

Academic and Examination Regulations (OER)

Master's degree programme in Cardiovascular
Research

Academic year 2013-2014
VU University Amsterdam
School of Medical Sciences

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Section 1 General provisions

Article 1. Regulations' scope of application

1. These regulations apply to the educational activities associated with examinations of the Master's degree programme in Cardiovascular Research, hereinafter referred to as: 'the degree programme'. The regulations also cover the topmaster programme for the most excellent students of the degree programme.
2. The degree programme is offered by the VUmc School of Medical Sciences, hereinafter referred to as: 'the faculty'.
3. These regulations apply to anyone following the degree programme in this academic year, irrespective of when he or she started the degree programme. Where necessary, transitional regulations will also apply. These are appended to these regulations.

Article 2 Definitions

If the terms used in these regulations also occur in the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, WHW), the meaning given in this Act will prevail. Below is a list of key terms and their definitions within the context of this document:

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|--------------------------|--|
| a. The Act: | The Higher Education and Research Act, abbreviated as WHW. |
| b. (Programme) Component | A programme component as defined in Article 7.3, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Act. |
| c. Practical | A practical educational exercise as defined in Article 7.13, paragraph 2d of the Act, for example in the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- writing a thesis;- preparing an assignment or paper;- conducting a research assignment;- conducting a literature review;- completing a work placement/internship;- participation in an excursion;- conducting tests and experiments;- participation in other educational activities with the aim of developing specific skills. |
| d. Prospectus | The guide for the degree programme containing specific information relating to it. The Prospectus is available on www.med.vu.nl and on paper. |
| e. Institution | VU University Amsterdam. |
| f. Blackboard | Electronic system intended for the sharing of educational information. |
| g. SIS | Student Information System. |
| h. Disability | A disorder of a temporary or permanent nature which affects the student's ability to follow the programme or to complete interim examinations or practicals. |
| i. Follow-up Master's | The degree programme to which access is legally granted on the basis of a designated Bachelor's degree programme. |
| j. Selective master | The Master's degree programme not designated as a follow-up Master's |
| k. Semester | Part of the academic year, starting on 1 September and ending on 31 January, or starting on 1 February and ending on 31 August. |
| l. EC | European Credit |
| m. examination board | The examination board is organized in accordance with Article 7.12 of the Act; |
| n. executive board | The management of the institution as referred to article 1.1 and 10.8 of the Act; |

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|------------------------|---|
| o. admission board | the board responsible for admission of students according to the admission criteria as mentioned in session 2 article 6 |
| p. course coordinator | individual responsible for the organization execution and quality of a programme component |
| q. programme committee | committee as referred to in article 10.3c of the Act. |

Article 3. Aim of the degree programme

1. The degree programme aims to achieve the following:
 - to prepare the student to practice as an independent professional within the field of Cardiovascular Research.
 - to teach the student specialized knowledge, skills and understanding in the field of Cardiovascular Research and to be a suitable candidate for a subsequent course of study leading to a career in research.
 - to prepare the student for academic work in the field of Cardiovascular Research.
2. The degree programme also promotes the academic education of the student, in particular with reference to:
 - awareness of the ethical aspects of medical research;
 - independent academic thought processes and performance;
 - communicating at an academic level in the student's own language or/and English;
 - applying specialist academic knowledge in a wider and/or philosophical and social context.
3. The degree programme focuses attention on the student's personal development, promotes his or her awareness of social responsibility and develops students' skills of expression in the English language.

Article 4. Degree programme types

The degree programme is offered on a full-time basis.

Article 5. English Language Requirement

1. For admission to an English-language Master's degree programme, the applicant must complete a certified English-language test before beginning the programme.
2. The minimum requirements for students' English language proficiency are:
 - IELTS 6.5
 - TOEFL paper based test: 580
 - TOEFL computer based test: 237
 - TOEFL internet based test: 92-93
3. The following are exempt from this test:
 - a) anyone who has passed all the distinct components of an English test (IELTS/TOEFL) no longer than one year before commencement of the programme;
 - b) anyone who has met the requirements of the VU English language proficiency test: TOEFL ITP;
 - c) anyone who has completed a previous course in the English language in an English-speaking country included on the relevant list issued by the International Office.

