



MEMORANDUM

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Overall assessment of written paper and oral presentation (overall evaluation)

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TWH

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Ministerial Order no. 670 of 19 June 2014 on University Examinations and Grading (the Examination Order), which applies to bachelor, master and MBA programmes¹, states in s. 3(4):

"Subsection (4) "The University may stipulate in the course description that an oral defence of a written paper must be held before the evaluation of the written paper. The evaluation will thus take place on the basis of an overall assessment of the written paper and the oral performance, cf. s. 4(4)."

The reference to s. 4(4) concerns special cases in which the written product is prepared by a group of students (and it is therefore necessary to include the product in a subsequent oral exam to avoid individualisation of the written product).

However, the provision in s. 3(4) regarding the evaluation being based on an overall assessment of the written and oral elements also applies to individual exams, if these are exams based on oral defence of a written paper.

1. What does it mean that the evaluation will be based on an overall assessment?

Prompted by a number of inquiries about the interpretation of the last sentence of the provision, we would like to clarify how the Dean's Office, Education interprets the effect of this demand; for the evaluation of this type of exams to be based on an overall assessment.

¹ In *Ministerial Order no. 1519 of 16 December 2013 on exams in vocational programmes*, which applies to the diploma programmes, this type of exam is not specifically regulated, and as such it is in principle possible to give separate grades for the written and oral elements respectively and calculate an average based on the weight of each exam element. However, CBS has decided that the diploma programmes will apply the same principle of 'overall evaluation' as applies to the other programmes. Obviously, this applies only to the exam types which are subject to this provision, cf. (2) below.

The requirement for the evaluation to be based on an overall assessment means that the exam regulations for the relevant type of exams (cf. below) must not contain provisions for the written and the oral elements respectively to be part of the final grade with pre-established weights or percentages, as the evaluation would then resemble separate evaluations which would subsequently be mathematically summed up to one grade on the basis of the weights used.

It would also be contrary to the requirement for an overall evaluation if the exam regulations specified that the oral element could only affect the grade for the written paper within a defined margin (e.g. plus/minus one grade) or by a defined percentage of this.

The evaluation must therefore be an overall evaluation of the overall performance, so that the examiners are free to decide on a grade after the oral performance and not limited by a pre-defined margin for the result.

The above concerns the formal rules, i.e. what can be specified in exam regulations for the exams in question. However, this will not hinder that it may be expressed at examiners' meetings, in examiners' instructions or the like that for a specific type of exam, either the written or the oral element is expected to have the greater influence on the overall evaluation.

Weight of the written element (master's theses and the like)

If the written paper clearly constitutes a greater part of the effort, and is therefore the element most central in achieving the learning objectives for these exams (as is the case with e.g. the master's thesis), it will usually (i.e. unless special circumstances apply) be this element that constitutes the central basis of the evaluation, and the oral element will usually only have a marginal effect on the grade (e.g. used for 'fine-tuning'). Therefore it will also be reasonable for the examiners to share their views on the evaluation of the written work ahead of the oral examination to clarify whether they agree in their assessment.

It is only critical that there are no formal provisions to bind the examiners and thereby, in the (presumably few) situations where circumstances so warrant, prevent them from deviating from common practice.

We do not mean situations in which it is documented or rendered probable that the examinee has not personally produced the exam paper, and the case is thus one of plagiarism or other form of cheating to some extent, as such situations must be dealt with according to the regulations for cheating.

However, there may be cases in which the oral performance demonstrates that the examinee, despite the written exam paper being convincing, demonstrates a lack of basic knowledge and understanding of essential issues in the subject area, and it will therefore be well-founded to let the oral performance have significant influence on the grade for the overall performance. As a consequence, it will therefore also be possible in extreme cases that the oral performance demonstrates such an extensive and grave lack of basic knowledge and understanding of the issues in the subject area that the overall

performance must be evaluated as failed, regardless of whether the written performance in itself is assessed at a high grade.

Similarly, there may be situations in which the examiners find the written exam paper questionable, but where the oral performance proves these doubts to be unfounded, as the examinee can account for the choices and assessments made in a convincing way. And in such cases it will be natural for the oral performance to be given relatively more weight than usually, so that the grade for the overall performance may be significantly higher than the assessment of the paper first suggested.

Weight of the oral element (oral examination with synopsis and the like)

If the written element is of a limited extent and only serves as a basis for a broader oral examination in the syllabus (e.g. as at an oral exam based on a synopsis) it will usually (i.e. unless special circumstances apply) be the oral element that constitutes the central basis of the evaluation, and the written element (synopsis) will usually only have a marginal effect on the grade.

2. Which exam types are subject to the rule on overall evaluation?

Finally, please note that the provision in s. 3(4) solely concerns written papers with oral defence of the paper. This means that project exams, where the exam is composed of a written project and an oral defence thereof, also belong under these rules.

On the other hand, if an exam is composed of a written project or a case paper and an *independent oral examination* (i.e. not a defence, but an examination in the syllabus or the academic field in broad terms), it is not directly subject to this provision. However, it is CBS's decision that all exams that are composed of both an oral and a written element, and at which the evaluation will be expressed in one overall grade, must follow the principles described above for an overall evaluation - except for seminar exams (cf. below).

This also implies that if the written product is prepared by a group of students (i.e. a group product), the individual students' contribution must not be detectable (i.e. no demand for individualisation), as it will be part of an overall assessment with the oral examination (cf. s.4(3) of the Examination Order).

Specifically for seminar exams

Seminar exams (composed of a written seminar paper, an oral defence hereof and opponency of another paper) are not subject to the provision of s. 3(4). At these exams separate sub-grades are given for each of the 3 sub-elements, and the overall evaluation result will be calculated from the final weighting of all the sub-grades. This weighting must be specified in the programme regulations.