

## 6. Assessment and grades

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### 6.1 What is a final assessment?

A final assessment is when an examiner determines a grade for a student's achievement on a course, based on the intended learning outcomes in the course syllabus. It is a qualitative assessment of the student's knowledge, skills and abilities, and a quantitative follow-up of the student's achievement may also be included (attendance during compulsory elements).

The final assessment is based on results from one or more examination elements, henceforth referred to as exams. Every course syllabus specifies how the assessment of the student's achievement is to be done. All requirements for a pass grade on a given course must be clearly communicated no later than when the course begins.

There are different types of exams. These regulations describe what applies generally as well as for some of the most common types of exams. Exams to be held in the language that is the course language, unless the course syllabus specifies otherwise. Exams may be held with an individual or a group of individuals, but must be devised such that an individual appraisal can be made, see also section 6.4 Grading criteria.

An exam can be made up of several parts, e.g. a number of laboratory sessions or seminars or excursions or guest lectures. As a rule, results for such exams are not communicated until all parts have been completed. Once the course iteration is completed, the student is entitled to be informed about what, if anything, remains before a pass grade can be issued for the course.

Exams are to be carried out according to the rules in the course syllabus. Deviations from the course syllabus may be made in the following cases:

- If there are grounds for it, the examiner is entitled to set supplementary assignments for a student who has not obtained a pass grade on an exam. Such supplementary assignments must comply with the times specified for renewed exams, as applicable.
- If a student has a documented functional disability, the examiner may set an adapted exam or select an alternative testing method. See SLU's Action plan for equal opportunities and SLU Guidelines for support to students with functional disabilities.
- If a course syllabus is changed or a course cancelled, adaptations may be made to the assessment of a student who was admitted under the previous course syllabus. See section 6.10 Retake sessions (renewed exam).

It is sometimes the case that “duggor” (written assignments or equivalent) provide bonus credits which are added to the result of the final exam. There is no requirement to carry out such assignments, but they may give the student an advantage. Such arrangements are permissible even if they have not been specified in the course syllabus as long as two conditions are fulfilled:

1. That information about any bonus-giving assignment and how to carry it out are communicated no later than when the course begins.
2. That even students who have not done any bonus-giving assignments have the possibility of achieving a pass grade and, where applicable, higher grades (4 and 5).

For programmes offered in collaboration with another higher education institution, other terms may apply for examinations. Generally, the rules of the higher education institution where the department running the course is located are those that apply.

## 6.2 Examiners

Examiners are responsible for ensuring that course content and level follow the stipulated course syllabus. The examiner determines grading criteria and is responsible for assessing the students' achievements. The examiner makes the grading decision by signing the documentation to Ladok.

The Guidelines for examination on first- and second-level study programmes at SLU specify qualification requirements and appointment procedures for examiners, and these are further detailed in each faculty's delegation regulations. As a rule, each course must have one (1) examiner. Information about who is the examiner on individual courses must be available on the course homepage (or equivalent) no later than when the course begins. Independent projects (degree projects) may have several examiners for every course. In such cases, the names of and contact details for examiners may be included in students' study plans (or equivalent) instead.

Other teachers may take part in the examination as per the examiner's instructions, but it is the examiner who has the ultimate responsibility and who makes the grading decision. See also section 7.2 Course leader, supervisor and examiner regarding independent projects (degree projects).

### Change of examiner

A student who has failed two exams on the same course is entitled to a change of examiner, unless there are special reasons against this (Ch. 6, Section 22 of the Higher Education Ordinance). A written request for a change of examiner must be submitted to the head of department (or equivalent) or the director of studies (or equivalent) at the department running the course. Decisions to change examiners for individual students are taken by the head of department.

## 6.3 Grades

SLU students are graded on a four-point grading scale:

- 5 (pass with special distinction)
- 4 (pass with credit)
- 3 (pass)
- U (fail)

If a decision has been made to exempt a certain exam, course or programme from this regime, a two-point grading scale will apply instead:

- G (pass)
- U (fail)

In the document where course grades are recorded it must be clear which grading system was used on the course.

### **Exceptions to the four-point grading scale**

Special rules apply to incoming exchange students who study at SLU as part of a bilateral exchange agreement. These students (according to Ladok) are entitled to be graded on the seven-point ECTS scale. For courses assessed on a four-point scale, the transfer is done as follows:

5 = A

4 = B

3 = D

U = F

Exchange students on courses which are assessed on a two-point scale receive a "Pass" or "Fail".