Section 2 Admission to the degree programme

Article 6. Previous education

1. Students will be admitted to the degree programme if they hold a certificate of admission, issued by or on behalf of the School of Medical Sciences because they have demonstrated that they meet the knowledge, understanding and skills requirements reflecting the final level of attainment in an academic Bachelor's degree programme, i.e.:
 - a) knowledge, understanding and skills in anatomy, physiology, biochemistry and immunology of heart and circulation at the level of Bachelor of Science degree.
 - b) Tangible laboratory experience.

2. An assessment of the knowledge of anatomy, physiology, biochemistry and immunology of heart and circulation is part of the admission procedure. Students may be admitted to the programme on the basis of a decision to that effect taken by the examination board of the Master's Programme. The examination board may make additional demands of the student before granting admission to the Master's Programme.

3. Only when severe mental or health problems interfered with completing the final bachelor year, VU university students not yet in the possession of an eligible Bachelor's degree, but conditionally admitted after completing the assessment, Can be admissible as an exception to that stipulated in paragraph 1. The Examination Board needs to be provided with a written declaration of the bachelor's student councillor stating their right of exemption. In this case of the total of 180 EC no more than 6 EC may be omitted. The missing credits must have been secured at the latest by the end of the academic year in which the master's programme was started. The master's degree programme cannot be completed before the bachelor degree has been awarded.

4. The certificate of admission relates exclusively to the academic year following the academic year in which the application for the certificate was submitted, unless the Examination Board decides otherwise.

5. Students with a bachelor degree from an institution of higher education (HBO) must participate in the premaster assessment of the VU University. The scores will be used to inform students for self-evaluation and to identify possible deficiencies. In an additional assessment, the academic level of knowledge and skills will be tested. In this assessment students must critically interpret and summarise a scientific paper on a cardiovascular subject. The Examination Board will decide on the basis of this assessment and the assessment indicated in paragraph 2, letters of recommendation if applicable, and previous track scores about rejection, admission with the obligation to supplement deficiencies (max 6 EC) during the Master's programme. The Examination Board may make additional demands of the student before granting admission to the Master's Programme.

Article 7 Conditions of admission to programmes

The following conditions of admission apply to the Topmaster programme within the degree programme, in addition to that stipulated in Article 6:

Admission criteria

The student's previous education must have included the following subjects:

- a) The mark of the bachelor or HBO placement is ≥ 7.5 .
- b) The marks of the compulsory master courses in the programme are on average ≥ 7.5 , with a minimum score of 7.
- c) All compulsory courses have to be completed successfully in the first instance.
- d) The maximum top 20% of the student population will be admitted to this programme.

Article 8 Admissions Board

1. Responsibility for admitting students to the degree programme, including the distinct programmes, is delegated to the Admission Board of the degree programme by the School of Medical Sciences.

2. The School of Medical Sciences is responsible for drawing up the Admissions

Regulations.

Article 9 Restrictions on the number of students admitted to Master's degree programmes

1. At the latest two months before the deadline for applications, specified in the Application and Registration Regulations, the School of Medical Sciences can submit a proposal to the Executive Board specifying the maximum number of students to be admitted to the degree programme.

2. If a restriction on numbers applies, the Examination Board will determine a series of criteria to be used to rank the applications submitted. These criteria are public and

will be announced before the 1st of June on the website of the school of medical sciences: <http://www.med.vu.nl>

3. The Examination Board will then offer admission to the candidates in the order of ranking.

Section 3 Composition of the degree programme

Article 10 Composition of the degree programme

1. The degree programme will comprise the components listed in the appendix to these Academic and Examination Regulations.
2. When performing the practical components, students must adhere to the faculty's safety regulations.

Article 11 Study load

The degree programme has a study load of 120 EC divided over two years of study. One EC is equivalent to 28 hours of study.

