

Annual report Board of Examiners 2020-21

1. Composition, scope and functioning of the Board of Examiners.

Composition:

The Board of Examiners for the academic year 2020-21 was composed of the following members:

Prof. Dr. Jan Bouwe van den Berg, Chair, VU (full period)

Dr. A.E. Brown, Vice-Chair, AUC (full period)

Dr. M.L. Schut, AUC (full period)

Dr. A.L. Lankreijer, AUC (full period)

Dr. T. Pattij, VU, external member, (full period)

Secretary (not a member)

Ms. C.L. Moolhuijzen (full period)

Scope and functioning:

The Board of Examiners (BoE) deals with all the degrees within the bachelor programme of the Amsterdam University College (AUC). The Board members are appointed by the Science Deans. The affiliation of the BoE members, activities, responsibilities and duties of the BoE are defined by Dutch legislation. Four of the five members of the BoE teach at AUC; there is one external member, not associated with the AUC programme. The BoE meets at least four times annually, and convenes for internal meetings fortnightly during the academic year. The meetings are planned, prepared, and convened by the Secretary. The agenda of the meetings includes: welcome (and apologies of absentees), minutes of the last meeting, a list of subjects that need discussion or aruling, and finally 'any other business'. The Secretary handles all correspondence to and from the Board of Examiners including appeals, and requests from AUC students and reports of fraud/plagiarism.

Procedure appeals/requests to Board of Examiners:

- All requests and appeals to the Board of Examiners must be submitted by the student after consultation with their tutor
- All formal requests are to be sent to the Secretary of the Board of Examiners
- The Board has internal meetings weekly to discuss appeals and requests
- After the Board has decided, the Secretary communicates the decision to the student

2. Meetings and main agenda items of the plenary meetings

Agenda items and decisions:

18-09-2020 (meeting 47)	
Topics	Decisions
Rules and Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absences will be discussed in separate meeting with BoE members - Draft of R&G will be sent to BoS, SC and the DoE in October. R&G will be finalized during the next Plenary
Priorities for 2020-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to deal with absences and accommodations - Ensure that BoE does not take on too many additional tasks
Examiner appointment	List from HR with examiners was incomplete and not up to date. BoE responsibility to know who is the examiner for which course. Secretary will contact HR regarding the examiner appointment
Grading system working group	AL provided an update regarding the discussions in the working group. AL will continue to join the group meetings and provide updates.
Secretarial support	There will be a meeting with the chair, vice-chair and DoE regarding the need for increase of permanent Secretarial support and consequences if no extra support is provided.
Workload and efficiency	This point was discussed together with the previous topic.
Assessment Committee	No external check was done in 2019-20 by the DoE. The BoE would like this to be done annually. This will be further discussed during another meeting.
Any other business	No other business

03-12-2020 (meeting 48)	
Topics	Decisions
Rules and Guidelines	The Rules and Guidelines have been finalised. Document will be sent to the Secretary who will publish the Rules and Guidelines. A communication regarding pass/fail courses will be sent to the BoS.
Attendance policy	Secretary will set up a meeting to discuss this topic with the DoE and BoS in January
Annual Report	The Annual report has been approved by all members
Missed exams	Email was sent by a lecturer regarding alternative accommodation for student. The lecturer was informed that the student can appeal any decision that the BoE makes. Lecturers have flagged certain concerns with the AS&P.
Accommodation	The BoE will provide the student an accommodation where the BoE recognizes their condition and state that there can be flexibility with deadlines where appropriate.
Any other business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AL attended grade conversion and learning committee meetings. Has sent documents regarding committee meetings the the BoE for review and comments - Student wants to perform the AUC programme in 4 semesters. Proposal is for student to take 2 courses during the Intensive period. The BoE agrees with this for an exceptional student if there are no timetable clashes and will not excuse the student from the absence policy.

