which is approved by the Faculty Board.

In addition to the Faculty Board, the following three actors are also involved in degree programme quality assurance:

- the Programme Director
- The Programme Committee
- the Board of Examiners

Each of these people/committees is appointed by the board of the institution. In this context, the ‘board of the institution’ refers to the Faculty Board (Art. 9.15.e in conjunction with Art. 9.12.2 WHW). In this manual, we will therefore refer to the Faculty Board rather than the board of the institution.

Although Programme Directors, Programme Committees and Boards of Examiners may be appointed for more than one degree programme, their duties are always defined at individual degree programme level.

The Assessment Committee and Admissions Board may be indirectly involved. These two bodies are not legally required. They perform duties on behalf of the competent bodies (the Board of Examiners and the Faculty Board, respectively) and fall under their responsibility.

The division of duties among the Programme Director, Programme Committee and Board of Examiners is as follows:

- The Programme Director *is responsible for* the design and implementation of the degree programme as set out in the OER and for ensuring that the teaching and the degree programme meet the quality standard.
- The Programme Committee *issues advice to* the Programme Director concerning the OER and its implementation (WHW, Art. 9.18 a and b). With the entry into force of the Enhanced Governance Powers (Educational Institutions) Act as of 1 September 2017 the Programme Committee has acquired the *right of consent* regarding certain OER matters.
- The Board of Examiners *assesses the results* of teaching for individual students in accordance with the OER of a degree programme, and *guarantees the quality* of (the organization of and the procedures regarding) examinations and final assessments.

2.2 Independence

2.2.1 Independence in relation to the board of the institution

The Explanatory Memorandum states the following with regard to the independent position of the Board of Examiners in relation to the board of the institution:

‘The independent functioning of the Board of Examiners in relation to the Board of the University means that, although the Board of Examiners is appointed by the Board of the University, the institution must enable the Boards of Examiners to perform their duties independently within the institution. This also means, for example, that the Board of the University cannot impose any obligations on the Board of Examiners with regard to the assessment of students. The Board of the University will remain ultimately responsible for the quality of teaching and the conferral of degrees (Art. 7.10a 1 WHW) – a Board of Examiners must operate within the boundaries of the OER. This will also guarantee that the modes of assessment tie in with the degree programme.’

In other words, the OER is approved by the Faculty Board, which thus bears final responsibility for the quality of teaching. The Board of Examiners assesses whether individual students satisfy the requirements set out in the OER, and if this is the case the institution will award the relevant Bachelor’s or Master’s degree.

2.2.2 Independence and composition

In addition to independence in terms of the *position in the organization* with regard to the parties responsible for teaching quality (Faculty Board, Director of Education, Programme Director), the independence of the Board of Examiners must also be reflected in its *composition*.

The Board of Examiners consists of an odd number (minimum 3) of members, including an external member. The inclusion of external members in the Board of Examiners is an important guarantee of quality assurance. External members contribute to the level of expertise of the judgement of the Board of Examiners as a whole. External members may be from within the institution (for example a colleague from a different discipline) or elsewhere.

According to the Quality Assurance Reinforcement Act (Wkvho: *Wet versterking kwaliteitswaarborgen hoger onderwijs*), members of the board of the institution and others who have financial responsibilities within the institution may not be appointed as members of the Board of Examiners.

In addition, the legal requirement (Art. 7.12a.3 a) that at least one member of the Board of Examiners must be a lecturer in the degree programme(s) covered by the Board of Examiners must be satisfied. The University of Groningen has therefore decided that at least one of the members must be a lecturer from the degree programme (or one of the degree programmes). A Programme Director or a study advisor for the degree programme may not be a member of the Board of Examiners.

2.3 Expertise

For the quality assurance of examinations and final assessments, the focus of the responsibility of the Board of Examiners lies on the substantive aspects of examinations. Underlying this is the fact that the Board of Examiners must be given the opportunity to actively contribute to formulating assessment policy. This means that the Board of Examiners must have extensive subject-specific expertise, expertise in the field of testing and knowledge of the legal framework.

When selecting a Board of Examiners, the Faculty Board can choose to require expertise in all fields for each of the members or to appoint various subject experts and one expert in the field of testing.

However, each member must have at least basic knowledge of the legal framework. The institution must enable the Board of Examiners to further develop their professional skills in this domain. The UG does this by organizing an annual course day and several peer discussion sessions per year for members of Boards of Examiners. A Nestor page has been set up to reach all members of all Boards of Examiners within the UG. This page also enables users to discuss matters and exchange information.

The Board of Examiners may delegate part of its quality assurance duties to an Assessment Committee, as discussed above in Section 2.1. This Committee then performs activities on behalf of the Board of Examiners, and issues advice and reports to the Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners remains responsible for this duty. Members of an Assessment Committee must satisfy the same requirements as the internal and external members of a Board of Examiners, including the stipulations concerning incompatibility and independence (see, for example, Section 3.2.3).

2.4 Conclusion

The emphasis on the Boards of Examiners functioning independently sometimes leads to the interpretation that these Boards can impose their 'own' quality criteria on students, lecturers and degree programmes, which could result in the degree programme management and the Board of Examiners opposing each other.

However, this is not the case. The Board of Examiners assesses the quality attained against the requirements (including quality requirements) and stipulations set out in the OER approved by the Faculty Board. If the Board of Examiners observes that these requirements or stipulations are not met, consultation with the programme director and Faculty Board is

the first appropriate route to take. As a last resort, the Board of Examiners has a number of tools at its disposal to intervene, for example in cases when it cannot be determined with certainty that a student has satisfied all the requirements of the final assessment. These tools can be found in the WHW and in the OER.

3 Boards of Examiners at the University of Groningen

3.1 Appointing Boards of Examiners

As stated in Chapter 2, the Faculty Board appoints a Board of Examiners for a degree programme or cluster of degree programmes. If a Board of Examiners is appointed for a cluster of degree programmes, the Faculty Board is free to decide which degree programmes fall into this cluster.

Boards of Examiners can be appointed:

1. for an individual degree programme
2. for a cluster of degree programmes that are *related in content* (this may be a combination of a Bachelor's and a Master's degree programme, but combinations of several Bachelor's and/or Master's degree programmes are also possible)
3. for a University College or Graduate School
4. for an entire faculty (a 'broad-based' Board of Examiners).

As mentioned before, the most important criterion for appointing a Board of Examiners is that the members of the Board *together* have sufficient subject-specific expertise to guarantee the quality of the degree programme(s) covered by it.

Guaranteeing subject-specific expertise is usually no problem in the first two options listed above. In the third and fourth options, however, it could be difficult to guarantee subject-specific expertise if a University College/Graduate School or Faculty hosts a wide range of degree programmes that are not closely related.