Section 4 Interim and final examinations

Article 12 Number of interim examinations, time periods and frequency

1. There are two opportunities to take interim examinations in the degree programme in each academic year.
 - a. the first time immediately following the teaching period in which the subject is offered;
 - b. the second time during the resit period.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of the previous paragraph, participation in a practical component is only possible once a year. If a student, due to unforeseen circumstances, misses an obligatory practical component, the student needs to contact the course coordinator for a replacement assignment.
3. An annual timetable is issued detailing when written interim examinations may be taken and is published before the start of the academic year.
4. Without prior permission from the Examination Board students may sit a given interim examination no more than four times. When the maximum of four interim examinations has been reached, without successful completion of the examination component in question, the Examination Board will determine whether, and under what conditions, the candidate can be admitted to future interim examinations. Requests for admission should be submitted in writing.
5. If no indication is provided with regard to the number of times an interim examination may be taken in each academic year, because this concerns a subject not provided by the degree programme itself, stipulated in the Academic and Examination Regulations for the relevant degree programme will apply.
6. As an exception to paragraph 1, if a subject is not taught in a given academic year, only one opportunity to sit an interim examination in that subject will be offered during the course of that year.
7. In exceptional cases, the Examination Board may issue permission for the rules regarding the number of times in which interim examinations may be taken, to be waived.

Article 13 Assessment

1. An interim examination is expressed according to one of the following ranges:
 - a) in whole or half numbers on scale from 1.0 –10.0 where 10 is the highest mark, or;
 - b) as level indicator on the scale as 'well', 'adequate', 'inadequate', or;
 - c) as a level indicator on the scale 'met', 'not met'.
2. Obtained marks within the range of 5 and 6 will be registered as a 6.0 if 5.5 or higher and a 5.0 if obtained 5.4 or lower.
3. If a written interim examination is made up of several components, no assessment will be made of this examination until all components have been tested. The results of intermediate components will be published on blackboard.

4. The assessment of a work placement/internship or a literature survey will be issued by the examiners after consultation with the relevant supervisor on site.
5. In addition to, or instead of, classes in the form of lectures, the elements of the Master's examination programme often include a practical component, as defined in Article 2. The prospectus contains information on the types of classes used in each part of the programme. Attendance during the practical components is mandatory. In addition, active participation in the practical components and/or completion of the assignments handed out during the practical components can influence the final mark.
6. Rules for grading reports of placements or literature surveys are the following:
 - a) The examiner determines the result of the report within 30 days after submission. The examiner will pass to the VUmc Cardiovascular research master secretariat, the information required for the official document concerning the student's results.
 - b) The period of 30 days as mentioned in article 13.6a may be extended to 60 days, when the report is submitted in the period between June 15 and August 15.
 - c) In case the examiner determines the content of the report as insufficient, he or she returns the report along with written comments to the student within the period of 30 or 60 days (article 13.5 section 2). Within 30 days the student should hand in the corrected report for final assessment.
 - d) In case the content of the report is still insufficient after this second round of correction article 13.6.c the component needs to be retaken.
An interim examination with a sufficient result, but not approved by the Examination Board does not bring the student credits.
7. If a student re-sits an examination component, the highest mark will count. Re-sitting of passed examinations is not allowed.
8. As an exception on Article 13.7 the Examination Board may decide at the request of the student to resit an examination already passed if mental or health problems prevented the student performance.
9. When an assessment of a compulsory course is composed of several interim examinations each component should at least be completed with 5,5 or more.
10. A minimum of 18 EC of the first four compulsory courses needs to be obtained before a student can start with an internship or literature study assignment.

Article 14 Types of interim examinations

1. The interim examinations will be taken as described in the prospectus for the degree programme.
2. The Examination Board can deviate from that stipulated in paragraph 1. A request to do so can be submitted by the student or by the examiner at least two weeks in advance.

Article 15 Oral interim examinations

1. Unless specified otherwise by the Examination Board, no more than one student at a time will sit an oral interim examination.
2. Unless otherwise specified by the Examination Board, a second examiner will be present during an oral interim examination.
3. Oral interim examinations will be public unless decided otherwise by the Examination Board or the relevant examiner in exceptional cases. Students can submit a corroborated objection against the examination being held in public to the Examination Board. The Examination Board will weigh the student's objection against the interests of holding a public examination.
4. Before the commencement of an oral interim examination, the examiner will ask the student for valid proof of enrolment and identification.

