

**Rules and Guidelines
of the ECRO Joint Examination Board**

**Master's degree programme in Cardiovascular
Research**

Master's degree programme in Oncology

2018-2019 academic year
School of Medical Sciences, VU University Medical Center Amsterdam

Adopted by the Central Examination Board on 23 August 2018

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Article 1 Scope of application

1. Rules and Guidelines as stipulated in Article 7.12, paragraph 4 of the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek, WHW*). (See annex 1).
2. These Rules and Guidelines are confirmed by the Central Examination Board (Central EB) and the Epidemiology, Cardiovascular Research and Oncology Joint Examination Board (ECRO Joint EB).
3. These Rules and Guidelines apply to the interim examinations and final examinations of the Master's programmes in Cardiovascular Research and Oncology. They are related to the Academic and Examination Regulations (OER) that apply to these programmes, which have to be adopted by the Faculty Board.
4. These regulations apply to all students following the degree programme in this academic year, irrespective of when they started that degree programme.
5. If a provision in the Rules and Guidelines is contrary to a provision in the OER that applies to the programme in question, then the OER provision will apply.

Article 2 Definitions

The following is a list of the key terms (and their definitions) used in the context of this document:

Act	The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW).
Academic and Examination Regulations	The Academic and Examination Regulations (OER) for the Master's programme in Cardiovascular Research and for the Master's programme in Oncology of the VUmc School of Medical Sciences, as adopted by the dean.
Central Examination Board	The Central EB operates in accordance with the Act (WHW). The Central Examination Board supervises the two Examination sub-Boards.
Functional handicap	Any handicap that is temporary or permanent in nature, and which limits the student's ability to follow classes, take examinations and/or obtain a practical education.
Final examination	The body of successfully completed interim examinations in the components included in the programme, possibly also supplemented by an assessment of the student's knowledge, understanding and skills, conducted by examiners appointed by the Examination Board.
Interim examination or constituent interim examination	An assessment of the knowledge, understanding, attitude and/or skills of the examination candidate, as well as the evaluation of the results of that assessment. An interim examination can take various forms and may be referred to in different ways: test, assessment, assignment, report,

	thesis, recitation, presentation etc.
Examiner	The individual appointed by the Central Examination Board to conduct interim examinations and assess the marking, in accordance with Article 7.12c of the Act.
Invigilator	The individual appointed by the examiner to be present on his or her behalf during the completion of an interim or final examination.
Practical component	A practical educational exercise as defined in Article 7.13, paragraph 2d of the Act and as described in Article 2 of the Academic and Examination Regulations.

Article 3 Procedure followed by the Central EB

1. The Central EB is responsible for compliance with the statutory duties of examination boards, in accordance with the WHW.
2. The Central EB has mandated subtasks to the ECRO Examination sub-Board (ECRO Joint EB).
3. The members of the Central EB are appointed by the dean.
4. At least one of the members is an external member, and does not work for the School of Medical Sciences in another capacity.
5. The dean guarantees that Central EB will perform its duties independently and competently.

Article 4 Composition of the ECRO Joint EB

1. The ECRO Joint EB consists of four members, each of whom is an expert in the subject matter of one of the three degree programmes.
2. At least one member teaches within one of the three degree programmes to which these rules and regulations apply.
3. The ECRO Joint EB appoints a chairperson from amongst its members. The chairperson is responsible for the day-to-day management of the ECRO Joint EB.
4. The ECRO Joint EB appoints a vice-chairperson who will deputize for the chairperson in his/her absence.
5. When appointing the members of the ECRO Joint EB, the dean will be advised by a Nomination Advisory Committee.
6. Before a member is appointed, the dean questions the Central EB and the ECRO Joint EB regarding the intended appointment. This will involve a member of the ECRO Joint EB who sits on the Nomination Advisory Committee.
7. The Central EB has the task of safeguarding the independent and expert performance of the ECRO Joint EB.
8. Each member of the ECRO Joint EB is appointed for three years, and may only be reappointed once.
9. When a vacancy is filled, that position will only continue for its remaining term. All vacancies should be filled as soon as possible after they occur.
10. The dean is responsible for ensuring that the ECRO Joint EB operates independently and that it provides relevant expertise.

