



**Handbook for Exam Committees  
Universiteit Nyenrode B.V.**

Date: July 16, 2015

Central Exam Committee  
& Academic Services Center

*Adopted by the University Board on July 20, 2015 following consultation with the Central Exam Committee.*

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Exam Committees: independence and expertise</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Position of Exam Committees within the organization	4
2.2	Independence	5
2.2.1	Independence in respect of the governing body of the institution	5
2.2.2	Independence and composition	6
2.3	Expertise	6
2.4	Conclusion	7
<b>3</b>	<b>Exam Committees at Universiteit Nyenrode B.V&gt;</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1	Installation of the Exam Committee	8
3.2	Composition of the Exam Committee	8
3.2.1	Profiles of individual members	9
3.2.2	External members	10
3.2.3	Exclusion from membership	11
3.2.4	Appointment of members	11
3.2.5	Termination of membership	12
3.3	Development of expertise	12
3.4	Tasks of the Chair	13
3.4.1	Chair	13
3.4.2	Vice Chair	13
3.5	Support for Exam Committees	13
3.5.1	Independence of the official secretary	15
3.5.2	Student Advisors	15
3.6	Meetings	15
<b>4</b>	<b>Activities of Exam Committees</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1	Tasks and powers of Exam Committees	16
4.2	Decisions	20
4.3	Complaints handling	21

## Appendices

Appendix I	Organogram
Appendix II	References
Appendix III	Statutory Frameworks

## List of abbreviations

BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
NNBS	Nyenrode New Business School
OER	Onderwijs en Examenregeling (Rules & Regulations)
WhW	Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek (Dutch Higher Education and Scientific Research Act)

# 1 Introduction

Exam Committees perform an important task at Universiteit Nyenrode B.V.: they are responsible for assuring the quality of exams and final examinations. Their purpose is to determine, in an independent and expert way, that each student has satisfied the requirements for the award of a degree set by the program concerned. This means that Exam Committees fulfill a vital role in monitoring the quality of the process leading to the awarding qualifications. After all, students, researchers, stakeholders and supervisory bodies must have faith in the fact that Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. awards its qualifications with all due care.

Thanks to the amendment of the *Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek* (Dutch Higher Education and Scientific Research Act, abbreviated as “WHW” in Dutch) through the *Wet versterking besturing* (Dutch Governance Strengthening Act, abbreviated as “Wvb” in Dutch), as of 1 September 2010 Exam Committees acquired more substantive tasks and their independent position has been strengthened.

In order to function optimally, it is essential that the governing body of the institution (represented by the University Board) guarantees that the Exam Committees can operate independently and with due expertise, and it is important that (the members) of the Exam Committees are well aware of the frameworks within which they must perform their statutory tasks. The aim of this handbook is to inform the educational management and Exam Committees about the statutory frameworks within which the Exam Committees should operate and the way in which they can properly perform their tasks in this context. To this end, Chapter 2 goes into more detail regarding the terms “independence” and “expertise”. Chapter 3 describes how these terms are put into practice at Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. (institution-wide) and the composition of the committees. In conclusion, Chapter 4 sets out the activities of the Exam Committees, including this for Nyenrode New Business School (NNBS). This chapter sets out the statutory responsibilities and tasks with an explanation of each task.

## 2 Exam Committees: independence and expertise

With the adoption of the *Wet versterking besturing*, “independence and expertise” became the major features that Exam Committees must demonstrate (WHW, Section 7.12.a. and the Explanatory Memorandum). This independence and expertise apply to the position of Exam Committees within the organization, the composition and appointment of members as well as the tasks and powers of Exam Committees.

This chapter looks at the position of Exam Committees within the organization from the perspective of the WHW, and further examines the terms “independence” and “expertise”. The concrete elaboration of these two terms at Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. is set out in the next chapter.

### 2.1 Position of Exam Committees within the organization

The main focus of the Act is on the program (Section 7.3.). A program is a cohesive set of units of study focused on well-described attainment levels. The goal and content of the program are set out in the Rules & Regulations (*Onderwijs- en Examenregeling*, OER) which are yearly reviewed and approved by the University Board.

In addition to the Dean, three statutory entities are directly involved in assuring the quality of a program:

- The Program Director
- The Program Committee (Opleidingscommissie)
- The Exam Committee.

WHW, Section 7.12. Exam Committee

1. Every program or group of programs of the institution has an Exam Committee.
2. The Exam Committee is the body that determines, in an objective and expert manner, if a student meets the conditions set down in the Rules & Regulations (OER) regarding the knowledge, insight and skills required for the award of a qualification.

The governing body of the institution appoints or installs each of these persons or committees. In the case of universities, the “governing body of the institution” is represented by the University Board (WHW, Section 9.5). The Program Director, Program Committee and Exam Committee can be appointed for more than one program, as long as the activities always concern individual programs. An OER is also set for each program.

The tasks of the Program Director, Program Committee and Exam Committee are divided as follows:

- The Program Director is responsible for the structure and implementation of the program as described in the OER, and ensures that the teaching and the program meet the quality standards.
- The Program Committee advises the Program Director and the Associate Dean and the Rector on the OER and the way in which it is implemented (WHW, Section 9.18, paragraphs a and b).
- The Exam Committee advises the Program Director and the University Board on the OER regarding exam regulations and, for each individual student, assesses the results of the education provided within the framework of the program's OER. The Exam Committee is, after all, the body that determines, in an objective and expert manner, if a student meets the conditions set down in the OER regarding the knowledge, insight and skills required for the award of a qualification (WHW, Section 7.12.).

Due to its supervisory role, it is important that the Exam Committee can perform its tasks and exercise its authority independently and with due expertise. The terms "independence" and "expertise" are examined in more detail below.

