



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

# **RULES FOR GRADES AND EXAMINATIONS AT FIRST AND SECOND CYCLE LEVELS**

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# 1. Description

The purpose of the rules is to clarify and assure grading and examination at Umeå University. The document includes rules and procedures for examiners, grades, compulsory programme components, adapted examination form and retaking examinations.

# 2. Background

Examination is both a form of the exercise of public authority and a part of the student's learning process. In order for examination to be perceived as fair and just, rules and procedures need to be clear to students, teachers and administrators. General provisions on examination and grades are contained in the Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6.

Governing documents at Umeå University shall integrate the perspectives that shall characterise the university's activities. The governing documents shall also include an analysis of the consequences of the document in a gender perspective.

In the following rules, the student, accessibility and work environment perspectives have been integrated. The governing document is not considered to have any consequences from a collaboration or sustainability perspective. Nor is it judged to have consequences for international perspectives or equality at Umeå University.

# 3. Examiner

- 3.1. An examiner is one of the university's special appointed teachers for decisions on grades.<sup>1</sup> To be appointed examiner for a course given by Umeå University, the person must have a teaching position<sup>2</sup> at a Swedish university.<sup>3</sup>
- 3.2. The vice-chancellor's delegation system and the respective faculty's delegation systems indicate who appoints the examiner.
- 3.3. The examiner shall normally be appointed at least one month before the start of the course.
- 3.4. The examiner may, in an examination case, obtain the help of others, e.g. another teacher or supervisor in practice, to assess the student's performance.
- 3.5. An examiner or other person involved in handling the examination case is obliged to act objectively and impartially. If the question of conflict of interest arises, the relevant person shall personally inform the head of department.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.6. In the case of independent work (degree projects) the supervisor and examiner may not be the same person.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 6 section 18 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>2</sup> See the employment regulations of the university at which the teacher is employed

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 6 section 18 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>4</sup> section 11 the Administration Act



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### 4. Change of examiner

- 4.1. A student who has completed an ordinary examination and one retake for a course or part of a course has the right at the next retake to have a different examiner appointed, unless special reasons dictate otherwise.<sup>5</sup>
- 4.2. In cases where the number of opportunities for placement, internship or equivalent training periods is limited to two, the student has the right to change the examiner after the first examination session.
- 4.3. If there are cooperation problems or other similar special reasons, the student shall have the question of changing supervisor or examiner on a thesis or degree project urgently examined.
- 4.4. The course syllabus shall indicate where the student should turn to request a change of examiner or supervisor.

### 5. Grades

- 5.1. Grades shall be set from a review of the course if the university does not prescribe otherwise.<sup>6</sup>
- 5.2. As a grade, one of the expressions "fail", "pass" or "pass with credit" is used<sup>7</sup>. Dispensation from this 3-grade scale can be given by the vice-chancellor.<sup>8</sup> The grades used shall be stated in the course syllabus.
- 5.3. However, for a wholly or partly placement course leading to pre-school teacher, primary teacher, subject teacher or vocational education examination, more than one grading step shall always be used for a pass. This applies only if the placement part of the course covers more than three higher education credits.<sup>9</sup>
- 5.4. For the course review, grades shall be decided by one of the university's specially appointed teachers (examiners).<sup>10</sup>
- 5.5. A grading decision shall be documented in Ladok. The decision shall specify those who have taken part in the final examination of the grading case, such as rapporteurs or other members of teaching staff who have participated in the correction of the examination.

### 6. Reappraisal of grades

- 6.1. Grades cannot be appealed, that is to say tested by some higher body, but a student can always make remarks against the assessment or request the examiner to review his or her decision.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter 6 section 22 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 6 section 18 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>7</sup> vice-chancellor's decision 540-1133-07

<sup>8</sup> vice-chancellor's decision 100-1190-11

<sup>9</sup> Chapter 6 section 18 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 6 section 18 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>11</sup> chapter 12 sections 4 and 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance



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- 6.2. If an examiner finds that a decision on a grade is manifestly incorrect due to new circumstances or for any other reason, the examiner shall amend the decision, if this can be done quickly and easily and if it does not mean that the grade is reduced.<sup>12</sup>
- 6.3. In order to eliminate suspicions of cheating, students wishing to make a complaint against the assessment or to request a review should not collect the original of their examination. Note that a student does not lose his or her right to reappraisal of the grade even if the student has collected his or her original.<sup>13</sup>

