

Assessment Policy



November 2019

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
1.1	<i>Reasons for reviewing the assessment policy</i>	3
1.2	<i>Objectives of this faculty assessment policy</i>	3
1.3	<i>Who is this document aimed at?</i>	4
1.4	<i>The faculty assessment policy and other policy documents</i>	4
2.	Responsible parties in the assessment process	5
2.1	<i>Faculty Board</i>	5
2.2	<i>Examination Board</i>	5
2.3	<i>Programme director and programme coordinator</i>	6
2.4	<i>Examiners</i>	6
2.5	<i>Programme Committees</i>	6
2.6	<i>Support by Corporate Real Estate and Facilities, Student & Educational Affairs, IT and the Education</i>	7
2.7	<i>Cooperation</i>	7
3.	The principles of the Faculty of Social Sciences' vision for assessment	8
3.1	<i>Valid</i>	8
3.2	<i>Reliable</i>	9
3.3	<i>Transparent</i>	10
3.4	<i>Educational</i>	11
4.	The 'assessment future' of the Faculty of Social Sciences	12
4.1	<i>Strengthened feedback function</i>	12
4.2	<i>Formative assessment and more feedforward</i>	13
4.2.1	<i>Peer review by students</i>	13
4.2.2	<i>Formative tests</i>	13
4.3	<i>More skilled in skills</i>	14
4.4	<i>More realistic assignments and variation in assessment within a programme</i>	14
4.4.1	<i>Choosing an assessment method and context</i>	14
4.4.2	<i>Variation in assessment</i>	15
4.5	<i>Strengthening the connection between teaching and testing</i>	16
4.5.1	<i>Compensation within courses</i>	16
4.5.2	<i>What needs to be considered?</i>	17
4.5.3	<i>No compensation between courses</i>	17
4.6	<i>Becoming more skilled at assessment: the examiner and the Examination Board</i>	18
5.	Final projects	19
6.	Organization of the quality assurance in assessment	21
6.1	<i>The quality of the assessment of a course</i>	21
6.1.1	<i>Course coordinator and examiner</i>	21
6.1.2	<i>Support by Corporate Real Estate and Facilities, IT, Student & Educational Affairs and the Education Office</i>	24
6.1.3	<i>The Examination Board</i>	25
6.1.4	<i>Programme Committee</i>	25
6.2	<i>The quality of the assessment of a degree programme</i>	25
6.2.1	<i>The program director and the programme coordinator</i>	25
6.2.2	<i>The Programme Committee</i>	27
6.2.3	<i>The Examination Board</i>	27
6.3	<i>The quality of the assessment at the Faculty of Social Sciences</i>	28
6.3.1	<i>The Faculty Board</i>	28
Annexes		30
	<i>Annex 1: Forms of assessments at different cognitive levels</i>	30
	<i>Annex 2: Example of an assessment overview of a course</i>	31
	<i>Annex 3: Example of blueprints</i>	33
	<i>Annex 4: Determining the cut off score and the marks</i>	34
	<i>Annex 5: Example of an assessment instruction</i>	36
	<i>Annex 6: Components course files</i>	37
	<i>Annex 7: Thesis Assessment forms</i>	38
	<i>Annex 8: Assessment plan of the programme</i>	39

1. Introduction

1.1 Reasons for reviewing the assessment policy

The VU Assessment Framework forms part of the Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning and was rewritten in 2018. This revision meant that the faculty assessment policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences required some modification to remain in line with the VU Assessment Framework. At the same time, it provided an opportunity to evaluate and upgrade the faculty assessment policy that had been adopted in 2015. This task was taken up by a working group consisting of Sylvia Vink, Frans Kamsteeg, Wouter van Atteveldt, Christine Teelken, Christoffel Reumerik and Suzanne Willems. There are some marked differences between the current faculty assessment policy and the previous policy:

- The prevailing principle that assessment should be valid, reliable and transparent has been updated to reflect education that is linked to the world we live in and to assessments that are relevant to students and that they can relate to. A second principle has been included, namely that assessment should be instructive.
- The Faculty of Social Sciences has defined a number of assessment ambitions that will determine the 'assessment agenda' in the coming years: more focus on the feedback and feedforward role of assessments, so that students really do learn from assessments and that teaching and assessment are linked; not avoiding assessing skills; assessment that is closer to real-world experience; and giving Faculty of Social Sciences staff the opportunity to gain further experience in assessment in a range of different ways.
- As in the previous edition of the assessment policy, the Faculty of Social Sciences prioritizes quality assurance: assessment plans, peer reviews, course files and test analyses remain as important as ever. However, by describing the activities of the various parties in all phases of the PDCA cycle, the Faculty of Social Sciences wants to ensure that these quality assurance instruments actually result in improved assessments.

1.2 Objectives of this faculty assessment policy

Assessments influence the way we act. That applies both to students, who want to know how the lecturer assesses them so that they are able to obtain sufficient credits, and to the lecturers themselves, who are aware that their innovative teaching plans need appropriate assessment befitting that new teaching. In that respect, assessment is no different from education in general: people learn on the basis of what motivates them.

The Faculty of Social Sciences' assessment policy has two objectives. Firstly, to provide a vision for assessment, a vision required to shape the development of testing in the programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences in the coming years. A development that corresponds with the innovation plans in the Long-term Plan for Education 2019-2024. Fundamental to the assessment policy is to ensure that the time and energy that lecturers and students expend on assessment is used as effectively as possible. Effectively, so that we can assess students as accurately as possible, but also ensure that the lecturers' and students' time and energy pays off as educational benefit. The Faculty's vision for assessment and its implementation in assessment instruments can be found in Chapters 2 and 3. This vision is in line with the current assessment of programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences and describes what the next steps in assessment could be.

Secondly, this assessment policy aims to clarify the procedures and rules concerning assessment. This information can be found in Chapter 5. This assessment policy refers to more detailed information that can be found in other documents, such as on VU.net, which offers information on constructing tests, and the chapter on the VU Amsterdam Assessment Framework in the VU Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, which forms the basis for this faculty assessment policy.

1.3 Who is this document aimed at?

This assessment policy has been drafted by and for all persons involved in teaching at the Faculty of Social Sciences, i.e. a focus group, the Examination Board, the programme directors, the programme coordinators and FSC students who helped to draft the document or provided input and feedback. Chapter 2 describes the duties and responsibilities of those involved in teaching.

Chapters 3 and 4 of this assessment policy offer lecturers pointers and inspiration on renewing the assessment on their course. These chapters describe topics that are well suited to debates and mutual exchange in a teaching staff team. Chapters 5 and 6 contain the faculty rules about theses and assessment respectively. Chapter 5 lists an overview of lecturers' duties with a view to safeguarding the quality of assessment.

And lastly, this assessment policy is intended to inform stakeholders outside the faculty about the objectives that the Faculty of Social Sciences pursues with regard to assessment. They include independent audit committees, other faculties, and the Executive Board. By explicitly setting out their desired path, the Faculty of Social Sciences programmes can examine what connects them and where they may be able to learn from each other.

1.4 The faculty assessment policy and other policy documents

This assessment policy describes the framework for assessment and the quality assurance of assessment. In addition to this assessment policy, other regulations and documents are in place to determine the procedure relating to assessment. These include:

- Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, chapter on the VU Assessment Framework;
- VU Examination Regulations;
- the Teaching and Examination Regulations (OER) for the programmes;
- the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Board;
- the faculty regulations for the Bachelor's thesis;
- the faculty regulations for the Master's thesis;
- the faculty's work placement regulations.

In the event of contradictory provisions, the persons concerned should first invoke the Teaching and Examination Regulations. The Teaching and Examination Regulations prevail over all other faculty provisions.

Structure of the Assessment policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences:

- Chapter 2 lists all parties actively involved in assessment.
- Chapters 3 and 4 explain the vision of the Faculty of Social Sciences: what are its principles and, ideally, what form will assessment take in five years' time?
- Chapter 5 details the vision and ambition of the Faculty of Social Sciences for the final projects.
- Chapter 6 describes how the Faculty of Social Sciences has organized its quality assurance for assessment based on the different roles in education: course coordinator/examiner, programme directors, programme coordinator, Education Office, Programme Committee, Examination Board and Faculty Board.

2. Responsible parties in the assessment process

A considerable number of parties are involved in assessment in teaching. The Higher Education and Research Act (, WHW) and the VU Assessment Framework describe the duties and responsibilities of these parties in detail. Their tasks and responsibilities are summarized here.

2.1 Faculty Board

The Faculty Board is responsible for the study programme, assessment and policy, along with the relevant aspects of quality and quality control within the faculty. The Portfolio Holder for Teaching has been given a mandate for this task and the Director of Education carries out a number of the duties relating to assessment. The Faculty Board adopts the Teaching and Examination Regulations¹ and is responsible for informing students about the Teaching and Examination Regulations before the start of the academic year. In addition, the Faculty Board is required to inform the students about their right to submit a complaint or appeal².

The members of the Examination Board are appointed by the Faculty Board. The Examination Board makes sure that it carries out its duties independently and expertly, and ensures the same from the examiners. Ongoing professionalization in education programmes for examiners has been developed (see 4.7). The Faculty Board adopts the assessment policy in close consultation with the Examination Board.

2.2 Examination Board

The Examination Board is autonomous and has overall responsibility for assuring the quality of the assessment and the organization of that assurance. Accreditation committees always question the Examination Board on how it organizes its system of quality control. The Examination Board establishes whether each student meets the requirements of the study programme and therefore plays a crucial role in monitoring the quality of the degree certificates³. After all, society must be able to trust that the degree programmes at VU Amsterdam are scrupulous in awarding their degree certificates.

The Examination Board safeguards the quality of assessment in a range of ways, including the following:

- It establishes the Rules and Guidelines regarding the assessment and recording of the results of examinations and final degree assessments⁴;
- It appoints examiners each academic year;
- It evaluates the assessment plan and course files of all courses in a programme each academic year and discusses these with the programme director;
- It monitors the quality of assessments after they have been administered. This is done randomly once every two years with a number of assessments, based on observations from the education organization (complaints, disappointing evaluations);
- It reassesses the final projects by means of spot checks. Final projects (theses) are given greater scrutiny, as this is a way to assess the final level of proficiency of the programme. In addition the Examination Board evaluates the assessment form on completeness and substantiation for all theses.

1. Higher Education and Research Act, 7.13 subsection 1

2. VU Amsterdam, (2018). Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, chapter on the VU Assessment Framework.

3. VU Amsterdam, (2018). Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, chapter on the VU Assessment Framework, page 23.

4. Higher Education and Research Act 7.12b subsection 1b

The Examination Board has appointed a core committee, along with a subcommittee for each programme. The Faculty of Social Sciences has an external assessment expert on its central Examination Board. The Examination Board is the ultimate guarantor of the quality of assessment and as such issues advice or makes adjustments whenever the quality of assessment is at stake. The Faculty involves the central Examination Board in drafting the assessment policy and regulations relating to assessment. The subcommittees conduct random checks.