## **2.2 Independence**

### **2.2.1 Independence in respect of the governing body of the institution**

The independent position of the Exam Committee in respect of the governing body of the institution (in the case of Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. represented by the Dean) was confirmed and strengthened through the most recent amendment to the WHW in 2012 (*Wet versterking besturing*). The Explanatory Memorandum states the following regarding the independence of the Exam Committee in respect of the governing body of the institution:

*The independent functioning of the Exam Committee in respect of the University Board means that although the University Board installs the Exam Committee, the institution must ensure that the Exam Committee can carry out its work independently within the institution. This also means, for example, that the University Board cannot impose any obligations on the Exam Committee regarding the assessment of students. The Board does, however, have final responsibility for the quality of the education provided and the awarding of qualifications (WHW, Section 7.10a, paragraph 1); an Exam Committee must act within the boundaries of the OER. This also guarantees that the way in which exams are conducted is in line with the program framework.*

In other words: the University Board approves the Rules & Regulations (OER) and thus has final responsibility for the quality of the education provided. The Exam Committee assesses if students have met the requirements set down in the OER and, after this assessment, the institution awards a Bachelor's or Master's Degree.

## 2.2.2 Independence and composition

In addition to independence in terms of its position in the organization in respect of those responsible for the quality of the education provided (University Board, Program Director), the Exam Committee's independence should also be demonstrated by its composition.

### *External members*

The *Wet versterking besturing* has already made it possible for Exam Committees to include an external member. This will be a legal requirement from September 2015. The idea behind this is that external members can provide an important safeguard in terms of quality assurance and can contribute to the expertise of the Exam Committee as a whole.

During the debate on the *Wet versterking besturing* whether or not members of the management would be able to sit on Exam Committees was also discussed. This is not set down in the Act, but the Explanatory Memorandum includes a *recommendation* that managers with financial or line responsibility should not be allowed to sit on Exam Committees.

In respect of assuring the quality of Exam Committees and the quality assurance they provide, the State Secretary has announced that two major points of the WHW are to be amended:

- 1) An Exam Committee must always have at least one external member.
- 2) Managers with financial responsibility cannot sit on an Exam Committee.

The concrete elaboration of these two points is discussed in more detail in the next chapter (in paragraph 3.2).

## 2.3 Expertise

The Education Inspectorate's report entitled *Boekhouder of wakend oog* (Accountant or Watchful Eye) showed that Exam Committees assess their expertise as "satisfactory" or "very satisfactory". However, there were differences in the type of expertise. Whereas Exam Committees indicated they had "very satisfactory" knowledge of the programs and the OER, this classification was seen significantly less frequently regarding knowledge of assessment and statutory frameworks. In addition, the same study showed Exam Committees mainly fulfill their task in terms of procedures and far less in terms of substantive aspects.

With the introduction of the *Wet versterking besturing*, the emphasis in terms of the responsibility of Exam Committees has shifted to the substantive aspects of examinations. In the WHW, for example, assuring the quality of exams and final examinations is listed explicitly as a task (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under a). To this end, it is necessary that the members of Exam Committees have a high degree of subject-matter expertise, expertise in assessment and knowledge of the statutory frameworks.

The Exam Committee as a whole must cover these different areas of expertise. When an Exam Committee is being compiled, the University Board can therefore choose to require each individual member to possess expertise in the different areas, or to have the Exam Committee made up of

members with different subject-matter expertise and an expert in assessments. Nyenrode has chosen for Exam Committees as a whole to possess the necessary expertise (cf. page 8). Every member of an Exam Committee should possess basic knowledge of the statutory framework. The institution is obliged to allow the Exam Committees and examiners sufficient opportunity for professional development.<sup>1</sup>

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The emphasis on the independent functioning of Exam Committees sometimes leads to the interpretation that they have the power to impose their 'own' quality criteria on a student or program, whereby the danger arises that the Program Management and the Exam Committee can result in disagreements. This is, however, not the case: Exam Committees assess the realized quality against the (quality) requirements and provisions of the OER approved by the University Board. If an Exam Committee observes that these requirements and provisions are not being met, it has several intervention instruments at its disposal. In this regard, consultation with the Program Director is important.

---

<sup>1</sup> Policy response to the reports on alternative final projects, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 20 May 2011.

## **3 Exam Committees at Universiteit Nyenrode B.V>**

### **3.1 Installation of the Exam Committee**

As stated in Chapter 2, the Dean installs an Exam Committee for a program or group of programs. The Program Directors concerned advise the Associate Dean of Degree Programs who makes recommendations to the University Board. The most important criterion when installing an Exam Committee is that together the members possess sufficient subject-matter expertise to safeguard the quality of the program(s) that fall under it.

### **3.2 Composition of the Exam Committee**

Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. has a central Exam Committee and three sub-committees:

- Accountancy, Controlling & Fiscal law Exam Committee
- General Management Exam Committee
- Nyenrode New Business School Exam Committee\*.

*\* The Nyenrode New Business School (NNBS) Exam Committee reports to the General Director of the NNBS. The Chair of the Nyenrode New Business School Exam Committee attends the meetings of the central Exam Committee.*

The central Exam Committee is composed of the three chairs of the sub-committees.

A list of the Exam Committees and the programs that fall under the various sub-committees is appended to this document (Appendix I).

It applies at Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. that each Exam Committee consists of a minimum of three members. The Exam Committee needs to be supplemented by an external member.

When compiling the Exam Committee (and therefore when appointing its members), it is important to take into account that the subject-matter expertise and assessment expertise of the Exam Committee as a whole should be assured. In addition, it is of importance to meet the statutory obligation that a minimum of one member of the Exam Committee is a lecturer within the program or programs for which the Exam Committee is installed. At Universiteit Nyenrode B.V., it applies that the Chair is tied to the program that falls under the Exam Committee concerned (or tied to at least one program when a group of programs is involved). The reason for this is that in many instances the Chair is the first point of contact in the event of a decision, request or statement. In practice, this role can best be fulfilled when the Chair is close to the program, physically as well as in terms of content.

