



**Amsterdam University College**  
*Excellence and Diversity in a Global City*

**AUC Board of Examiners**  
**Annual Report 2021-22**



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

### **Composition:**

The Board of Examiners for the academic year 2021-22 was composed of the following members:

Prof. Dr. Jan Bouwe van den Berg, Chair, VU  
(until February 2022)

Dr. A.L. Lankreijer, AUC (full period, Chair from March 1st 2022)

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

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

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

Secretary (not a member)

Ms. C.L. Moolhuijzen (full period)

Mr. J. Rocket (full period)

Mr. Drs. Helena Beks (from July)

Administrative Assistant

Ms. D. Dimitrova (from December 2021)

### **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; the fifth member is an external member. 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:**

<b>18-09-2021 (meeting 52)</b>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Decisions</b>
Increasing structural hours BoE	
Update R&G BoE	
Diploma Checks	
Retro-active Course load reduction / 7 <sup>th</sup> semester	
New Assistant to the BoE	

<b>07-12-2022 (meeting 53)</b>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Decisions</b>
Update BoE Secretary Support	
Update R&G BoE	
Assessment Committee Report	
Future Composition BoE	

<b>22-02-2021 (meeting 54)</b>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Decisions</b>
BoE Chair position	The BoE shall nominate one of its members, but not the external member, as its chairperson. The chairperson is responsible for the day-to-day management of the BoE. If necessary, he or she will designate another member to deputize during his or her absence.
BoE R&G amendment 3.1	Amendment to BoE Rules and Guidelines. Edit Article 3.1 to <i>The Board of Examiners should consist of five or six members.</i>
Working methods BoE	A letter was sent to the Management team
AS&P request for BoE feedback to changes proposed by MT	<p>With the present composition of the BoE following the end of Prof. Dr. JBvdB term as BoE Chair, the additional BoE hours will be utilized for pre-screening of internal requests. When scheduling the weekly internal meetings, the pre-screening of requests will be assigned on a rotating basis.</p> <p>With regards to the BoE composition commencing the upcoming 2022-23 academic year, there was agreement that focusing the selection process within the AUC institution would provide continuity and stability during the transition period.</p> <p>The matter of diversity and inclusivity was mentioned with several arguments reiterated, namely the BoE's composition being reflective of the composition of the institution, the benefits of diversity with regards to the nature of requests handled by the BoE, and the BoE's responsibility to ensure quality of expertise.</p>
BoE Annual Report	The BoE annual report was approved after minor technical corrections were proposed (removing students' names, replacing the title 'examination quality assurance' with 'external member' for the 5 <sup>th</sup> BoE member). The report is published after implementing these final amendments.
Extension requests	It has been flagged that there is necessity to clarify the BoE's stance on the scope of extensions, especially retroactive ones. This issue illuminates a second area of concern, namely extension request that pertain to new assignment/exam dates extending beyond the closure of a course which may result in unforeseen burdens upon the lecturers. It was emphasized that there needs to be clarification on what grounds the BoE would allow such extensions and what is the point beyond which such requests cannot be accommodated. Following agreement that this issue should be brought to the institution's consciousness, this point will be included in the BoE's list of recommendations for changes to the AS&P and reiterated during the upcoming meetings with MT discussing the AS&P (see point 54.6).
COBEX adjustments	A meeting was planned between the members of the BoE and representatives of the VU COBEX appeal commission. Following the meeting, a new procedure is to be implemented ensuring clarity of the responsibilities of the BoE.

<b>29-04-2022 (meeting 55)</b>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Decisions</b>

Update new BoE	The BoE Chair has held consultation meetings with the Dean and the Director of Education to discuss a comprehensive plan forward with regards to BoE support level, need for an additional hours/board member and a transition period between the current and new BoE composition.
NAP report	Lecturers have been instructed to no longer enter NA/NAP grades on Datanose. In addition, a systematic update to disable the option to award NA/NAP is trying to be implemented.
AS&P meeting update	Following the second AS&P meeting. The BoE provided advice pertaining the circulated drafts of the new AS&P. (see document 56.1.1 for summary of feedback points.)
CLR 5 <sup>th</sup> course BoE request	Process remains for students that are registered for more than four courses (per 16-week period), to apply for a course load reduction for their fifth (additional) course. As per AS&P article 2.10.8
BoE summer recess period	The Board of Examiners will hold a summer recess from Wednesday 27 July until Monday 22 August. Recess information has been published in recent newsletters and Canvas.