In such situations, the Faculty Board may choose to appoint a relatively large Board of Examiners from which an 'Executive Committee' can be appointed, or to appoint a smaller Board of Examiners that consults subject-specific experts in the field of the degree programme(s).

With an eye to transparent and uniform decision-making, the method of working with advisors of a Board of Examiners of a limited size is preferred, rather than small Boards of Examiners with sub-committees, the chairs of which would have their own powers.

The Boards of Examiners and the degree programmes for which they are responsible are listed in an Appendix to the Faculty Regulations. The Faculty is legally obliged to list the composition (or any changes in the composition) of the Board of Examiners for registration and certification purposes.

3.2 Profile of the members of the Board of Examiners

3.2.1 Profile of the individual members

The individual members of the Board of Examiners must possess

1. Test expertise
Although expertise in the field of testing can be ensured by appointing an expert in this field to the Board of Examiners, all members should preferably have some knowledge of testing.
2. Knowledge of the degree programme and its structure
Subject-specific expertise is ensured by appointing at least one member of the academic staff (WP) who is involved in one of the degree programmes. The individual members must also have knowledge of the degree programme and its structure.

Considering the profiling and arguments listed above, the profile for non-external members is as follows. A non-external member of a Board of Examiners:

1. is a member of the academic staff of the University of Groningen
2. has preferably been involved in teaching in the degree programme(s) for three years or is involved in the development of a new degree programme
3. has obtained the University Teaching Qualification and
4. will follow a professionalization module within the University of Groningen or elsewhere within the framework of their duties in the Board of Examiners, preferably during the first year of membership.

In addition to these requirements, the Faculty Board may use additional criteria when appointing members, for example the results of curriculum evaluations. Given the role of the Board of Examiners, at least one of the members must be an associate professor (UHD) or professor in the relevant degree programme(s). This will enhance the 'weight', authority and status of the Board of Examiners. The lack of an associate professor or professor on the Board of Examiners has been a recurring point of criticism in visitation reports.

Additional requirements may be defined for the Chair and Deputy Chair(s), for example that the Chair must be a UHD or professor, or that they must have followed other professionalization modules in the field of testing in addition to the UTQ programme.

New members may be recommended to the Faculty Board by the Director of Education, the Programme Director, the head of the department or the Board of Examiners itself. However, such recommendations are never binding. The Faculty Board must always consult the Board of Examiners concerning the appointment of new members. The Board of Examiners plays an advisory role in this context.

3.2.2 The external member

Appointing an external expert will improve external legitimacy with regard to testing and examinations. An external expert can provide an external perspective on the quality assurance of examinations and final assessments in the degree programmes covered by the Board of Examiners. The external expert may be a colleague from a different institution or from another discipline within the University of Groningen. It may be someone with expertise in the field of testing, or someone from the professional field (in the Netherlands or abroad).

The external member may not be involved in teaching activities in the degree programme(s) covered by the Board of Examiners. No other criteria have been formulated at University level – members may be either academic staff or not. This gives the Faculty Board ample freedom to draw up profiles, possibly for each individual Board of Examiners, that tie in optimally with the character and the needs of the relevant degree programme(s). The Board of Examiners may issue advice in this matter if desired.

Given the ‘external’ nature of the external member and the urgent advice that the Chair should be a UHD or professor within the relevant degree programme(s), it follows naturally that the external member cannot be the Chair of a Board of Examiners. In addition, the external member is not authorized to sign degree certificates. In order to ensure the quality of degree certificates, they must be signed by members with subject-specific expertise.

3.2.3 Non-eligibility for membership

Members of the board of the institution and others who have financial responsibilities within the institution may not be appointed as members of the Board of Examiners. This also applies to persons who are jointly responsible for the current quality policy or who are members of certain consultative bodies. For the University of Groningen, this concerns:

1. members of the Supervisory Board
2. members of the Board of the University
3. Deans and Vice Deans
4. Directors of University Colleges or Graduate Schools
5. Programme Directors and Directors of Education
6. Managing Directors of faculties
7. Research Directors
8. The chair of the Programme Committee of the degree programme(s) covered by the Board of Examiners
9. The chairs of University and faculty participation councils
10. study advisors

The first seven officials listed are not eligible for membership because they bear management or financial responsibility for the curriculum. In most faculties, the Research Director is a member of the management team and is thus jointly responsible for the current policy. The chair of the Programme Committee is excluded from membership because of the difference in duties of the Programme Committee (advisory/consultative participation) and the Board of Examiners (supervisory) in the field of quality assurance. Although all academic staff members of the Programme Committee should ideally be excluded from membership of the Board of Examiners, this would make it impossible for small departments with few staff members to fill both committees. The chairs of the University Council and the Faculty Councils are also excluded from membership. Finally, study advisors can never be members of a Board of Examiners due to the conflicts that might arise between the interests of the students and the decisions made by the Board of Examiners. However, as indicated above, a study advisor may be appointed to the Board of Examiners in an advisory capacity.

In addition to the officials listed above, the Faculty Board may exclude other officials from membership, stating its reasons. In such cases, this will be set out in the Faculty Regulations.

3.2.4 Appointment of members

Next, a letter of appointment is sent to the candidate. If the appointment (or reappointment) concerns a chair or deputy chair position, this will be explicitly stated in the letter of appointment. If the Faculty Board has reasons for not wanting to appoint the candidate, it will contact the person who recommended the candidate for further discussion. Any rejections must be substantiated.

The chairship or membership of a member of the Board of Examiners ends when

- a. the appointment term expires and the Chair/member in question cannot or does not want to be reappointed
- b. the Chair/member takes on a position that is incompatible with membership of the Board of Examiners
- c. the employment contract ends (for the Chair/internal members)
- d. the Chair/member starts teaching in one of the degree programmes covered by the Board of Examiners (for external members)
- e. the Chair/member wishes to end their membership
- f. the Chair/member demonstrably acts in contradiction of the statutory frameworks and duties of the Board of Examiners and the Faculty Board relieves the Chair/member of their duties on substantiated grounds.

It is possible that the Chair or member of the Board of Examiners does not perform properly. In such cases, the only way to terminate the person's membership is via a decision by the Faculty Board, possibly in combination with immediate suspension. Such decisions must be made on an individual basis. Substandard performance of the Board of Examiners or its Chair or a member is usually brought before the Faculty Board by the Board of Examiners or its Chair, or by the Director of Education.