### 3.2.1 Profiles of individual members

The Exam Committee as a whole must possess sufficient subject-matter expertise as well as assessment expertise. Subject-matter expertise can be assured by appointing members of the Faculty involved with the program or one of the group of programs. In addition, it is important that within the committee there is sufficient knowledge of the structure of the program(s). The preference is that the members of the Exam Committee have been teaching within the program or have been involved in developing the content of the program for a minimum of three years. Assessment expertise can be assured by adding an assessment expert to the committee. Moreover, one of the members must be “independent” and capable of making well-considered decisions if a conflict of interests arises. Taking the above arguments into account, the profile for internal members is as follows:

An internal member of an Exam Committee:

1. Is a member of the Faculty of Universiteit Nyenrode B.V> or In the case of the NNBS, freelance lecturers employed by the school;
2. In the first year of membership, follows a training course on his/her area of expertise within the framework of his/her tasks on Exam Committee<sup>2</sup> (cf. paragraph 3.3);
3. Possesses the ‘soft’ trait of independence and is capable of making a well-considered decision in the event of any conflict of interests. Independence means:
  - being independent in behavior;
  - daring to maintain and defend a personal standpoint that is in opposition to that of others (and to any one-sided interest) in the interest of the *quality of the program*;
  - actions in this regard are objective and critical;
  - recognizing and anticipating situations in which personal and *quality* interests are (potentially) in conflict.

Preferably:

4. Has been involved in teaching within the program(s) or has been involved in developing a new program for a minimum of three years.

The Program Director(s), via the Associate Dean of Degree Programs or the Exam Committee itself, can nominate new members to the University Board . However, such nominations are not binding. At minimum, the University Board assures that the Exam Committee is listened to regarding the appointment of new members (WHW Section 7.12a, paragraph 3); the Exam Committee has an advisory role in this regard.

Due to the ‘weight’ of the Exam Committee, at least one of the members (preferably the Chair) should be a professor or associate professor of the program(s) concerned. This adds to the status of the Exam Committee.

---

<sup>2</sup> Applicable to sitting members as of 1 January 2013.

### 3.2.2 External members

It is mandatory to have an external member in the Exam Committee. The goal of including an external member is formulated as: [...] *In addition, attracting external experts from outside the program can increase external legitimacy regarding the assessment and examinations.*<sup>3</sup> The external expert thus adds an external perspective to the quality assurance of the assessments and examinations of the programs that fall under the Exam Committee. The same Explanatory Memorandum (2011) states that the external expert can be a fellow subject-matter expert at another institution or from a different discipline within the same institution. It may be someone who is an expert in the field of assessment, or someone from the professional field (in the Netherlands or abroad).

External members may not be involved as lecturers in the management and development of the education provided in the programs that fall under the Exam Committee, and should come from a different background. Apart from these conditions, no other institution-wide criteria have been set. This allows the University Board the freedom to draw up a profile (possibly for each Exam Committee) that is in the best possible alignment with the character and needs of the program (or group of programs) that falls under the Exam Committee concerned.

Intermezzo: profile of an assessment expert

- Has knowledge and insight into the (faculty) assessment policy framework.
- Has knowledge and insight into the standard quality criteria for assessments (validity, reliability, transparency and workability).
- Is able to apply the quality criteria to the usual research university (in Dutch: WO) assessment formats (open questions, multiple-choice questions, essays, papers, theses, etc.).
- Is able to assess the quality of formative assessment formats.
- Has insight into the quality and shortcomings of the usual assessment formats.
- Has insight into the standard methods for determining the caesura.<sup>4</sup>
- Is able to perform an elementary item analysis (reliability, p-value, Point-Biserial correlation, etc.).
- Is able to perform an elementary analysis of assessment results (e.g. linking it to earlier results and course evaluations).
- Is able to provide adequate feedback.

---

<sup>3</sup> Explanatory Memorandum to the amendment to the WHW in connection with improving quality assurance, December 2011.

<sup>4</sup> In assessment theory, caesura refers to the score that forms the cut-off point between a pass and a fail.

Preferably:

- Teaching experience at research university level (WO).
- Is familiar with digital assessment.

### **3.2.3 Exclusion from membership**

Managers with financial responsibility are excluded from being members of exam committees. In addition, there are several officials who will not be eligible for membership due to the incompatibility of membership with their other tasks. Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. has therefore decided that the following officials are excluded from sitting on Exam Committees:

- Members of the Foundation Board
- Members of the University Board
- Dean and Associate Dean of Degree Programs
- Directors of Colleges or Graduate Schools
- Program Directors
- Directors of Operations/Operational Managers
- Chairs of the Program Committees (PCs) of the programs that fall under the Exam Committees
- Student Advisors.

The first 6 officials are excluded from membership due to their line management or financial management responsibilities regarding the education provided. The Chairs of the PCs are excluded from membership due to the incompatibility of the tasks of the PCs (advising the Program Management) with those of the Exam Committees (monitoring the programs as a whole) regarding monitoring quality. . Finally, Student Advisors are excluded from membership due to a possible conflict of interests between the interests of the student on the one hand, and the decisions of the Exam Committee on the other. In addition to the officials mentioned above, the University Board may exclude other officials from membership if this is desired.

### **3.2.4 Appointment of members**

The University Board appoints the members of the Exam Committee. The law (WHW) stipulates no term for such appointments. This means that, in principle, members are appointed for an indefinite period. To guarantee the continuity of knowledge and decision-making within the Exam Committee, it is desirable members are appointed for a period of four years, with one possible extension of another four years . The General Director of NNBS appoints members of Exam Committee BBA for periods of 1 year, due to the organizational structure of NNBS (no lecturers on the pay roll).

As a rule, the Exam Committee or the Program Director nominates a candidate member to the University Board. The University Board then assesses whether the candidate member meets the criteria set for subject-matter and assessment expertise, and consults the members of the Exam Committee on the nomination via the Chair of the Exam Committee. The Exam Committee has an advisory role in this (WHW, Section 7.12a, paragraph 3).<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Parliamentary Document 31821, number 7.