Article 16 Determining and publishing interim examination results

1. The examiner will determine the results of the written interim examination as soon as possible, but at the latest within three weeks after the examination has been taken. The examiner will provide the Cardiovascular Research Master programme secretariat with the relevant information. The School of Medical Sciences Education Office will ensure that the results are recorded and published on the cardiovascular research blackboard site within four weeks after the examination has been taken, with due regard for the student's privacy.
2. If, as a result of exceptional circumstances, the examiner is likely to exceed the deadline, he or she must inform the Examination Board, stating reasons, who will then ensure that the student is informed of the new deadline.
The period of inspection can be prolonged to 90 days when the results are published in June, July or August.
3. The examiner will determine the result of an oral interim examination immediately after the examination in question and will give the student a written explanation of this decision.
4. With regard to interim examinations that are neither written nor oral, the Examination Board will decide before the end of the course in which a specific exam is given how the student will be informed of the results and how long that will take.
5. When notified of the result for an interim examination, the student will also be informed of the right of inspection as referred to in Article 18, as well as the option of appealing to the Examination Appeals Board.
6. In the event that the Examination Board ascertains that a student has committed fraud, it is entitled to take measures against the student. More information can be found in the Rules and Regulations of the cardiovascular research master.

Article 17 Period of validity of interim examinations

1. The period of validity of interim examinations is 4 years, as from the year the interim examination has been taken.
2. As an exception to this rule, in cases where it has been over four years since the student successfully completed the interim examination in a given component, the Examination Board may decide that he or she is required to sit an additional or replacement interim examination in that component before being permitted to sit the final examination.

Article 18 Right of inspection

1. For a period of at least four weeks following publication of the results for a written interim examination, the student will upon request be given the opportunity to inspect his or her assessed work. If a student intends to appeal against the way in which his or her work has been assessed, he or she will be issued with a copy of the assessed work.
2. Within the period of July-August the period noted in paragraph 1 can be prolonged to maximum 90 days.
3. During the period specified in the first paragraph, any student will be informed of the questions and assignments in the examination in question, as well as the standards against which the assessment was conducted.
4. The Examination Board has the right to determine that the inspection referred to in paragraphs 1 takes place at a given location and at a fixed time.
5. If the student can demonstrate that he or she is or was unable to attend at the place and time indicated by the Examination Board (paragraph 2), he or she will be granted another opportunity to do so.
6. The locations and times indicated in paragraph 1 will be announced before the start of the course.

Article 19 Reflective discussion of interim examinations

1. As soon as possible after the results of an oral interim examination have been announced, a reflective discussion will be held between the examiner and the student

at the request of the student or on the initiative of the examiner. If requested, a justification of the assessment will be given.

2. For a period of four weeks after the publication of the results of a written interim examination, the student can request a reflective discussion with the relevant examiner.

The reflective discussion will take place within 15 working days at a time and location determined by the examiner.

3. If the Examination Board organizes or arranges a collective reflective discussion, students may only submit a request as stipulated in the previous paragraph if they have been unable to attend the collective discussion for reasons beyond their control.

4. That stipulated in paragraph 3 applies if the Examination Board or the examiner offers the student the opportunity to compare his or her answers with model answers.

5. The Examination Board can decide to permit exceptions to the provisions in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4.

Article 20 Exemption

1. After soliciting the advice of the relevant examiner, the Examination Board can grant exemption from an interim examination or practical, based on an examination or practical successfully completed in the past within higher education in the Netherlands or elsewhere, the content and study load of which correspond to the component for which exemption has been requested.

2. If a student wishes to meet the requirements of specific interim examinations by studying at a different faculty or (Dutch or foreign) university, prior approval is required from the Examination Board.

3. If the Examination Board grants a student exemption from a component of the examinations, then the credits for that component are registered in the year in which exemption is granted. These credits do not count towards time-related grants or performance grants.

Article 21 Final examination

1. If the examinations for the programme components relating to the degree programme have been completed successfully, the final examination has been completed.

2. Students who have successfully completed the final examination will be conferred the title 'Master of Science' by the Executive Board.

3. Details of the degree awarded will be recorded on the degree certificate in question. In relevant cases, details of the degree can be recorded in the diploma supplement.