2.3 Programme director and programme coordinator

The programme director is responsible for the exit qualifications, teaching and the content of education, as well as the consistency and quality of the assessment provided by the programme. The programme director will usually discuss and formulate exit qualifications, an assessment plan and appropriate assessment in conjunction with the programme coordinator. The assessment plan details the various assessment options, for example which assessment methods are included in the programme, how the feedback function on assessment has been implemented in the programme, procedures such as submission dates for papers, and the assessment criteria that apply to various courses. The programme director is responsible for enforcing the quality of assessment in the programme and therefore evaluates the assessment plan each year (see 6.2) and subsequently discusses this evaluation with the Examination Board and the programme committee. Before the start of the academic year, the programme director proposes a list of which lecturers are to administer exams for which programme components and submits this list to the Examination Board.

The programme coordinator is tasked with organizing the implementation of teaching and assessment, meaning that the Coordinator will be held to account by the Education Office if lecturers forget to hand in assessments (for example if an exam needs to be supplied for extra time students) and will be consulted on questions and changes relating the examination arrangements.

2.4 Examiners

The provisions of the Rules and Guidelines for the Examination Board include the Regulations for Appointing Examiners. These Regulations contain the requirements for appointing an individual as an examiner, which include being involved in a programme and having teaching experience.⁵

As a lecturer within a team of teaching staff, the examiner has a key role in achieving the quality of assessment. The examiner must ensure that the teaching and assessment methods selected are in line with the programme's learning objectives (a concept known as 'constructive alignment'), that an assessment is developed which meets the standard quality requirements, and finally that grades are determined and recorded. In the study guide, the examiner provides information about the assessment methods. Any decision by the examiner to deviate from this role must first be discussed with the programme director. It is important that the assessments in the degree programme, taken in combination, meet the quality requirements of the assessment plan: they must cover the exit qualifications with sufficient variation in the assessment methods. At the start of the course, the examiner provides detailed information about the methods of assessment in both the course guide and on Canvas. An example can be found in Appendix 2. Finally, the examiner also provides information in the course file about the assessment and the quality of the assessment to the Examination Board and to colleagues.

2.5 Programme Committees

The Programme Committee also merits a mention on this list, although the Committee is not responsible for assessment. In Chapters 3 and 4 of this assessment policy, we have chosen a programmed role where assessment is concerned: assessment is a feedback instrument par

5. Rules and Guidelines for the Examination Board, Faculty of Social Sciences, Appendix 2: Regulations for Appointing Examiners

excellence and is, therefore, a powerful educational tool. It is important that the Programme Committee, consisting of both lecturers and students, works on the basis of this vision to evaluate how teaching encourages students to put the feedback from the assessments to active use and how assessment helps – or hinders – educational reforms.

2.6 Support by Corporate Real Estate and Facilities, Student & Educational Affairs, IT and the Education Office

Lastly, we address the logistical processes, in which many parties are involved: Corporate Real Estate and Facilities (FCO), involved in invigilation and transport of exams; Student & Educational Affairs, in matters relating to timetables and electronic facilities (e.g. for the registration of marks); Information Technology, providing support for electronic assessment; and the Education Office, as a point of contact for and link to all these services.

2.7 Cooperation

These different parties clearly have autonomous responsibilities, but they also need each other. The examiner obviously plays a central role in assessment, but would lack the context for effective assessment without the programme director, who drafts the assessment plan for the entire programme and appoints the examiner; without the Examination Board, which manages the regulatory side, ensures quality and provides a wealth of assessment expertise; and without the coordinating role played by the Education Office. Quality is not achieved solely by following rules. It requires active consultation and coordination between examiners, programme directors, programme coordinators and the Examination Board to ensure a widely supported culture of quality in which peer review is a keyword. The Faculty of Social Sciences believes that cooperation between these different parties is crucial.

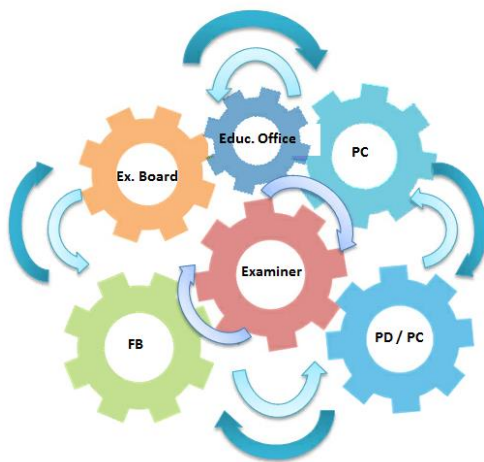


Figure 1: Parties cooperating in assessment

3. The principles of the Faculty of Social Sciences' vision for assessment

Valid and reliable assessment calls for clear rules. But developing an educational and inspiring assessment programme requires more than simply following rules. Assessments are educational if they form an integral part of teaching and as such they are the strongest feedback instrument a lecturer has. In turn, feedback takes learning to new heights. The Faculty of Social Sciences has the ambition to develop an assessment programme that allows lecturers and students to use this feedback option to full effect.

This chapter describes the principles at the basis of the Faculty's vision for assessment as detailed in Chapter 4: every assessment programme and every separate assessment must be valid, reliable, transparent and educational. **Valid**: the assessment actually measures what it aims to measure; **reliable**: the measurement is not subject to all sorts of influences that offer little information on the students' performance and when repeated it gives a more or less consistent impression of the student's performance; and **transparent**: students know what is expected of them. Finally, assessment should be **educational**, which is the case when the assessments in a study programme are used properly to provide feedback during the courses. These principles form the basis of the current assessment programme of the degree programmes. The current assessment programme is good, on some points even very good and challenging, but there is always room for improvement. For that reason, the principles underlying this new assessment policy have been worded more precisely to do justice to the Faculty of Social Sciences' status as a learning organization. In addition, their connotation has changed slightly now that we are considering them from the perspective that assessment is part and parcel of teaching.

3.1 Valid

The assessments primarily cover the learning objectives of a course and ultimately the final exit qualifications of the degree programme. An **assessment blueprint** is drawn up for this purpose (see appendix). The Examination Board monitors the internal validity. The Faculty of Social Sciences, however, wants to take validity a step further: assessment should **reflect the design** of teaching to better effect. For example, where collaborative learning is an essential part of teaching, group assignments should form part of the assessment. A second example is a degree programme that sets great store by pushing boundaries and adopting an investigative attitude: that degree programme accepts that the research results may be disappointing and assesses the students on their development throughout and not just on their final product. That calls for different test items and, more importantly, new assessment criteria.

The external validity of the test items will also be enhanced. The more challenging the wording of the final attainment levels, for example in terms of competences, the more varied and **realistic** the assessment will be. Many programmes involve stakeholders both from the university and elsewhere in the assignments that students have been set. The assignments are therefore true to professional life and require students to combine theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

The Faculty of Social Sciences defines valid tests as follows:

- form and content are aligned with the exit qualifications and the learning objectives;
- the tests take in true-to-life assignments, in collaboration with stakeholders from VU Amsterdam and elsewhere;
- the tests demonstrate characteristics of the degree programme.

3.2 Reliable

Our students' academic careers depend on assessment. We must therefore be able to trust that the assessments form a reliable measurement of the students' knowledge and ability. However, the reliability of an assignment does not exist in isolation. Assessments that measure only the reproduction of knowledge are often rated as having a higher degree of reliability than assessments that measure a combination of knowledge and skills. But the latter actually fits better with realistic assessment methods. So how does the faculty safeguard the reliability of its tests?

Firstly by appointing examiners who ensure a high level of reliability by working to develop [well-formulated questions, answer keys, assignments and assessment forms](#). These are then examined critically by colleagues, a process known as the [peer-review principle](#). The Faculty of Social Sciences views these types of activity as the foundation of reliable assessment. Peer review and exchanging ideas on assignments and assessment models are educational and lead to improvements.

After a written multiple-choice test has been administered, TestVision (in the case of electronic tests) or OKP (in the case of written tests) provide an analysis, including reliability indices such as Cronbach's Alpha (reliability) and RIR values (the extent to which a question distinguishes students who perform well on the test from students who do not). Ideally, the examiner will also perform an assessment analysis in the case of open-ended questions. Based on that assessment analysis, the examiner will adjust the assessment if applicable. The assessment analysis also offers a tool to engage in discussion and reflect on the test questions. The examiner indicates in the course file whether an assessment analysis has been performed and what has been done with the results of that analysis.

A further way of increasing reliability is to [spread the assessments: more frequent, smaller-scale assessments](#) are preferable to a weighty evaluation of knowledge and skills in one sitting, as this yields a more reliable measurement. That is why the Faculty of Social Sciences is an advocate of constituent tests. This does not mean more assessments with a corresponding increase in workload for the lecturer but a distribution of assessments with the corresponding distribution of the lecturer's workload. After all, students also need time to let the subject matter sink in. And we should be aware that every test has a measuring error, which is why giving students the chance to compensate on component assessments within courses makes good sense (see also 4.5).

In the case of more [realistic and hence true-to-life types of assessment](#) and projects, ideally a [number of assessors](#) should assess the product. An intersubjective opinion ensures the judgement can still be reliable while the assessment being administered is very true-to-life in terms of professional practice⁶. That does not necessarily mean that many different assessors assess a single assignment. But it does mean that a student's performance at the exit qualifications level is assessed

6. Van der Vleuten, C.P. & Schuwirth, L.P. (2005). Assessing professional competence; from methods to programmes. *Medical Education*, 39 (1); 309-317.

in various ways and by different assessors. The examiner also takes into account the opinion of a stakeholder from outside the university in his or her considerations. Last but not least, rubrics are a positive contribution to an assessment⁷.

The Faculty of Social Sciences achieves a high level of reliability by:

- producing well-written assignments and assessment forms, and making use of peer review by colleagues; and by using assessment analyses to reflect on the test.

The Faculty wants to achieve an even higher level in future through:

- distribution of assessment opportunities in a course;
- intersubjective assessments, i.e. multiple assessors; more frequent use of rubrics.

3.3

Transparent

It is only fair to students to provide them with clear information about assessment. After all, academic progress depends on assessment results. But the requirement of being transparent about assessment also stems from the adage that **assessment influences learning**, or in other words: assessment and evaluation influence our behaviour in general. That applies not only to the assessment of students, but also to annual appraisal interviews with academic staff and in daily life, where we adapt our behaviour or our clothing to how we think others will respond. In the view of the Faculty of Social Sciences, it makes sense to use this pattern of interhuman behaviour to bring out the best in our students. That means that from the very start of a course, we are transparent about assessment in a number of ways.

Being transparent about assessment means that at the start of a course and as it progresses, students are given **information about the assessments** and, more importantly, they **experience first-hand what the assessment criteria mean** and how far their own achievement is removed from the achievement with the highest score. This means that practising with assessment criteria forms part of teaching. Transparency also means that students know when their test is **summative** (with an assessment that counts towards the final grade). Transparency about assessment is **not a passive state**: the Bachelor's programme contains mock tests and examples of intermediary levels and students are given example questions that clearly detail the learning objectives. Master's students are expected to be more independent and to offer their own examples of detailed accounts of the learning objectives and to discuss these with the lecturer. Students thus learn in the programme that creativity and originality are important and that they will have to find their own way in that respect.