Article 5 *Procedure followed by the ECRO Joint EB*

1. The ECRO Joint EB meets ten times each year, or as often as its chairperson deems necessary. The timetables of each meeting will be published well in advance.
2. The Board's meetings are not held in public.
3. The Faculty Board is entitled to appoint a Secretary to the ECRO Joint EB.
4. The agenda for ECRO Joint EB meetings is drawn up by the chairperson and the official secretary. This agenda is then sent to all members at least one week before the meeting, together with all documents pertaining to that meeting. Minutes are taken at all meetings, and copies are sent to the members no later than two weeks after the meeting.
5. Any requests or complaints should be filed with the official secretary of the ECRO Joint EB, in full, at least 10 days before the scheduled date of the meeting.
6. Such requests must be filed together with the requisite appendices, as prescribed by the rules published on the Master's programmes' website.
7. Within 20 working days of receiving a request, the ECRO Joint EB will reach a decision on the matter and will communicate this to the applicant by email, the decision is also filed in the digital archive of the student. Such decisions on requests may be postponed once only, for a maximum of 10 days. Applicants will be informed about this in writing.
8. The ECRO Joint EB cannot reach a decision unless at least two members are present. If a vote is required, a simple majority is sufficient to confirm a decision. In the event of a draw, the chairperson has the casting vote.
9. In the event that a student has submitted a complaint or request to the Examination Board that involves an examiner who is a member of the Examination Board, the examiner in question will take no part in dealing with that issue, or in reaching a decision on the matter.
10. When any exam or request to be discussed in the ECRO Joint EB meeting concerns an exam held by an examiner/mentor/tutor who is member of the ECRO Joint EB, the individual in question will take no part in reaching a decision on the matter.
11. All members of the ECRO Joint EB are bound by a duty of confidentiality. This means that no details of any issues discussed in the ECRO Joint EB meeting will be provided to anyone who is not involved in these Master's programmes,
- 12.
13. The ECRO Joint EB safeguards its position by operating independently of students and of the organization.
14. The chairperson may grant a mandate to one of the members of the ECRO Joint EB to act with the authority of the ECRO Joint EB.
15. The procedure for signing degree certificates was established by the Central EB.
16. The ECRO Joint EB drafts procedural regulations for the examinations (and interim examinations), details of which are appended (Annex 3) to these Rules and Regulations.
17. All other regulations pertaining to the appointment, responsibility and operation of the ECRO Joint EB are set out in procedures and protocols, including the allocation of tasks to the Central EB and the ECRO Joint EB.

Article 6 *The examiners*

1. After consulting the ECRO Joint EB, the Central EB appoints examiners to the examinations in each of the Master's programmes. The Programme Director is empowered to propose potential examiners. Examiners are always appointed in accordance with the wishes of the Programme Director in question.
2. The appointment is for a period of three years. If the individual in question fails to perform adequately, they will be relieved of their duties.
3. The examiners are responsible for the quality of the examinations, for conducting examinations under the proper conditions, and for confirming the marks awarded.

4. The examiner of the educational unit in question is responsible for the final assessment of an exam. This mark becomes legally valid when the document in question is signed by the examiner or by a coordinator/assessor who has been granted the authority to sign such documents.
5. Examiners are charged with the selection and supervision of coordinators/assessors (to whom they have granted the necessary authority) for that particular educational unit.
6. In general, course coordinators will be the examiners for their own courses.
7. On receiving details from one or more assessors, the examiner will establish the results for a given educational unit.
8. The examiners deliver a report to the ECRO Joint EB concerning the examination (or examinations) for which they are personally responsible.
9. Details of the names and signatures of the examiners and authorized assessors/coordinators are recorded in the register of examiners.

Article 7 *Registration for interim examinations*

1. Students register for written interim examinations via the internet, in accordance with the guidelines set out in the 'Registration for courses and interim examinations' regulation.
2. Students register for oral interim examinations in consultation with the examiner.

