

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE RELIGION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023–2024

Rules and Regulations as referred to Articles 7.12b.1 and 3 of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW; *Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek*) for the Bachelor's degree programmes in Theology (180 ECTS) and Religious Studies (180 ECTS), the Master's degree programme in Theology and Religious Studies (60 ECTS), the Research Master's programme in Theology and Religious Studies (120 ECTS), the Minor on Religion in the Modern World (15 and 30 ECTS), and the Minor on Art and Religion (15 ECTS).

The Board of Examiners for the above-mentioned degree programmes and University Minors, having regard to Articles 7.12b.1 and 3 of the Higher Education and Research Act (henceforth referred to as the Act), has decided to set the following rules and regulations for the degree programmes:

Article 1 – Definition of terms

The following definitions apply to these Rules and Regulations:

- **TER** (Dutch OER for *Onderwijs- en Examenregeling*): the Teaching and Examination Regulations for the degree programmes and University Minors listed above, most recently updated on 1 September 2023.
- **Examiner**: a person appointed by the Board of Examiners to set examinations and determine the results thereof.
- **Examinee**: a person taking an examination or final assessment.
- **Final assessment**: the final assessment for the Bachelor's/Master's degree which is considered to be passed if all the requirements of the entire Bachelor's/Master's degree programme have been satisfied.
- **Examination**: an assessment of the knowledge and/or skills of the examinee concerning a specific course unit in the degree programme.
- **Student**: a person registered at the University for the purpose of following course units and/or taking examinations leading to the conferral of a university degree.

Article 2 – Duties and work methods of the Board of Examiners

1. The Board of Examiners is the body responsible for determining, in an objective and expert manner, whether individual students satisfy the conditions set out in the TER with regard to the knowledge, understanding, and skills that are required to be awarded a university degree.
2. The duties of the Board of Examiners include:
 - a. monitoring and advising on the correct application of the TER. The Board of Examiners is the body that deals in the first instance with complaints regarding the application of the TER. The Board of Examiners does not make decisions about the content or organization of the curriculum;
 - b. ensuring the quality of examinations and final assessments, notwithstanding Article 7.12c of the Act;
 - c. drawing up guidelines and instructions within the framework of the TER referred to in Article 7.13 of the Act, in order to determine the results of examinations and final assessments;
 - d. decisions concerning the approval of course units as referred to in Article 7.3.d of the Act (i.e. Open Degree Programme). An Open Degree Programme and the inclusion of an irregular component in the degree programme must always be approved in advance by the Board of Examiners of the degree programme;
 - e. decisions concerning regulations that, at the request of the student, may deviate from current provisions;
 - f. decisions regarding exemptions;
 - g. decisions regarding the approval of course units followed at universities abroad. If a student is following part of the programme at a foreign university, the programme must be submitted to the Board of Examiners in advance for approval and must be laid down in a learning agreement;
 - h. preparations to determine the results of final assessments;
 - i. determining measures in the event of an infringement of the due procedure during an

- examination, and in the event of cheating and plagiarism;
- j. presenting the relevant degree certificates on behalf of the Board of the University;
 - k. specific duties with regard to the assessment policy set out by each Faculty Board:
 - appointing officials who will be responsible for the implementation of the various components of assessment;
 - determining the method for the periodic evaluation of assessment and the evaluation of the assessment process as a whole;
 - ensuring that assessment complies with the assessment plan that has been drawn up;
 - ensuring that students satisfy the learning outcomes of the degree programme when assessed in accordance with the assessment plan.

3. The Board of Examiners elects a chair and a secretary, as well as a deputy chair and a deputy secretary from among its members. An administrative secretary is appointed to provide administrative support to the Board of Examiners.

4. The Board of Examiners can appoint a committee from among its members to deal with the day-to-day business of the Board of Examiners, within the meaning of Article 2.2 (a, d, e, f, g, h, i, j and k). This committee is accountable to the Board of Examiners.

5. The Board of Examiners organizes the agenda and minute-taking for every meeting. All decisions are recorded in the minutes. The agenda and minutes are sent to all members of the Board of Examiners. The documents will be filed by the secretariat of the degree programmes.

6. The Board of Examiners has set out the following in appendices to these Rules and Regulations:
- a. mandated duties, including the determining of accountability in decision-making (see Appendix 1: Mandates);
 - b. internal work procedures relating to:
 - the appointment of examiners (see Appendix 2: List of examiners)
 - quality assurance for examinations (see Appendix 3: Quality Assurance Protocol)
 - measures in the event of cheating and plagiarism (see Appendix 4: Regulations concerning cheating and plagiarism).

