## To: UC-E

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## Subject: Proposal for a central protocol on rules of order for the right of inspection and discussion of tests (examination review sessions)

# Introduction

I am writing to recommend the establishment of a central protocol[[1]](#footnote-1) concerning the rules of order for the right of inspection and discussion of tests (commonly referred to as the examination review) at the University of Twente. The main problem is the lack of standardised guidelines across the university or at the faculty level for degree programmes, examiners or students, with the potential to lead to inconsistencies and potential issues during the examination review process. The absence of a clear, central protocol about the purpose and rules of order for the examination review has resulted in examiners interpreting the rules independently; and adopting their own, sometimes differing practices, which has led to confusion and disparity among students, examiners, and degree programmes. This inconsistency affects students' experiences when seeking clarification on their examination results and creates challenges for both programmes and examiners in ensuring a fair and transparent process. A central protocol would address these concerns.

# The Problem in Practice

In practice, this inconsistency affects students' experiences when seeking clarification on their examination results. Currently, students encounter varying rules and expectations during examination reviews. Some examiners have set specific time limits and rules, such as no copying from the screen during reviews (Example 1, Appendix B), while others allow more flexibility (Example 2). Moreover, there's ambiguity regarding the purpose of the examination review. I have received valuable input from ten examiners, and their collective experience highlights the urgent need for a central protocol on the examination review. The insights from seven of these examiners reveal a range of significant concerns that have arisen during examination reviews, necessitating a comprehensive and standardised approach. These concerns include:

**1. Academic Misconduct:** During examination reviews, some students have been found altering papers or attempting to copy exam questions. This not only compromises the integrity of the review process but also raises issues of academic misconduct that need to be addressed.

**2. Grade Negotiation and Disputes:** Teachers have faced challenges when students come to review sessions with **strong** grade negotiation demands and, at times, confrontational disputes over their grades. This can make the review process difficult to manage.

**3. Confidentiality Issues:** Safeguarding the confidentiality of exam materials and students' work is of paramount **importance**, yet it has become an issue during examination reviews, which is a matter of concern.

**4. Managing Student Expectations:** Teachers have encountered difficulties managing the expectations of students, who may attend **review** sessions with a wide range of assumptions and hopes for grade changes. This can sometimes lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointment.

**5. Emotional Support:** In some cases, examiners have had to provide emotional support to students who become visibly upset **or** even angry during the review. Navigating these emotions while upholding the educational process presents a unique set of challenges.

These observations underline the critical need for a standardised and well-defined protocol for examination reviews. Such a protocol would address these concerns, promote fairness, transparency, and professionalism, and contribute to a more consistent and streamlined review process. It would also serve as a reference point for students, examiners, and degree programmes and help align the examination review process with the broader goals of assessment.

Top of Form

The current university wording in the Model Education and Examination Regulations (EER) permits students to discuss and review their test with the examiner without explicitly defining the purpose or limitations of the review. This lack of clarity can lead to potential misunderstandings between students and examiners. The absence of a central protocol has resulted in examiners needing to formulate their own "rules of order" for the examination review, as illustrated in Example 1 (Appendix B). This creates issues related to the examination's confidentiality, fairness in grading, and logistical organisation. Inconsistent practices make it challenging to ensure a fair and transparent process.

# Solution

To address these challenges, I recommend the establishment of a comprehensive central protocol concerning the rules of order for examination reviews at the University of Twente that:

1. Clearly defines the purpose and rules of order for examination reviews.
2. Provides consistent guidelines for students, examiners, and degree programmes.
3. Enhances transparency and safeguards the quality of assessment.
4. Aligns with the university's commitment to maintaining academic standards.

# Implementation and Responsible Parties

To establish a central protocol the following steps should be taken:

1. **Development of a central protocol:** The UC-E, should initiate the development of a comprehensive central protocol on the rules of order for the examination review. This protocol should be drafted by the Strategy and Policy Department considering input from relevant stakeholders, including programmes, Examination Boards, examiners, students, and the Centre for Educational Support (CES).
2. **Safeguarding by the Examination Boards:** Once the protocol is formulated, it should be safeguarded and upheld by the Examination Boards, ensuring its implementation and enforcement across all programmes and faculties. According to article 7.12, first paragraph of the WHW, the Examination Board is responsible for safeguarding the quality of the organisation and the procedures surrounding examination and final examinations.
3. **Inclusion in Rules and Guidelines:** The finalised protocol should be formally adopted into the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Boards, as is already the case for the existing [Rules of Order for Written Tests](https://www.utwente.nl/en/eemcs/education/examination-board/examiners/guidelines/orderrules/). This ensures that the protocol is readily accessible to all programmes, examiners and students, serving as a point of reference for any examination-related inquiries.
4. **Communication and training:** The new protocol should be communicated to all Examination Boards, programmes, examiners, students, and examination administrators (Centre for Educational Support – CES). The information should be available via a dedicated webpage. Additionally, information sessions for programmes and examiners can be conducted to familiarise them with the protocol’s contents and implications.