Transparency also means **formative** assessment: students are given **feedback** based on the criteria they need to meet in summative assessments and obtain valuable information about what they still need to learn or practise. This feedback may be automated, given by peers, during tutorials or in some cases by the lecturer. Giving marks during a course is not very informative, whereas indicating a student's strengths and points for improvement will give the student useful pointers to achieve better results. **Rubrics** are an excellent tool for this purpose. Regularly using the same rubric gives students a clear picture of their progress. Rubrics are already being used in many degree programmes of the Faculty of Social Sciences. We will use rubrics to good effect in the coming years by having students come up with assessment criteria themselves and to subsequently use the same

7. Ohta, R., Plakans, L.M. & Gebriel, A. (2018). Integrated writing scores based on holistic and multi-trait scales: A generalizability analysis. *Assessing Writing*, 38; 21-36.

Thompson, M.K., Clemmensen, L.H. & Ahn, B.U. (2013). Effect of rubric rating scale on the evaluation of engineering design projects. *International Journal of Engineering Education*, 29 (6); 1490-1502 for a balance between directive rubrics that are not too detailed.

rubrics in different courses to monitor progress. Students learn to review each other using these rubrics, which is after all a skill every scientist must master.

The degree programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences [set high standards](#). We aim to prepare young professionals for the job market who are both knowledgeable *and* able. As long as students know what they have to do and understand what is expected of them, they can be high-performing, helped by mock tests⁸, rubrics⁹ and other forms of information and practice. Being transparent about expectations results in greater achievement^{8,9}.

Transparency about assessment is necessary for tests to be educational. And therefore:

- the Faculty of Social Sciences will continue providing clear and accessible information about assessment;
- the directions given to students will slowly decrease – a Master’s student requires less detailed information than a Bachelor’s student;
- whether an assessment counts towards the final grade will be clearly indicated.

The Faculty of Social Sciences also aims to:

- administer formative tests to familiarize students with the assessment criteria and rubrics;
- provide feedback during the course about students’ points for improvement and strengths;
- be transparent about the expected level so that students can perform better.

3.4 Educational

While validity, reliability and transparency do credit to the assessment policy of every programme, the Faculty of Social Sciences wishes in the near future to focus on a fourth basic principle. Tests are educational: not only is sitting a test instructive, but students also learn a great deal when tests are well scheduled in the education provided and the [feedback and feedforward](#) of tests are part of teaching. Students are challenged and motivated by forms of assessment that are demanding – such as applying knowledge and skills to a realistic issue. Assessment thus becomes appealing and motivating. It is on these aspects in particular that the Faculty of Social Sciences wishes to develop further. How we aim to do so is described in Chapter 4.

Educational in assessment means the following:

- well scheduled tests;
- good use of the feedback and feedforward function;
- motivating tests.

8. Adesope, O.O., Trevisan, D.A. & Dunderararjan, S. (2017). Rethinking the use of tests: a meta-analysis of practice testing. *Review of Educational Research*, 87, (3); 659-701.

9. Panadero, E. & Jonsson, A. (2013). The use of scoring rubrics for formative assessment purposes revisited: a review. *Educational Research Review*, 9; 129-144.

4. The 'assessment future' of the Faculty of Social Sciences

The basic principles of assessment as described above inspire a number of developments for the coming years in the degree programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences. All those developments are aimed at making assessment relevant, effective and challenging for students. The aim is that students enjoy showing their mettle. The Faculty of Social Sciences has drawn up six ambitions for the coming years that, just like the basic principles, align with existing practice. In the coming years, we aim to strengthen the feedback function of tests (4.1), focus more on the feedforward aspect of tests (4.2), assess skills (4.3), provide realistic assignments and variations in assessment (4.4), link teaching and assessment (4.5), and train examiners and the Examination Board to a greater degree (4.6).

4.1 Strengthened feedback function

If the test is an effective and educational teaching instrument, the time and energy spent by lecturers will result in greater educational benefit for students. The Faculty of Social Sciences expects that assessment will develop as a strong feedback tool for the programmes.

A programme wishing to benefit most from the feedback function of tests needs to spend time on the test results in teaching. Simply providing an opportunity to inspect the test is too meagre. One rule in teaching methodology is that people would rather prepare than postpare: most people prefer cooking to washing the dishes. That goes for students as well – they generally do not look at the tests if there is no immediate concern, which is the case if a course has been completed. Therefore, it is a waste of a lecturer's time to give extensive feedback on test items at the end of the course if there is no opportunity to incorporate that feedback into new assignments. Giving extensive [feedback on a mid-term test or draft version is far more effective](#). This can be done in mentor groups but may also be the starting point for a working group if a mid-term test has been taken. For that reason alone, mid-term tests and interim assessments during the eight-week courses are a good idea.

The Faculty of Social Sciences wants to make better use of [TestVision and Canvas](#). Canvas offers the opportunity to give efficient feedback through rubrics and to add audio comments. TestVision also offers options such as grading criteria that are not yet used extensively. In the coming years, the Faculty of Social Sciences wants to make better use of electronic means for assessment and giving feedback.

For students, a mark is not a very informative way of understanding where their strengths and weaknesses lie. It takes more to truly improve: narrative feedback. And to process that feedback, students need time. Assignments and open questions during the course prompts the giving of feedback. At the end of the course, the emphasis of the assessment is on go/no-go decisions and so this is not a good time to give extensive feedback.

[Mid-term tests are also useful for lecturers, giving them a good idea](#) of which parts are not yet fully understood and on what points they need to focus in the rest of the course. One example of an activating approach to teaching that works on this principle, is 'team-based learning'. Team-based learning starts with a session in a lecture hall in which a short individual multiple-choice test is given that is then retaken in small groups. After the group round, it will be clear to the lecturer what the students do not yet understand and he/she will only explain those sections posing problems.

The Faculty of Social Sciences aims to make better use of the feedback function of tests. After all, tests are a highly effective means of learning.

- Mid-term tests on which feedback is given.
- Using the test results for the remainder of the course.

4.2 Formative assessment and more feedforward

The saying that assessment influences learning is well known. Putting that into practice is a lot harder. The Faculty of Social Sciences will use tests as feedforward instruments more frequently in future. We aim to achieve this in the following ways:

4.2.1 Peer review by students

During courses, we want students to actively work with rubrics and assessment criteria and teach them to come up with good assessment criteria themselves. That will help them become more adept at discerning the characteristics of a good product. One effective teaching instrument to gain that insight is when students **review** each other's work. Assignments within the social sciences usually intend to shape academic development and are rarely of the sort 'right' or 'wrong' answers. That makes peer review a challenging form of teaching that, as is the case in other teaching methods, runs from **simple to complex** in becoming adept at giving feedback. Simple peer review exercises for years 1 and 2 in the Bachelor's consist of classifying products from good to less good and discussing what makes a product better or less good. It is also a good idea to discuss and illustrate the assessment criteria with examples and to practise giving feedback (for example the difference between describing the product and describing which effect it has on you as the reader). In years 2 and 3, students formulate and apply their own criteria and subsequently amend their own criteria and apply them to their own products. In that way, students practise giving relevant and educational feedback, not in a single course but over a number of courses. We would like to make more frequent use of Canvas for teaching how to give peer feedback. Canvas offers several tools for this.

Peer review is generally a teaching method and is suitable for formative tests. When rubrics or assessment criteria are used to assess end products, the peer review has a strong **feedforward** quality: students are given effective and individualized information about where they are in their learning process and which matters require more work for them to achieve the learning objectives and pass the final test. The Faculty of Social Sciences also wants to examine how peer review may be used in summative assessment, such as is the case in the Research Master's programme, for example.

By looking at someone else's product critically, students will see points for improvement in their own product. Moreover, giving and receiving feedback is an important skill required in their professional lives. It is the faculty's ambition to regularly use peer feedback to implement the items 'open' and 'personal responsibility' of the VU Educational Vision. The faculty is currently looking into drawing up a didactic path in teaching how to conduct a peer review.

4.2.2 Formative tests

Besides summative mid-term tests used by the programme to take decisions on the students' progress, **formative** tests are also administered. One reason is to give feedback, but the main reason is to give students an idea of the summative test(s) awaiting them and an understanding of where they stand in relation to the course's learning objectives. The basic principle that the tests should be educational clearly comes to the fore in formative assessments and their **feedforward** function. Examples of formative tests include all assignments done during tutorials, mock examinations and interim exercises.

Testing drives learning! But it requires extra effort by the programme:

- Students learn to apply rubrics and assessment criteria;
- Students learn to give a peer review based on a didactic path 'peer review';
- Greater use of formative tests so that assessment is educational: the function of feedforward.

4.3 More skilled in skills

The degree programmes of the Faculty of Social Sciences want their teaching to matter and to be relevant for social partners and the professional field. Job market research under stakeholders and alumni shows that skills and competencies are essential to our graduates. These skills become meaningful when applied with a sound theoretical body of knowledge.

In the coming period, the faculty will examine what more it can do to help students to develop the necessary skills and how these skills can be assessed. The Faculty of Social Sciences will not shun **hard to test skills**. The demand to test individual achievements tends to leave out of the equation skills such as cooperation, reflection on personal functioning, communication with stakeholders from outside the university and project management. Indeed it is not easy to find a good format to assess these skills. Nevertheless, in developing socially relevant teaching, the Faculty of Social Sciences wants to further detail these skills in the coming years, so that they will in time form part of the assessment plan of the programmes and the assessment blueprint of the courses.

The faculty has the ambition to further develop skills – including those hard to test – in teaching and assessment.

4.4 More realistic assignments and variation in assessment within a programme

Both the teaching vision of VU Amsterdam and that of the Faculty of Social Sciences strongly urge the programme to be socially engaged. Programmes try to increase the involvement of the social and professional field to make their teaching even more relevant. The reverse is also true: the university has an important duty to transfer knowledge and wants to impart the following attitude to students: can you use your knowledge and skills to make society a better place? The learning objectives of the courses will increasingly make this visible. Consequently, the forms of assessment that fit are those that are aligned with 'real' questions from stakeholders outside the university¹⁰. That means that a degree programme will increasingly use assessment methods such as advisory notes, organizing stakeholder activities, and research reports in the form of a blog, interviews or posters. Just as relevant teaching motivates students, relevant assessment methods motivate students to show their worth.

4.4.1 Choosing an assessment method and context

When choosing a form of assessment, **the learning objectives** are guiding. This is known as 'constructive alignment'. The Faculty's learning objectives are often arranged according to the Dublin Descriptors. A learning objective that combines the application of knowledge and skills is generally a more difficult and complex learning objective than one that only describes the use of knowledge. Appendix 1 has a table with examples of assessment methods indicating which assessment methods are suitable for which cognitive level. This is one perspective of choosing the appropriate assessment method for a learning objective. In addition, the **context** of the test makes this easier or harder. An

10. VU Amsterdam, (2018) Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, chapter VU Assessment Framework.

advisory note written by students based on an assignment in a working group is far less complex than an advisory note written on the instructions of a real stakeholder from outside the university. In the latter situation, skills such as thorough enquiry into the assignment, adapting to the culture of the organization and speaking the language of the organization are important skills that determine the quality of the end product. Challenging teaching goes hand in hand with challenging assessment methods; assessment methods that appeal to knowledge, skills and attitude and that stimulate students to use their knowledge and skills creatively.