Article 3 – Taking examinations

1. The Board of Examiners appoints one or more examiners for each examination.
2. Every examination is a test by the examiner of the knowledge, understanding, and skills of the student, as well as an assessment of the results of that test.
3. The Board of Examiners ensures that the basic quality of the assessment is satisfactory (valid, reliable, and transparent).
4. The examiner ascertains whether the conditions for taking the examination have been met.
5. If a student has already passed an examination for a course unit, they may not resit the same examination.

Article 4 – Alternative modes of assessment

With the approval of the examinees and the Board of Examiners, an examiner may decide that a certain examination will be taken in the form of an oral exam rather than a written one.

Article 5 – Determining the result of the final assessment

1. In the case of insurmountable disagreement between examiners, the Board of Examiners or the committee within the meaning of Article 2.4 determines the result of the final assessment by a simple majority vote. If the vote is tied, the examinee is awarded a fail.
2. Results of official final assessments, and the dates of degree certificates and ceremonies are published in writing by the Student Administration Office on behalf of the Board of Examiners and are sent to the student in question and to the Board of Examiners.
3. Degree certificates proving that the student has passed the final assessment are awarded by the Board of Examiners on behalf of the Board of the University.

4. All members of the Board of Examiners are authorized to sign degree certificates.

Article 6 – Retention periods

1. In connection with possible appeals procedures, work that has been assessed, or assessable proof of that work, must be retained for at least two years after the result has been made known.

2. In respect of re-accreditation of the degree programme, notwithstanding Article 16.1 of the Act, final papers that meet the criteria set for the Bachelor's and Master's degree, and the relevant assessment forms, must be retained for seven years. Also the thesis proposal and contract must be retained for seven years.

3. If the result was not made known, or if it was not allowed to be made known, the period stipulated in Article 16.1 of the Act will commence on the date that the examination was set.

4. The results of examinations and theses must be retained for at least seven years.

5. These retention periods are based on the Basic Selection List Universities.

Article 7 – Examination times

1. The dates for written examinations will be determined at least two months before the start of the relevant semester, in consultation with the relevant examiners and in accordance with the provisions of the TER.

2. When determining the times as referred to in Article 7.1, wherever possible examinations will not be planned concurrently.

3. Changes to a time as referred to in Article 7.1 may only take place as a result of force majeure, for example the non-availability of the required examination hall.

4. Oral examinations will be taken at a time to be agreed between the examiners(s) in question, if possible in consultation with the examinee.

5. The provisions of Article 7.4 apply mutatis mutandis to examinations to be taken in a form other than written or oral.

Article 8 – Registration

1. Students who satisfy all the entrance and progress requirements for a certain course unit do not have to fulfil additional requirements to participate in the examination for that course unit. For modes of assessment requiring registration in ProgRESS students are automatically registered for the examination after registering for a course unit in ProGRESS .

2. Students who receive a mark lower than 5.5 for an examination with automatic registration in ProgRESS WWW will be automatically registered for the relevant resit.

3. Students who are not registered for a course unit but wish to take the examination or resit and satisfy the entry requirements, must register electronically for the relevant examination or resit in ProgRESS WWW before the deadline set for this purpose.

Article 9 – Request for an additional examination opportunity

1. The examinee or examiner may ask the Board of Examiners to grant an additional examination opportunity (e.g. to sit an examination outside the designated period or to replace a written examination with an oral one).

2. Such requests may be granted if the examinee did not pass the examination in question due to force majeure and not granting an additional examination opportunity would result in a study delay of at least one semester.

3. An additional examination opportunity will only be granted if the course unit in question is the only course unit that still needs to be passed. The examinee must have participated in the last two regular

examination opportunities for the course unit in question and have obtained at least the grades 4 and 5 on them. The examinee must not have already passed the examination for the course unit in question. The study delay, when granting the additional examination opportunity, may amount to at least one semester.

Article 10 – Request for exemption

1. Requests for exemption, stating reasons, must be submitted digitally to the Board of Examiners via the form intended for this purpose.
2. The Board of Examiners or the committee within the meaning of Article 2.4 takes a decision on the student's request, with due observance of the provisions of the TER, within six weeks of receipt of the request. The student will be informed of the decision immediately. Before making a decision, the Board of Examiners may speak to the student, lecturer(s), examiner(s) and/or study advisor.
3. A decision to entirely or partially deny exemption may not be made by the Board of Examiners before the person making the request has been given the chance to put forward their case.
4. Appeals against the decision of the Board of Examiners may be lodged in accordance with the provisions of Article 19.