Article 8 *Examinations involving students with a disability*

1. In written examinations, students suffering from dyslexia can apply for a half-hour extension to the examination time. However, they must first present a written declaration from a recognized expert in that field, confirming their status, to the Master's programme coordinator.
2. In case of any other disability than mentioned under article 8.1, a tailor-made decision will be made by the ECRO Joint EB.

Article 9 *Approval for internships, optional courses and literature study*

In the case of students who are participating in a given programme (internship, optional course and/or literature study) without written consent, the ECRO Joint EB is authorized to expel the individuals in question from that programme and to cancel any credits that they may have been awarded.

Article 10 *Language of instruction for interim or final examination*

1. The interim or final examination will be completed in English.
2. The language of the literature used for instruction must be the same as the language of instruction.

Article 11 *Questions and assignments, subject matter and duration of interim examinations*

1. None of the individual questions or assignments in the interim examination will relate to anything other than the previously announced interim examination material. Details of this material are mainly announced prior to the start of the period in which the teaching for this interim examination takes place. Full details will be published (in the online study guide or on Canvas at least one month before the scheduled date of the interim examination. These details will not be modified between the start of the programme and the scheduled date of the examination.
2. The relevant examiner) will provide students with the opportunity to consult a sample interim examination question sheet, model answers, and information concerning the relevant assessment standards.

3. The educational material covered by the examination is similar to that covered by the subsequent resit examination. However, any students who resit an examination in a different academic year should consult the course coordinator for details of any changes that may subsequently have been made to the educational unit in question.
4. Each interim examination is designed to ensure that students will have sufficient time to answer all of the questions. In general, written interim examinations should be completed in no more than 2.5 hours. The examiner can decide whether to extend or reduce the duration of an examination. There is no minimum duration.
5. A written exam includes a cover sheet, which always includes the following details: - the name of the course and the course code; - the date, the times at which the examination starts and ends; - the practical aids or similar devices that students are permitted to use during the examination (calculators, reference books, etc.); - the mode of response or instructions for filling in the questions; - the scoring or weighting of individual questions).

Article 12 *Invigilation of interim examinations*

1. In principle, the examiner with primary responsibility for the examination in question will be responsible for the invigilation involved. The programme staff are tasked with carrying out the requisite procedures. The examiner should, preferably, be present at the examination. Failing this, the examiner should at least be accessible, either in person or by phone.
2. Any invigilators other than the examiner will officially be selected and instructed by the examiner or by the ECRO Joint EB, and will act on behalf of the examiner in question or the ECRO Joint EB. Student assistants are only permitted to invigilate in the presence, and under the supervision, of the examiner with primary responsibility. If urgent and compelling circumstances prevent the responsible examiner from attending the examination, then he or she is responsible for appointing one or more suitably authorized invigilators.
3. There should be at least two invigilators for every 50 students sitting the examination.

Article 13 *Procedure during practicals*

If a risk evaluation has been carried out for a given course, the students are required to adhere to the rules and to sign a document to this effect prior to the start of the course in question. Any students who have not signed the risk evaluation document can be excluded from the course.

Article 14 *The assessment of interim examinations*

1. Final marks are expressed as follows:
 - a. in whole or half numbers on a scale from 1.0 to 10.0, where 10 is the highest mark, *or*;
 - b. as a level indicator on the scale of 'Good', 'Pass', 'Fail', *or*;
 - c. as a level indicator on the scale of 'Met', 'Not Met'.
2. Any final marks ranging from 5.1 to 5.9 are not listed as such. The examiner will round up a final mark of 5.5 to a 6, provided that the mark was at least 5.50 before being rounded up.
3. If a component includes a number of constituent examinations, the results obtained for these subsidiary components can (in addition to the series listed in paragraph 1) be expressed as numbers on a scale from 1.0 to 10.0, rounded to one decimal place. The final mark is expressed as the weighted average of the results. Details of the weighting of each constituent interim examination must be given in the study guide. The final mark will be rounded off as follows: a value of less than 0.25 will be rounded down, 0.25 to 0.74 rounded to 0.5, more than 0.74 will be rounded up.

4. The method of assessment will be sufficiently transparent to enable examination candidates to see how their examination results were arrived at.