The timeline for implementing the central protocol should be determined through collaboration between the UC-E and relevant stakeholders. A clear schedule should be established to ensure a smooth transition to the new protocol.

# Background

The Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) currently states in article 7.13, second paragraph that the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) should lay down the applicable procedures and rights and obligations of the degree programmes with regard to education and examination, including specific rules relating to the right of inspection and discussion. This is further detailed in points p. and q. of the aforementioned article, which state that “the manner in which, and the period during which the student who has taken a written examination, is allowed to inspect their work”; and “the manner in which and the period during which questions and assignments, asked or given in the context of a written examination, can be taken into account, and the standards used for assessment”, must be included in the EER of the degree programme(s). Article 3.10 of the Model and Guideline Education and Examination Regulations (Model EER) of the Bachelor programmes (2023-2024), establishes how these rules are laid down at the University of Twente (refer to Appendix A for the full text).

The operationalisation of these legal frameworks is left to the individual examiner to decide upon. Apart from certain aspects of the ‘’how’’ and ‘’when’’, the university has established no further guidelines in the model EER or policies elsewhere which elaborate on how the examination review should be undertaken. I am aware of a small number of cases where this has proven problematic for examiners for several reasons, including students putting unfair pressure on examiners to inflate grades, ensuring the confidentiality of the examination questions and the work of other students, and the actual amount of time taken to review the examination with each individual student. A number of examiners see the need to formulate their own ‘’rules of order’’ for the examination review in the absence of university-defined policies as can be seen from the examples in Appendix B. These differ from basic instructions to very detailed ‘’rules of order’’ about the logistical organisation and how students should conduct themselves during the examination review.

Other than what is stated in the Model EER, the university has not further defined the purpose of the examination review. Currently, the student has the right to access the examination review for the purposes of discussing and reviewing their test based on the student’s wishes and not those of the examiner. This limited wording in the Model EER does not fully incorporate the needs of examiners and has led to a small number of teachers adding their own interpretations of the purpose of the examination review: clearly stating what they believe the purpose to be and also, not to be.

The wording in the Model EER may also be interpreted ambiguously, the use of the wording “review” and “the right to discussion” may imply that there is some negotiation possible in the grading. The current view of the university is that the current wording in the Model EER is sufficient for the purpose of the examination review, with aspects such as the importance of providing constructive feedback to support a student’s learning and development not explicitly mentioned. The wording in the Model EER is also open to interpretation when it states ‘’together with the examiner’’, as can be seen from Example 1 (Appendix B) that the examiner is not physically present at the examination review. The examiner is still willing to answer ‘’requests for further explanation’’ asynchronously although this could be argued negates the student’s right to ‘’discussion’’. However, with the increasing use of digital testing formats, the examiner may not even need to be present for the inspection and should have the option to answer questions from students asynchronously, as is already the practice in other universities where dedicated platforms have been developed for this purpose. Examination administrators or teaching assistants could organise the logistical set-up and be present for the review, allowing for more efficient use of examiners’ time and increased flexibility and accessibility for students in reviewing the examination.

When it comes to the role of the examination board, as outlined in article 7.12, first paragraph of the WHW, their duty is to safeguard the quality of the organisation and procedures related to assessment and final examinations. If we consider the exam review to be an inherent part of the assessment process, it naturally falls within the existing purview of the Examination Board's responsibilities.