3.3 Development of expertise

The institution must enable the members of the Board of Examiners to further develop their professional skills. At the University of Groningen, this requirement is satisfied in the following ways:

- The Faculty Board presents each new member of a Board of Examiners with the Manual for Boards of Examiners, the Rules and Regulations (R&R) of the Board of Examiners and the Teaching and Examination Regulations of the degree programme(s) upon appointment.
- Basic training in the field of testing and examination is offered via the University Teaching Qualification programme. In addition, ESI (Education Support and Innovation) offers tailored workshops in the field of testing.
- The University provides its Boards of Examiners with a support network, including peer support and training.
- It is always permitted to follow a course or training programme outside the University of Groningen that can be considered relevant to the functioning of the Board of Examiners.

3.4 Duties of the Chair and Deputy Chair

3.4.1 Duties of the Chair

The Chair of the Board of Examiners:

- a. is responsible and accountable for the independent and expert functioning of the Board of Examiners
- b. justifies and defends the policy and decisions taken to internal and external parties, including CBE and CBHO
- c. signs degree certificates and diploma supplements
- d. issues advice – on behalf of the Board of Examiners – to the Faculty Board regarding the appointment of members of the Board of Examiners
- e. prepares meetings together with the secretary or administrative secretary
- f. chairs the meetings of the Board of Examiners.

3.4.2 Duties of the Deputy Chair(s)

The Deputy Chair(s) substitute(s) for the Chair during the Chair's absence and therefore has/have the same duties and powers as the Chair for the duration of such absence.

3.5 Support for the Board of Examiners

The Faculty Board ensures that each Board of Examiners is supported by an administrative secretary, who is a member of the academic staff (WP) or support staff (OBP) of the Faculty. The administrative secretary is not a member of the Board of Examiners and thus has no right to vote.

A non-administrative secretary (or 'secretary'), in contrast, is appointed as a member of the Board of Examiners.

The secretary or administrative secretary:

- a. prepares the meetings together with the Chair and/or Deputy Chair(s)
- b. takes minutes of the meetings of the Board of Examiners and ensures that the approved minutes and decisions are archived
- c. draws up annual reports together with the Chair and/or Deputy Chair(s)
- d. conducts and monitors correspondence on behalf of the Board of Examiners
- e. may process requests from students on behalf of the Board of Examiners if they concern documented standard decisions
- f. assesses whether proposed standpoints and decisions by the Board of Examiners are in accordance with the relevant decision-making frameworks, procedures and statutory provisions (e.g. OER, WHW)
- g. monitors the procedural progress of decision-making
- h. manages the archives of the Board of Examiners
- i. supervises the archiving of documents in student files.

3.5.1 Independence of the administrative secretary

The position of the administrative secretary is an important point of attention in the context of independence – they must be able to fulfil their duties independently from the curriculum management. If possible, the administrative secretary should therefore not fall under the supervision of a Director of Education or a Programme Director.

In addition, it is not desirable to assign the role of administrative secretary of the Board of Examiners to a study advisor. A study advisor has to represent the interests of students, and this role would be in conflict with the duties of the administrative secretary of informing students of decisions taken by the Board of Examiners and possibly implementing such decisions. A study advisor can, however, be appointed to the Board of Examiners in an advisory capacity.

3.6 Meetings

The entire Board of Examiners should preferably meet at least twice a year. The Chair, Deputy Chair(s) and possibly the administrative secretary will meet more regularly to discuss matters such as requests from students. A Board of Examiners may have an Executive Committee (see Section 3.1). Although the meetings of the Board of Examiners are in principle closed to the public, the Board may invite guests, such as a study advisor, an examiner, the Programme Director or an expert, to attend a meeting or part thereof.

Examples of topics that may be discussed in a plenary meeting include:

- checks of the OER
- advice on a degree programme's assessment policy
- approval of the R&R
- approval of assessment forms for the final-year projects of Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes
- cases of proven or suspected cheating and/or plagiarism committed by a student that may have consequences for the assessment of the student's work.
- approval of the annual report.

4 Duties of the Board of Examiners

4.1 Duties and powers of the Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners is responsible for the quality of examinations and degree certificates. The following duties and powers are therefore legally assigned to the Board of Examiners:

1. Determining, in an objective and expert manner, whether a student has satisfied the requirements specified in the Teaching and Examination Regulations with regard to the knowledge, understanding and skills that are required to be awarded a degree (Art. 7.12.2 WHW)
2. Assuring the quality of examinations and final assessments (Art. 7.12b.1.a WHW)
3. Formulating regulations and guidelines within the framework of the OER to assess and determine the results of examinations and final assessments (Art. 7.12b,.1.b WHW)
4. Granting exemptions from one or more examinations (Art. 7.12b.1.d WHW), as set out in the OER
5. Assuring the quality of the organization and the procedures relating to examinations and final assessments (Art. 7.12b.1.e WHW)
6. Taking measures in case of cheating (Art. 7.12b.3 in conjunction with 7.12b.2 WHW)
7. Appointing examiners to take examinations and determine their results (Art. 7.12 c WHW)

8. Awarding degree certificates and the accompanying diploma supplements to prove that the final assessment was successfully completed (Arts. 7.11.2 and 7.11.4 WHW)
9. Granting permission to individual students to follow an open degree programme, the final assessment of which leads to the conferral of a degree (Art. 7.12 b.1.c WHW)
10. Issuing statements of examinations passed to students who have successfully completed more than one examination but who cannot be awarded a degree certificate (Art. 7.11.5 WHW)
11. Annually drawing up a report of activities (Art. 7.12b.5 WHW)
12. (possibly) Annually issuing advice to the Faculty Board on the Teaching and Examination Regulations
13. Granting facilities to students with functional impairments (the Equal Treatment of Disabled and Chronically Ill People Act [WGBh/cz], elaborated in the OER).

Based on these duties and powers, the Board of Examiners takes decisions that must satisfy the rules of administrative law (see Chapter 4.2). The duties and powers of the Board of Examiners are discussed in more detail below. In addition, there are several duties that may not be legally assigned to the Board of Examiners but for which the Board of Examiners may be mandated by the Faculty Board.

4.1.1 Explanatory notes to the duties and powers

1. *Determining, in an objective and expert manner, whether a student has satisfied the requirements specified in the Teaching and Examination Regulations with regard to the knowledge, understanding and skills that are required to be awarded a degree*

This means that the Board of Examiners must assess whether individual students have achieved the learning outcomes of the degree programme set out in the OER. The assessment of whether students satisfy the requirements set out in the OER is translated, among other aspects, into the approval of study programmes.

A student who has successfully completed all necessary course units in accordance with the provisions in the OER and the R&R can be awarded a degree. The sum of all the learning outcomes of individual course units must result in the achievement of the relevant final learning outcomes. The Board of Examiners may decide that students who have passed all individual course units must sit an additional final assessment. However, this requirement will have to be set out in the OER. In addition, it is a good idea to use this power carefully, given the independent authority of examiners on the one hand and the Board of Examiners on the other. After all, the Board of Examiners primarily has a supervisory duty.