Article 11 – Order during examinations

1. The Student Administration Office must ensure that invigilators are appointed to supervise written examinations, to ensure that the examination proceeds in good order.
2. Examinees are required to prove their identity by means of their student card.
3. Examinees must obey the instructions of the Student Administration Office or the examiner that are published before the start of the final assessment or the examination, as well as instructions given during or immediately following the examination or final assessment.
4. If an examinee ignores one or more of the instructions referred to in Article 11.3, then they may be excluded from further participation in the examination in question by the Board of Examiners or the examiner. Exclusion means that no mark will be awarded for the examination in question. Before the Board of Examiners or the examiner makes a decision to exclude an examinee, it will give the examinee the opportunity to put forward their case.
5. The duration of each examination is such that the examinee may reasonably have enough time to answer the questions.
6. Unless otherwise determined by or on behalf of the Board of Examiners, examinees must hand in the examination papers after the examination. This also applies to any note paper used during the examination.

Article 12 – Cheating and plagiarism

1. Cheating is an act or omission (regardless of whether that act or omission was intentional) by an examinee that partly or wholly hinders the forming of a correct assessment of an individual's knowledge, understanding, and skills. Cheating also includes plagiarism. Lecturers are expected to report suspected cases of cheating to the Board of Examiners.
2. Plagiarism refers to copying one's own or someone else's work without properly indicating the source. The Board of Examiners distinguishes between the following forms of plagiarism:
 - a. Mild plagiarism: incomplete or unclear referencing;
 - b. medium plagiarism: copying short pieces of text without (clearly) referring to the source, creating the impression that other people's ideas are one's own;
 - c. severe plagiarism: copying large pieces of text without (clearly) referring to the source; presenting other people's ideas as one's own; re-submitting previous assignments.
3. The Board of Examiners will take certain measures to prevent cheating, including:

- Clear communication about the penalty for cheating;
- organizing examinations and tests in such a way that cheating is prevented as far as possible;
- requiring the use of a plagiarism scanner in order to check assignments and the Bachelor's and Master's thesis before these are assessed.

4. Any student caught cheating during an examination may be excluded by the Board of Examiners from participation in one or more examinations or final assessments to be determined by the Board of Examiners, for a period of time also to be determined by the Board of Examiners with a maximum of one year. In serious cases of cheating, the Board of the University, on the recommendation of the Board of Examiners, may definitively terminate the student's registration in the degree programme. The Board of Examiners must notify the student in advance that they will advise the Board of the University in this way.

5. The decision to exclude a student will be taken on the basis of a written report by the invigilator concerning the discovered or suspected cheating.

6. Before the Board of Examiners makes a decision within the meaning of Article 12.4, it will give the examinee the opportunity to put forward their case.

7. In cases requiring swift action, the Board of Examiners may decide to impose a provisional ban based on a verbal report by the invigilator. They must ensure that this report is committed to writing immediately after the examination and a copy provided to the examinee.

8. In the event that a student is excluded, no mark will be awarded for the examination referred to in Article 12.4.

Article 13 – Questions and assignments

1. The questions and assignments of an examination paper must not extend beyond the content of the sources upon which the paper is based. These sources are made public in general terms before the start of the course unit that prepares for the examination.

2. The questions and assignments that form part of the examination cover the examination material as evenly as possible, and the content and form of the examination are in line with the intended learning outcomes of the relevant component.

3. The questions and assignments in the examination must be clear and unambiguous and contain sufficient indications of the detail required in the answers.

4. No less than four weeks before the examination is scheduled to take place, the Board of Examiners or the examiner will announce the manner in which the provisions of Article 9.7 of the TERs for the Bachelor's degree programme in Theology and the Bachelor's degree programme in Religious Studies, and Article 4.7 of the TERs for the Master's degree programme in Theology and Religious Studies and the Research Master in Theology and Religious Studies will be implemented with regard to the mode of assessment.

5. No less than four weeks before the examination is scheduled to take place, the Board of Examiners or the examiner will arrange a mock examination to familiarize the examinees with the mode of assessment as well as the model answers and the norms based on which the examination has been assessed.

Article 14 – Assessment

1. The propaedeutic phase is deemed to have been passed when all the examinations have been passed (5.5 or higher). Students are deemed to have passed the final Bachelor's assessment if they have passed all the examinations (5.5 or higher). In order to pass the Bachelor's and Master's theses, they must have been awarded a 6.0 or higher (not rounded off). Internships may also be assessed as follows: O (*Onvoldoende*; Fail), V (*Voldoende*; Pass).

2. Exemption from an examination or an internship is considered to be the equivalent of a Pass and will be indicated by VR (*Vrijstelling*).