The assessment method itself also has a directing effect¹¹. If students know that the test they are sitting is multiple choice, they have a tendency to simply memorize and be less focused on understanding and comprehension¹². The Faculty of Social Sciences stands for variation in testing (see 4.4.2); for that reason, multiple choice is a part of the range of assessment methods. But exams solely consisting of multiple-choice questions is not something the faculty likes to see, as this type of test only draws on a limited number of learning strategies⁹. [Practically-oriented multiple-choice questions](#) (see Appendix 1) [where the stem of the question concerns a problem or case combined with open questions are an adequate way of assessment in introductory courses](#). For exams consisting of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, electronic assessment is far preferable. The Faculty of Social Sciences will therefore continue to press the university as a whole to increase the capacity for electronic assessment.

4.4.2 Variation in assessment

Programmes strive to assess each exit qualifications using a [varied range of assessment methods](#). A well formulated exit qualification should firstly be a combination of both knowledge and skills. This type of exit qualification can be assessed using assessment methods that mainly measure knowledge, such as multiple-choice and open-ended questions (for example in year 1). Assessment methods suitable for measuring skills and the application of knowledge include papers, take-home assignments and presentations (for example in year 2) and assessment methods where it concerns a stakeholder outside the university include advisory notes and projects (year 3). All years include assessment methods that challenge students and make clear what the relevance of knowledge is. Secondly, variation in assessment method does justice to the differences in learning of students. An assessment can test several exit qualifications. Appendix 1 contains suggestions for assessment methods.

In a particular course, several forms of assessment may be used, for example an examination combined with a report or a presentation. That is often preferable because the learning objectives concern knowledge, skills and attitude. The weighting and/or the conditionality of the (summative) constituent tests and the sub-components are predetermined for each course. The final assessment is determined on this basis.

The [assessment plans](#) of the bachelor and master programmes provide information about the assessment methods used by the programmes and whether they aim to increase the use of certain [assessment methods in future](#). A programme may aim to use more integrated forms of assessment (combined with knowledge and skills), such as advising a stakeholder, because that better suits to, for example, Community Service Learning. In this case, the examiner may include the opinion of the stakeholder although he/she has final responsibility. The assessment plan also shows whether the final attainment levels are assessed and if so, how often and at what level. Therefore, it is worth writing a sound assessment plan. That makes choices about assessment methods possible – which courses require more labour-intensive forms of assessment and in which courses does the

11. Cilliers, F.J., Schuwirth, L.W., Addendorff, H.J., Herman, N. & Van der Vleuten, C.P. (2010). The mechanism of impact of summative assessment on medical students' learning. *Advances in Health Science Education*, 15; 695-715.

12. VU Amsterdam, (2018) Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, chapter VU Assessment Framework.

programme reduce the hours spent on assessment? Ultimately, the assessment plan is a means to [shape the programme and manage it financially](#).

Realistic tests are inherent to developing socially relevant education:

- Assessment methods that resemble the 'real' product in the professional or research field;
- In different circumstances, ranging from 'academic' to situations that are true to life;
- Practically-oriented multiple-choice questions (using cases and issues) combined with open-ended questions;
- Different assessment methods are used to test exit qualifications and often the learning objective of a course;
- The programme's assessment plan describes both the current situation and provides information about the assessment ambitions and is therefore an aid to taking decisions, financial or otherwise.

4.5 Strengthening the connection between teaching and testing

The degree programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences offer courses in which the lecturer is developer, implementer and examiner. In those courses, the lecturer gives both tutorials and working groups. However, some courses are gradually becoming larger or interdisciplinary, in which multiple lecturers are involved. We often see a division of tasks in this type of course: some lecturers are responsible for the tutorials, others for the working groups. Sometimes, assessment also follows this dual-track approach.

In the coming years, the faculty wants to promote that students are enabled to perceive the courses [as a whole](#). Such coherent courses may be more understandable from the perspective of the students: the different types of teaching, such as tutorials or interactive meetings and working groups have a purpose in the light of the learning objectives. Cooperation within a teaching team in a course is essential. That also implies that [assessment within the course must reflect that cohesion](#). But how?

Well, firstly, by constituent tests that provide powerful feedback and feedforward to the students. Spreading assessments is not only a sensible course of action for assessment-related reasons, but constituent tests link teaching and assessment. Secondly, working groups continue building on the information taught in the tutorials. Students must actively use that knowledge in the assignments they do in the working groups, both the assignments in preparation for the working group as the assignments that count towards the assessment. A course's final tests cover the learning objectives of the course. That means therefore, that [final tests can cover all the learning activities done throughout the course](#): independent study, literature, tutorials, working groups and practicals. After all, it is through these learning activities that students master the learning objectives, which is why these activities can be tested in final tests or exams. This is clearly described in the course guide.

4.5.1 Compensation within courses

If we view a course as a collection of linked learning activities, the different [tests within a course form part of a larger whole](#), a large test. In line with this vision, results the students obtain in the various tests can be [compensated](#).

There are also other reasons to compensate within courses, i.e. for assessment and teaching purposes. Firstly, no test is a completely reliable and valid measuring instrument. By allowing compensation within courses, these measuring errors within a course are corrected. Secondly, students do not perform consistently. If every constituent test were a separate decision about a student's progress, the conclusion would wrongly be drawn that students consistently show the

same, highest, level. However, when the combined test achievements are considered, these students do meet the requirements. Therefore it is not conducive to turn every test into a potential stumbling block by which students *could* suffer a delay in studies.

One educational motivation lies in the vision that assessment is an important tool for feedback. If a student fails the first test within a course but passes the final exam where by and large the same learning objectives are tested, well, then the first test did exactly what was intended, i.e. giving the student feedback and teaching the student. And the student in this example used that feedback well.

A practical aspect to conclude this section. Allowing compensation within courses may mean that even if students fail a form of assessment, such as a debate, organizing a symposium or project, they will not need to resit, if their final mark is a pass by compensation. That does not detract from the fact that the programme must ensure that all skills in the exit qualifications are assessed and that students are able to demonstrate their proficiency to a sufficient degree.

4.5.2 *What needs to be considered?*

Students have two opportunities to take examinations in the degree programme in each academic year (see the Teaching and Examination Regulations and the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Board). In the [course guide](#), the Course coordinators explain how constituent examinations can be retaken, how these exams combine to one final mark and if any conditions are attached to compensation. Considerations are:

- Does a test assess one or more learning objectives that are not part of the final exam? That could be a reason not to allow that particular test to be compensated.
- Do students need to obtain a minimum mark for the different tests? This decision also depends on whether the learning objectives are assessed only once or more often during a course. If a Course coordinator wishes to set a minimum mark for a constituent test, the minimum of a 4.5 out of 10 suffices¹³.
- Is the resit of a constituent test part of the resit of a final exam, or is it possible to resit at a different time?

4.5.3 *No compensation between courses*

It is not possible to compensate between courses of Faculty of Social Sciences programmes. Compensation between courses would require different measures in the assessment policy, such as reducing the number of resits. If a programme introduces compensation between courses without other measures, this can create the impression that the level of the programmes has been lowered. Another argument against compensation between courses is that most courses of programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences do not build on each other in terms of content. If a student failed a course, the relevant subject matter is hardly ever repeated in a higher-level course.

- Courses are a defined whole. Exams cover the learning objectives and therefore all the subject matter: slides and explanation during tutorials, subject matter in the working group, literature, independent study, etc. That is why compensation between constituent tests is possible within one course.
- Compensation between courses is not possible because this requires far-reaching measures and because the courses within faculty programmes are not based on each other.

13. This mark is random. Transparency for students in the form of a faculty-wide policy is a good thing.

4.6 Becoming more skilled at assessment: the examiner and the Examination Board

The Faculty Board must ensure that examiners and the Examination Board are trained in the ins and outs of assessment. Naturally, courses in assessment are offered across VU Amsterdam. The Faculty of Social Sciences would like to see a [VU-wide offer](#) for specific groups: [Basic Qualification in Examination Competency for examiners and Senior Qualification in Examination Competency courses for members of Examination Boards](#). The Faculty of Social Sciences itself plans to do more: a great deal can also be learned outside of courses.

In the first place, [peer review](#) of the tests and test assignments is an effective way to keep quality in mind and is a beneficial means of increasing the examiners' professionalization. Many examiners at the Faculty of Social Sciences involve a second or even third lecturer to help write test questions. Another option is a [calibration session](#) prior to assessing theses, in which knowledge and insights are shared regarding assessment. In addition to peers, there is the [Examination Board](#): a number of members have been specifically trained as Examination Board members and the external member – who is also an expert in assessment – further professionalizes the Examination Board by his/her contribution to discussions. The Examination Board provides educational feedback on questions and assignments and as such helps to make the lecturers more professional along the way. Besides these activities, which are routine to a number of degree programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty aims to organize additional activities, such as [educational lunch meetings about assessment](#).

The focus in these meetings will be on assessment methods and instruments that are relatively unknown within the faculty and that are well suited to the faculty's educational vision, on the effective use of TestVision and Canvas when testing, and in particular: how a degree programme can use assessment in the programme and gain the most benefit from the feedback function. The lunch meetings have another purpose, namely that lecturers experimenting with new forms of assessment can get in touch and start to work together.

- It is the Faculty of Social Sciences' ambition to create a lively exchange about various aspects of assessment, including innovative forms of assessment.
- In addition, the faculty will argue for Basic Qualification in Examination Competency courses as well as Senior Qualification in Examination Competency courses for specific target groups.

5. Final projects

Each programme has a final project, often a thesis or project. This is a special programme component: it is both teaching and testing at the same time and constitutes a significant part of the curriculum (in particular in the Master's programme) and furthermore requires a great many supervision hours from the lecturer. For that reason, the Faculty of Social Sciences has dedicated a small chapter in this assessment policy to final projects.

Teaching

The Faculty of Social Sciences considers the final project as teaching but also as an assessment. Both in the Bachelor's and the Master's programmes, completing the final project covers an extensive period. The final project is expressly not meant to be seen as just one enormous assessment. It is an important **programme component in which a lot is learned**: independent study, setting up research (formulating a research question, choosing the method, collecting data, analysing data, drawing conclusions, determining the social and scientific relevance of the subject and determining the conclusions), planning and peer review. To enable students to learn all this requires teaching: guidance, cooperation and feedback. Students learn a great deal from each other. For the Faculty of Social Sciences, **the ideal form of supervision is both the individual feedback from the lecturer and the group supervision**, where students give each other feedback and monitor each other's data and data analyses. The thesis process is a teaching period par excellence in which students are invited to give each other peer feedback: after all, peer review is an important skill in the scientific domain. In addition, it is also a powerful teaching method¹⁴.

In the coming years, the faculty wants to examine how teaching in the lead up to the final project can be made more effective and efficient. The final project is all too often a stumbling block in the curriculum and does not always appear to be effectively set up.