As part of this duty, the Board of Examiners is also authorized to deviate from certain provisions of the OER in certain cases (i.e. to apply the hardship clause). Examples include granting permission for adapted examinations or modes of assessment, extending the validity of exam results, replacing individual course units with different course units with the same learning outcomes or deviating from participation requirements in practical exercises.

All exceptions that the Board of Examiners may make are governed by the same principle: the Board of Examiners must explicitly guarantee that the quality and level of the examination or assessment remains unjeopardized.

2. *Assuring the quality of examinations and final assessments*

Drawing up and implementing an assessment policy is an important way to help assure the quality of examinations and final assessments. Within the framework of assessment quality policy, in 2014 the University of Groningen introduced the assessment policy Aiming for quality and study progress, in which the conditions for assuring test quality were formulated. Each degree programme's assessment policy must satisfy these conditions. Each degree programme's management team is responsible for drawing up and approving its own local assessment policy. Depending on the organization within a faculty, once a year the assessment policy is approved/confirmed for each degree programme, for each University College/Graduate School, or for the entire faculty. Given the duties of the Board of Examiners, the Board should preferably issue advice to the degree programme management on the assessment policy to be established.

In addition, the University of Groningen Assessment Policy states that 'Each degree programme must have an assessment plan that reflects that assessment is seen as an instrument for influencing student behaviour and lists both the parties responsible for its implementation and the method of regular evaluation' (requirement 9).

The Board of Examiners is responsible for assessing the quality of tests in terms of reliability, validity, transparency and feasibility, based on evaluations conducted by the degree programmes. Reports on the annual, systematic evaluations of tests and assessment policy, including theses and other final Bachelor's and Master's projects, are published annually in the Curriculum Monitor at faculty and degree programme levels.

One course unit that requires special attention when it comes to assuring the quality of examinations is the final Bachelor's or Master's project. A thesis and/or placement completed within this framework usually comprises most if not all of the learning outcomes. Students must conduct this project individually, which means that a lot of examiners are involved in assessing the students' final level. Quality assurance for this course unit is therefore extremely important. This is why the University of Groningen Assessment Policy sets out that each degree programme must have a graduation manual that discusses the procedure, supervision and assessment of final-year projects. This manual is submitted to the Board of Examiners for advice within the framework of the faculty and degree programme assessment plans.

In addition, assessment forms must be used when assessing the final products of final Bachelor's and Master's projects. These assessment forms are drawn up by the degree programme management team, after which the Board of Examiners will assess whether the form ties in with the learning outcomes of the course unit under which the final project falls, as well as the learning outcomes of the final project itself.

Procedure in combination with content

Quality assurance of examinations and final assessments has, on the one hand, a procedural aspect (are the Rules and Regulations being adhered to, are the assessment forms being used, etc.). On the other hand, the Board of Examiners also has responsibility for subject-specific aspects; is the manner of testing in line with the learning outcomes of the course unit or degree programme in question? The Board can rely on advisors or an Assessment Committee for assistance in this matter.

The Board of Examiners can appoint an Assessment Committee to conduct some or all of these subject-specific duties. However, even if the Assessment Committee does the actual work, the official responsibility for this aspect remains with the Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners must see to it that the Assessment Committee fulfils its duties in accordance with the requirements set by the Board of Examiners. After all, the Board of Examiners must answer to the accreditation committee in matters of ‘testing and assessment’. The Assessment Committee falls under the responsibility of the Board of Examiners, which means that this Assessment Committee may only issue advice to the Board of Examiners, for example in the form of the evaluation of a test once the results of this test have been determined. Examiners are legally required to provide any information requested by the Board of Examiners (Art. 7.12c.2 WHW).

N.B. Legally required storage period

Since the introduction of the *Wet versterking kwaliteitswaarborgen hoger onderwijs* [Quality Assurance Reinforcement Act for higher education], all assignments completed within the framework of the final assessment (theses, final-year research projects, final papers or images of such papers, tests) must be stored for at least 7 years in either physical or digital form, depending on the preference of the institution. This 7-year storage period will ensure that all final-year projects completed in the period covered by the latest accreditation or assessment of a new degree programme can be perused by NVAO or the Inspectorate. This also applies to exam papers, answer sheets, results and exam slips, which can be destroyed after 7 years once the visitation round is completed.

3. Formulating regulations and guidelines within the framework of the OER to assess and determine the results of examinations and final assessments

The Board of Examiners must set out in the OER or the R&R of the Board of Examiners rules for assessing and determining the results of examinations, final assessments and final-year projects. Model R&R have been drawn up as an aid in this process. Several of the R&R in this model document are binding – this is indicated in the explanatory notes accompanying the model. Ideally, a uniform set of Rules and Regulations should be used within a faculty, and certainly within a University College or Graduate School. This will contribute to equal treatment of students in similar situations, and thus also to a faculty’s quality policy.

The Board of the University has also decided that an up-to-date and representative ‘mock’ version of each examination must be made available to students to give them an idea of the question style and the way the exam will be marked.

The Board of Examiners may also include stipulations in the Rules and Regulations regarding ‘remote’ exams sat elsewhere, to help students abroad avoid study delay due to factors such as differences in academic year plans.

4. Granting exemptions from one or more examinations

The Board of Examiners is authorized to grant individual students exemptions from one or more examinations. The R&R of the relevant Board of Examiners set out how this duty is fulfilled. The question whether an exemption can be granted should be assessed against the OER. It is therefore highly recommended that the grounds for exemption be set out in the OER of the relevant degree programme.

Article 7.13.2 r of the WHW explains that these grounds may be related to previously passed examinations or final assessments in higher education and knowledge acquired outside the world of higher education. In general, exemption may be granted if the replacement course unit has roughly the same learning outcomes as the course unit for which exemption is granted. The reasons for granting exemption must be formulated clearly and concisely, and this formulation must be adequately archived.

In addition, the Board of Examiners may decide to list certain course units in the OER, for example course units offered by a sister institution or a joint degree programme, or course units that are often used to replace regular course units. In such cases a request for exemption may be approved 'automatically'.

5. Ensuring the quality of the organization and the procedures surrounding examinations and final assessments

The Board of Examiners acts as a watchdog with respect to the quality of the procedures relating to examinations and (the granting of) final assessments, including, for example, the environments in which examinations will be taken. It is the responsibility of the Faculty Board to ensure an adequate environment, but the Board of Examiners plays a role in ensuring that this is actually the case. If the Board of Examiners receives signals that there are defects in this area, they must address this with the Faculty Board.