Section 5 - Study advice

Article 22 Records of study progress

The School of Medical Sciences will ensure records are kept of study results in order to enable students to consult the student portal at any time for details of the results they have achieved for the various teaching components in the degree programme. The study results are filed and are handled strictly confidential.

Article 23 Study advice

The School of Medical Sciences will ensure that students enrolled for the degree programme are provided with study advice. This will always include:

- a) The services offered by the study advisor.
- b) Annual evaluations with the study coordinator.

Article 24 Adaptations for students with disabilities

1. Students with a disability will qualify for special adaptations to the teaching provided, interim examinations and practical's, based on a written request submitted for that purpose to the study advisor. These adaptations will be tailored as far as

possible to the individual disability of the student, but are not permitted to affect the quality or level of difficulty of the subject or final examination programme. The facilities available for this purpose may consist of examinations and/or practicals whose nature and duration is attuned to the situation of the individual concerned, or providing practical aids.

2. The request referred to in paragraph 1 must be submitted via the study advisor and accompanied by a recent recommendation from a student counsellor. This recommendation is based on a statement from a doctor or psychologist. In the case of dyslexia, no recommendation from a student advisor is required and a statement from a BIG, NIP or NVO accredited testing centre will suffice. Where possible, the statement should include an estimation of the extent to which progress of study will be hindered. Foreign statements of dyslexia will be assessed by the VU for and compared with the Dutch statements.

3. A statement as referred to in paragraph 2 is valid for a maximum of one year. In the case of a chronic disorder, this period of validity may be extended at the recommendation of a student counsellor.

4. The School of Medical Sciences will decide on any requests for adaptations relating to the educational facilities. The Examination Board will decide on any requests for adaptations relating to the process of examining.

Section 6 – Transitional and final provisions

Article 25 Conflicts with the regulations

If a prospectus or other regulations related to the study programme or the examination programme are in conflict with the OER of the cardiovascular research master that stipulated in these regulations will take precedence.

Article 26 unforeseen situations

1. In cases that are not provided for by these regulations, the decision of the Examination Board is final.
2. In case of disputes, the Executive Board's decision will be final.

Article 27 Amendments to the regulations

1. Amendments to these regulations are implemented by the School of Medical Sciences, by means of an individual decision. This takes place following a recommendation by the Programme Committee relating to the regulations in their entirety, and with the endorsement of a joint meeting of those sections which do not relate to the subject of Article 7.13 paragraphs 2 a to g, and paragraph 3 (follow-up Master's) of the WHW and the admission requirements for Master's degree programmes.
2. An amendment to this regulation will not take effect during the current academic year, unless this does not unreasonably affect the interests of the students.
3. Furthermore, amendments must not disadvantage the students by influencing:
 - a) Approval granted under the provision of Article 18.
 - b) Another decision taken on the basis of these regulations by the examination board, with regard to a student.

Article 28 Transitional Regulations

1. In the event that substantive changes are made to the composition of the study programme or to the contents of these regulations, the School of Medical Sciences will draft transitional regulations which will be appended to these regulations.
2. These transitional regulations will always include:
 - a. Regulation relating to exemptions that may be awarded on the basis of examinations already secured;
 - b. the period of validity of the transitional regulations.
3. If a subject in the compulsory study programme is discontinued, a further two opportunities will be offered after the final teaching in the subject to sit the interim

examination in the subject. Resits will take place in the academic year subsequent to the final academic year in which teaching in the subject was offered.

Article 29 Publication

1. The School of Medical Sciences will ensure that these regulations are published on www.med.vu.nl . This also applies to the rules and guidelines drawn up by the Examination Board, and to any amendments to these documents.
2. The Education Office will furnish any interested parties with a copy of the documents referred to in the first paragraph.

Article 30 Date of commencement

These regulations come into force on 1 September 2013.

Adopted by the School of Medical Sciences on 4 February 2013

Appendices

I. Curriculum

1. Composition of degree programme

The *degree programme* has a research profile ('R' profile) and no specializations.

The curriculum consists of the programme components stated below.