## 7. Correction of grades

- 7.1. A decision on a grade containing an obvious irregularity resulting from typographical error, miscalculation or similar omissions may be corrected, both to the benefit and to the detriment of the student.<sup>14</sup> Such a correction decision is taken by the examiner<sup>15</sup>. Corrections that are to the detriment of the student must be done with great care. Before such a correction is made, the student shall be given the opportunity to comment.

## 8. Examination

- 8.1. An examination means that an examiner will determine a grade based on the assessment form(s) for the student's performance as stated in the course syllabus.<sup>16</sup>
- 8.2. Different forms of examinations, also known as examination forms, are used as a basis for assessment, such as hall examination, home examination, oral examination, participation in compulsory programme components, academic paper, group assignment, memorandum, laboratory work, internship/placement and seminars.
- 8.3. What forms of examination are used during the course shall be clearly stated in the course syllabus.<sup>17</sup>
- 8.4. Examinations shall be structured so that an individual assessment of the student's achievements is possible.
- 8.5. For rules on the distribution of exam papers, responses, project reports, academic papers and publication of results see the rules for study administration at first and second cycle levels.

## 9. Compulsory course modules

- 9.1. In order to require compulsory student participation, the course module must be of an individual investigative nature. For safety reasons, demonstrations or equivalents and preparations for clinical training may be considered to be of such importance that compulsory attendance may be required without the inclusion of an investigative element. Compulsory course modules shall be stated in the course syllabus.

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<sup>12</sup> Chapter 6 section 24 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>13</sup> Legal examination, Swedish Higher Education Authority

<sup>14</sup> section 26 the Administration Act

<sup>15</sup> Chapter 6 section 23 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 6 sections 15 and 18 of the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>17</sup> Chapter 6 section 15 Higher Education Ordinance and HSV decision Reg. No. 31-5952-09



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- 9.2. A student may request to be exempted from a compulsory module. The request is made in advance to the examiner. Decisions not to grant a student exemption from compulsory course modules can be appealed to the Higher Education Appeals Board.<sup>18</sup>
- 9.3. In the case of a missed compulsory element, the same rules apply as for retaking (see section 17).
- 9.4. Where a compulsory course element cannot be repeated, it shall instead be replaced by another equivalent course element. The scope and content of such elements shall be proportionate to the missed compulsory course module.

## 10. Failure of student during placement

- 10.1. The responsible examiner has a right to, in consultation with the supervisor involved, decide to fail a student during on-going placement in cases where he or she demonstrates such deficiencies in knowledge, skills or approach that they, individually or in combination, entail a tangible risk that the student during placement may harm another person physically or mentally. The student then prematurely discontinues his or her placement and receives the grade fail in the course in question. This means that one placement opportunity has been used. The right to fail a student during a placement is only valid if provided for in the course syllabus.
- 10.2. In connection with such a decision as is referred to in 10.1, an individual development plan shall be established by the examiner in consultation with the student. The development plan shall state what knowledge, skills and approaches the student needs to acquire to be allowed to begin a new placement and a point in time at which a check of this shall take place. The student is entitled to two such checking occasions per year. In total, however, the number of checks shall not exceed four, unless there are exceptional reasons. 10.2 only applies on condition that the number of placements is not exhausted in accordance with 16.1.

## 11. Tests

- 11.1. Ordinary tests shall normally be taken Monday to Friday between the hours of 08:00 and 17:00 during the course.
- 11.2. In the case of a teacher's illness or similar circumstances that may cause delays, the department shall find a different solution to allow the test to be carried out.
- 11.3. If a student cannot be examined due to mistakes on the part of the university, the student is entitled to a new examination session as soon as possible, but no later than within 5 working days of the ordinary test date.<sup>19</sup>
- 11.4. A student has the right to find out in retrospect how the assessment has been made. Oral or written reviews of tests shall be offered after the ordinary examination session and at least two weeks before retaking.
- 11.5. Tests can not be recalled by a student whether a decision on grade has been made or not.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>chapter 12 section 2 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>19</sup> Legal examination, Swedish Higher Education Authority

<sup>20</sup> Parliamentary Ombudsmen serial no. 977-2010, 2011-11-30.