Article 15 *Resits of written examinations*

1. With regard to resits, the most recent result is definitive.
2. Students may resit any examinations once every academic year.
3. The students who have successfully finished all interim examinations except one can submit a request to the examination board ECRO for an extra opportunity. The request must be motivated and the student has to send a study plan that is signed by the program coordinator of the master Oncology & master Cardiovascular Research. If the request is approved, the examination may have another form than stated in the exam manual. Excluded from this article are practical examinations including internships, literature studies and theses.

Article 16 *Extension of the validity period for exam results*

1. In response to individual requests, the ECRO Joint EB is authorized to extend the validity period set down in the OER.
2. Any requests for credits' period of validity to be extended can be submitted up to twelve months before the date on which the credits' validity is due to expire, but no later than one month before that date.
3. The ECRO joint EB EB may decide to extend the period of validity only after the applicant has passed an additional examination in the relevant subject matter.
4. When requesting an extension to the validity period for examination results, students are required to submit a study plan indicating that they will graduate within a period of twelve months. This plan should be feasible and measurable, and must be signed by the study advisor (in agreement with the examiner of the Master's programme in question).
5. Extensions will only be granted if the student is likely to graduate within a period of twelve months.
6. The period of validity can be extended by a maximum of twelve months, based on an assessment of the current relevance of the exam materials in question.
7. It is not possible to validate expired results.
8. If a student ascribes the expiry of the validity period to 'personal circumstances', the ECRO Joint EB may approach the student's study advisor and/or coordinator for further details.

Article 17 *Retention period of the examinations*

1. Bachelor's theses or final study assignments, and Master's theses are retained for at least seven years.
2. Exam question papers and answers, including any assignments and other written materials for which a mark (or constituent mark) is awarded, and exam results, are retained for at least two years.

Article 18 *Final examination*

1. The final examination is considered to have been completed once the student has passed the examinations for each of the individual programme components relating to the degree programme in question.
2. As an exception to paragraph 20.1, prior to assessing the result of the examination, the ECRO Joint EB can undertake an assessment of the student's knowledge with regard to one or more degree programme components, if and in so far as the results of the relevant examinations in question warrant it.

Article 19 *Determining the result of the final examination*

1. Once a student has met all of the requirements of the degree programme, the certificate is requested by the student. The administrator of SMS prepares a list of the earned ECTS of all the programme components including the grades. This is checked by the programme coordinator and the chairperson of the ECRO Joint EB. If all requirements are met, approval is granted including the *judicium* when appropriate.
2. The degree certificate will bear the date of the last interim examination.

Article 20 *Degree classifications (judicium)*

1. If a student has demonstrated exceptional competence, the classification 'cum laude' (distinction) may be awarded (in which case, 'cum laude' will appear on the degree certificate).
2. Master's students are awarded the 'cum laude' classification if they achieve an average mark of at least 8 for all components of the final examination, if they have never received lower than a 8 for the major and minor thesis and no (partial) marks lower than a 7, and if they obtain all of their marks within 3 years of commencing their course of study.
3. This classification is only awarded to students who did not have to resit any examinations.
4. Exemptions granted by the ECRO Joint EB are not taken into account when determining degree classifications.
5. No degree classification will be awarded if the student has been awarded exemptions amounting to 20% of the total amount of ECTS credits in the Master's Programme.
6. No degree classification is awarded to students found guilty of academic misconduct.
7. Provided that it gives its reasons for doing so, the ECRO Joint EB can deviate from the criteria cited in paragraph 21.2.

Article 21 *Assignment of Topmaster status*

1. In 2002, the Master's in Oncology programme obtained permission from the Ministry of Education to award certain students Topmaster (an internationally oriented Dutch Master's programme) status. The ECRO Joint EB selects students who are eligible for Topmaster status, based on the OER.
2. Topmaster status enables students to intensify their course of study by taking additional optional courses (involving a total of 12 ECTS credits).
3. Literature surveys must be of a sufficiently high standard that they can be submitted (as reviews) to peer-reviewed journals.
4. In addition, the second internship should be performed at a reputable research institute outside the Netherlands.
5. In order to be considered for a Topmaster, students should:
 - a. Have a mark of > 7.5 for the Bachelor's/Laboratory Science (HLO) scientific internship.
 - b. Have an average mark of >7.5 for the compulsory courses with a minimum score of no more than one 7.0.
 - c. Have passed all courses for the educational unit in question at the first attempt.
6. Eligibility for the Topmaster programme is restricted to the top 20% of the students in any given academic year.
7. In exceptional situations, the ECRO Joint EB can deviate from the above, provided that it gives its reasons for doing so.