19-02-2021 (meeting 49)	
Topics	Decisions
Learning outcomes Committee Report & Grading System Committee Report	AL has been attending meetings for the BoE. Grading system report needs some more review regarding the point of pass/fail courses. AB will provide feedback to EMT regarding the pass/fail courses.
Urkund problems	BoE received messages from the DoE informing the board that there are problems with Urkund and the findings of Plagiarism. HoS and Capstone

	coordinator should be informed regarding the problems regarding the reliability of Urkund.
Off-campus course with transfer of credit	Do we count transfer of credit credits towards the 7 off-campus courses that a student is allowed to take. And are the transfer of credit courses going to count towards the GPA of the student? To be discussed during the next AS&P meetings and will be flagged in a letter to DoE. Short term solutions can be determined during internal meetings.
Off-campus course submission (when?)	Practise is inconsistent with what is now stated in the AS&P. To be further discussed during a separate meeting
CLR request submission end of semester	Should there be a cutoff point created for students to submit a CLR to prevent grade shopping? MS suggests that this point should be added to the letter that is going to be created to the governing bodies.
Add/Drop case	Informative point for the Plenary. Registrar has taken decisions in this case instead of communicating with the BoE. Power of authority was taken from the BoE and was also not informed on this. The case will be further discussed during the next internal meeting and further action will be discussed then.
Tutor working group information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Target point is to improve communication with the BoE - Create BoE workshop - BoE minutes during tutor working group have been insufficient for clarity - Further discussion during next internal meeting
Course and assessment Quality online learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MT offered BoE extra hours in order to bulk up BoE presence. - BoE has structurally more to do but not available hours - MS will be accommodating the BoE Spring/Summer period with an additional 2 hours a week.
Any other business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only members which have handled an amicable settlement hearing should attend the COBEX hearing - Secretary will send reimbursement request student to the Dean for review

09-04-2021 (meeting 50)	
Topics	Decisions
Increasing structural hours BoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DoE is open to increase hours of the BoE (outside of the pandemic) - Concrete list of work needs to be created - BoE wants to invest more time into quality - TP and AL will provide information to the BoE in next Plenary
Attendance policy	Policy in the AS&P has not yet been resolved.
Off-campus course requests/procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Off-campus course requests will stay with BoE and not move to HoS. - Further discussion during the AS&P meeting
Portal wish list	BoE wants to phase out Planning Grids for BoE requests. Vice chair and Secretary have been working with registrar to see if BoE can work with Portal. BoE will work with Portal team to create develop this further
Grade registration	Document is not relevant for AUC
Moving to Microsoft Teams	All documentation regarding BoE meetings will be documented in Microsoft Teams instead of on the P-drive. A BoE team has been created by the Secretary and all members have access.

06-07-2021 (meeting 51)	
Topics	Decisions
Increasing structural hours BoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AUC BoE works sufficiently in line with other BoE's - Proposal to create workshops for next year BoE will continue and further develop BoE minutes during tutor meetings - Currently unknown how many extra hours the BoE would need. Proposal shall be made
Summer recess period	Summer recess period has been communicated to students via the student newsletter and digital boards. Registrar team has been informed and reminded in meetings
Diploma supplement checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of BoE for the checks has shifted. Previously BoE were checking diplomas, but with time would only perform checks randomly - There is concern about the quality of the diploma checks being