Assessment

The final project is also a form of assessment. In their final product, students show they are able to set up and complete research. The extent to which students are able to do this independently is a process factor that cannot be estimated from the product. Because teaching and testing are intertwined in the assignment, it is important to be clear to the students what is being assessed, on what basis and when. If that is not clearly established from the start, there is a chance that the supervisor will supervise so closely that it raises the question of which work was actually done by the student and which by the supervisor. That can be prevented by a **transparent assessment with clear assessment times**, which allows students to function independently.

Final projects are in principle individual products. Even in group work students write an individual product. Components that students have worked on together make up a small percentage: 30%.

Assessment criteria

At the Faculty of Social Sciences, the degree programmes are currently discussing the **assessment criteria and rubrics**. These assessment criteria are also the basis for the assessment of assignments and papers that students write before starting on their final project. Thus students learn to understand these criteria before embarking on the final project. At the start of their final project, students are given information on the assessment criteria and give peer feedback to other students.

Just as this applies to other papers and assignments, **assessment criteria may be compensated** in this case as well. The substantiation for this is that one test such as a thesis should not have to consist of

14. Harland, T., Wald, N. & Randhawa, H. (2017). Student peer review: enhancing formative feedback with rebuttal. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher education*, 42 (5), 801-811.

several tests with a pass/fail limit. If an individual assessment criterion definitely has to be a pass, this is established at a separate assessment **time**. That may be the case, for example, in the assessment of the problem definition which the supervisor assesses first and which the student subsequently alters before being allowed to continue collecting and analysing data.

There are criteria that provide information about the **quality of the product** (quality, relevance and originality of the problem definition, choice of method, data collection, data analysis, conclusions and manner of presentation including clarity of the argument). **Process criteria** may also have been defined, such as the independence shown by the student, how they worked with other researchers/students, their ability to plan and their work pace. It is good to be clear about which assessment criteria relate to the final product and which describe the work method.

Assessment procedure

As the final project is the grand finale of the programme, the programme pays extra attention to the quality of the assessment. For example, the faculty encourages the programmes to organize **calibration sessions** so that all final projects are assessed uniformly, and furthermore assessment forms are used, **two examiners** assess the final projects and the **Examination Board screens** all completed assessment forms. Appendix 7 lists the requirements the assessment form must meet. If there is a discrepancy of two or more points between the assessments of the first and second examiners *OR* if one examiner awards a fail while the other awards a pass mark, the Examination Board is notified, who subsequently appoints a **third examiner**. The Examination Board monitors this policy.

The Bachelor's and Master's thesis regulations of the Faculty of Social Sciences contain extensive information about supervision and assessment of the final project.

Faculty of Social Sciences programmes have the following aims:

- to make the process of the final projects a highly effective teaching period;
- to ensure the assessment is transparent so that students learn to work independently;
- to assess based on clear product and process criteria;
- to assess based on rubrics;
- to compensate performance on various criteria;
- to maintain a high quality assessment procedure.

6. Organization of the quality assurance in assessment

Chapter 2 lists all the parties involved in assessment at the various programmes. It is quite a challenge to have all these parties follow more or less the same procedures and this is only possible if all matters concerning assessment are properly described. Audit committees examine the assessment organization to obtain a picture of how the organization of education tries to prevent mistakes and if any are made, how adequately an organization deals with that. Quality assurance is also conducted at interfaculty level, which we will not go into here. This chapter focuses on the course, programme and faculty levels, where we look at the responsibilities and tasks of the various parties involved. To apply structure to the tasks, we use the quality cycle Plan-Do-Check-Act (& Adjust!) to ensure that the chronology and role of the activities are clear. The size of the document on quality assurance at course level is an indication of its importance as a basis for quality assurance in assessment. In short, the examiner is the backbone of the assessment.

6.1 The quality of the assessment of a course

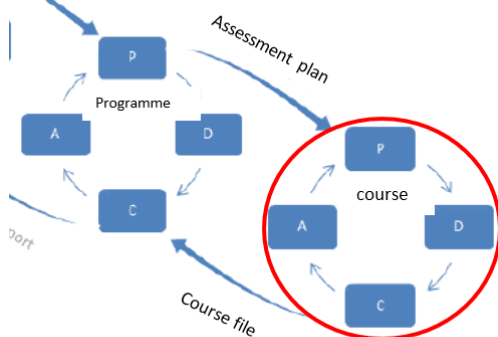


Figure 2: Quality assurance cycle VU Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning: the course

The course coordinator has a central role in assessment at course level. The course coordinator must also coordinate with the programme director, the Programme Coordinator (see 6.2) and the Education Office for development and implementation. The Examination Board's role is monitoring both the quality of the assessment and its administration and process (see also 6.2).

6.1.1 Course coordinator and examiner

Plan: A course coordinator has the responsibility of an examiner. That means that he/she, in consultation with colleagues in a course, **has formulated clear learning objectives to which the assessment methods** have been aligned. The tests of a course are listed in the study guide. If a course coordinator wishes to deviate from the form of assessment published in the study guide, he/she will have to coordinate this with the programme director as well.

The course coordinator makes an **overview of the tests** for the course. That overview provides information about the forms of assessment, how the learning objectives of the course are linked to the exit qualifications of the programme and how the different tests are weighed. To some extent, the overview of tests can help to estimate the amount of time lecturers need to spend. There should be a balance between the time required by the lecturer and the importance of the test. The course coordinator also provides **general assessment information**: for example, the feedback given to students and how this is followed up in teaching. One function of feedback is to provide information about a mock test. And lastly, the course coordinator provides information about resits. Appendix 2 contains an example of assessment information for a course.

When it concerns a written examination, the course coordinator will make an [assessment blueprint](#). An assessment blueprint is a table specifying in the first column the learning objectives or the subjects of the course and in the following columns the different cognitive levels of the questions (knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation)¹⁵. This table of specifications is a tool to ensure the validity of the test. If the contents of a course remain largely unaltered in the following year, the assessment blueprint will not be changed. That allows comparison of tests and ensures the degree certificate has the same value. An assessment blueprint is a useful tool to distribute the writing of questions over the lecturers. Appendix 3 contains examples of assessment blueprints.

Do: This is the actual writing work: [writing good test questions](#) that follow the subjects and levels of the test matrix closely. Ideally, there will be multiple authors writing questions to avoid an exam becoming an idiosyncratic product of one course coordinator. Just as scientific articles benefit from authors working together, the same applies to tests. The course coordinator also writes the assessment requirements with the lecturers: an [answer key](#) for open-ended questions including distribution of marks, [assessment criteria](#) and, ideally, [rubrics](#). 'Do' is also 'think': how will students use the [rubrics in their learning](#)?

A number of programmes have an international track or are even wholly international. Some courses within these programmes are taken by students of a Dutch-language programme. It is important for both lecturers and students that there is no confusion about the [language](#) in which the test questions are drawn up and need to be answered. The basic principle here is that the language of the test must, where possible, be in alignment with the objectives of the programme, the background of the student and the literature consulted. In the case of programmes with components that are taught partly in Dutch and partly in English, the programme's assessment plan will clearly state what the rules are for testing in Dutch or English. These rules can be found in the [Rules and Guidelines](#) of the Examination Board. If language proficiency in one of the languages is an express learning objective of that programme component, the Rules and Guidelines may be deviated from. This will be clearly stated in the study guide.

There are now a number of programmes and programme components where different departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences work together. This collaboration requires [faculty-wide](#) regulation. An important rule regarding assessment is the [cut-off score and determining the marks](#). The cut-off score is the minimum score a student must achieve in order to pass the test, the so-called fail/pass mark. Based on the cut-off score, scores that students have achieved can be converted to marks. To determine the [cut-off score for tests consisting of closed questions, open-ended questions](#) or a combination of both, the basic principle is an absolute cut-off score, supplemented with a relative correction. Appendix 4 shows the steps to determine the cut-off score and establish the marks.

For [assignments, take-home assignments and theses](#), the course guide describes the assignment and the assessment criteria so that students know what they will be assessed on. The Faculty of Social Sciences aims to describe the assessment criteria in what is known as [rubrics](#) that provide information about what the product should be like to obtain a certain mark. This contributes to transparency in testing and reliability in assessment. Furthermore, students are able to follow their own development based on the rubric. The assessment form shows how the mark is built up and how the components count towards the final mark. The mark is the average of the assessment criteria, taking into account the weighting of the

15. The cognitive levels can also be tagged to the questions in TestVision, so that the questions can readily be classed and reused.

criteria. The same applies here as to constituent tests: not every individual appraisal criterion needs to be a pass: [compensation between criteria](#) is possible. The substantiation for this is that one assessment (such as a take-home assignment or thesis) should not have to consist of several tests with a pass/fail limit. If a lecturer wishes to set a minimum requirement to the assessment criterion, a minimum mark of 4.5 out of 10 will generally suffice¹⁶.

Transparency is a key word for the programme of the Faculty of Social Sciences: therefore, the course coordinator publishes all information and any later changes in the [course guide](#) or on Canvas in a student-friendly way. The test itself also has clear instructions. See Appendix 5 for an example.

There are also a variety of [practical matters](#) for a course coordinator to arrange: submitting the exams to the Education Office, arranging for answer sheets and pencils, etc. Up-to-date information can be found on the following [VUnet page](#). Approximately a week before the exam, the examiner sends the exam to the Education Office, so that there is still time to correct any errors and to arrange the facilities for special administrated exams.

Check: Obviously, the check phase is important in assessments and consequently, a lot of checks are carried out. After all, if a degree programme makes a mistake, this can have far-reaching consequences as well as repercussions for publicity. Prior to administering the exam, a [peer review](#) is conducted: lecturers check each other's questions, including the answer key or assessment criteria or rubrics, with a critical eye. This is not an impromptu activity: the peer reviewers will include the assessment overview, the learning objectives and the assessment blueprint to check the level of the assignments or questions.

When the test is administered, the [misconduct policy](#) applies that is appended to the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Board.

After the test has been administered and the open-ended questions or assignments marked, the course coordinator checks whether the [exam analysis](#) gives a picture of the reliability and quality of the written test: which questions proved hard or showed little cohesion with the other questions? Does that lead to any adjustments in the answer key? The course coordinator will always receive a test analysis for exams consisting of multiple choice and those administered in TestVision. For exams with open-ended questions that are not administered through TestVision, there are Excel formats available with which lecturers can register the results to run an analysis. The VU Examination Service can help interpret the outcome. We also aim to create an exam analysis for open-ended questions. The examiner indicates in the course file if a test analysis has been performed and what has been done with the results of that analysis.

Besides quality indices such as P values, RIR values and Cronbach's Alpha, the [pass rate](#) is another indicator to determine the quality of a test. The course coordinator looks at the pass rates in his/her course and links these to the evaluation results. If the pass rate is very low (lower than 50%), this is a clear indication for the course coordinator to take another good look at the exam analysis. Should the coordinator decide to adjust the pass mark, he/she must consult with the programme director first.

The course coordinator creates a [course file](#) which includes the test, the answer key, the assessment requirements, the results of the test and the personal evaluation using the

16. This mark is random. Transparency for students in the form of a faculty-wide policy is a good thing.

student evaluations. With the teaching staff from the course, the coordinator then evaluates the test, the progress of the course, the tests and the pass rates. The topic components of the course file can be found in Appendix 6. The course files are also a basis for external accountability to guarantee the quality of the tests in the case of mid-terms and independent inspections.