# Link to the Quality of Assessment Pyramid

The Quality of Assessment pyramid encompasses multiple layers, each vital in safeguarding the quality of assessment. Careful consideration of the interplay between these layers is essential. Of particular significance in the context of the examination review are the following layers:

1. **Assessment policy:** Establishing a clear, institution-wide protocol for the examination review that aligns with legal **frameworks** and educational vision is essential for preserving consistency and fairness. This should also take into consideration the university's vision on assessment and align with the principles of the UT assessment policy (currently being updated).
2. **Assessment competence & tasks**: It is important that examiners possess the necessary expertise, including assessment competence, enabling them to design and grade assessment in line with **the** principles of constructive alignment, and have incorporated best practices such as the ‘’four-eyes’’ principle thus ensuring both the validity and reliability of assessment. This enables the examiner to be confident in the quality of their assessment when it comes to grading and discussing the assessment during the examination review process. The examination review serves an important function in ensuring the transparency of assessment. This goes beyond merely informing students about the assessment criteria in advance; it allows them to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the grading process was applied to their assessment. This, in turn, enables them to learn from past mistakes and ensures they understand how the grade was reached.
3. **Assessment organisation:** The examination board has the overall responsibility to safeguard the quality of assessment, and the quality and the procedures surrounding tests and examinations. It should play a pivotal role in ensuring the protocol is followed and also that it deals with any cases of academic misconduct in line with the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Board applicable to the study programme.

# Conclusion

The establishment of a central protocol for examination reviews is essential to eliminate inconsistencies, enhance transparency, and support the overall quality of education at the University of Twente. It is imperative that the university takes steps to address this issue and provide clear guidelines for all stakeholders involved in the examination review process.

# Appendix A

Excerpt from University of Twente Guideline and Model Education and Examination Regulations for Bachelor Programmes 2023-2024

**Article 3.10**        **Right of inspection and discussion**

1. Students are entitled to discuss and review their test together with the examiner, and the examiner is to explain the assessment.
2. If the examiner holds a group discussion of the assessment, the student must use that opportunity to exercise the right to discussion referred to in paragraph 1. If a student cannot attend the group discussion or if the student is not given the opportunity at the group discussion to discuss the reasons for the examiner’s assessment of the test with the examiner, the student may submit a request for individual discussion with the examiner no later than on the first working day following the working day of the group discussion. Students are informed about the group discussions and the aforementioned deadline. The individual discussion is to take place no later than three working days prior to the next test opportunity.
3. If there is no group discussion of the test, then a student may submit a request to the examiner for an individual discussion within ten days after publication of the results. The individual discussion is to take place no later than three working days prior to the next test opportunity.
4. Individual and group discussions must take place no later than five weeks after the publication of the test results, but at least three working days prior to the next test opportunity, in the presence of the examiner or a substitute designated for that purpose.
5. Students are to be given the opportunity to inspect their assessed work for a period of two years following the assessment.

# Appendix B

Examples of Canvas announcements to students by examiners regarding the examination review

## Example 1

1. You will possibly need maximally 20 minutes for checking this exam. Because xxxx has a limited capacity, be aware that more students will need to check the exam and so please do not use more time than necessary.
2. During the exam review, you are not allowed to copy anything from your screen.
3. During the review, you can state requests for further explanation in Remindo and we will answer your questions today.
4. Please mention in Remindo if we also made a possible error so that we can correct this.

## Example 2

You can see the scores you got, remarks from the graders and the answers you filled in during the test. You can compare them with the solutions for the exam questions which have been posted on Canvas. If you have questions about your scores or something is unclear, I will be available for you there.

## Example 3

The inspection session will take place on campus in room xxxx in the x building. You will be able to log in on the Chromebooks and view your work. There is a limit to the capacity of persons who can be present in that room at the same time. Therefore, I would like to kindly request you to sign up via the People’s page.

**Time**

**Currently, we have the whole afternoon blocked in the schedule, which is generally not needed. I have divided the inspection session into three half-hour blocks of time.**

**14.30 - 15.00 (Session 1)**

**15.00 – 15.30 (Session 2)**

**15.30 - 16.00 (Session 3)**

**Please indicate your preference when signing up for these sessions via the People's page. You can choose one of the three sessions and sign up.**

**IMPORTANT: Rules of order for the inspection session**

Treat the inspection session as an exam. This means: **no phones are allowed at the inspection session. You may not take notes of the questions or the answers. The only thing allowed on the desk is the Chromebook.**

**Review your work quietly and do not talk with your classmates**. This is very distracting to the other students who are trying to review their work! Of course, you may ask questions to the support staff or to me.

The session is meant to provide you with insight into how the grading is done and what you can expect in future exams. The inspection session is not meant to negotiate on the grades or ‘look for **extra points’.  For students whose grade is between 5.1– 5.4: these answers have been double-checked already.**

I will post an overview of how the grading was done, some frequently made mistakes, and some tips on the xxxx modules page.

1. The term protocol is used in this document in accordance with the definition provided on the website of the general examination board of the UT [Policy, regulations and guidelines | Home (utwente.nl)](https://www.utwente.nl/en/examination-board/Policy-rules-guidelines/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)