<b>12-07-2021 (meeting 56)</b>	
<b>Topics</b>	<b>Decisions</b>
Composition of new BoE and transition plan	The new composition of the BoE starting 2022-23 academic year was confirmed.
Update new Secretary	Mr. Drs. Helena Beks has started her position as legal secretary to the BoE
Graduation checks	The planning and implementation of graduation checks was discussed, further meetings between BoE members involved in the process were arranged.
Grading culture	In response to an invitation from the DoE to reflect upon the grading culture at AUC, the BoE supported the proposal of the BoS to initiate a faculty-wide discussion on the matter, including the issue of grade awareness. The BoE members further noted that the transition to numerical grading system and the general grading culture need to be considered as separate topics.
BoE inquiry CPI projects	The issue of CP/I cancellations versus awarding a failed grade in cases of uncompleted projects/unsubmitted assignments was discussed. The BoE agreed that a solution would be to fail the CP/I course when students have already completed the application/registration process, but did not continue with the project and no assignments were submitted.
Off-campus course participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The topic of monitoring off-campus course participation and the registration of grades was discussed. A recurring issue is that students request and receive approval to attend off-campus courses, however, due to administrative and technical constraints (e.g. Portal), it is not possible to have an up-to-date information of what courses students are attending in their current semester, as off-campus courses are registered in the system only once the grade is received.</li> <li>- It was agreed that this topic, including the overview of off-campus course requests and received transcripts/processed grades, will be noted in the next annual report</li> </ul>
Evaluation of reinstated attendance policy	The BoE evaluated the decision-making process on exemption requests that were received in the period immediately after the attendance policy was reinstated, and specifically, for the June intensive 2022 period. The BoE noted that the number of requests for exemption from the attendance policy was not significant. The BoE further noted that approving exemption requests when students provided sufficient evidence that their plans were made before the announcement of the attendance policy reinstatement, was an elegant solution and no problems were encountered

Evaluation of handing over course changes to DoE	It was noted that handing over course change requests outside the add/drop and registration period to the DoE/Registrar, should be periodically evaluated. Specifically, the BoE emphasised the importance of students being provided with clear reasoning when a course change request is denied, in addition to sufficient information about appealing a denied decision
Leaving meal booking	It was agreed that a farewell dinner will be organized for the outgoing BoE members in the beginning of the new semester.

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

None occurred in 2021.

### **3. Reflection on identified areas of concern**

The graduation process was identified as an area of concern in the previous period. The BoE has organized a series of meetings, in cooperation with the registrar's team, and the Director of Education. In March a detailed planning was made, that, in combination with the assignment of dedicated support staff and BOE members led to a significant improvement in the processing and issuing of diplomas.

The new grading system, implemented in September 2022, was closely monitored by BoE. The Director of Education organized a series of information sessions to address concerns and explain the implementation. The BoE has advised not to translate off campus grades to AUC grading scheme anymore.

Work pressure, rising numbers of requests and increasing complexity of the work of BoE has led to a plan to allocate more structural hours to BOE members, as well as to streamline responsibilities within the organization, and increase the support staff in both number as well as UFO level. The BOE has adopted the policy, outlined in the AS&P to transfer the responsibility and implementation logistical course changes after add – drop to the Director of Education in Spring 2021.

The post-COVID situation has led to the reinstatement of the attendance policy. BoE has contributed to reinstating the policy as well as further detailing the implementation.

### **4. Quality assurance of test and exams**

In accordance with the assessment committee guidelines, the BoE conducted quality assurance checks through the following procedures: individual meetings with Heads of Studies to discuss quality of assessments in courses and to check the peer review quality control process; checking the Capstone and CPI Quality Control processes in reviewing the reports produced by the respective committees; and conducting internal marginal checks on a range of courses across the curriculum (checking all assessments for these courses). The quality assessment report contains both the deferred report of 2020 and the current 2021.

The BoE guided and advised on adjusted assessment structures necessitated by the move to online teaching and the events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. This included extensive guidance to the Director of Education and examiners regarding how to continue issuing assessments (and guaranteeing that students continue to meet learning objectives) in a fair and reliable manner under the restrictions of online teaching and sudden change in learning environment, in line with VU and UVA policies.

In the 2020-2021 quality assurance procedure, the BoE Assessment Committee evaluated the quality and reliability of assessments in the online environment and the sudden changes to teaching and assessment resulting from the pandemic.

The Quality assurance cycle focused on examining how test validity was maintained during Covid; especially the lab courses were assessed.

Overall the awareness and prioritization of the peer review process has improved consistently, a development which addresses Assessment Committee recommendations in previous reports, with an improved institutional structure for peer review. Completion of peer review is also improved (though not yet complete), but archiving practices to keep track of the reviews must continue to improve. Whether in the context of peer review or elsewhere, it remains crucial to provide opportunities for the (recorded) reflection on partial and final grades by examiners as well as reflections on individual assessments. A final improvement will be to develop the peer review process so that it is more continuous over time, as the course develops in the long term, rather than only (retroactively) evaluating each single iteration of the course.

Nonetheless, internal checks revealed that archiving practices and grading remain necessary points of attention. *The inclusion of graded assessments in course archives:* This was lacking in several instances which limits the ability to determine the transparency of grading.

*Proper and complete implementation of the course as indicated in the syllabus:* The internal checks revealed some evidence of additional assessments provided outside of the alternate assessments that accounted for exceptional circumstances. It appears these additional assessments were intended to provide students supplementary opportunities to meet learning objectives and prevent failing the course.

*Improving consistent justification and transparency of grades:* Some examples are exemplary, but the internal check also revealed instances of assessments where the grading is not fully transparent. This issue can be addressed through a more consistent provision of substantive feedback (as indicated in AS&P art. 3.2.6) and/or the clear elaboration of how points are assigned per criteria in the use of a rubric.