~~Note: this is under the duties and authority of the Board of Examiners as stated by article 7.12.b.1.e of the WHW.~~

6. Taking measures in the event of cheating

The Board of Examiners is responsible for taking measures in the event of suspected or actual cases of cheating or plagiarism and sets out its course of action in such cases in the R&R. The Board of the University has included a definition of cheating or plagiarism in both the Model OER and the Model R&R, to which a stipulation is added here that all exam papers must state that copyright to the examinations lies with the UG.

7. Appointing examiners to set examinations and determine their results

One important instrument that the Board of Examiners has at its disposal for the assurance of quality in examinations and final assessments is the appointment of examiners. This duty is mandated to the Board of Examiners by law.

The University of Groningen principle is that each member of staff who has a permanent contract, has gained the UTQ and is a Professor, Associate Professor (UHD), Assistant Professor (UD) or Lecturer in principle qualifies for the position of examiner for **all** Bachelor's and Master's course units in their field of expertise. The reasons underlying this principle are as follows:

- Professors, Associate Professors (UHDs), Assistant Professors (UDs) and Lecturers have sufficient knowledge of the subject field and, thanks to the current UTQ policy, also have sufficient knowledge of testing.

- Professors, UHDs, UDs and Lecturers are competent to function as examiners at all levels (from the first year of the Bachelor's phase up to and including supervising and assessing Master's theses).

Despite this principle, the Board of Examiners must still explicitly appoint the examiners (on an annual basis; see below), although a mild assessment will suffice for appointment. The Board of Examiners may determine alternative criteria for candidate examiners who do not satisfy the criteria listed above. The Board can distinguish between examiners who are appointed for all course units in a degree programme or only for specific course units.

The duty of appointing examiners covers not only the act of appointing but also means that the Board of Examiners is authorized to terminate this position for individual examiners in the event of serious irregularities. Needless to say, such a decision may only be taken upon careful consideration.

Explicit appointment of examiners

Explicit appointment of examiners means that a schedule is drawn up on an annual basis setting out which examiner is responsible for which course units. To this end the Programme Director must submit a list to the Board of Examiners for approval in good time. When checking the list, the Board of Examiners will at the very least assess whether each examiner is competent/authorized to function as an examiner for the course unit in question.

The Board of Examiners will determine which examiners are authorized to supervise placements and theses – also on an annual basis and as part of the list of examiners. Mid-term additions are permitted.

8. Awarding degree certificates and the accompanying diploma supplements to prove that the final assessment was successfully completed

The Board of Examiners is responsible for awarding degree certificates to students once it has been determined that they have satisfied the requirements (see 1). The Board of Examiners may start the procedure as soon as the student applies for a degree certificate, or the Board can take the initiative itself once it is clear that all requirements have been met. In cases where the Board of Examiners takes the initiative, the student may submit a request to the Board of Examiners to postpone graduation, for example because they want to take another course unit and include this on the diploma supplement.

N.B. Signing the degree certificate and diploma supplement

The degree certificate and diploma supplement must be signed by the Chair and the secretary of the Board of Examiners or by the Deputy Chair (or one of the Deputy Chairs) in the Chair's absence.

In exceptional cases one of the other members of the Board of Examiners (but not the external member) may sign the degree certificate and diploma supplement. The degree certificate and diploma supplement may not be signed by staff members who are not members of the Board of Examiners, or by the administrative secretary.

9. Granting permission to individual students to follow an open degree programme, the final assessment of which leads to the conferral of a degree

In accordance with the Act, each student has the right to compile their own study programme. The Board of Examiners must approve such open degree programmes to confirm that the programme has the required level and student workload and satisfies the learning outcomes of the degree programme.

The Board of Examiners approves the individual study programme, and determines under which degree programme this study programme falls with respect to the application of the WHW. This may only be a degree programme for which the Board of Examiners is authorized.

If, given the composition of the open degree programme, a Board of Examiners does not consider itself to be the most appropriate body to decide on approval of the programme, the Faculty Board may appoint a different Board of Examiners to make this decision. The original Board of Examiners may issue advice in this matter. Certain degree programmes may not permit students to draw up their own open degree programmes due to the requirements of the professional field. Such stipulations should be included in the OER.

10. Issuing statements of examinations passed to students who have successfully completed more than one examination but who cannot be awarded a degree certificate

The Board of Examiners is authorized to issue statements of examinations passed to students who have successfully completed more than one examination but who cannot be awarded a degree certificate. This may be important for students who are transferring to a different degree programme and qualify for exemptions based on previously earned results on the basis of such a statement. The Board of Examiners must define who is authorized to sign these statements, for example the Director of Education.

11. Annually drawing up a report of activities

The Board of Examiners must report on its activities every year in an annual report. A template has been created to this end (see Appendix 5). The Board of Examiners' annual report serves a number of purposes:

1. Accounting to the Faculty Board
2. Providing input for possible improvements in teaching quality to the Programme Director, the Director of Education and the Faculty Board
3. Providing management information. This information must always be available during the visitation and accreditation procedure of a degree programme.

In addition, we have attempted to structure the working method in accordance with the PDCA cycle by asking the Boards of Examiners to include points of attention for each year of study and to reflect on these.

12. Annually issuing advice to the Faculty Board on the Teaching and Examination Regulations

The Board of Examiners can issue advice to the Faculty Board on the OER for the current year. This way the Board of Examiners can proactively contribute to quality assurance for the degree programme's assessment programme.

13. Granting facilities to students with a functional impairment

The Equal Treatment of Disabled and Chronically Ill People Act (WGBh/cz) states that students with a functional impairment must not be given unequal treatment. The Board of Examiners can decide to adapt examinations to the impairment as much as possible at the request of a student with a functional impairment or chronic disease. This request must be supported by advice from a student counsellor at the Student Service Centre (SSC). Deviating from this advice is only possible if the proposed facilities present a disproportionate burden to the educational organization or if the advice affects the most important competences for which the degree programme trains students.

This principle of disproportionateness or reasonability is not clearly defined: the interests of the student and the effects of the adjustments on the educational institute must be weighed up. A decision whereby the Board of Examiners deviates from the advice of the student counsellor must therefore provide additional justification that clearly demonstrates the weighing of interests.

With regard to examinations for electives taken by students with a functional impairment at other degree programmes, the Board of Examiners of the degree programme that sets the examination must comply with the facilities permitted by the Board of Examiners of the degree programme for which the student is registered.