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### 12. Results of tests

- 12.1. Students shall be informed about the results of tests within 15 working days after the examination session, regardless of the form of examination<sup>21</sup>. For written assignments, laboratory reports or similar, the day of handing in is counted as the examination session. A teacher's illness or similar circumstances should not cause delays; the department shall instead find a different solution in such cases.

### 13. Test at a different location

- 13.1. Tests are normally carried out at the place where the course is given. If there are special reasons, a student may be able to take a test at another place. A student who wishes to take a test elsewhere must apply for it at the responsible department at least one month before the examination session. The conditions for tests elsewhere are that approved invigilation and premises can be arranged at a reasonable additional cost to the department and that the test can be carried out at the same time as the test is carried out at the main location. Elite sports students who have an agreement with Umeå University are considered to have special reasons for taking a test at a different location<sup>22</sup>.

### 14. Adapted form of examination

- 14.1. For students who have decisions about pedagogical support due to disability, individual adaptations of forms of examination shall always be considered based on the student's needs.<sup>23</sup> The form of examination is adapted within the framework of the expected study results of the course syllabus.
- 14.2. The teacher responsible for the course shall, upon request by the student and in consultation with the examiner, promptly decide on the appropriate form of examination. The decision shall then be communicated to the student.

### 15. Participation in tests

- 15.1. On condition that the student complies with the university's rules for written examinations<sup>24</sup> and does not exceed any limits in the number of examination sessions (see section 17), a student may not be refused the opportunity to participate in a test. This also applies when there are compulsory programme components that shall have been completed before a pass is given for the component (module) or course. However, to pass, the student must complete the compulsory component afterwards or be granted an exemption from it, after application. With forms of examination where third parties (such as patients) are involved or it is otherwise necessary for safety reasons, it may be a requirement that relevant programme components are completed before the student is allowed to participate in the test.
- 15.2. For an examination session to be counted as used, the student must have been present at the examination session. A student's absence from an examination session may not be counted as a used examination session. Participation in a test without submitting a result, "leaving blank", is considered to be an examination session.

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<sup>21</sup> Parliamentary Ombudsmen serial no. 3980-1990

<sup>22</sup> The vice-chancellor's decision "Policy for the combination of elite sport and studies" serial no. 102-329-07 and the vice-chancellor's decision "establishment of the school of sports" serial no. 103-2905-12

<sup>23</sup> Decisions on the right to pedagogical support are taken by the coordinator for pedagogical support at Student Services

<sup>24</sup> Rules and guidelines for written examinations serial number FS 1.1.2-784-14



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# 16. Limitation of examination sessions

- 16.1. Limitation of the number of examination sessions shall be carried out with restraint and be justifiable in that an unlimited right would lead to waste of resources.<sup>25</sup> If the university limits the number of occasions on which a student may undergo a test to obtain an approved result for a course or part of a course, the number of occasions shall be at least five. If an approved result for a course or part of a course assumes that the student has undergone internship/placement or equivalent education with an approved result, the number of internships/placements or equivalent education shall be at least two<sup>26</sup>.
- 16.2. Any restrictions on the number of examinations shall be stated in the course syllabus and, where the rules apply to an entire degree programme, also in the programme syllabus.
- 16.3. In the departments that have introduced a limit on the number of examination sessions, there shall be procedures for support measures for students at risk of losing their right to participate in tests in certain courses. Procedures shall be formulated in line with the university board's decision on goals and local regulations for study guidance.<sup>27</sup>