An appointment letter is then sent to the candidate member concerned. If the appointment of a Chair is involved, this will be specifically stated in the appointment letter. Should the University Board have any reason not to wish to appoint the candidate in question as a member, he/she will contact the Associate Dean and Program Director(s) for further consultation.

### **3.2.5 Termination of membership**

The membership of a member of the Exam Committee terminates if:

- the member is going to take on a position that is incompatible with membership of the Exam Committee;
- the member's employment is terminated (for internal members);
- the member wishes to terminate the membership;
- the member is going to teach within one of the programs that falls under the Exam Committee
- four years after the initial appointment

In addition to the reasons above, it may be the case that an Exam Committee member no longer performs satisfactorily. In such instances, the only way to terminate the membership is by a decision of the University Board, possibly in combination with immediate suspension. When this point was debated in the House of Representatives, the suspension of a member was, however, referred to by the Minister as a *far-reaching measure and this can only take place if this measure is proportionate*.<sup>6</sup> Such a decision should therefore be taken on an individual basis.

As a rule, the Exam Committee, its Chair or the Program Director informs the Associate Dean of Degree Programs of any unsatisfactory performance on the part of (a member of) the Exam Committee, and the Associate Dean of Degree Programs appraises the University Board of the situation.

### **3.3 Development of expertise**

The institution is obliged to offer the members of the Exam Committee sufficient opportunity for the development of expertise.<sup>7</sup> At Universiteit Nyenrode B.V., this obligation is fulfilled as follows:

- On appointment, each new Exam Committee member receives a copy of the Handbook for Exam Committees and the OER of the program(s);
- Every year, at least one training course is organized for the Exam Committee members to develop their expertise.

---

<sup>6</sup> Parliamentary Document 31821, number 7.

<sup>7</sup> Policy response to the reports on alternative final projects, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 20 May 2011.

### **3.4 Tasks of the Chair**

Each Exam Committee at Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. has a Chair.

#### **3.4.1 Chair**

The Exam Committee elects its Chair. The University Board appoints as Chair the person nominated by the Exam Committee. The Chair is responsible for the independence and expertise of the Exam Committee in its functioning, and is accountable for this. Moreover, the Chair should be a competent process monitor; he/she should allow the experts to be heard.

The Chair of the Exam Committee:

- a. is responsible for the independence and expertise of the Exam Committee in its functioning, and is accountable for this;
- b. is accountable for and defends the policy and decisions made in respect of internal and external parties such as the Appeal Committee;
- c. signs certificates and diploma supplements;
- d. advises the University Board, on behalf of the Exam Committee, regarding the appointment of members of the Exam Committee;
- e. prepares meetings together with the official secretary;
- f. chairs the meetings of the Exam Committee;
- g. contributes to the drawing up of the annual report and approves the annual report;
- h. is responsible for the mandates approved of by the Exam Committee;
- I is a members of the central Exam Committee.

Due to the task of external representation, it is preferable that the Chair is a professor or associate professor within one of the programs that falls under the Exam Committee concerned.

#### **3.4.2 Vice Chair**

In the absence of the Chair, or if the Chair is not independent regarding a particular matter, the Vice Chair can replace the Chair. In such instances, the Vice Chair has the same duties and powers as the Chair, but may only sign diplomas under the statement “*b.a.*” (Dutch for “in the absence of”). The Vice Chair is elected from the members of the Exam Committee.

### **3.5 Support for Exam Committees**

The University Board ensures that each Exam Committee is supported by an official secretary. These official secretaries are not members of the Exam Committees.

**Official secretary :**

- a. Organizes meetings (in consultation with the Chair) and sends out invitations and meeting documents to the Exam Committee members;
- b. Takes the minutes of Exam Committee meetings and ensures that the minutes and decisions are archived;

- c. Contributes to the annual report in collaboration with the Chair;
- d. Handles and monitors correspondence on behalf of the Exam Committee;
- e. Regarding cases: responsible for compiling dossiers, handling correspondence, managing the Exam Committee's dossiers, holding preliminary consultation with the Program Management, gathering information, searching for precedents, discussing cases with the Chair, advising on decision-making and communicating decisions;
- f. Can, in the event of standard decisions, handle the requests of students on behalf of the Exam Committee, if mandated to do so;
- g. Contributes to the proposed positions and decisions of the Exam Committee with due observance of the relevant decision-making frameworks, procedures and statutory provisions (for example, the OER, assessment policy, WHW);
- h. Monitors the procedural progress of the decision-making;
- i. Plays a monitoring role regarding the implementation of the decisions of the Exam Committee by the Program Management, and, if necessary, supports/advises the Program Management regarding the application of underlying procedures;
- j. Monitors compliance with the R&R/OER\* of the programs that fall under the Exam Committee;
- k. Makes an inventory of changes to the R&R/OER\* of the programs that fall under the Exam Committee, and consults with the Chair on the practical application of such changes;
- l. Manages the Exam Committee's archives;
- m. If necessary, looks into, explains and advises on the R&R/OER (and any financial consequences thereof ) and Exam Committee policy to the Program Management;
- n. If necessary, looks into, explains and advises students on the exam regulations. In practice, this also takes place via the Program Management.

*\*regarding the sections that have to do with exam regulations.*

Specifically for the General Management Exam Committee

- o. Creates, manages and maintains spreadsheets with the academic records of all degree programs (Osiris);
- p. Responsible for entering grades, the final check that the calculations of GPA/rankings/Cum Laude have been performed correctly and for the uniformity of grade lists/academic records of graduating students.

Specifically for the Accountancy, Controlling & Fiscal Law Exam Committee

- q. Supervises the archiving of documents intended for student dossiers and/or the sending of relevant information to the Program Management for archiving in digital student dossiers.

Note: the details of the job profile for the position of official secretary can vary from one Exam Committee to another.