Article 22 *Degree certificate, list of marks and diploma supplement*

1. Once the Executive Board has confirmed that the procedural requirements for issuing a degree certificate have been met, the ECRO Joint EB awards a degree certificate as proof that the student has successfully passed their final examination.
2. The degree certificate is signed by the chair of the ECRO Joint EB or by an authorized deputy.
3. The diploma supplement gives details of the components included in the final examination and their respective study loads, along with the results achieved and the student's average final mark. In addition, the degree certificate will include references to components that were not included in the final examination but for which the student was examined, at his/her request, before the result of the final examination was determined (provided that the student passed the components in question).
4. The ECRO Joint EB will append a diploma supplement to the degree certificate, outlining the nature and content of the degree programme.

Article 23 *Standards*

1. In making decisions, the Central EB, the ECRO Joint EB and the examiner will apply the following standards as guidelines, and in the event of any conflict will weigh these standards against each other:
 - a. Maintenance of the quality of the examination (or constituent examination) and of the selection requirements involved.
 - b. The student's personal circumstances, these should be reported to the academic advisors within a period of three months after they first arose.
 - c. Applicability
2. Where necessary, the ECRO Joint EB will consult the academic advisors before ruling on individual cases.

Article 24 *Exemption from an interim examination or practical*

1. A request for exemption from an interim examination must be submitted to the official secretary of the ECRO Joint EB at least six weeks before the start of the relevant component. The relevant form (which is available at the faculty's website) should be used for this purpose.
2. After consulting the relevant examiner, the ECRO Joint EB can grant exemption from an interim examination, practical or fieldwork based on the following:
 - a. a successfully completed interim examination, practical or fieldwork in higher education in the Netherlands or elsewhere, which corresponds in terms of content, level and study load with the component from which exemption is sought;
 - b. knowledge and/or skills that are comparable in content, level and extent acquired outside higher education.
3. Exemption cannot be granted for a thesis or final assignment.
4. Any students who wish to study at another faculty or university (in the Netherlands or elsewhere), and who wish to use that period of study to meet the requirements for specific interim examinations, must obtain prior approval from the ECRO Joint EB.

Article 25 *Departure from standard programmes*

1. Any request to deviate from the curriculum must be submitted to the ECRO Joint EB in writing, substantiated with specific reasons. The ECRO Joint EB will issue a ruling on the matter within six weeks of receiving the request. Such requests will be rejected whenever:

- a. the proposed alternative component does not correspond with the component it is intended to replace, in terms of level and scope.
 - b. the proposed set of alternative components does not correspond with the set of components it is intended to replace, in terms of level and scope.
2. Any students wishing to complete a component of the degree programme at another university (in the Netherlands or elsewhere) must first obtain the approval of the ECRO Joint EB before commencing the period of study in question. If such approval is granted, the results achieved at the other university will be incorporated in the student's personal study programme.
 3. Students registered for a degree programme at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam are entitled to design their own programme, using teaching components provided by the university. This is subject to the provision that a final examination is offered for each of these components. Any such programme must be approved by the ECRO Joint EB. For legal purposes, the latter must also indicate the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam degree programme to which the student's programme is deemed to belong.

Article 26 Penalties and procedures in relation to academic misconduct and other forms of misconduct

The ECRO Joint EB has a protocol for academic misconduct (see Annex 3).

Article 27 Year report

The ECRO Joint EB will compile a report of its activities during the previous academic year. The ECRO Joint EB will submit this annual report to the dean no later than 1 November. Upon request interested parties may read the year report or parts of it.

Article 28 Student archive

Every student has a digital archive. The examination board ECRO files its decisions about student requests and misconduct in this archive.