# 17. Retaking

- 17.1. A student who has not passed a test has the right to participate in a new examination (retaking) on the course where the student has been registered at some point, provided that any limitations in the number of examination sessions are not exceeded.
- 17.2. A student who has received a pass grade may not retake an examination.
- 17.3. The time for retaking shall be given at the latest in connection with the ordinary test.
- 17.4. The first retake shall be offered no later than two months after the ordinary test, but not earlier than ten working days, after the result of the ordinary test has been notified. For tests performed during May and June, the first retake may be offered within three months after the ordinary examination session (see also 17.5, 17.6, 17.7).
- 17.5. In the case of *special forms of examination*<sup>28</sup>, where the specified time limits for the first retake (see 17.4) would lead to unreasonable costs or major practical difficulties for the university or third parties, it is possible to make exceptions to the time requirement. To allow exceptions, it is necessary that:
  - the form of examination is clearly justified on the basis of the objectives of the syllabus and cannot be replaced by another task (see 17.7)
  - the first retake is normally offered at the latest the next semester,
  - the form of examination comprises a maximum of 15 credits
- 17.6. In the case of *placement/internship*, where the specified time limits for the first retake (see 17.4) would lead to unreasonable costs or major practical difficulties for the university or third parties, it is possible to make exceptions to the time requirement. To allow exceptions, it is necessary that:

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<sup>25</sup> Swedish Higher Education Authority's inspection visit report 2014:5

<sup>26</sup> chapter 6 section 21 of the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>27</sup> Goals and local regulations for study guidance serial no. 102-437-07

<sup>28</sup> Legal examination, Swedish Higher Education Authority





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- the form of examination is clearly justified on the basis of the objectives of the syllabus and cannot be replaced by another task (see 17.7)
  - the first retake is normally offered at the latest the next semester
- 17.7. If the test or placement/internship cannot be repeated according to 17.4 or 17.5–17.6, it may instead be replaced by another task. The scope and content of such tasks shall be proportionate to the missed test or placement.
- 17.8. At least one second retake (a so-called catch-up test) is to be offered within one year of the ordinary examination session.
- 17.9. In order to take into account students with children or reasons that are due to different beliefs, ordinary tests and retakes shall be on different days of the week.
- 17.10. In cases where a course syllabus has expired or has undergone major changes, guidance for retakes shall be stated through transitional provisions in the course syllabus. In the transitional provisions, students shall be guaranteed at least three examination sessions (including ordinary examination sessions) according to the previous course syllabus during a period of maximum of two years from the date the previous course syllabus expired or the course stopped being offered. For internship/placement, the same applies, with the restriction that the students shall be guaranteed at least one examination session (including ordinary examination sessions).

## 18. Supplements

- 18.1. If such a provision is included in the course syllabus, the examiner may decide that a student who has not passed a course may provide a supplement to achieve a pass. The course syllabus shall indicate during which time and in which ways the supplement may be provided.<sup>29</sup>
- 18.2. If the examiner has decided that a supplement is possible, the student has the right to choose to provide a supplement or instead retake a test if the opportunity for this is given.

## 19. Disciplinary measures

- 19.1. Disciplinary measures in connection with tests may be taken against students who<sup>30</sup>
1. use prohibited aids or other methods to attempt to deceive during examinations or other forms of assessment of study performance,
  2. disrupt or obstruct teaching, tests or other activities within the framework of courses and study programmes at the higher education institution.

A reasonable suspicion of such an offence shall be reported promptly to the vice-chancellor<sup>31</sup>, who shall have the matter investigated.

- 19.2. The vice-chancellor shall decide whether the circumstances are such that the disciplinary matter shall be left without further action, prompt a warning by the vice-chancellor or be referred to the disciplinary board for consideration.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Legal examination, Swedish Higher Education Authority

<sup>30</sup>chapter 10 section 1 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>31</sup>chapter 10 section 9 the Higher Education Ordinance

<sup>32</sup>chapter 10 section 9 the Higher Education Ordinance



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- 19.3. If the disciplinary board finds that a student has committed an offence, the Board decides on disciplinary action, which may be either a warning or a suspension.<sup>33</sup>

A decision on suspension means that the student may not participate in teaching, examinations or other activities within the framework of education at the university. The decision shall be valid for one or more periods, but not more than six months in total. A suspension decision may also be limited to access to certain premises within the university. Suspension is normally applied to semester time. The vice-chancellor advises the Swedish Board of Student Finance (CSN) on suspension decisions. A suspension is considered to be an interruption in studies in the assessment of the right to receive study grants.

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<sup>33</sup>chapter 10 section 2 the Higher Education Ordinance