

Guideline Universal Design

Sheet 8: Exams and tests



What? ³

Exams and tests determine to what extent a student has achieved the set objectives and expectations within a course. There may be **summative evaluation** (with the aim of awarding points or a diploma), but **formative evaluation** (with the student's learning process as the goal) is also a possibility.

Why and for whom? ^{1, 2}

Evaluating is ideally not a stand-alone activity. Orientation and supervision are activities that can supplement and / or follow up evaluating. Good evaluation practice makes students learn, assesses their performance in relation to specific goals and ensures that they make choices better and more thoroughly in the future.

Students differ in their preferences for certain evaluation, work and assignment forms. The way in which they can best express themselves or prove what they have learned and their possibilities in time and space, can differ. Adding variation in the ways of evaluation offered is a way to meet this. Flexibility in forms of evaluation and attention to inclusive testing and evaluation increases accessibility, promotes study results and reduces perceived barriers.

Tips & Tricks ^{1, 2, 3, 4}

Test format and transparency ^{1, 2, 3, 4}

- Learning objectives** | Refer clearly to the learning objectives that have to be achieved (ECTS sheet) and make explicit how they will be evaluated.
- Transparency** | Communicate well in advance about the purpose, form and content of the test. The test type influences how students will learn. Match the test form to

what exactly you want to evaluate, for example: knowledge, application, insight or integration.

- ❑ **Determination of success** | Communicate transparently about the minimum success limit and the method of score determination.
- ❑ **Sample questions** | Provide sample questions, good sample answers and sufficient material for testing self-knowledge.
- ❑ **Spread** | Spread the evaluation in time, so the "checkout moment" of the final evaluation is less stressful.
- ❑ **Types of tests** | Vary in test forms to meet the preferences of all students. A few possibilities are: an online test, an oral exam, a written open or closed book exam, open questions, multiple choice questions, essay questions, case discussions, etc. Variations in test forms can also be done within one evaluation moment.

Framework and context

- ❑ **Sufficient time** | Adjust the exam or test to the available time. Give students plenty of time. Extra time can be an inclusive measure, unless working under time pressure is explicitly part of the competences to be measured.
- ❑ **Quiet room** | Ensure that the evaluation takes place in a quiet and accessible space.
- ❑ **Choose the seat** | Give students the opportunity to choose a seat in the evaluation room themselves.

Comprehensible and readable exams

In the context of universal design, it is important to prepare comprehensible and readable exams. Therefore, when preparing an exam, observe the guidelines for creating **accessible documents** (e.g. file 12: PDF and Word). Some examples for refreshment:

- ❑ Use font size 12 in a sans serif font and line spacing 1.5.
- ❑ Use supporting images, tables and flow charts in a functional way and ensure that they are clearly legible for each student (e.g. insert Alt text).

Not only accessible document layout is important, the **formulation of questions** also plays a major role. The unclear formulation of questions can lead to doubt and discussion or be

disadvantageous for some students when language is not part of the learning content.

Therefore pay attention to the specific question and apply the following advices:

General advice

- **Positive formulations** | Preferably formulate positive questions and certainly avoid double denials.
- **Concrete formulations** | Be specific: avoid ambiguous words and vague indications such as "sometimes" or "often".
- **Simple formulations** | Formulate simple and neutral questions and avoid giving unnecessary information.
- **Consistency** | Number all questions and be consistent in formatting, terminology and names.

Specific advice for multiple-choice questions

- **Avoid repetition** | Implement information that applies to all answer alternatives in the question. Repeating this information in every answer alternative hinders readability.
- **Grammar** | Have the answer alternatives match grammatically with the question. This promotes the readability of the question.
- **Avoid overlap** | Avoid overlap in the alternatives.
- **Order** | Place a logical order in the alternatives (e.g. alphabetically or by size).

Specific advice for open questions

- **Instructions** | Formulate clear instructions so that the student knows exactly what is expected. Provide answer restrictions. For example, specify how many examples, reasons, causes must be given or how many words an answer should consist of.
- **Clear questions** | Formulate questions clearly with thoughtful choice of words. Avoid questions being interpreted in different ways.
- **Simple questions** | Break down compound questions into simple questions.

Know more?

- On the [website 'studielicht'](#) you can find more information about different sorts of assessment (Dutch).

In practice

“We have been working with MOOCs for four years. There is also an interest for micromasters: pieces of a master's degree online. If they take an exam for these courses - completely online - they get the credits and they no longer have to follow that piece of the master at the university. This could be interesting for internationalization and for people with limited mobility. ”

“We have required lecturers to put a model exam online. This way students see how the evaluation is done.”

“We give manuals to teachers about the structure of their exam in Word. This is also about the basic rules for legibility.”

“At our university this year many facilities have become inclusive for all students. For example, everyone gets 1 / 3rd more time for exams.”

“Online examining is a hot topic with us. We often had to lend out laptops for paper exams. Now we work with exam centres, where students can indicate themselves when they will take the exam in the exam centres. There are also pilot projects for students at Erasmus who can take exams from there. ”

“We provide different forms of examination. In the bachelor's thesis there is often a poster fair at the end of the ride. This is done before the oral assessment. That way the fair is still a moment of feedback.”

“ Interim examinations are important to us. We want to see in time whether and where we need to support students more before the exam. We have to put a score on this, otherwise they will not prepare.”

References

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- ² CAST. (2015). Top 10 UDL Tips for assessment. Geraadpleegd op 23 mei via <http://castprofessionallearning.org/project/top-10-udl-tips-for-assessment/>
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- ⁴ Dolmage, J. (2015). Universal design: Places to start. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 35(2).