Act (& Adjust): The evaluation and the discussions with both colleagues and students can result in improvement plans. The course coordinator includes the [improvement plans](#) in the course file. We recommend that improvements are communicated to those students taking the course the following year. If the course changes, please remember to adjust the assessment blueprint as well. The course coordinator must discuss any major changes with the programme director, who has an overview of and responsibility for the programme as a whole.

6.1.2 Support by Corporate Real Estate and Facilities, IT, Student & Educational Affairs and the Education Office

Plan & Do: Various parties are involved in administering paper and electronic tests. Which party does what depends on whether an exam is held in examination halls shared by faculties or non-shared examination halls. For both types of hall, the VU-wide regulation for administering exams applies, as included in an appendix to the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Board.

Support in administering exams in the shared examination hall is provided by the Corporate Real Estate and Facilities (organizing invigilators, transfer of exams to and from an external location), Information Technology (setting up electronic tests and providing technical support on the exam computers) and Student & Educational Affairs (scheduling the exam, electronic facilities including list of candidates and registration of marks, improvements to the process). The Education Office acts as exam point of contact for and link to all these services. The Office notifies lecturers each period of what is expected of them when administering the exam, depending on the location of the exam as indicated on the [flowchart](#).

The Education Office arranges invigilation for the examination rooms not shared by faculties. In the case of electronic exams, the Education Office puts ready an 'empty' test for the lecturer. If the test is on paper, the lecturer's departmental secretariat will copy the test for the lecturer. The Education Office arranges any further special exam facilities (the examination halls not shared by faculties) for students with a disability and for students with coinciding exams as a result of doing two studies. To ensure these processes run smoothly, it is important that the examiner sends the tests to the Education Office or puts it in TestVision **at least two weeks** before the exam is administered.

Check: A report is available with each exam. In the case of incidents, the course coordinator completes the form and submits it to the Education Office.

Act (& Adjust): Incidents during the exam period are logged and followed up. If there are complaints relating to invigilators, the Education Office will contact the temping agency/Corporate Real Estate and Facilities (depending on the hiring party) immediately. An evaluation is held with the temping agency each period and with the VU contract manager every six months.

6.1.3 The Examination Board

Check: The Examination Board receives the completed course files and issues advice to the programme where necessary. The Examination Board is also involved if there are any complaints from students. The Board assesses what happened and whether the test was properly administered.

6.1.4 Programme Committee

Check: The Programme Committee looks at the student evaluations, including those of the test and gives the course coordinator and the programme director feedback about the progress of the course, the test, the preparation for the test and the communication about the test.

6.2 The quality of the assessment of a degree programme

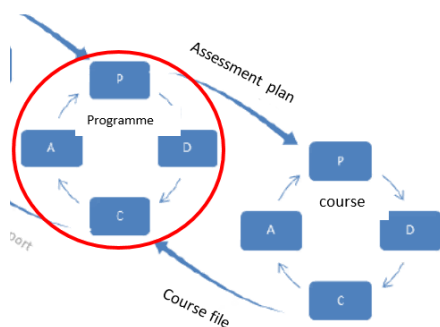


Figure 3: Quality assurance cycle VU Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning: the programme

The programme director bears primary responsibility for assessment of the programme. He/she ensures that assessment remains in line with the final attainment levels and that the forms of assessment are varied, and sets ambitions regarding assessment. For that purpose, the Director works closely with the Programme Coordinator, who collects information and therefore has a clear picture of the implementation of assessment.

6.2.1 The programme director and the programme coordinator

Plan: Starting point is the [assessment plan](#) in which the programme director and the Programme Coordinator describe the assessment of a programme (see section 4.4.3). The assessment plan provides an overview of how the exit qualifications are assessed in the various courses during the degree programme. The faculty assessment policy provides the parameters, as well as input for the assessment plan. The assessment plan is consequently an important tool for the programme director to illustrate the line in skills such as writing, presenting etc. and to describe the required skill level for each course. The plan also provides an overview of group tests and individual tests. That is necessary to guarantee that each individual student achieves the final attainment levels of the degree programme. The programme director adjusts the assessment plan each year.

Decisions on [adjustments to the assessment plan](#) are taken by the programme director based on the course files, among other things, for example whether lecturers are planning to implement major changes. The Programme Coordinator is often aware of issues with implementing tests and he/she will provide input towards proposals for improvements. If there are no changes to the curriculum, there will be little or no changes to the assessment plan. The assessment plan briefly describes the vision on assessment and the modernization objectives for assessment in the degree programme. See Appendix 8 for the list of topics for the assessment plan.

The programme director discusses the assessment plan and the innovation objectives [with the teachers](#) of the programme in September or October, when the contents of the programme annual report and improvements to the programme are discussed with the teaching team. That is the time when an overview of assessment must be available and when the programme director must expound the programme's ambitions relating to assessment – the programme aims to provide challenging assessment, but the curriculum must be feasible (no competing assessments in the same week) and affordable (distribution of assessment forms that are time consuming for lecturers). The programme director discusses these plans in November or December in the [administrative consultative meeting with the dean, portfolio holder for teaching and the director of education](#), preceded by meetings with the [Examination Board](#) and the [Programme Committee](#) which take place in October or November. The Faculty Board adopts the renewed teaching programme including assessment in December.

Do: Based on the assessment plan, the programme director discusses the [assessment criteria](#) for skills with the teaching staff. After all, there must be a line in the assessment of skills. The *Do* phase is one in which the programme coordinator mainly coordinates: writing assessment criteria and subsequently testing and redacting them. The assessment plan shows that some exit qualifications may be assessed using different forms of assessment and that this needs to be coordinated with the teaching staff. But the programme director mainly ensures that assessment [remains a lively topic of conversation](#) within the degree programme and that students are given plenty of feedback and on time. The result of coordinating with staff is that the programme director can ensure that regulations concerning assessment and the description of assessment of the courses are included in the assessment plan of the programme.

Following coordination, the Programme Coordinator ensures the Education Office is able to archive the tests and assessment forms. The programme director has final responsibility for this. It must be possible to quickly supply all tests and assessments in the event of an inspection.

Check: The [course files](#) are an important source of information for the programme director and the programme coordinator. The assessment component describes how the course was assessed, what the results were and how the test was evaluated. In addition, the programme director [collects information from other lecturers, students and the Examination Board](#) to identify points for improvement and to innovate the assessment programme. [Assessment indices and pass rates](#) are very informative in this respect. In the case of high (higher than 90%) and low (lower than 50%) pass rates, the Programme Coordinator will first attempt to find the cause. The pass rates of courses in the academic core and SS4S courses are broken down into the various Faculty of Social Sciences programmes once every three years or more frequently if necessary. This is done by the Education Office.

In order to reflect on the pass rates, the programme director needs information about how [the cut-off score](#) for a course was determined. The programme coordinator collects this information. The Faculty of Social Sciences is aiming for a faculty-wide regulation to determine the cut-off score. There is no reason – based on course content – to vary the cut-off score within a programme. Moreover, a uniform regulation is transparent to students and makes it easier to provide support in determining the cut-off score. For tests consisting of closed-ended questions and/or open-ended questions, the basic principle is an absolute cut-off score, supplemented with a relative correction (see Appendix 4). A relative cut-off score depends on how a cohort performed, bearing in mind that the performance of relatively

smaller cohorts such as those in programme at the Faculty of Social Sciences may fluctuate over the years. That means that each time a different benchmark would have to be used and that is not expedient.

Each year, the programme director and Programme Coordinator draft a programme annual report in which they also reflect on assessment, using input provided by the course files. In September/October, the programme director and Programme Coordinator discuss the draft version of the [programme annual report](#) with the lecturers of the programme to exchange good practices and to formulate proposals for improvement. The programme may consult the Examination Board and the Programme Committee.

Once every three years, either a [mid-term review](#) (MTR) or an [audit](#) takes place. The committees examine the assessment plan and several of the programme's assessments and provide feedback.

Act (& Adjust): If the programme director has any proposed changes following the 'check' phase, he/she amends this in the [assessment plan](#). He/she [discusses these changes with the lecturers of the programme](#) in September when the programme annual report is discussed with the teaching team, together with the Programme Committee and the Examination Board in the annual meeting. The changes may lead to amendments to the teaching programme. The programme director ensures that lecturers modify their tests and if necessary receive additional training.

6.2.2 *The Programme Committee*

Check: In its capacity as quality assurance body, the Programme Committee looks at teaching as a whole. Precisely because the Faculty of Social Sciences views assessment as an important tool for feedback and therefore considers it a teaching tool par excellence, it makes sense for the Programme Committee to look at the diversity of assessments within the programme, or whether the tests are challenging and are appropriate to the learning objectives, exit qualifications and didactics of the teaching. In addition, assessment determines the attainability of a teaching programme. Distribution and size of the assignments are therefore issues for the programme committees. A healthy discussion has become an important driver for enjoyment in improving the assessment. For this purpose, the programme director will occasionally sit in on meetings of the Programme Committee.

6.2.3 *The Examination Board*

Check: The Examination Board's role is to ensure the quality of assessment; the board is therefore often engaged in the check phase of the PDCA cycle. The Board assesses the [course files](#), paying particular attention to whether the programme director and the coordinators actually use the test evaluations to improve assessment. The Examination Board annually assesses [the assessment plan](#) on whether the programme enables students to achieve the exit qualifications of the degree programme with its programme of assessment. In addition, the Examination Board ensures compliance with the procedures and regulations in the [Teaching and Examination Regulations and with the Rules and Guidelines, where it concerns assessment](#). The Examination Board reviews all reports of administered tests for any actions to be taken.

The Board records its findings in a memorandum and discusses this with the programme director and Programme Coordinator in an annual meeting (early October), and if necessary with the course coordinator. Naturally the sub-committee of the relevant programme is present at those meetings. Every two years, the sub-committee randomly checks a number of exams and final projects of the programme. In addition, the core committee may involve

the sub-committee in an enquiry into the quality of those tests that resulted in complaints or disappointing evaluations. The outcome of the random checks are used to provide the programme director with new ideas for improvement. The programme director subsequently sends the modified assessment plan to the Examination Board.

6.3 The quality of the assessment at the Faculty of Social Sciences

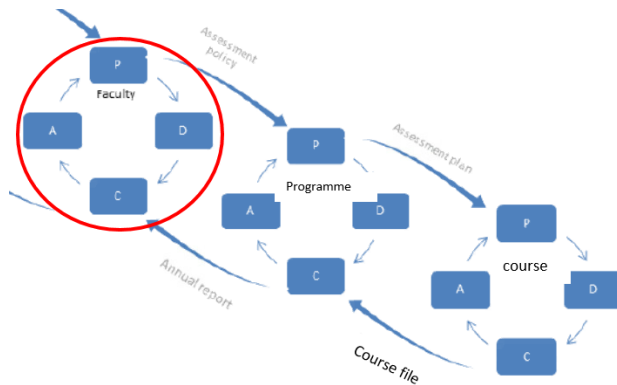


Figure 4: Quality assurance cycle VU Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning: the faculty

The quality of assessment is laid down and discussed at faculty level in several ways, through policy documents and recurring meetings.