### **3.5.1 Independence of the official secretary**

The position of official secretaries is an important area for attention within the framework of independence. In order to perform their tasks, official secretaries must be able to function independently of the educational management.

The Student Advisor (within Accountancy, Controlling & Fiscal Law) in many cases that arise, has the role of advocating for the student. This role is in conflict with the duties of the official secretary to convey a decision of the Exam Committee to the student, or possibly to handle the decision on behalf of the Exam Committee. It is therefore not desirable that a Student Advisor fulfils the role of official secretary to an Exam Committee.

### **3.5.2 Student Advisors**

Students of the Accountancy & Controlling programs can turn to Student Advisors for counseling and advice. Within General Management, this role is fulfilled by the Program Management. At the Nyenrode New Business School, the Student Advisors are the contacts for students. The Exam Committee can invite a Student Advisor or a representative from the Program Management to act as a consultant to the Exam Committee.

### **3.6 Meetings**

The Exam Committee meets a *minimum* of twice a year. Decisions are made by a majority of the members. The Chair and the official secretary will consult more frequently about, for example, the requests of students. The meetings of the Exam Committee are, in principle, closed. The Exam Committee can invite guests to attend meetings, including a Student Advisor, Educational Quality Advisor or a Program Director. The subjects that are dealt with at plenary meetings include advising on the OER and on the assessment policy of a program, and finalizing the assessment forms for the final projects of bachelor's and master's programs. The official secretary takes the meeting minutes and is also responsible for setting down the decisions and advice of the Exam Committee and for communicating them to the parties involved.

The Central Exam Committee meets four times a year.

## 4 Activities of Exam Committees

### 4.1 Tasks and powers of Exam Committees

The Exam Committee must assure the quality of exams and diplomas. To this end, the legislature has given Exam Committees the following tasks and powers:

1. To determine, in an objective and expert manner, if a student meets the requirements set down in the Rules & Regulations (OER) in respect of the knowledge, insight and skills necessary for being awarded a qualification (WHW, Section 7.12, paragraph 2).
2. To assure the quality of exams and final examinations (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under a).
3. To set down guidelines and instructions within the framework of the OER in order to assess and approve the results of exams and final examinations (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under b).
4. To grant exemptions from taking one or more exams (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under d).
5. To take measures in the event of fraud (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 2).
6. To assign examiners to conduct exams and determine the results thereof (WHW, Section 7.12c).
7. To award certificates and related diploma supplements, as proof that a final examination was passed (WHW, Section 7.11, paragraphs 2 and 4).
8. To grant permission for a student to follow a flexible study program, for which the final examination leads to the award of a qualification (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under c).
9. To issue a transcript stating the exams passed to persons who have passed more than one exam but to whom no certificate can be awarded (WHW Section 7.11, paragraph 5).
10. To draw up an annual report of its activities (WHW, Section 7.12.b, paragraph 5).

#### *Accreditation*

The way in which the Exam Committee performs its statutory tasks plays an increasingly more important role in accreditations, including that of the Accreditation Organization of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO).

#### *Mandates*

The tasks of the Exam Committee can be mandated to persons and committees. In this regard, it is important that it is clearly set down to whom the tasks are mandated and what responsibilities are covered by the mandate and under what conditions.

1. ***Determining, in an objective and expert manner, if a student meets the requirements set down in the Rules & Regulations (OER) in respect of the knowledge, insight and skills necessary for being awarded a qualification (WHW, Section 7.12, paragraph 2).***

This means that the Exam Committee must assess if the student has achieved the attainment level of the program. If a student has passed all components of the exam in accordance with the provisions of the OER, the qualification can be awarded. The sum of the learning objectives of the individual components should, after all, lead at a minimum to the set attainment levels being achieved. The Exam Committee can determine that passing the individual program components will be closed with a final exam. In such cases, this requirement must be set down in the OER.

Within this task, the Exam Committee is also the body that is authorized, in special cases, to deviate from the provisions of the OER (i.e. the application of the bachelor-before-master requirement). Several examples of this are: permitting a modified exam or final examination format, extending the period of validity of an exam result, replacing individual units of study with a different unit of study that has the same learning objective and deviating from possibly mandatory participation in a practical exercise. Moreover, the Exam Committee can determine, under conditions to be set by the Exam Committee itself, that not every exam needs to be passed in order to record a pass for the final examination.<sup>8</sup>

## **2. *Assuring the quality of exams and final examinations (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under a).***

WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under a states that the Exam Committee has the task of assuring the quality of exams and final examinations. This provision was included in the Act based on the findings of the Education Inspectorate that Exam Committees spend too little time on “quality assurance and the quality policy involving exams and final examinations”.

Drawing up and implementing an assessment policy is an important tool in assuring the quality of exams and final examinations. The Central Exam Committee of Universiteit Nyenrode B.V. has installed an Assessment Committee that draws up the assessment policy and performs the tasks involved in assuring the quality of exams and final examinations.

### *Assessment Committee*

The Assessment Committee consists of representatives from the three sub-committees and other faculty members, and is supported by a secretary and an advisory official from the Academic Services Center. The Assessment Committee submits its assessment policy to the Central Exam Committee to be decided on. The Assessment Committee reports on an annual basis to the Central Exam Committee and, if required, provides information in the interim.

---

<sup>8</sup> WHW, Section 7.10, paragraph 2.

It is important to note that, officially, the Exam Committee remains responsible, even though the Assessment Committee does the actual work. The Exam Committee should therefore ascertain that the Assessment Committee performs its tasks in a manner that meets the requirements that the Exam Committee sets in this regard. During an accreditation procedure, the Exam Committee is accountable for the aspect 'assessment'. The Exam Committee can assign a representative from one of the sub-committees and/or the Assessment Committee for this.

**3. *Setting down guidelines and instructions within the framework of the OER in order to assess and approve the results of exams and final examinations (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under b).***

The Exam Committee should advise the University Board annually on the Rules & Regulations (OER). In this way, the Exam Committee can add substance to the quality assurance of the program's assessment program.