Areas of concern were identified in CPI grading procedures.

The practice of issuing NA and NAP grades is not in line with the AS&P and should be abolished.

#### **5. Assigning and instructions of examiners**

HR sends a letter to newly appointed examiners. A series of communications was sent on assessment in online exams.

#### **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 Board of Examiners has discussed the level and quality of support, in the context of the new composition of the BoE. A legal specialist was added to the support staff of the BoE.

#### **8. Recommendations on Academic Standards and Procedures.**

The Board of Examiners has made several comments on the AS&P, as outlined in their advice on 9 May 2021. Most significant are the recommendation to have a legal expert advice on the coherence and compliance of the AS&P within the scope of the WHW. The BoE has signaled the possibility that off-campus courses could be cherry picked by students and added to their curriculum, allowing for grade manipulation. Additionally, the BoE has commented on the definition of Fraud.

#### **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 number 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 1534 requests.

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

Total number of cases handled	1534
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Table 1. Overview of requests handled by BoE in academic year 2021-22

<b>Request/appeal/report</b>	<b>total</b>	<b>approved</b>	<b>denied</b>
Off-campus course recognition (within 180 ecs)	577	457	20
• Of which language off campus requests	6	6	0
• No decision made	100	-	-
Off-campus course recognition (outside 180ec)	17		
Exemptions	76	52	14
• Of which language exemptions	8	3	5
• No decision made	10		

Switch major	32	12	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No decision made</li> </ul>	13		

<b>Request/appeal/report</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Denied</b>
Accommodation requests	58	38	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No decision made</li> </ul>	16		
Minor Request	62	55	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No decision made</li> </ul>	7	-	-
Extension request	135	105	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No decision made</li> </ul>	11		
Capstone extension:	85	73	12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of which 1 week or less</li> <li>Of which 2 or more weeks</li> </ul>			
Additional semesters			
7 <sup>th</sup> semester	55	51	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of which due to medical reasons and/or withdrawn</li> <li>No decision made</li> </ul>			
8 <sup>th</sup> or more semester	10	10	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of which due to medical reasons and/or withdrawn</li> <li>No decision made</li> </ul>			
Course load reductions	224	182	40
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No decisions made</li> </ul>	0		
AS&P requests	2		
Other requests	208	82	52
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No decisions made</li> </ul>	72		
Register Major	0		
Plagiarism	23		
Miscellaneous	0		



### Capstone discrepancies

Capstone			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade revision/appeal</li> <li>Thesis grade discrepancy</li> </ul>	1		

Table 2. Overview of plagiarism/fraud cases handled by BoE in academic year 2021-22

Total of reports (plagiarism, fraud)	No sanction	Allowed to resubmit paper	Strong warning	F for assignment	F for course	Suspension
1 <sup>st</sup> Offence	3		6	14		
2 <sup>nd</sup> Offence		1				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Offence					1	

Table 3. Overview of transfer of credit/waiver requests received for starters 2021-22

	Delegated to	Total	Approved	Denied	No decision made
Credit transfer/waiver requests	DoE	4	3	1	0

Table 4. Overview of students requesting Study Abroad course approval

Students requesting Study Abroad course approval (Delegated to HoS)	Total
Autumn	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total selected students</li> <li>Total declined students</li> <li>Students who went on exchange*</li> </ul>	42 6 7
<p>* 4 in person exchange and 3 virtual exchange. 18 students cancelled by host university due to COVID. 3 students withdrew because of uncertainties with Covid, 4 students did not receive BoE permission due to credit deficiency, 8 students withdrew without providing a</p>	

<p>reason, 2 students were not allowed to travel due to negative travel advice</p> <p>Spring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total selected students</li> <li>• Total declined students</li> <li>• Students who went on exchange*</li> </ul> <p>* 2 students cancelled right after being selected, 4 students withdrew because of uncertainty due to Covid, for 1 student the host university cancelled due to Covid</p>	<p>8</p> <p>0</p> <p>1</p>
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Table 5. Overview of Admissions requests

	Submitted	Admitted
Total number of admissions requests	1424	276

**10. BSA cases**

BSA procedures took place in July and August. There were no February starters at AUC in 2021-22. Due to COVID students needed 48EC to receive a positive BSA.

The numbers include five students who received postponement letters in 2020-21. There were six BSA hearings. Two students received a positive BSA after receiving all their grades and 12 students had already withdrawn from AUC.

Table 6. Overview of BSA cases in the academic year 2021-22 (before appeals to VU COBEX)

	Total BSA cases	Dispensation	Postponement letters	Negative BSA
First year students	42	7	0	22

**11. COBEX cases**

Table 7. Overview of appeals to VU COBEX in the academic year 2021-22

Total appeals		19
	Amicable settlement reached	15
	No amicable settlement reached	3
Total hearings with VU COBEX		2
	Appeal declared founded	2
	Appeal declared unfounded	0
Number of appeal withdrawal by student before hearing		1
Number of still ongoing cases		0

**12. Areas of concern for the new academic year.**