Components of the programme	Total EC
a. compulsory courses	30 EC
b. optional courses	18 EC
c. 2 research projects including the Master's Thesis	63 EC
d. literature survey	9 EC

During the first semester the compulsory courses of the degree programme will be taught. The second, third and fourth semester can be filled in according to the student's own study programme which comprises of 18 EC of optional courses, 63 EC research projects divided over two internships and 9 EC of literature survey. Additional information can be found in the text underneath.

a. Compulsory courses

Name	EC	level	code
Pathophysiology of heart and circulation	6	400	M_CPATHO09
Clinical aspects of cardiovascular diseases and imaging	6	400	M_CLINBIO09
Vascular function and metabolic diseases	6	400	M_CVASCFU09
Remodelling of the circulatory system	6	400	M_CREMODE09
Biostatistics	3	500	M_CBIOSTA09
Scientific writing in English	3	500	M_FWSE09

First year students starting in September 2013 are only allowed to start the first placement after they have taken all compulsory courses.

b. Optional courses

The optional courses are aimed at theoretical, practical, ethical and social aspects of Cardiovascular Research. The courses offered by the VU university medical centre vary per year. At the beginning of the year the Examination Board decides on the package offered to the students. Students may also take selected subjects and courses from other Master's Programmes. In exceptional cases, the Examination Board may allow one or more components from other university programmes to be selected. In all cases these options have to be submitted to the examination board that decides whether these optional components effectively meet the requirements of the degree programme.

List of optional courses organized by the degree programme

Name	EC	Level	code
Biobusiness course	3	500	M_OBIOBUS10
Proteomics in biomedical sciences	3	500	M_CPROTBIO09
Life cell imaging	3	500	M_CLIFECE09
Research ethics	3	500	M_CETHICA09
Advanced cardiac diagnostics	3	500	M_CCARDDIA09
Academic teaching and presenting	3	500	M_CACTP09

c. Research projects

1. The degree programme includes two research-based placements. The Master's thesis is linked to one of these placements. The placements are worth a total of 63 EC: these consist of a longer (more than 36 EC; major) and a shorter one (more than 21 EC; minor). The major must be focussed on a cardiovascular research subject. When performing the practical components, students must adhere to the faculty's safety regulations.

The placements must comply with the following conditions:

- Both placements must be carried out in a research laboratory which is recognized by the Programme.
- One of the placements must be completed within the VU/VUmc.
- The major must deal with a purely cardiovascular topic while the minor can be in a field that is related to cardiovascular research.
- The choice of placements has to be submitted to the Examination Board for approval.

Both placements must contain the following elements:

- Theoretical deepening of understanding in the cardiovascular field in question
- Elaboration, performance and analysis of the research assignment
- Formulation of conclusions and recommendations
- Production of a written report in English
- Presentation of an oral report in English.

The final mark awarded for the placements is based on the quality of the practical work (50%), the report (25 %) and the oral presentation (25 %). The examination board can, to a limited extent of 6 ECTS credits, grant the student permission to extend a period of placement. The student must request this before the end of the research project. Approval for the extension of a placement is given once-only. The extension is at the expense of optional courses.

The mark for the extension is equal to the mark for the placement and is registered as a separate component. The Master's thesis includes the results of a cardiovascular research project obtained during the major, integrated with and from the perspective of the knowledge acquired in the cursory education. The format of the cover of the Master's thesis will be provided the Master. The Master's thesis will be defended in public.

d. Literature survey

The literature survey is worth 9 EC and must be composed either in the format of a review paper or in the format of a research proposal. The literature survey must comply with the following conditions:

- Although it is supervised by a member of the teaching staff, the literature survey must be carried out largely independently.
- Working within the limitations governing this section of the programme, the student must be able to efficiently absorb and critically evaluate the literature in a given sub-field.
- Taking this study as a basis, he or she will be able to clearly indicate the current state of affairs in the sub-field in question.
- In addition, the student will be able to point out limitations and problems, formulate recommendations for future research and indicate problem solving strategies, dependent on the context of the research.
- The subject of the literature survey must be approved by the Examination Board.

II. Composition of programmes/specialization

The additional requirements for students in the topmaster programme are listed in Article 7.

III. Transitional regulations

The OER applies to all students of the Master's programme in Cardiovascular Research. If the OER in place has a negative outcome on a cohort of students the OER of the year in which they started the programme will apply