**4. *Granting exemptions from taking one or more exams (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under d).***

The Exam Committee has the power to grant a student an exemption for one or more subjects. The way in which this task is carried out is set down in the OER of the program concerned. Whether or not an exemption can be granted is assessed against the OER. It is therefore necessary that the grounds for granting exemptions are set down in the OER of the relevant program.<sup>9</sup> Section 7.13, paragraph 2 under r of the WHW clearly states that these grounds could lie in exams or final examinations taken earlier in the higher education system, and in knowledge and skills acquired outside the higher education system. Broadly speaking, one condition for granting an exemption is that the replacement component has roughly the same learning objective as the component of the curriculum for which an exemption is granted. The reasons that constitute the basis for granting an exemption should be set out clearly and transparently and archived in the proper manner. In addition, it is possible for the Exam Committee to have included in the OER components that are frequently used to replace standard components of the curriculum. In such instances, a request for an exemption is 'automatically' approved.

The granting of exemptions can be mandated to a person or a committee, but the Exam Committee remains responsible. The Exam Committee should set down who is authorized to grant exemptions and under what conditions (e.g. a description of standard cases, the procedure and the delivery of reports on a yearly basis).

**5. *Taking measures in the event of fraud (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 2).***

The Exam Committee is the body that must take measures in the event of fraud.

---

<sup>9</sup> WHW, Section 7.13 paragraph 2, under r.

**6. Assigning examiners to conduct exams and determine the results thereof (WHW, Section 7.12c).**

An important instrument available to the Exam Committee for its task of assuring the quality of exams and final examinations, is the assigning of examiners. By law, this task lies with the Exam Committee.

**7. Awarding certificates and related diploma supplements, as proof that an exam was passed (WHW, Section 7.11, paragraphs 2 and 4).**

The Exam Committee is the body that awards the certificate to the student once it has been determined that the student has met the requirements (cf. 1).

The certificate and diploma supplement must be signed by the Chair of the Exam Committee. In special cases, one of the other members of the Exam Committee (with the exception of the external member) may sign the certificate and diploma supplement. The official secretary or members of staff who are not members of an Exam Committee are not permitted to sign the certificate and diploma supplement.

**8. Granting permission for a student to follow a flexible study program, for which the exam leads to the award of a qualification (WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 1 under c).**

Universiteit Nyenrode B.V> currently has no flexible study programs (fall 2013). The expectation is that in the future such programs will be possible (expansion of the modular structure of programs). The prior approval of the Exam Committee will then be a condition for determining if a flexible program is of the required level and if the study load and attainment levels of the program are satisfactory.

**9. Issuing a transcript stating the exams passed to persons who have passed more than one exam but to whom no certificate can be awarded (WHW Section 7.11, paragraph 5).**

The Exam Committee has the power to issue a transcript to students who have passed more than one exam, but to whom no certificate can be awarded. Such a transcript lists the exams that were passed. This can be important for students if, for example, they are transferring from one program to another and are entitled to an exemption from a component of the new program based on the results achieved earlier.

The issuing of such transcripts can be mandated to a person or a committee, but the Exam Committee remains responsible. The Exam Committee should set down who is authorized to sign such transcripts and under what conditions (e.g. the procedure and the delivery of a report to the Exam Committee on an annual basis).

#### **10. Drawing up an annual report of its activities (WHW, Section 7.12.b, paragraph 5).**

The Exam Committee should submit an annual report on its activities to the University Board. The aim of this annual report is:

- 1) To ensure the accountability of the Exam Committee to the University Board;
- 2) To deliver input for the Program Director, Associate Dean of Degree Programs and the University Board on any improvements to the quality of the education;
- 3) To provide management information. This information is often requested in the accreditation procedure of a program.

#### **4.2 Decisions**

The Exam Committee may make decisions on many different matters. How the Exam Committee makes its decisions will be set out in the house rules (cf. the Recommendation on p. 17). Examples of decisions set down in the WHW include:

- Decisions to grant exemptions.
- Approval of the examination schedules of students.
- Decisions to award a qualification. In other words, the decision that a student has achieved the attainment levels of the program.
- Decisions to award a distinction, such as Cum Laude.
- Decisions to allow a different form of examination for a student with a disability.
- Decisions involving the general assessment policy of a program, for example, approving an assessment form for final projects.
- Drawing up guidelines for examiners.
- Imposing sanctions for fraud and plagiarism.
- Assigning examiners.
- Decisions on requests for an extension of the period of validity of an exam.
- Decisions on permitting additional opportunities to take an exam.
- Determining alternative program composition (for example, when a curriculum revision is concerned).
- Approval of study units successfully completed abroad.
- Decisions to approve a flexible study program.

Not every decision needs to be made by the full Exam Committee. The Chair can make several of the decisions referred to above independently. The decision-making process, however, must be transparent. It is therefore up to the Exam Committee to set down in the regulations who is authorized to make what types of decision. The guidelines below can be used to this end:

- The gravity of the decision. In the event that an appeal may be lodged against a decision, for example, against the imposition of sanctions for fraud or plagiarism, it is desirable that the decision is made by the full Exam Committee.
- Decisions involving the assessment or examination policy of a program (determining alternative final projects, guidelines for examiners), should always be made by the full Exam Committee.
- A request that has never arisen earlier, will at least be submitted to the Chair.
- The official secretary can deal with standard decisions (e.g. replacing a subject that has been passed earlier). Decisions of this type must be well documented, for example in a separate document entitled “Decisions of the Exam Committee”.

In the event that a decision must be made by the full Exam Committee, the decision will be made by a majority vote. If the vote is tied, the Chair’s vote will break the tie. If the decision is to be sent to the party or parties involved, the Chair must sign the decision. In the event of so-called ‘standard decision’, the decision can be signed by another person with the designation *i.o.* (on behalf of) or *b.a.* (in the absence of).