Article 29 Amendments to these Rules and Guidelines

No amendments are made in relation to the current academic year, unless there is a reasonable expectation that this will not damage the interests of the students.

Article 30 Appeal against decision of the Examination Board

The student can lodge an appeal against the decision of the Examination Board with the Examination Appeals Board.

Article 31 Unforeseen circumstances

In any circumstances not covered by these Rules and Guidelines, the ECRO Joint EB will issue a ruling on the matter.

Article 32 Entry into force

These Rules and Guidelines come into force on 1 September 2018.

Adopted by the Central EB on 23 August 2018.

Annex 1 Statutory duties of the Examination Board

The Examination Board:

1	Maintaining and assuring the quality of all examinations in the study programme	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12b paragraph 1(a)
2	The Examination Board will issue a degree certificate as proof that the student has satisfied all the requirements of the final degree assessment once the board of the institution has confirmed that the procedural requirements for issuing the degree certificate have been met.	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.11, paragraph 2 and paragraph 4
3	Establishing, in an objective and professional manner, whether a student has met the conditions set by the Academic and Examination Regulations regarding the knowledge, insights and skills required to obtain a degree.	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12, paragraph 2
4	Establishing guidelines and instructions within the framework of the Academic and Examination Regulations, as referred to in Article 7.13	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12b paragraph 1(b)
5	The granting of an exemption from one or more examinations.	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12b paragraph 1(d)
6	Taking measures with regard to academic misconduct	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12b, paragraph 2
7	The appointment of examiners to conduct examinations and determine the results	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12c
8	Granting a student permission to follow a flexible study programme that includes an examination leading to the award of a degree	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12b paragraph 1(c) Article 7.3d
9	Issuing a statement to those who have passed more than one examination but who are not entitled to a degree certificate as referred to in paragraph two	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.11, paragraph 5
10	Dealing with requests and complaints	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12b, paragraph 4
11	Drawing up an annual report on its activities.	Higher Education and Research Act Art. 7.12b, paragraph 5

Annex 2 Rules of Procedure

Procedure for the completion of written final examination components:

1. In order to participate in an interim examination, students must show valid proof of registration and a valid ID. A scan of the ID is not allowed.
2. Access to the examination room will be refused to students who have not registered for the examination, unless the examiner decides differently.
3. Students are obliged to follow the instructions of the examiner and/or invigilator(s).
4. Unless this is expressly permitted, it is forbidden to take books, notes or other items that may serve as assistance into the examination room. Portable telephones or similar devices should be turned off.
5. Any student who arrives later than thirty minutes after the officially scheduled starting time will be excluded from sitting the examination, unless the examiner decides differently.
6. It is not permitted to leave the examination room within thirty minutes after the officially scheduled starting time.
7. It is not permitted to wear clothing which covers most, or the whole, of the face.
8. It is not permitted to eat or drink, unless the examiner decides differently.
9. When students leave the examination room, all examination materials and evaluation forms provided must be handed in or left with a blank sheet facing upwards, unless the examiner decides differently.
10. The student is not allowed to leave the examination room within the last 15 minutes of the examination.
11. When the examination papers are handed in, students must sign their name on the entry list, as proof of participation.
12. In highly exceptional cases, the invigilator can decide to permit exceptions to the provisions in paragraphs 9.4, 9.5 and 9.6. This must always be reported to the relevant examiner and/or the ECRO Joint EB.
13. Any student who fails to abide by the provisions of these articles may be excluded from further participation in the relevant examination by the ECRO Joint EB or the examiner.

Procedure regarding use of the toilet

1. No students will be allowed to use the toilet until one and a half hours after the start of the examination.
2. Any students who, prior to the examination, have submitted a medical certificate to the study advisor stating that they must be allowed to use the toilet within the stated period, will be placed in a separate examination room or in a separate area of the same examination room.
3. Prior to the examination, any students who – due to acute illness – must be allowed to use the toilet must submit a medical certificate to the invigilation coordinator. Such students will then be placed in a separate examination room or in a separate area of the same examination room.
4. For each group taking a given examination, only one student at a time may use the toilet.
5. The invigilator asks students who wish to use the toilet to show that they have no practical aids or similar devices on their person. The invigilator shall also ensure that any students visiting the toilet during the examination will neither have contact with any other students nor be able to consult practical aids or similar devices by any means whatsoever.
6. If students want to use the toilet, they must leave all the examination material issued to them (with a blank sheet facing upwards) on the desk at which they are sitting the examination.