	<p>done by registrar team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BoE should not check every diploma supplement which is made. MT should be informed regarding the problems surrounding the quality of the diplomas which are being made
AS&P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BoS would like input from the BoE at the beginning of the academic year regarding the AS&P and then again at the end of the academic year. This can be done together when the BoE restricts the Rules and Guidelines.
Portal wishlist/Tutor workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BoE has been piloting Portal and BoE forms have been amended. Problems have been discussed with Registrar - Planning for tutor workshops will be made during internal meeting. Workshops should be held in November
Grading System changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This will not be accomplished in the next academic year
Major change – possible concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MS proposes to make changes in the Rules and Guidelines to avoid making ad-hoc decisions surrounding a change major request. MS will draft an article surrounding the major change.
Digital exams Human Body course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is a procedural issue and not online proctoring. There are no objections from the board. The Secretary will send a message to the lecturer to inform her that this can go ahead.
Assessment committee report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thorough and well balanced report - Meeting will be arranged with HoS and DoE to go through some issues and concerns which have been raised in the report
Exemption GPA calculation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GPA calculation was changed in the AS&P. Student would like to graduate under the new AS&P. request for student will be approved.
Any other business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waiver letter: This will be discussed further during an internal meeting - German course: Fraud case regarding language course. The BoE finds that there should be a line in the new BoE R&G that the placement test should be mandatory for a language course.

Annual Joint meeting (BoE/BoS/HoS/ST/Dean)

None occurred in 2021.

3. Reflection on identified areas of concern.

- In view of overall increase workload due to adaptations of teaching in Corona times, the BoE will need to be very cautious in taking on any avoidable tasks. *The BoE was reasonably successful in sticking with this plan.*
- In dialogue with the Heads of Studies, the BoE Assessment Committee will pay particular attention to the Lab Courses (science major) and CPI, as potentially these graduation requirements may be particularly affected by the coronavirus measures. *The assessment committee was satisfied that these aspects of the graduation requirements were met under the coronavirus restrictions.*
- Formulate a workable implementation of the attendance policy *The attendance policy was deferred during the pandemic. The new AS&P largely reverts back to the old situation and the BoE can work with that.*

4. Quality assurance of test and exams

The BoE continued the work of the Assessment Committee, evaluating the quality care processes for both the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years via an internal review of selected courses, meetings with the Heads of Studies and Director of Education, and review of Capstone and CPI Quality Reports. The findings of the Assessment Committee recommended: developing further institutional attention to capturing and examining unusual grade patterns in courses, and to initiating a broader discussion on grade calibration; and reinstating external checks on the assessments of a sample of courses, in addition to the internal check conducted by the BoE's Assessment Committee.

The Assessment Committee particularly investigated the quality of assessments issued under the period of online learning. Some few individual cases of potential irregularities in examinations arose, but were detected and handled under the rules for fraud/plagiarism, but no examinations were invalidated. Further as in Spring 2019-2020 the BoE worked closely with the Director of Education and Heads of Studies during the period of online examinations necessitated by the pandemic restrictions, to develop recommendations based on guidelines the UvA and VU, and to consult with Heads of Studies and course coordinators about best practices for examinations.

5. Assigning and instructions of examiners

HR sends a letter to new examiners.

6. Fraud

- For regular courses the HoS check that lecturers comply with measures taken to prevent plagiarism and fraud.
- The Assessment Committee monitors this as part of the internal testing of regular course assessments.
- For Capstone theses a plagiarism check is part of the Capstone procedure.

7. Other decisions/findings of the Board of Examiners

The BoE raised a concern with AUC management about the graduation check, both in terms of time investment and regarding independence of the quality check. Improving the process of issuing diplomas will be a priority for 2021/22.

8. Recommendations on Academic Standards and Procedures.

The BoE participated in an advisory role in AS&P changes. A procedural adjustment was made to include BoE feedback on recommended changes and a draft version of the AS&P, rather than joining every discussion between the Management Team and the participatory governance bodies. This facilitated the distinction of the role of the BoE from policy making and maintains BoE autonomy.

The BoE commented on, among other points, the attendance policy, the limit to credits allowed outside of AUC and (also via working groups) proposed changes to the grading system

9. Overview requests/appeals/cases of plagiarism/cases of fraud

A variety of requests were brought forward to the Board of Examiners. There was another increase in the amount of requests compared to the previous year. There have also been new categories added to the request form. The requests are summarized in the tables below.

During the previous Academic year there were a total of 1275 requests.