### **4.3 Complaints handling**

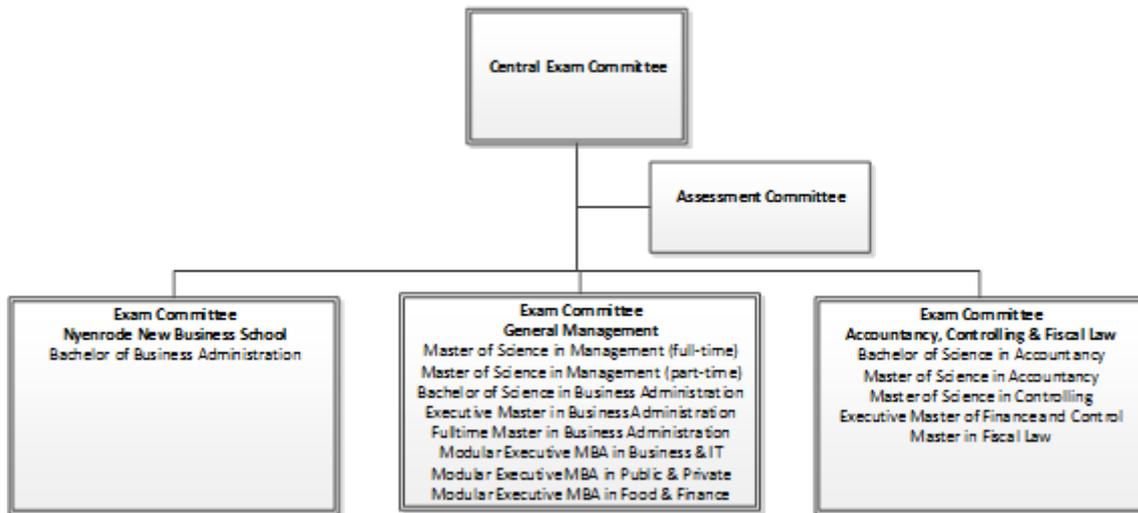
Students should, in the first instance, submit any complaints concerning exams or final examinations to the Exam Committee of the program involved, with the exception of objections or appeals. When handling complaints, the Exam Committee applies the principle of the right to a hearing and to present counter-arguments: both the student and lecturer will be heard. At least one member of the Exam Committee, in addition to the Chair, should be involved in handling complaints. If a student submits a request or complaint to the Exam Committee that concerns an examiner who is a member of the Exam Committee, the examiner concerned may not take part in handling the request or complaint.<sup>11</sup>

A student has, on the basis of the Burgerlijk Wetboek the right to challenge (wraeking in Dutch) a member of the Exam Committee if he/she has the impression that this member is not impartial to the case. The central Exam Committee decides upon this challenge. Should the chair of the subcommittee being challenged then he/she is excluded from taking part in the decision.

---

<sup>11</sup> WHW, Section 7.12b, paragraph 4.

## APPENDIX I ORGANOGRAM



## APPENDIX II REFERENCES

The following sources were used in writing this Handbook for Exam Committees:

### Statutory Framework

*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek* (Higher Education and Scientific Research Act, WHW).

*Wet versterking besturing* (Governance Strengthening Act, Wvb), Government Gazette 119, 2010.

*Memorie van Toelichting* (Explanatory Memorandum).

*Kamerstuk* (Parliamentary Document) 31821, number 7.

### Ministry of Education, Culture & Science (OCW) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture & Innovation (EL&I)

*Kwaliteit in verscheidenheid. Strategische Agenda Hoger Onderwijs, Onderzoek en Wetenschap*, 1 July 2011.

### Inspectie van het onderwijs (Education Inspectorate)

*Boekhouder of wakend oog*, May 2009.

*Tussenrapportage alternatieve afstudeertrajecten in het hoger onderwijs*, October 2010.

*Alternatieve afstudeertrajecten en de bewaking van het eindniveau bij Hogeschool InHolland*, April 2011.

*Alternatieve afstudeertrajecten en de bewaking van het eindniveau in het Hoger Onderwijs*, April 2011.

### Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)

*Rapport van Bevindingen NVAO- Commissie onderzoek Hogeschool InHolland*, April 2011.

*Beoordelingskaders ten behoeve van het accreditatiestelsel*, 6 December 2010.

### Onderwijsraad (Education Council of the Netherlands)

*Advisering over Examinering, een stand van zaken*, August 2008.

## APPENDIX III RELEVANT SECTIONS OF THE WHW

### Section 7.10. Exams and final examinations

1. Every exam involves investigating the knowledge, insight and skills of the examinee, as well as an assessment of the findings of that investigation.
2. If the exams for units of study that belong to a program or the propaedeutic phase of a bachelor's program have been successfully completed, the final examination has been taken, insofar as the Exam Committee has not determined that the final examination also consists of an investigation that it must conduct as set down in the first paragraph.

### Section 7.11. Certificates and transcripts

1. As proof that an exam has been passed, the examiner or examiners concerned issue the relevant document.
2. As proof that a final examination has been passed, the Exam Committee awards a certificate, after the governing body of the institute has declared that all procedural requirements for the award have been met. One certificate is awarded per program. The final examination passed is listed on the certificate together with the relevant information that includes but is not restricted to:
  - a. the name of the institution and the name of the program involved as stated in the register referred to in [Section 6.13](#);
  - b. the units of study included in the final examination;
  - c. if appropriate, the related competencies, taking into account [Section 7.6, first paragraph](#);
  - d. the degree awarded as referred to in [Section 7.10a](#), first or second paragraph, and
  - e. the date on which the program was last accredited or the date of the initial accreditation of the program as referred to in [Section 5a.11, second paragraph](#), and
  - f. if a joint program or joint final project is concerned as referred to in [Section 7.3b](#), the name of the institution, or for a joint program, the institutions, that jointly provided the program or final project.
3. The person entitled to be awarded a certificate, in accordance with the rules determined by the governing body of the institution, can request the Exam Committee to delay the award.
4. The Exam Committee adds a supplement to the final examination certificate. The aim of the supplement is to provide insight into the nature and content of the completed program, in part with a view to the international recognition of programs. The supplement contains at least the following information:
  - a. the name of the program and the name of the institution that provided the program;
  - b. whether the program falls under academic education or higher professional education;
  - c. a description of the content of the program, and
  - d. the study load of the program.