6.3.1 The Faculty Board

Plan: The Faculty Board is responsible for drafting [the faculty assessment policy](#) that is derived from the VU Assessment Framework. And this is the resulting document. This faculty assessment policy helps the programmes to draft the assessment plan, by focusing on the duties and responsibilities at the levels of assessment policy, assessment proficiency and assessment organization (Chapters 2 and 5). The faculty assessment policy is submitted during audits and mid-term reviews and the inspecting committee examines how this is implemented within the programme. Suggestions for improvements can be given based on this check.

Each year, the Faculty Board adopts [the Teaching and Examination Regulations](#) containing the teaching programmes, the exit qualifications of each programme and the assessment.

Do: The faculty supports programmes and lecturers in developing and implementing tests. It does so by organizing [training](#) through the LEARN Academy, as well as through the Summer Festival and workshops at the departments. The faculty also ensures that assessment is an item on the Education Agenda and releases the necessary [financial means](#). The faculty is an active mediator in putting lecturers in touch with others who have similar wishes to innovate. Assessment is also an item on the agendas of the [programme director meeting](#) and the [programme coordinators meeting](#).

Check: Each year, the Faculty Board is sent the programme annual reports by the programme directors. In its programme annual report, the programme describes the plans to innovate assessment, among other things. This input is used by the Portfolio Holder for Teaching and the Director of Education to draft the [faculty annual report](#).

Act (& Adjust): The dean, the portfolio holder for teaching and the director of education discuss the programme annual report with the programme director and the Programme Coordinator. From the 2019-2020 academic year, the same group, but without the dean, hold a second meeting during the academic year to examine what the programme needs to achieve its objectives, including those regarding assessment.

In addition, the Faculty Board meets twice a year with the Examination Board to discuss assessment within the faculty, how current policy is working and where optimization is required. The Examination Board reports the findings of its inquiry into assessment within the programmes, based on course files and assessment plans, in an annual report in aggregated form to the Faculty Board.

Based on the recommendations of audit committees, the experiences of the Examination Boards, input from the programmes and external reasons such as modification of the VU Assessment Framework, the Faculty Board decides how and when to adjust the faculty assessment policy. The proposed changes are discussed with the Examination Board, the programme directors and the Programme Coordinators.

Annexes

Annex 1: Forms of assessments at different cognitive levels

Table 1: Forms of assessment appropriate for the different cognitive levels of Bloom (i.e. remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create), adjusted to the assessment ambitions of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

	Remember <i>identifying, defining, describing</i>	Apply <i>using information in a different context</i>	Analyze <i>dissect information, exploring relationships, predict</i>	Evaluate <i>Giving a judgement about a decision etc..</i> Create <i>Ideas, products etc. generating</i>
Multiple choice questions <i>Choose the correct answer from several options</i>	•	•		
Fill in questions <i>Fill in the missing word</i>	•	•		
Short-answer question <i>Answer to a question with a quote, several words, a number, drawing or a formula</i>	•	•		
Essay <i>An extended answer to a question (for example camping) with a coherent text</i>	•	•	•	•
Take home assignment <i>An assignment in the form of a case-study, dilemma or problem that takes about 8-40 hours and multiple sources to answer</i>		•	•	•
Presentation <i>Presenting ideas and a vision about a subject</i>	•	•	•	•
Summarize from an assignment/perspective <i>Describing the main points of, for example, an article from a specific point of view</i>	•			•
Poster <i>(Research) results compress and visualize down to the core</i>	•	•	•	•
Case study assignment <i>On the basis of a case-study a solve or judge a created situation</i>		•	•	•
Project <i>Answering/solving a question/assignment from the field</i>		•	•	•
Reflection assignment <i>Take a critical look at one's own actions in a study or practical situation</i>				•
Advisory note <i>A paper assignment or an assignment from a stakeholder</i>				•
Blog/vlog <i>Describe research findings to a wider audience in an appealing way</i>		•		•
Event /exhibition <i>Translate research insights in an accessible medium for the population</i>				•

Annex 2: Example of an assessment overview of a course

Assessment	Grading	Weight	Date/Deadline
1. Midterm exam (five open ended questions)	1-10	20%	Week 5
2. Individual theory paper or poster (presentation) + extended abstract	1-10	75%	Week 8
3. Research log and reflection assignment	1-10	5%	Week 8

Note that the weight of the three tests differ, implying that a high grade for one test can be compensated by a high grade for another test depending on its weight.

1. The *midterm exam* consists of five open ended questions in week 5 that test your understanding of the prevalent theories at hand, and that potentially also examine your understanding of how these theories link to the concept of societal resilience, your ability to compare and evaluate theories from a given perspective, and to discuss the contribution of theories from different disciplines to societal challenges, societal resilience, and threats to societal resilience. The grade for this diagnostic test is 20% of the final grade. The assignment mainly assesses learning goal 1, 5, and 9.

2. *Final assignment (Research question proposal)*. You can choose between two different types of final assignments. If you have chosen option 1 in one of the other P4-courses, then you need to go with option 2 in the present course, and *vice versa*. This assignment assesses the learning outcomes 1 to 7. The grade of this assignment is 75% of the final grade.

- Option 1: Writing a theoretical paper. You write a theoretical paper which includes a theoretical framework and a research question. It comprises information about why this RQ is important and socially and scientifically relevant. It will require the visualization of structural or causal models and potential hypotheses that substantiate the RQ. The theoretical paper is no longer than eight pages (4.500 words). See Appendix B for a description of the assignment and the rubric that will be used to assess the paper.
- Option 2: Designing and presenting a poster (including extended abstract). This option incites to use your creativity in designing a research poster. The poster informs about the research question, its social and scientific relevance, and which theoretical concepts are important. It will require the visualization of structural or causal models and potential hypotheses that substantiate the RQ. The poster is supported by an extended abstract. The extended abstract contains references and comparisons to related work and elaborates on the theoretical concepts underlying the research question. The extended abstract is no longer than four pages. See Appendix C for a description of the poster and the accompanying rubric.

Note that the assignments are individual work. However, during the course there is ample opportunity to get feedback on your work, to consult experts to discuss your research question and to work together as you would do in a research group. Nevertheless, the final product reflects your own work, and presents a unique topic and research question.

The grade for the theoretical paper or the poster and extended abstract will consist of both a peer review grade (10%) and a course coordinator grade (90%). The peer-review grade will be established by assigning two students to review and grade your research proposal or the concept poster and extended abstract – the average grade will represent the peer-review grade. The course coordinator also reviews the research proposal or poster and may ask the student reviewers to clarify their

assessment if he or she doesn't agree. You need to upload your final assignment on Canvas at least two days before session 15. If you go for a poster as final assignment, you will also present your poster in session 15.

3. Research log and reflection assignment. Throughout the course, you also keep track of your learning process in a research log. In the reflection assignment, you describe your learning trajectory: what you learned in relation to the theme, chosen research questions, theories, the pair-work, and your individual role within the group/pairs and contribution to the research process. This is an individual assignment. The grade for this assignment is 5% of the final grade. This assignment contributes to learning objectives 2 and 8.

Resits

1. The resit for the midterm exam (five open end questions) is scheduled in the resit week in P5.
2. In case of a resit of the final assignment, there will not be peer review, and only the course coordinator will grade the paper or poster + abstract (100% of final grade). The resit is also an individual product. It will be an improved version of the first paper or poster + abstract (without a presentation). You have to hand in the improved paper or poster with the accompanying extended abstract in the resit week in P5.
3. The resit for the reflection assignment is an improved version based on feedback of the course coordinator and should also be handed in the resit week of P5.

Assessment matrix

Learning outcomes	Related with exit qualification:	Assessments
1. Know and be able to evaluate theories from communication science, psychology, political science, and sociology on democratic functioning and polarization, with an emphasis on mass and computer-mediated communication.	KU1, KU2	1, 2, 3
2. Have attained the skills to describe research questions that are embedded in and emanate from relevant theories on polarization, particularly in the domain of mass communication, so that they are an appropriate starting point for a research proposal.	KU2, AKU 6, JF9	2
3. Be able to describe the societal relevance of a research question, also by using empirical analysis of data.	AKU7, JF9	2
4. Have enhanced your basic skills to apply computational research techniques and qualitative and quantitative methods which are used to collect, edit and analyse large or unstructured data sets.	KU4, AKU7	1,2
5. Be able to reflect critically on polarization research conducted in the ISR and to identify strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.	KU4, AKU7	2, 3
6. Have improved your skills to conduct a literature search by using feasible and relevant search terms, evaluate the quality of your research question and theories, and add proper references.	JF10, JF11	2, 3
7. Be able to present the scientific and societal relevance of a research question and relevant theories on polarization in a clear manner so that they are understandable for stakeholders outside university.	C12	1, 2
8. Be able to value the disciplinary and intercultural input of other group members about your research questions and underlying assumptions of these questions and to benefit from them to enrich your research questions and add original perspectives.	LS14, LS15	1, 2, 3
9. Be able to interpret and position polarization in the context of societal resilience research.	KU1, KU2	1, 2, 3

Annex 3: Example of blueprints

Underneath you find two examples¹⁷ of blueprints. In the left column you can find the learning goals, subjects or themes. Both blueprints are usable. The examiner can make his own choice.

Learning goals*	Level question				Weight
	Knowledge	Understanding	Applying	Analyse	
Learning goal 1/ Subject 1	Questions numbers/ amount of questions/ closed/open				%
Learning goal 2/ Subject 2		Questions numbers/ amount of questions/ closed/open			%
Learning goal 3/ Subject 3			Questions numbers/ amount of questions/ closed/open		%
Learning goal 4/ Subject 4				Questions numbers/ amount of questions/ closed/open	%
Total	%	%	%	%	100%

Table 2: Example of a blueprint

Another format for a blueprint:

	Type of question	Written examination				Other assessment form	
		Knowledge	Understanding	Applying	Total	Assignment	Presentation
Learning objective 1	Open						
	MC						
Learning objective 2	Open						
	MC						
Learning objective 3	Open						
	MC						
Learning objective 4	Open						
	MC						
Total							

Table 3: Example of a blueprint

17. VU Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, H11 Assessment Policy (2018).

Annex 4: Determining the cut off score and the marks

The cut off score

The cut off score in all assessments is at 55%. In the case of multiple-choice questions, this is corrected for the chance of guessing¹⁸. The resulting score corresponds to the mark of 5.5. The boundary between sufficient and insufficient is thus determined. It is possible to deviate from these methods if there are reasons to do so. If the assessment has been checked and the cut off score has been applied, the success rate is known. It is possible to adjust the success rate on a reasoned basis (i.e. not only on the basis of success rates). For example, if a teacher, on the basis of a quantitative and substantive test analysis, feels that the level of difficulty of the assessment has not been properly assessed beforehand, or that certain questions in the assessment or subjects in the course turned out to be unclear. In general, adjustment of the cut off score is examined if more than 50% of the students have failed. As a rule, the adjustment of the cut off score can be easily defended with one or two standard measurement errors.