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3.3, the assessment of written examinations will be carried out on the basis of standards that have been laid down in writing in advance and amended if necessary as a result of matters that may arise during the actual assessment process.
4. Assessment takes place in such a way that the examinee can review how their examination result was determined.
5. The Board of Examiners will announce in good time in which cases it will carry out its own investigation as referred to in Article 10.1.4 of the TER for the Bachelor's degree programme in Theology and the Bachelor's degree programme in Religious Studies, and in Article 5.1.3 of the TER for the Master's degree programme in Theology and Religious Studies and the Research Master in Theology and Religious Studies.

Article 15 – Feedback

1. As soon as possible after announcement of the results of an oral examination, there will be a discussion of the results between the examiner and the examinee, either on request or on the initiative of the examiner. The results will then be explained.
2. An examinee can request a feedback discussion with the relevant examiner concerning the results of an examination other than an oral examination within a period of six weeks, starting on the day following the announcement of the results. The discussion will take place at a time and a place determined by the examiner.
3. If the Board of Examiners arranges a collective feedback session for an examination, an examinee may only submit a request as defined in Article 15.2 if they attended the collective feedback session and are able to substantiate their request, or if they were unable to attend the collective feedback session due to force majeure.
4. The provisions of Article 15.3 will also apply if the Board of Examiners or the examiner offers the examinee the opportunity to compare their answers with the model answers.
5. The Board of Examiners or examiner may allow exceptions to the provisions of Articles 15.2 and 15.3.

Article 16 – Examiner authorization

1. An (external) examiner is responsible for an individual course unit at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Groningen and is appointed by the Board of Examiners to assess students by setting the examinations for the course unit and determining the results thereof. In principle, the person who is ultimately responsible for the course unit is also ultimately responsible for all the assessments of components for which credits are awarded. An examiner is also responsible for determining whether a student has met the conditions for admission to the examination, the taking of examinations, and the determination of their results.
2. The responsibilities as referred to in the previous paragraph apply per academic year and per course unit. To this end, the Director of Education must submit a list of examiners to the Board of Examiners for approval in time for the coming academic year. The list is kept up to date throughout the academic year by the secretary of the Board of Examiners. This list is public and can be consulted by anyone upon request. The Board of Examiners applies the following criteria:
 - a. Staff members (lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, full professors) at the University of Groningen who have a UTQ certificate are authorized to conduct examinations.
 - b. Staff members with a temporary appointment who are not UTQ certified, including postdocs and research assistants, can be authorized to conduct examinations by the Board of Examiners if they have successfully completed a course in didactic skills. The period of validity and area of expertise of the staff member must be noted in this decision.
 - c. Staff members of universities and other institutions other than the University of Groningen can also be authorized to conduct examinations by the Board of Examiners.

- d. Authorization to conduct examinations is limited to the domain in which staff members are recognized as experts.
3. At the start of their thesis process, a student can submit a request to the Board of Examiners to appoint an external examiner as second reader/second assessor of their Master's thesis. The primary thesis supervisor must be from the student's own faculty. Such requests must be made before the student draws up the thesis contract with the supervisors in question.
4. At the request of the student, the Board of Examiners may, occasionally, grant examination authorization to:
- a second assessor from *outside* the Faculty but from *within* the University of Groningen.
 - a second assessor affiliated to a *university other than* the University of Groningen.
 - a second assessor who has a PhD and *is not affiliated to a university*.
5. If the second supervisor is an expert without a PhD and is not affiliated with a Dutch university, a third examiner from within the student's faculty must also be appointed as an examiner for the assessment of the thesis.
6. At least two and no more than five examiners must attend the Master's thesis defence, including at least the first thesis supervisor and the second reader/second assessor.

Article 17 – Standards

The Board of Examiners or the examiners must adhere to the following standards when making their decisions:

- a. The preservation of quality criteria and selection criteria for each examination;
- b. effectiveness criteria, with a focus on:
 - limiting the loss of time for students who are progressing well with their studies
 - the timely withdrawal from the degree programme by students who are unlikely to pass a final assessment or examination
 - limiting the amount of study delay for students who have incurred such delays, by organizing the subsequent course of study in an efficient manner;
- c. be understanding towards students who, through no fault of their own, have incurred study delay.

Article 18 – Decisions

The Board of Examiners and/or examiners make their decisions taking into account:

- a. Legal, university and faculty regulations and policies
- b. General principles of good governance.

Article 19 – Right of appeal

Students can lodge an appeal with the Board of Appeal for Examinations against decisions made by the Board of Examiners or the examiners, within the meaning of Article 7.60 ff. of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW).

Article 20 – Amendments to the Rules and Regulations

No amendments applicable to the current academic year will be made unless it is reasonable to assume that the amendment will not harm the interests of students.

Article 21 – Date of commencement

These Rules and Regulations will take effect on 1 September 2023.