The number of off-campus course requests has been on the increase for several years.

Total number of cases handled	1373
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Table 1. Overview of requests handled by BoE in academic year 2020-21

Request/appeal/report	total	approved	denied
Off-campus course recognition (within 180 ecs)	561	419	19
• Of which language off campus requests	11	10	1
• Withdrawn requests	20	-	-
• No decision made	103	-	-

Off-campus course recognition (outside 180 ecs)	30		
Exemptions	51	25	15
• Of which language exemptions	9	5	4
• No decision made	11		
Switch major	28	9	3
• No decision made	16	-	-
Accommodation requests	30	23	2
• No decision made	5		
Minor Request	59	47	2
• No decision made	10	-	-

Request/appeal/report	total	approved	denied
Extension requests	57	38	2
• No decision made	17	-	-
Capstone extension:	59	49	10
• Of which 1 week or less	9	-	-
• Of which 2 or more weeks	50	-	-
7 th semester	55	39	6
• Of which due to medical reasons and/or withdrawn			
• No decision made	10	-	-
8 th or more semester	17	17	-
• Of which due to medical reasons and/or withdrawn	5	-	-
• No decision made	2	-	-
Course load reductions	206	163	16
• No decision made	27	-	-
AS&P requests	6	6	-
Other requests	200	65	50
• No decision made	85		
Register Major	2	2	-

Plagiarism	41		
Miscellaneous	1	-	-

Capstone discrepancies

Capstone			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade revision/appeal 	No data		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thesis grade discrepancy 	17		

Table 2. Overview of plagiarism/fraud cases handled by BoE in academic year 2020-21

Total of 32 reports (27 plagiarism, 5 fraud)	No sanction	Allowed to resubmit paper	Strong warning	F for assignment	F for course	Suspension
1 st Offence	4		10	15		
2 nd Offence			1		2	
3 rd Offence						

Table 3. Overview of transfer of credit/waiver requests received for starters 2020-21

	Delegated to	Total	Approved	Denied	No decision made
Credit transfer/waiver requests	DoE	33	32	1	0

Table 4. Overview of students requesting Study Abroad course approval

Students requesting Study Abroad course approval (Delegated to HoS)	Total
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Autumn	
• Total selected students	83
• Total declined students	2
• Students who went on exchange	0
Spring	
• Total selected students	0
• Total declined students	0
• Students who went on exchange	0
All exchanges were cancelled due to COVID	

Table 5. Overview of Admissions requests

	Submitted	Admitted
Total number of admissions requests	1521	295

10. BSA cases

BSA procedures took place in July and August. There were no February starters at AUC in 2020-21. Due to COVID students needed 48EC to receive a positive BSA.

Table 6. Overview of BSA cases in the academic year 2020-21 (before appeals to VU COBEX)

	Total BSA cases	Dispensation	Postponement letters	Negative BSA
First year students	21	11	4	6

11. COBEX cases

Table 7. Overview of appeals to VU COBEX in the academic year 2019-20

Total appeals		15
	Amicable settlement reached	10
	No amicable settlement reached	5
Total hearings with VU COBEX		5
	Appeal declared founded	2
	Appeal declared unfounded	1
Number of appeal withdrawal by student before hearing		0
Number of still ongoing cases		2

Appeal subjects

- BoE decision: 15 (10 amicable settlements reached, 3 no amicable settlement. Of these 3, 0 appeals were withdrawn before a hearing, 1 were declared unfounded by VU COBEX, 2 were declared founded and 2 are still ongoing).
- The number of appeals is 40% lower than last year; the number of appeals declared founded is the same

12. Areas of concern for the new academic year.

- Improving the process of issuing diplomas, particularly in relation to the graduation check.
- Keep an eye on implementation of the new grading policy (including GPA calculation and honours).
- Decision on expanding hours for BoE work.
- Continue tutor meeting and workshop initiative.
- Renewal of the composition of the BoE.