Annex 3 Academic misconduct protocol

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Abbreviations and definitions:

ECRO –the master programmes Epidemiology, Cardiovascular Research and Oncology of the School of Medical Sciences.

GNK – Bachelors and Masters of Medicine

CEB – Central Examination Board; the legally responsible Examination Board

EsubB – sub-Boards with a mandate from the CEB to perform various executive duties

Examination – the assessment of a student’s knowledge, understanding and skills with regard to an educational unit. The assessment is expressed as a final mark. An examination can be completed in parts by means of two or more constituent examinations. An exam resit always covers the same material as the original examination.

1. Legislation pertaining to academic misconduct

The subject of this protocol is described in

Article 7.12b paragraph 2 of the Higher Education and Research Act. If a student or external student is found guilty of academic misconduct, the Examination Board may withdraw the right of the individual concerned to sit one or more examinations (to be specified by the Examination Board) for a period (to be determined by the Examination Board) of no more than one year. In cases of serious academic misconduct, and in response to a proposal by the Examination Board, the board of the institution may officially terminate the programme registration of the individual concerned.

2. The importance of identifying academic misconduct

In the academic world, academic misconduct is very harmful as it undermines the integrity of science, confidence in the physician/researcher, the value of educational programmes, and the status of VU University Medical Center Amsterdam. Moreover, in cases of academic misconduct, it is not possible to reliably assess what the student in question has actually learned i.e. the quality of the course of study’s end product. It is precisely these points that are crucially important to the Examination Board, in view of its duty to guarantee the quality of the assessment and of the end product. It is important to convey the clear message that this behaviour will not be tolerated and that a strict monitoring system is in place. This protocol provides the Examination Board with the guidelines it needs to transparently and clearly check for academic misconduct, to follow structured procedures

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in suspected cases of academic misconduct, to impose penalties, and to formulate procedures for the prevention of academic misconduct. This protocol has been incorporated into the rules and guidelines governing the degree programmes offered by VU Medical Center Amsterdam's School of Medical Sciences.

3. *Various types of academic misconduct*

Cheating and plagiarism are defined as any act or omission by a student that partially or entirely precludes making an accurate assessment of their knowledge, understanding and skills, or those of another student. Some examples of what we mean by the term 'academic misconduct' are described below. This is not an exhaustive list of academic misconduct.

Copying someone else's work

- a. being in possession of aids or resources (pre-programmed calculator, mobile phone, books, syllabi, notes, etc.) which are not expressly permitted during the examination;
- b. copying from – or exchanging information with – another student during the examination;

Switching identity

- c. assuming someone else's identity during the examination;
- d. allowing someone else to assume your identity during the examination;

Foreknowledge

- e. obtaining details of examination questions before the date or time at which that examination is scheduled to take place;

Amending

- f. changing, extending or amending an examination component after it has been submitted for final assessment;
- g. falsifying research results/inventing non-existent patients;

Plagiarism

- h. using or copying other people's texts, data or ideas without a complete and correct source reference;
- i. not showing clearly in the text, for example through the use of quotation marks or a particular layout, that text is being cited directly from another author, even where correct referencing has been included;
- j. paraphrasing the contents of other people's texts without sufficient referencing of sources;
- k. submitting texts that have previously been submitted for earlier assignments, or comparable texts, for separate examination components;
- l. copying work from other students and presenting this work as one's own;
- m. submitting papers that have been obtained from a commercial agency or that have been written by someone else (whether or not this was in exchange for payment).

4. *Procedure in cases of suspected academic misconduct*

The Examination Board shall always handle information pertaining to cases of academic misconduct with the utmost confidentiality, while making every effort to deal with the matter as clearly and carefully as possible. There is an established procedure for dealing with cases of suspected academic misconduct.