4.2 Decisions

The work of the Boards of Examiners is strongly judicial in nature. The WHW provides the main framework for the legal actions performed by the Boards of Examiners. It should be noted that Boards of Examiners operate as administrative bodies in an administrative law context. This means that the actions of a Board of Examiners can be factual, for example providing a student with information, and be aimed at a legal consequence. This would constitute a decision in the sense of Article 1:3 of the General Administrative Law Act: a written decision by an administrative body with regard to a legal act under public law. The decision must be aimed at legal consequences, which means that a change must be made to the rights and obligations of the person involved. The Board of Examiners can only take decisions based on an authority assigned to them by law or by the OER, such as the duties and powers set out in Section 1.1 of this chapter. If a Board of Examiners is not authorized, then the decision in question will be annulled. The Board of Examiners must take decisions in a variety of matters within a reasonable term (see Article 4.13 of the General Administrative Law Act), bearing in mind the principles of good governance, in particular the due diligence principle and the obligation to state reasons (see Section 4.2.1).

Some decisions may be dealt with by the administrative secretary, whereas others will need to be taken jointly by the entire Board of Examiners. 'Standard decisions', which, for example, do not involve any weighing up of interests, can be dealt with by the administrative secretary on behalf of the Board. This is often the case, for example, for frequently occurring requests for exemption. More serious decisions, for example in cases of cheating that result in hefty sanctions, must be taken by the entire Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners should set out in the R&R how decisions are taken, either jointly or on its behalf, and which policy and other guidelines are used.

Decisions by the Board of Examiners as a whole must be taken on the basis of a simple majority vote of the members present. If the vote is tied, the Chair will have the casting vote. Decisions that must be communicated in writing to the party/parties involved must be signed

by the Chair or a Deputy Chair. 'Standard' decisions may be signed by the person who approved the request in the form of a scanned signature of or on behalf of the Chair.

N.B. Whenever a student does not agree with the assessment of the content of an examination, the Board of Examiners is not the relevant institution to handle these objections. Examiners are authorized to award marks. Any such mark constitutes a decision, which is open to appeal. Boards of Examiners are expected to refer students with such objections to the appeals procedure of the Examination Appeals Board (CBE).

A remedy clause must be included in each document setting out a decision by the Board of Examiners and the examiner. It must be clearly indicated that the appeal period starts on the date on which the decision is taken. If this is not made sufficiently clear, then an appeal can be deemed admissible even after the deadline. If the appeal period is stated in the decision, then any appeal that is submitted after the end of the period will be deemed inadmissible or manifestly inadmissible.

4.2.2 Due diligence principle and the obligation to state reasons:

Due diligence means that a decision must be prepared carefully and taken by an authorized person/body in accordance with the approved procedure, on the basis of a careful investigation of the facts and interests and upon having heard both parties. The obligation to state reasons means that facts must be correctly presented and the decision must be clear and understandable. In the event of a negative decision, the Board of Examiners must clearly substantiate the grounds on which the request in question is denied.

4.3 Handling of appeals

Students can lodge an appeal to the Board of Appeal for Examinations (CBE: *College van Beroep voor de Examens*) within six weeks of the announcement of the decision by the Board of Examiners or the examiner. The UG is legally obliged to establish an accessible facility for this. Students can contact the Central Portal for the Legal Protection of Student Rights (CLRS: *Centraal Loket Rechtsbescherming Studenten*) if they wish to submit a complaint, appeal or objection.

Before taking an appeal into consideration, the CBE will first forward it to the body/person (Board of Examiners or examiner) against which/whom it is directed, with an invitation to hold a meeting with the parties involved to try to settle the dispute amicably (Art. 7.61.3 WHW). The principle that all parties are heard and the option to settle must indeed be applied in all appeals (due diligence). Only in exceptional cases may this principle be deviated from, namely when hearing all parties would not add any further value or in cases of 'bound implementation', when there is no reasonable doubt in advance that the objections cannot result in a different decision.

If no settlement can be reached, the parties are invited to attend a hearing, during which the CBE will decide on the appeal. Students may appeal against such a decision by the CBE to the Higher Education Appeals Tribunal (CBHO) in The Hague.

4.3.1 Complaints:

In cases when no individual decision has been taken against which an appeal can be lodged, students can submit a complaint via the CLRS. Complaints are dealt with by the Faculty complaints officer. When handling a complaint, the complaints officer must always hear all

parties involved. Complaints about the procedure regarding the quality of examinations and final assessments must be presented to the Board of Examiners.

4.4 Testing and assessment in the accreditation process

Examination is part of the quality of the curriculum being assessed in the accreditation process. A fail mark on assessment policy will result in NVAO not granting accreditation to a degree programme.

4.4.1 Degree programme assessments

‘Testing and learning outcomes achieved’ is included as a separate standard in the current accreditation framework for NVAO degree programme assessments. This standard sets out that the degree programme must have an adequate assessment system and must prove that the desired learning outcomes are realized. The visitation panel will peruse annual reports, the reports of Board of Examiners meetings and examples of examinations with the associated model answers. In addition, the panel will look at a representative sample of final-year projects. If this topic is assessed as ‘unsatisfactory’, this will result in a negative appraisal by the accreditation panel. Depending on the seriousness of the shortcoming, NVAO may either grant the degree programme a remedy period of up to two years or decide not to award accreditation.

4.4.2 Institutional Quality Assurance Assessment

In the Institutional Quality Assurance Assessment, NVAO includes the duties and position of the Board of Examiners in its assessment of the topic of ‘Organization and decision-making structure’. The standard is as follows: ‘The institution must have an effective organizational and decision-making structure with regard to the quality of its degree programmes, with clearly delineated duties, powers and responsibilities and in which students and staff have a say.’

In addition, Standard 3 of the Institutional Assessment states that the institution must have a good idea of the extent to which its view on teaching quality is in fact realized. NVAO can assess by means of audit trails how these frameworks have been fleshed out or adopted within the degree programmes.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Differences between OER and R&R

The WHW mentions two documents used to set out testing regulations: the Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER) and the Rules and Regulations (R&R).

The OER is approved by the Faculty Board. It sets out the learning outcomes and content of a degree programme. The following matters related to testing are also set out in the OER:

- number and order of tests
- mode of assessment
- exemptions
- course unit sequencing and entry requirements
- publication of marks and right of perusal
- resits
- validity period of exam results
- provisions for students with functional impairments

The R&R set out how the Board of Examiners handles matters in the field of examinations and final assessments. In accordance with the Act, the Board of Examiners is responsible for the content of the R&R.

