

Possibilities for alternative testing second semester 2019-2020

Faculty board and examination committees Beta-VU, 5-5-2020.

Introduction

This document states the preconditions for the alternative testing (see Rules and Guidelines Examination Committee, Article 8) of exams which cannot be taken in a regular manner because of the Covid-19 measures. Measures concerning practicals, fieldwork and internships will be communicated later.

Below, you will find 5 possible forms of alternative testing for the exam weeks of the second semester and the procedure to switch to these alternative forms of testing. The aim is to be able to complete the academic year 2019-2020 as well as possible and to avoid study delay and overload in the second semester as much as possible.

In determining the form of alternative testing, it is useful to distinguish between two main groups of subjects to be tested: group I, for which individual testing is the norm (Ia) or where this can be applied as an alternative (Ib) and group II, for which individual testing is practically impossible. The majority of the bachelor subjects will belong to group II; subjects with a uniform written exam that determines the final grade to a large extent. Subjects with a large (computer) practical component and (final) projects will belong to group Ia, while in subjects with a small number of students (Ib) the uniform exam can often be replaced by individual testing. For groups Ia and Ib, alternatives A) to C) are well applicable. For group II, alternatives D) to F) are the most suitable.

Possible alternative forms of testing

A. Only adaptation of oral presentation necessary

Subjects in which testing takes place on the basis of submitted work (reports, thesis) are relatively simple to organise. This can be done with due observance of the normal review period. In this category, only oral presentation and discussion are an issue. The teacher can choose to replace this by submitting the PowerPoint presentation, video of the presentation and/or (if practicable) holding an online presentation. There are a number of online options for feedback and discussion (ask: ih2ls.beta@vu.nl). The teacher may also choose to postpone this presentation - if these specific skills are discussed again later in the study programme, the presentation may even be cancelled.

B. Replacing the exam by an assignment

In this case, the exam will be replaced by an individual assignment, the report of which will be assessed. This option requires more effort on the part of the teachers, but preserves quality: checking for fraud is possible, and submission and review deadlines can still be communicated and enforced in good time.

C. Oral exam via Skype

This option requires a great deal of effort and planning on the part of the teachers, it is, however, feasible for small groups. Using Skype will make it possible to check afterwards by recording the call. Fraud remains possible because answers can be passed offscreen, but the risk is limited. The precondition is that the oral exam is recorded and stored by the teacher because of the possibilities for inspection (4-eye principle) and/or appeal afterwards.

D. Subtests determine the final grade

This is only possible if the subtests already made cover the majority of the learning objectives. If a remaining part (e.g. an oral final presentation) is also assessed elsewhere in the curriculum, this can be skipped when testing in this exceptional situation. The final grade is then determined on the basis of the grades for the subtests. In this option, the possibilities for reexams and appeals will have to be dealt with generously.

E. Online testing

This is the most fraud-sensitive solution and requires a clearly different way of testing which must be well prepared by the teacher. Taking a standard written exam at home is not an option.

The preconditions are, in particular, that the ability of students to communicate with each other and with external experts is hampered as much as possible. In this case it is important to reduce the time available per question. An undifferentiated 3 hours for an entire exam is therefore not an option; set maximum times per question. Two types of questions can be distinguished.

1) Open questions that zoom in on the application of knowledge and insight. The assignments are formulated in such a way that ready knowledge is less important and because of the limited time only students who have a good command of the subject matter can complete the assignment on time.

2) Adjust closed (multiple choice) questions and other input questions (numerical answer, correct word, etc.). Necessary measures to be taken are: a) not offering the possibility to review questions that have been completed, b) working with a subset of questions from a large question bank so that each student gets a different exam, c) randomizing answer options so that students who do get the same question see options in a different order. In view of the greater degree of unreliability with this form of testing, an adjusted standard setting, in which it is only determined whether a sufficient or insufficient standard has been achieved, is desirable. As a result, the greater uncertainty in determining the grade has less impact on a possible cum laude. For insufficient grades, a regular reexam will be organised in the regular reexam period.

Another form of examination is to use online proctoring. In this case an exam is made online with continuous surveillance via specific proctoring software. This is only possible if other forms of alternative testing are not possible due to the nature of the test or the scope of the test.

For more information see also: <https://canvas.vu.nl/courses/47759/pages/online-proctoring-information-for-teachers>

F. Postponement of the exam

This obviously has no impact on the test quality but can lead to a delay in study and interfere with other education in period 5 and 6. This is a possibility if other options are not feasible.

Procedure

The choice of one of the above options is always subject to the condition that the method and content of the alternative assessment is in line with the learning objectives and working methods of the subject. It must also be ensured that students can prepare for the alternative testing.

The procedure to be followed is based on the assumption that only a small minority of the tests in addition to steps 1 and 2 - which are always followed - also have to go through steps 3 and 4.

1. The teacher chooses one of the options and submits it to the second examiner.
2. The second examiner determines whether the exam falls within the above-mentioned preconditions or whether they agree with applying for an exception.
3. In exceptional cases, the proposal for the adjusted testing will be assessed in the first instance by the programme director.
4. If the programme director agrees with this form of assessment, they will submit it to the (sub)examination committee that decides whether the exception will be granted.