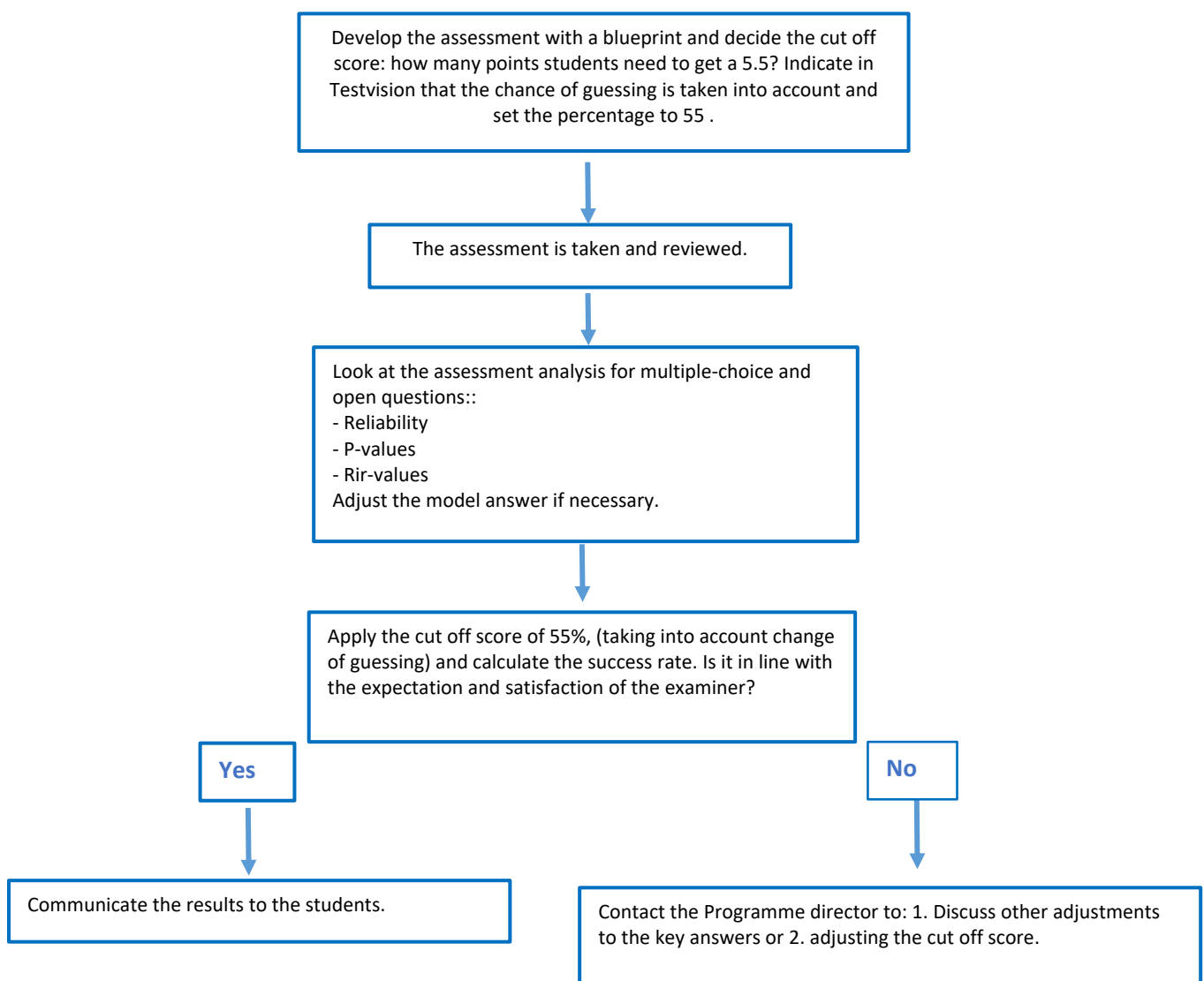


Figure 5: Determining and possibly adjusting the cut off score

¹⁸ Explanation of chance of guessing: suppose: a multiple-choice examination consists of 60 four-choice questions. For the calculation of the cut off score, the chance of guessing is first deducted from the total: this is 25% of the total for 4-choice questions, i.e. a score of 15. Therefore, no points are awarded for these first 15 points (VU Manual for Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning, H11 Assessment Policy 2018).

Determining the mark

After that, the numerical path is determined. FSS follows the calculation as used in Testvision, so that all assessments are calculated in the same way.

The procedure of assessing and grading is followed by the examiner according to the following step-by-step plan:

Step 1: if the written assessment consists of multiple-choice questions, analysis of the assessment will be examined. Based on the p-values (the value that indicates the difficulty of a question) and the Rir-values (the value that indicates to what extent the answer behavior of students to the question in question corresponds with how they answer other questions from the test), the answer key can be adjusted or, if necessary, questions can be deleted.

Step 2: if the written examination consists of open questions, the assessment analysis of the open questions will be examined and the answer key can be adjusted on the basis of this analysis. Perhaps the answer key has already been adjusted during the check-up or during a calibration session.

Step 3: then the cut off score is applied, taking into account the chance of guessing (in the case of multiple choice questions) and the success rate is calculated (again). The calculation is: (maximum score to be achieved - the chance of guessing) x 55% + the chance of guessing.

Step 4: if it turns out that, after adjusting the answer key and/or answer model, the success rate is still too low or too high, the examiner will contact the Examination Board to discuss the possibilities for further adjustment of the cut off score. Together with the examiner, the Examination Board will examine what a suitable adjustment of the cut off score is, such as deleting questions with an extremely low p-value, reducing the cut off score by 1x or 2x the standard measurement error or, in the case of a large cohort, taking the 5% best-performing students as a relative reference point instead of the maximum score to be achieved.

Step 5: The mark is calculated:

$$4.5 * (\text{score obtained} - \text{cut off score}) / (\text{maximum score} - \text{cut off score}) + 5.5$$

Note: marks are given on a scale from 1 to 10, with one decimal place after the decimal point. In the case of final marks, no 5.5 is given: that will be a 6.

Step 6:) The examiner records a "no show" (NS):

* In the case of a unit of study in which the assessment takes place by means of one (re)examination, if the student has signed up for the (re)examination, but has not taken part in it;

* in the case of a unit of study in which the assessment takes place by means of several partial examinations and/or partial assignments, and the student has signed up for the (re)examination, but has not taken part in any of the components of the assessment
The examiner registers a "not met" (NVD) in the event that a unit of study consists of several partial examinations and the student has not (fully) met the requirements of one or more of these partial examinations.

See: Article 13, Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the R&R

Annex 5: Example of an assessment instruction

COURSE:

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:

On this front page you can find important information about the assessment. Read this front page carefully before you start the assessment.

General information about the assessment

1. The assessment contains ____ pages, including the front page. The pages are numbered. Upon receipt of the assessment, check the number of pages and whether this number corresponds to the size described above. If pages are missing, raise your hand and ask for another copy.
2. This assessment consists of ____ multiple-choice questions and ____ open questions.
3. For this assessment you can earn a total of ____ points. For each multiple-choice question you can score __ points. In the case of open questions, the number of points for each question is indicated in brackets (...).
4. The following tools apply to this examination:
 - a.
 - b.
5. You have a maximum of ____ hours to answer the questions.
6. After the assessment has been taken, you ARE / ARE NOT allowed to take the (partial) assignments with you.
7. After the examination has been taken, the (partial) examination assignments ARE / ARE NOT published on Canvas.
8. During at least ten working days after the announcement of the results of the written examination, you can inspect the assessed work.
9. Mobile phones must be switched off (i.e. not on silent, but off!) and stored in a bag. Bags must be closed and may not be opened during the assessment. If you are found to be in breach of this rule, this will be regarded as fraud and reported to the Examination Board.
10. If fraud is detected or suspected during or after taking a written examination, the examiner will immediately report this to the Examination Board and will submit supporting documents.

Instruction answering the questions

1. Read the question carefully and think about what is asked.
2. In the case of multiple choice questions, tick the correct answer on the answer form. If you want to change the answer later, color the box with the wrong answer and tick (x) the correct answer.
3. If you have open questions, write clearly and with a pen and formulate your answer in a short and powerful manner.
4. Formulate your answer in the appropriate answer box. Answers written outside the box will not be included in the assessment.
5. If you are asked to name 3 characteristics for an open question and you give 4, only the first 3 characteristics will be read.

Annex 6: Components course files

The following documents and information needs to be submitted in the course file:

- course manual;
- course load;
- overview of the literature;
- overview how the learning goals will be assessed;
- all the assessment documents:
 - blueprints with a written test with multiple choice and open questions;
 - questions assessment opportunity 1 and opportunity 2, including the answers and/or model answers;
 - description of the assignment and the assessment forms;
 - analyse of the assessment;
- description of the cut off score;
- how peerreview took place;
- information how inspection of the assessment took place;
- student evaluation and evaluation of the course coordinator.

Annex 7: Thesis Assessment forms

Programmes develop an assessment form for the final projects which complies with the following requirements:

- The general information must be clearly marked on the assessment form, such as:
 - Name of programme, student and student number
 - Name of examiner 1 / 2 / 3 and who completed the assessment form
 - Name supervisor (if not the examiner)
 - Title thesis
 - 1st/2nd... chance
- The evaluation criteria must be clearly stated on the form;
- The assessment form should preferably consist of a rubric. A rubric can also be effectively used by the teacher in education;
- The first and second examiners (and possibly the third) use the same assessment form.
- The form contains clear instructions on how to complete the form.
- The assessment of the (partial) marks is substantiated, so that it is clear why a student has received a certain assessment on a particular component.
- An explanation is given on how the final grade is calculated and, if applicable, for what % the various components count towards the final grade.
- Each examiner gives one final grade (i.e. not 6.5-7), which is rounded off to a full or half point (with the exception of the grade 5.5).

Annex 8: Assessment plan of the programme

Components of the assessment plan for the programme are:

- a (short) introduction about the programme and the vision on assessment. This faculty's assessment policy describes the faculty's vision on assessment; the programme's assessment plan contains the vision of the programme and the assessment methods used;
- the exit qualifications and how they relate to the Dublin Descriptors;
- the relationship between the learning objectives of the courses and the exit qualifications of the programme, presented in an assessment overview. This relationship is indicated in two ways: in which courses is an exit qualification assessed and in which course is this exit qualification achieved at the final level;
- the distribution and structure of assessment forms in the curriculum, including reflection on the assessment variation (see Table 4 below);
- the policy concerning the quality assurance of the assessment,
- where and when is the subject assessment discussed within the programme?;
- Improvements made last year and which assessments will be revised next year, for example because the course has been revised or as a result of complaints.

Table 4: Example format assessment overview for the programme

	Exit qualification 1	Exit qualification 2	Exit qualification 3	Exit qualification 4	Exit qualification 5	Exit qualification 6
Course 1	MC questions		MC questions			Presentation
Course 2		MC and open questions	MC questions	MC questions	Open questions	
Course 3	Essay	Essay	Formative			
Course 4		MC questions	MC questions	Formative	MC questions	
Course 5	Paper			Paper	Paper	Formative
Course 6	Thesis	Thesis	Thesis	Thesis	Thesis	Thesis

Level: 100, 200, 300