Appendix 2: Profile of an expert in the field of testing

- Knowledge and understanding of the field of testing policy and/or faculty testing policy
- Knowledge and understanding of the regular quality criteria for tests (validity, reliability, transparency and feasibility)
- The ability to apply the quality criteria to the usual modes of assessment in university education (open-ended questions, multiple-choice questions, paper, thesis, oral exam, etc.)
- The ability to assess the quality of formative tests
- Understanding of the qualities and shortcomings of the regular modes of assessment
- Understanding of the regular methods of pass mark definition
- The ability to perform an elementary item analysis
- The ability to apply elementary analysis to a test result (e.g. link to previous results and curriculum evaluations)
- The ability to provide feedback in an adequate way

Preferably:

- Experience in academic teaching
- Basic knowledge of digital testing

Appendix 3: WHW articles relevant to Boards of Examiners

Text published by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on 22 December 2014.

Article 7.10 Final assessments and examinations

1. Each examination is a test of the knowledge, understanding and skills of examinees, as well as an assessment of the results of this test.
2. The final examination for a degree programme or for the propaedeutic phase of a Bachelor's degree programme will be considered to have been passed once all examinations for the course units that form part of this degree programme or propaedeutic phase have been successfully completed, unless the Board of Examiners has decided that the final assessment will also comprise a test as referred to in Article 7.10.1 to be administered by this Board.
3. The board of the institution is responsible for the practical organization of examinations and final assessments.²

Article 7.11 Degree certificates and statements

1. A statement will be issued by the relevant examiner(s) to confirm that a student has successfully passed an examination.
2. A degree certificate will be issued by the Board of Examiners to confirm that a student has successfully passed the final assessment once the board of the institution has declared that the procedural requirements for issuing the degree certificate have been satisfied. No more than one degree certificate will be issued for each degree programme. The degree certificate will list the relevant information, including at least:
 - a. the name of the institution and the degree programme as listed in the register referred to in Article 6.13
 - b. the course units that formed part of the final assessment
 - c. where relevant: the qualifications associated with the degree, bearing in mind Article 7.6.1
 - d. the degree conferred, as referred to in Article 7.10a.1 or 7.10a.2
 - e. the date on which the degree programme was most recently accredited, or the date on which the degree programme successfully completed the assessment for new degree programmes as referred to in Article 5a.11.2
 - f. for joint degree programmes or joint specializations as referred to in Article 7.3b: the name of the institution or, for joint degree programmes, institutions that co-organized the degree programme or specialization.

² Added via Amendment for Technical Improvements to WHW, parliamentary documents 33840

3. Students who qualify for a degree certificate may submit a request to the Board of Examiners to postpone the certificate ceremony in accordance with the rules set out by the board of the institution.
4. Each degree certificate will be accompanied by a diploma supplement, which provides information about the nature and content of the degree programme completed. This is particularly useful with a view to the international recognizability of degree programmes. The diploma supplement must contain at least the following information:
 - a. the name of the degree programme and the institution that provides the degree programme
 - b. whether it concerns a university (WO) or university of applied sciences (HBO) degree programme
 - c. a description of the content of the degree programme
 - d. the student workload of the degree programme. The diploma supplement will be drawn up in Dutch or English and in accordance with the European standard format.
5. Students who have passed more than one examination and who are not eligible for a degree certificate as referred to in Article 7.11.2 may submit a request to the Board of Examiners for a document listing the examinations they have passed.

Article 7.12 Board of Examiners

1. Each degree programme or cluster of degree programmes within the institution has its own Board of Examiners.
2. The Board of Examiners is the body responsible for determining, in an objective and expert manner, whether individual students satisfy the conditions set out in the Teaching and Examination Regulations with regard to the knowledge, understanding and skills required to gain a degree.

Article 7.12a. Appointment and composition of the Board of Examiners

1. The Board of Examiners is established by the board of the institution and its members are appointed based on their expertise in the field of the degree programme or cluster of degree programmes involved.
2. The board of the institution is responsible for ensuring that the Board of Examiners can function independently and in an expert manner.
3. When appointing the members of the Board of Examiners, the board of the institution must ensure:
 - a. that at least one member is a lecturer in the degree programme (or in one of the degree programmes that are part of the relevant cluster of degree programmes)
 - b. for universities of applied sciences, that at least one member is from outside the relevant degree programme or cluster of degree programmes

c. that no members of the board of the institution or others who have financial responsibilities within the institution are appointed.

4. Before appointing a new member, the board of the institution will invite the members of the relevant Board of Examiners to put their case.

Article 7.12b Duties and powers of the Board of Examiners

1. In addition to the duties and powers set out in Articles 7.11 and 7.12.2, a Board of Examiners has the following duties and powers:

a. quality assurance with regard to examinations and final assessments, without prejudice to Article 7.12c

b. drawing up guidelines and instructions within the framework of the Teaching and Examination Regulations, within the meaning of Article 7.13, in order to determine and confirm the results of examinations and final assessments

c. the most suitable Board of Examiners may grant permission to a student to follow a degree programme designed by that student, within the meaning of Article 7.3d of the Act, the final assessment of which will lead to the granting of a degree, whereby the Board of Examiners also indicates to which of the institution's degree programmes that programme will be considered to belong when applying the Act

d. granting exemptions for one or more examinations, and

e. ensuring the quality of the organization of and procedures surrounding examinations and final assessments.

2. Any student or *extraneus* caught cheating may be excluded by the Board of Examiners from participation in one or more examinations or final assessments to be determined by the Board of Examiners, for a period of time also to be determined by the Board of Examiners with a maximum of one year. In the event of serious cheating, the board of the institution, on the recommendation of the Board of Examiners, may definitively terminate the student's registration in the degree programme.

3. The Board of Examiners will draw up rules for the performance of the duties and exercising of the powers set out in Article 7.12b.1 under a, b and d and in Article 7.12b.2, as well as for the measures that they can take in this context. The Board of Examiners can, within conditions that it sets, determine that not every examination must be passed for the final assessment to be passed.

4. If a student submits a request or a complaint to the Board of Examiners that involves an examiner who is a member of the Board of Examiners, that examiner may not participate in the process concerning that request or complaint.

5. The Board of Examiners draws up annual reports of its activities This report will be presented to the board of the institution or the Faculty Board.

Article 7.12c Examiners

1. The Board of Examiners appoints examiners to set examinations and determine results.

2. The examiners must provide the Board of Examiners with information as requested.

Article 7.13. Teaching and Examination Regulations

1. The board of the institution approves a set of Teaching and Examination Regulations for each of the degree programmes or clusters of degree programmes taught at the institution. The Teaching and Examination Regulations contain clear and adequate information about the degree programme or cluster of degree programmes.