4.1 Any lecturer, examiner or invigilator who discovers a case of academic misconduct (or who has strong suspicions that this has taken place) is obliged to notify the student in question and the relevant Examination sub-Board by means of a written report. Such notification must take place within two weeks, following the examination in question. In the case of a specific written assignment, such as a literature review or a project proposal, the notification period is five weeks from the date on which the work in question was submitted.

The EB does not consider individual notifications that are made anonymously. These are passed on to the examiner for information purposes only. However, any serious anonymous reports that could have repercussions in terms of safeguarding the quality of the examination will be investigated and communicated to the examiner, to prevent any recurrence.

4.2 The EsubB will issue a written acknowledgment of receipt, after which the portfolio holder for academic misconduct will prepare the details and submit them to the sub-Board for academic misconduct (which consists of the two portfolio holders from the EsubBs and the chair of the Central Examination Board). The sub-Board will determine, as soon as possible (within a period of no more than two weeks), whether or not the suspicion of academic misconduct is well founded. To this end, the sub-Board will, if necessary, contact the individual who reported the case of academic misconduct in question.

4.3 The sub-Board for academic misconduct will question the student involved, to establish whether and – if so – to what extent, academic misconduct has actually taken place. Where appropriate, the individual responsible for managing the programme in question will also be invited to take part in this hearing. Following confirmation that the suspicion of academic misconduct is well founded, a hearing will take place within three weeks. While this is not a public hearing, a report will be made of what is said. When the student is formally invited to attend the hearing, the study advisors will be informed of this.

4.4 When they have finished questioning the student, the members of the sub-Board for academic misconduct will discuss the information obtained during the interview. Details of the verdict and the penalty imposed will be communicated in writing to all parties concerned within two weeks. All cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the CEB meeting. In addition, the decisions will be pooled to enable these meetings to regularly consider the consistency of such verdicts.

5. *Potential penalties in confirmed cases of academic misconduct*

In confirmed cases of academic misconduct, a penalty will be imposed that is proportionate to the academic misconduct in question. Under its mandate from the CEB, the sub-Board for academic misconduct fixes the penalty to be imposed. Details of this are always reported at the meeting.

Various penalties can be imposed, depending on the seriousness of the academic misconduct in question. These range from a reprimand to termination of the course of study. In general, the following penalties are imposed:

- Reprimand. In the case of an incident that was not especially serious and which did not negate the assessment in question, a reprimand is sufficient. Details of this will be appended to the student's dossier, and any repeat offences will be punished more severely.
- Declaring the examination results invalid. If it is not possible to guarantee that the academic misconduct in question had no effect on the assessment, then the examination can be declared invalid and the student can participate in the next scheduled resit.
- Rejection of the written assignment.
- Suspension from participation in assessments for a period of up to one year.

Details of any academic misconduct are always appended to the student's dossier. Where necessary, a note concerning unprofessional behaviour can be appended, if remedial assignments are appropriate.

This is not an exhaustive list of penalties in cases of academic misconduct.

If a student feels that the penalty in his case was unjustified, he can lodge an appeal with the Examination Appeals Board.

6. *Measures for the prevention of academic misconduct*

To prevent academic misconduct, students are reminded about the importance of integrity and about the “great trust, high penalty” principle on several occasions during their course of study and academic training. In addition, a range of preventive measures are used.

6.1 When they are given written assignments, students are made aware of the issue of plagiarism, as they must give active permission for their reports to be run through a plagiarism scanner.

6.2 Examinations (and constituent examinations) are subject to rules of procedure drawn up by the Examination Board and the programme authorities, for the prevention of academic misconduct. With regard to the medical programme, these rules are set out in the Procedural regulations for examinations (Appendix 3). Those applicable to the ECRO Master’s are contained in the respective rules and guidelines.

7. *Reporting*

The Examination Board will accurately archive all cases, with a view to building up a body of jurisprudence. In the course of national discussions between the chairs of the various Examination Boards, these cases will be assessed under the guidelines of other universities, to further expand the body of jurisprudence. Each year, a report summarizing every case of academic misconduct that has been processed will be published in the Examination Board’s annual report.