The supplement is in either English or Dutch and is in line with the standard European format.

5. A person who has passed more than one exam and to whom a certificate, as referred to in paragraph two, cannot be awarded, receives on request a transcript issued by the Exam Committee concerned which at least states the exams which the person has passed.

### **Section 7.12. Exam Committee**

1. Every program or group of programs of the institution has an Exam Committee.
2. The Exam Committee is the body that determines, in an objective and expert manner, if a student meets the conditions set down in the Rules & Regulations (OER) regarding the knowledge, insight and skills required for the award of a qualification.

### **Section 7.12a. Exam Committee: appointment and composition**

1. The governing body of the institution installs the Exam Committee and appoints the members based on their expertise in the field of the program or group of programs concerned. At least one member should be tied as a lecturer to the program or to one of the programs in the group of programs that falls under the Exam Committee.
2. The governing body of the institution ensures that the Exam Committee has the required expertise and that its independent functioning is properly assured.
3. The governing body of the institution interviews candidate members before appointing them to an Exam Committee.

### **Section 7.12b. Tasks and powers of the Exam Committee**

1. In addition to the powers referred to in [Sections 7.11](#) and [7.12, second paragraph](#), the Exam Committee has the following tasks and powers:
  - a. assuring the quality of exams and final examinations with no prejudice to the stipulations in [Section 7.12c](#);
  - b. drawing up guidelines and instructions within the framework of the OER as referred to in [Section 7.13](#) in order to assess and approve the results of exams and final examinations;
  - c. the granting of permission, by the Exam Committee most eligible to do so, to a student to follow a program compiled as described in [Section 7.3d](#), for which the final examination leads to the award of a qualification, whereby the Exam Committee also indicates to which program of the institution this program is considered to belong in terms of the application of this Act, and
  - d. the granting of exemptions from one or more exams.
2. If a student or external student commits fraud, the Exam Committee can withdraw that person's right to take one or more exams or final examinations indicated by the Exam Committee for a period determined by the Exam Committee that does not exceed one year. In cases of serious fraud, at the proposal of the Exam Committee, the governing body of the institution can terminate the enrollment of the person involved.
3. The Exam Committee sets rules for performing its duties and exercising its powers as referred to in the first paragraph under a, b and d, and in the second paragraph for the measures it can take in this regard. The Exam Committee, under conditions it sets, can decide that not every exam has to be passed to determine that a final examination has been passed.
4. If a student submits a request or complaint to the Exam Committee that involves an examiner who is a member of that Exam Committee, the examiner concerned may not participate in the handling of that request or complaint.
5. Every year, the Exam Committee draws up a report on its activities and submits it to the governing body of the institution or the University Board.

### **Section 7.12c. Examiners**

1. The Exam Committee assigns examiners to conduct exams and determine the results thereof.
2. The examiners provide the Exam Committee with the requested explanations.

### **Section 7.13. Rules & Regulations (OER)**

1. The governing body of the institution draws up Rules & Regulations (OER) for every program or group of programs. The OER contains adequate and clear information on the program or group of programs.
2. With no prejudice to other stipulations of the Act in this regard, the OER sets out per program or group of programs the applicable procedures, rights and obligations regarding the education provided and exams. This includes at least the following:
  - a. the content of the program and of the associated examinations;
  - b. the content of the specializations within a program;
  - c. the quality of the knowledge, insight and skills a student should have acquired at the end of the program;
  - d. where necessary, the structure of practical exercises;
  - e. the study load of the program and of each unit of study it comprises;
  - f. the further regulations as referred to in [Sections 7.8b, sixth paragraph](#) and [7.9, fifth paragraph](#);
  - g. the master's programs to which [Section 7.4a, eighth paragraph](#) has been applied;
  - h. the number and sequence of the exams as well as the times at which these can be taken;
  - i. the full-time, part-time or dual-program structure of the program;
  - j. where necessary, the order in which, the timeframes and the number of times per academic year in which there is an opportunity to take the exams and final examinations;
  - k. where necessary, the period of validity of exams that have been passed, subject to the authority of the Exam Committee to extend such periods of validity;
  - l. whether the exams will be oral or written or taken in a different way, subject to the authority of the Exam Committee to make exceptions in special cases;
  - m. the way in which students with a disability or chronic illness are given a reasonable opportunity to take exams;
  - n. oral exams being open to the public, subject to the authority of the Exam Committee to make exceptions in special cases;
  - o. the timeframe within which the result of an exam is made known as well as if and how this timeframe can be deviated from;
  - p. the way in which and the period in which persons who have taken a written exam may inspect their assessed work;
  - q. the way in which and the period in which questions and assignments set or given within the framework of an exam conducted in writing are made available, together with the standards that were used to assess this exam;

- r. the grounds on which the Exam Committee can grant exemptions from one or more exams based on exams or final examinations passed earlier within the higher education system, or on knowledge and experience acquired outside the higher education system;
- s. where necessary, that the passing of exams is a condition for eligibility to take other exams;
- t. where necessary, the obligation to participate in practical exercises with a view to being eligible to take the exam concerned, subject to the authority of the Exam Committee to grant an exemption from this obligation and to impose replacement requirements if it so chooses;
- u. monitoring students' progress and individual student counseling, and
- v. if applicable: the way in which students are selected for special courses within a program as referred to in [Section 7.9b](#).

3. The OER sets out how a person can put into effect the right to follow a higher education bachelor's program as referred to in [Section 7.8a, fifth paragraph](#) and what requirements must be met in this regard.