2. Without prejudice to any other provisions in this Act, the Teaching and Examination Regulations set out the applicable procedures and rights and obligations with regard to teaching and examinations for each degree programme or cluster of degree programmes. This includes at least the following:

- a. the content of the degree programme and its examinations
- b. the content of the specializations/tracks within a degree programme
- c. the competences in the fields of knowledge, understanding and skills that students must have acquired by the end of the programme
- d. where necessary, the design of practical exercises
- e. the student workload of the degree programme and of each of the course units in the programme
- f. further regulations as referred to in Articles 7.8b.6 and 7.9.5
- g. the Master's degree programmes to which Article 7.4a.8 applies
- h. the number and order of examinations and when they can be taken
- i. whether the degree programme is offered in full-time, part-time and/or dual variants
- j. where necessary, the order, the periods and the number of times per academic year that examinations and final assessments may be taken
- k. where necessary, the validity period of successfully completed examinations, notwithstanding the Board of Examiners' authority to extend this period
- l. whether examinations are held in written, oral or another form, notwithstanding the Board of Examiners' authority to deviate from this in special circumstances
- m. the way in which students with a disability or chronic illness are given a reasonable opportunity to take examinations
- n. the public nature of oral examinations, notwithstanding the Board of Examiners' authority to deviate from this in special circumstances
- o. the term within which the results of examinations must be announced, and whether and how this term may be deviated from
- p. the way and the period during which students can peruse their marked exam papers

- q. the way and the period during which interested parties can peruse the questions and assignments set within the framework of a written examination and the norms based on which the examination has been assessed
- r. the grounds on which the Board of Examiners can grant exemptions from one or more examinations on the basis of previously passed examinations or final assessments in higher education or knowledge and skills acquired outside the world of higher education
- s. where necessary, a statement that admission to examinations is subject to successful completion of other examinations
- t. where necessary, the compulsory nature of practical exercises in order to gain admission to the relevant examination, notwithstanding the Board of Examiners' authority to grant exemption from this requirement, possibly with alternative requirements
- u. study progress supervision and individual tutoring
- v. where relevant, the student selection procedure for special tracks in the degree programme as referred to in Article 7.9b
- x. the actual design of the curriculum

Appendix 4: Explanatory notes on test quality

Relevant questions relating to the quality criteria reliability, validity, transparency and feasibility

Validity

1. How is the test drawn up in relation to the learning outcomes?
2. Is it based on a test design (e.g. test matrix)?
3. Does the test sufficiently measure the required learning outcomes?
4. Does the test sufficiently reflect the material to be studied?
5. Does the test sufficiently reflect the material discussed in the lectures?
6. Has there been a double check in the creation of the test?

Reliability

7. Does the test include sufficient components to form a reliable impression of the student's competences?
8. Are the questions formulated clearly and unambiguously?
9. Are the assessment criteria formulated clearly and unambiguously?

Transparency

10. Is the mode of assessment clearly communicated at the start of the course unit?
11. Are the assessment criteria clearly communicated at the start of the course unit?
12. Is the way the final mark is arrived at clearly explained?
13. Are students clearly informed which minimum requirements they must satisfy in order to pass the test?
14. Is the performance expected from students in the test sufficiently practised during the course unit?

Feasibility

15. Is the test feasible for students in terms of the time available for studying and taking the test?
16. Is the test feasible for lecturers in terms of the number of lecturer hours available?

Appendix 5: Format for the Board of Examiners annual report

The annual report should cover one academic year.

An annual report drawn up according to the format can serve various purposes:

1. Accounting to the Faculty Board
2. Providing input for possible improvements in teaching quality to the Programme Director, the Director of Education and the Faculty Board
3. Providing management information. This information is often requested during degree programme accreditation procedures.
4. In addition, in this format we have attempted to structure the working method in accordance with the PDCA cycle by asking the Boards of Examiners to include points of attention for each year of study and to reflect on these.
5. Composition, scope and performance of the Board of Examiners.

Re 5: Please list the composition of the Committee over the past academic year or provide a list of members and changes in membership in an appendix. Also state the Chair and secretary, and list which degree programmes are covered by the relevant Board of Examiners. Briefly discuss the performance of the Board of Examiners.

6. Number of meetings and main agenda items

Re 6: Please state how many meetings the Board of Examiners held in the past academic year and briefly explain the main points discussed – in particular the agenda points that discussed new policy or additional guidelines.

Some faculties organize regular Board of Examiners meetings to discuss requests from students as well as plenary meetings (usually at a higher level) to discuss policy-related issues. In this case, please state both the number of regular meetings and the number of plenary meetings.

7. Review of attention points formulated

Re 7: Please provide a brief state of affairs with regard to the points that were marked as points of attention in last year's annual report.

8. Other decisions/findings by the Board of Examiners

Re 8: Please discuss here only those decisions or findings that were not listed as points of attention in last year's annual report, as the latter should be discussed under point 7. Provide a list of the most important decisions or findings by the Board of Examiners at a level higher than that of individual students. Attention may also be paid here to new topics, such as the practical implications of stipulations in the (Enhanced Governance Act, or findings based on test evaluations.

9. Advice issued on the OER

Re 9: This point should contain a brief discussion of the advice issued on the OER, if possible indicating whether the advice in question has been adopted.

10. Overview of requests/issues dealt with

Re 10: Please provide an overview of the number of requests dealt with. An *example* of such an overview is shown below. If trends or deviations from trends can be discerned, please explain these if possible.

- a. Category
- b. Course unit completed abroad/exemptions/study programme/course unit outside the degree programme
- c. Extension of validity of exam results
- d. Complaints about examinations/objections and appeals against marks awarded
- e. Requests for dispensation/additional resit due to Bachelor-before-Master rule
- f. Reports of cheating or plagiarism
- g. Other

11. Board of Appeal for Examinations (CBE) cases

Re 11: Please provide an overview of cases brought before the CBE and their results, and an overview of any appeals brought before the Court or the Higher Education Appeals Tribunal (CBHO; *College van Beroep voor het Hoger Onderwijs*) in response to CBE cases and the results of such appeals.

12. Points of attention for the next academic year.

Re 12: Please list any points of attention for the next academic year (in accordance with the PDCA cycle).

Appendix 6: Model decision concerning rejection of request

Date:

Dear ...,

Thank you for your request to the Board of Examiners for(enter request) dated(date).

We regret to inform you that the Board of Examiners has decided not to grant your request, for the following reason(s): The rules that apply to your request are set out in(state regulation or policy plus web source).... Your situation deviates from the requirements outlined in the above rules in the following ways:(explain).....

Kind regards,

The Board of Examiners for

On its behalf, (Chair/Secretary)

You can lodge an appeal against this decision within six weeks of the date of this letter with the Central Portal for the Legal Protection of Student Rights (CLRS) via: www.rug.nl/studenten/clrs or via CLRS, Postbus 72, 9700 AB Groningen