

Corona news update educational support #5 (week 18 2020)

ONLINE EDUCATION

Provision of information

The [Online Education](#) website for teachers on Canvas has been modified. New pages have become available about 1) designing online courses, 2) the workshops organized by the [VU Education Lab](#) along with [LEARN! Academy](#), the AVC, the University Library and Student & Educational Affairs (SOZ), and 3) the support offered by the University Library and the AVC with regard to online content.

Support

The workshops for teaching staff on course design, how to make instructional clips and how to use online resources (open-source textbooks, copyrights, etc.) are currently being set up. Communication on this will start soon.

ONLINE EXAMINATIONS

Online proctoring

- The schedule for online proctoring in the exam week of period 5 and for the entirety of period 6 is complete. All exams which require proctoring have been included in the schedule. [vu.nl](#) will be updated by 8 May at the latest.
- The final schedule was shared with the education offices on 30 April via the examination support staff, with the added request to inform the teachers involved as soon as possible about the schedule.
- In order to prevent stress and unnecessary emails, we ask the teachers involved to inform students as soon as possible via Canvas about the proctored exam schedule.
- Teachers will receive instructions to students for online proctoring no later than 8 May, and they will be asked to share them through their course pages on Canvas. We realize that this is late, but due to the high pressure under which everything has to be set up, we are unable to have them ready sooner.
- In the instructions, students are reminded of the importance of participating in the trial exam to test their equipment and settings. Be sure to stress the importance of participating in the trial run to your students to avoid problems during the actual exam.
- The procedure for dealing with reports on suspicion of fraud will be different in some respects for online-proctored exams. The heads of the education offices will be notified of these changes by 1 May at the latest.

Proctorio

- The University Student Council has given VU Amsterdam the green light to use Proctorio. There will be a number of conditions attached to this. So while we can already get started, the exact nature of those conditions is still being worked out in consultation with the USR.

- Pilots with Proctorio took place on 29 April. These went well. Technically, the process is going smoothly. There has been valuable feedback on the instructions document, which is now being processed.
- No later than 8 May, all students will receive a letter explaining that VU Amsterdam is using online proctoring to prevent study delays and diploma devaluation. Privacy and accessibility concerns will also be addressed in that letter. The goal is to be transparent about online proctoring and to remove as many concerns as possible.

Exams on campus

- Efforts are being made to make exam facilities available on campus for students who are unable to take online exams at home. For those who do not have suitable equipment, computers will be made available on campus during the exam. Students who think they are eligible for this can contact the academic advisor.

CENTRAL SUPPORT ISSUES

On-campus admission and deficiency tests: English language tests

In order to be admitted to English-language study programmes, prospective students must meet the English language requirement. By achieving a successful score on a language test, applicants can demonstrate that they have a sufficient command of the English language. For applicants from outside the EEA, compliance with the language requirement is also necessary in order to obtain a visa. Only a limited number of language tests (TOEFL, IELTS and Cambridge) have been recognized by the IND and included in its code of conduct.

Due to the current situation, language test centres are closed in many countries, and there is no possibility for both international and Dutch students to take a test. TOEFL IBT is now offering an online test, however, which has been approved by both the Dutch government and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) as a temporary substitute. Although students from China and Iran are not able to take this online test, this means that almost all other applicants now have a workable online alternative. A suitable solution still needs to be found for the remaining applicants, especially those from China.

A version of the IELTS exam can now also be taken online (IELTS indicator test, offered by Cambridge Education). VSNU is currently exploring the possibility of approving the use of this language test too. This language test could also be taken online in China. As soon as a decision has been made, we will report it via this channel. VU Amsterdam follows national policy as much as possible in this regard.

Taalcentrum-VU (VU Amsterdam's language centre) also offers a TOEFL test. This is an institutional test which is only accepted by VU Amsterdam. Their spring test schedule has been moved to August. It remains to be seen to what extent physical language tests can take place at all before the start of the coming academic year. And now, with students being provided the option of taking substitute tests online, the need to accommodate physical testing is limited.

Good to know: a significant proportion of our applicants were able to take a language test before test centres were closed, which means that these problems do not apply to them.

Matching

It has become apparent that technical adjustments are needed in order to extend application deadlines for international applicants. This is in contrast to earlier reports. International applicants normally only get access to Canvas once they have reached a certain stage of the application process. Because these international applicants now have more time to prepare their application, it is possible that they will reach this stage of the process much later than they would have under normal circumstances. In order to ensure that all international students have access to Canvas in time, they will be manually added to Canvas by operational management after their initial application.

Selection and placement

Medicine Bachelor's programme

As a result of an error in the admission process, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) decided that VU Amsterdam must grant admission to 50 students who would normally not have been admitted to the Medicine Bachelor's programme. These students will officially be offered a place on the programme by SOZ on Friday, 8 May. The students in question will be given two weeks to accept or refuse their spot on the programme, just like the other students who have been admitted. We are glad that a solution has been found for these students on such short notice.

Psychology Bachelor's programme

All students have been offered admission to the programme, and there is no wait list. Because there is no wait list, all students who are unable to meet the diploma requirement by 15 July will have the opportunity to hand in their diploma or certificates by 31 August at the latest. This will make it easier for international students in particular to gain admission to the programme. All other requirements (tuition fees, visa, etc.) must still be met by 15 July at the latest.

CENTRAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL MATTERS AND STUDY DELAYS

'Soft cut' is determined at programme level

Students who have not yet completed their Bachelor's or Pre-master's programme are being given the option to start their Master's programme regardless. The Consultative Body for Portfolio Holders for Teaching (OPO) adopted a VU-wide guideline on 21 April, which can be requested from h.everwijn@vu.nl. It is also available on the confluence page.

- Students who have obtained a minimum of 80-90% of the credits for the required Bachelor's or Pre-master's programme can already start their Master's programme/Pre-master's programme. The exact percentage/number of credits required will be determined by each individual programme itself.
- The Bachelor's degree must still be obtained/the Pre-master's programme must still be completed before 1 September 2021 or (if earlier) before the Master's degree is obtained. If this condition is not met, the student will not be allowed to continue their Master's or Pre-master's programme. (OCW will announce plans soon on how exactly enrolment in Master's programmes will be arranged.)
- Master's and Pre-master's programmes can choose to make certain background knowledge mandatory.

- Master's and Pre-master's programmes can choose to set entry requirements for certain courses. For example, students may be required to finish their Bachelor's thesis before they can start their Master's thesis.
- This guideline only concerns the deficiency in the diploma requirement for admission. Any existing additional admission requirements for the Master's/Pre-master's programme will remain in place.

Programmes with multiple intake moments can choose to keep a 'hard cut' and refer applicants to the next intake moment in the 2020-2021 academic year.

With regard to **international students** (non-Dutch diploma):

- All **EEA students** are admitted under the same conditions, but students who still have to complete a Bachelor's degree abroad are warned more emphatically about the difficulty of completing a Bachelor's degree in their country of origin while also starting an intensive programme at VU Amsterdam. The programmes must describe the conditions for the soft cut in such a way that they are applicable to international students.
- For **non-EEA students** who still have to complete a Bachelor's programme outside the Netherlands, the 'hard cut' continues to apply. An exception may apply to non-EEA students who are already enrolled in a Bachelor's programme at VU Amsterdam.

The faculties have been asked to determine the conditions at programme level and to keep SOZ informed of what they decide, to ensure that SOZ maintains overview.

Communication: the programmes will announce their admission conditions no later than 15 May via the programme pages on masters.vu.nl. There will be a VU-wide message on the Covid-19 page, which will also be included in the Q&A. Further communication to students will be coordinated between C&M and the faculties.

Implementation consequences: the working group will work out the implementation consequences, e.g. for processes surrounding registration, admission and graduation, but also with regard to funding and policy.

Working group members: Hayke Everwijn, Elroy Huijsman, Carolien Kranendonk, Anfaira Doest, Sharon Lo-Fo-Wong, Sylvia Vink, Kirsten Bijker, Eddy van der Borgt, Floris Korbee, Esther Wijnen.

Transitioning from HBO-P to research university Bachelor's

The 24 April update of the service document states that universities are given the opportunity to deviate from the requirement that students must have completed the first year of a Bachelor's at a university of applied sciences (HBO-P) in order to be admitted to a Bachelor's programme at a research university, under the condition that a) the applicant has obtained a positive completion recommendation from the university of applied sciences, and b) the HBO-P is obtained by 1 January 2021 at the latest. The VU can now decide how to handle such applications. For this purpose, consultations are being held with faculties with high levels of HBO-P intake (Law, Behavioural and Movement Sciences and Social Sciences) and the various services where necessary. This confluence page will be updated soon.

Final attainment levels, Academic and Examination Regulations, Examination Board

A number of VU students have asked whether their grades can be converted into a pass/fail, so that their GPA or cum laude distinction cannot be jeopardized by any lower grades obtained as a result of corona stress. This question was also asked by students at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). VU Amsterdam and UvA are now in talks about a joint approach to the measures they will take in this regard, and research is being done to determine whether students are actually achieving lower grades during this period.

Emergency Fund/Covid-19 emergency provisions

The Work Package has been completed. Students who are in financial distress due to loss of income from side jobs, parental allowances, etc. can find information at [VU.nl](https://vu.nl). Students with urgent financial problems can turn to the Emergency Fund. Information for students is available at vu.com/corona. It can also be requested from the Student General Counselling Service.

STUDENT WELL-BEING

More attention is being paid to students who would like to come to the VU campus to study due to an unsafe home situation, because we want to help these students wherever we can. Furthermore, we have emailed all student associations (including the Amsterdam ones) and councils, and we are keeping in close touch with them. In addition, information on financial problems and the Emergency Fund has been published. Minor adjustments to the page about student well-being have also been made to ensure that all information remains up to date.

FUTURE SCENARIOS

2019-2020

The proposal to schedule educational activities during the summer was discussed last week in the OPO. On the whole, the response was positive, but it was noted that educational activities should be scheduled for the first three weeks of July as much as possible, and that Saturdays and the last two weeks of August should ideally not be used. Further consultation with HR will take place before the plan can be submitted to the Executive Board. In addition, the OPO has agreed to the proposal to hold all lectures online in the first semester. This proposal will be submitted for approval to the Executive Board shortly.

A task force has been set up to prepare and organize practical educational activities. This task force's assignment is to provide guidelines and facilities with regard to educational support and safety, which will help the faculties restart practical educational activities as soon as this is allowed. This includes frameworks for the scheduling and rescheduling of practicals and instituting safety measures for practicals in which participants cannot keep a distance of 1.5 metres from each other. Colleagues from Beta, Behavioural and Movement Sciences, ACTA and the Faculty of Medicine will be asked to participate, as will be a number of colleagues from SOZ education planning and Corporate Real Estate and Facilities.