Students who registered on programmes before the autumn term of 2008 are entitled to the option of only including course grades according to the earlier two-point grading system on their degree certificate/certificates. If they choose that option, no other scale may be specified on the certificate. However, Ladok includes four-point grading scales for those courses which were assessed with that scale.

The Vice-Chancellor has determined certain temporary, programme-wise exceptions from the four-point grading system, see Guidelines for examination on first- and second-level study programmes at SLU.

### **6.4 Grading criteria**

Grading criteria must be available in writing no later than at the beginning of the course. They are binding for examiners and students registered on the course in question. The course web page (or equivalent) is to be used for documentation of grading criteria.

No later than at the beginning of the course, all the pass requirements must be clearly communicated for the course in question. Information must be provided about what time limits apply for when exams are to be done, and if doing the exam before the deadline is a prerequisite for a higher than pass grade (see below).

All grading must be based on the individual student's achievements. This also applies when exams include oral or written presentations of group work. In order for individual grading to be possible, the presentation must be done in such a way that the individual student's contribution can be distinguished. The examiner may request a supplementary presentation from the student if this is necessary for assessing his/her individual achievement.

#### **Time limits for higher than pass grades**

The awarding of a higher than pass grade (4 or 5) may be made dependent on sitting exams for the course within the time limits set by the examiner. If so, this must be clear from the grading criteria for the higher grade levels.

- For examinations: it must always be possible to receive a higher than pass grade (4 and 5) on the first retake session, where applicable. Further retake sessions do not normally include this possibility, if there is a time limit for higher than pass grades. However, if there are special reasons as described in section 6.12, higher than pass grades may be possible for these sessions as well.
- For written assignments (or equivalent): The time limits specified at the beginning of the course apply for handing in written assignments. If there are special reasons as described in section 6.12, an extension of the time limit must be granted, and it must still be possible to receive a higher than pass grade (4 and 5), where applicable.

- For independent projects (degree projects): The deadline specified in the study plan applies as a first exam session. The study plan may be revised as described in section 7. If there are special reasons as described in Section 6.12, or other reasons related to the project which are beyond the student's control, and the revision is done before the original deadline for the project, it must still be possible to receive higher than pass grades (4 and 5), where applicable.

### **6.5 Time, location and registration**

Time and place (location) for scheduled exams and suggestions for first retake sessions must be clear from the overall timetable for the course, no later than four (4) weeks before the beginning of the course. See section 4. Course information and documentation.

The timetable must be finalised by the beginning of the course, and must specify the following:

- Dates, times and locations for scheduled exams.
- Date for the first retake session, in connection with the course.
- Date for a second retake session, within one year of the beginning of the course.

Students intending to participate in retake sessions must register their intent at the department (or equivalent) running the course, unless otherwise indicated, no later than 15 days before the exam date. Shorter registration periods may occur, particularly for first retake sessions. Longer registration periods may occur, particularly for further retake sessions.

For normal studies (campus based tuition, weekdays 08.00-17.00), scheduled exams must be held in the daytime on weekdays, within the course period in question. Retake sessions and extra exams may be held at other times. On courses with other forms of study, exam scheduling is adapted to the form of study.

As a rule, exams are not held between the Christmas and New Year's holidays, nor during the month of July. This applies as a general rule, unless some other agreement is reached between the examiner and the affected students.

Exams must be held at the announced location, as a rule. However, an examiner may permit a student to sit an exam at a different location. A prerequisite for granting such permission is that the exam can be held in a legally certain manner and without recourse to substantial extra resources. This means that for a given exam, all students must take the same exam at the same time.

Grounds for permitting students to sit an exam at a different location than the announced one are specified in section 6.12, with a further reason being that a student is not in the country due to exchange studies. The examiner determines, on each individual occasion, whether SLU can provide this service. It is incumbent on the student to check, in good time, whether a room and invigilator are available at the location where he/she wants to sit the exam. Other SLU locations must be considered in the first instance.

A student at another higher education institution may also be given the opportunity to sit his/her exam at SLU, provided a room and an invigilator are already available.

### **6.6 Exam procedure**

The following is a description of how some common types of exams are carried out. Other types of exam may also occur. Compulsory elements are described in section 6.11.

#### **Written exam, invigilated**

For written exams overseen by an invigilator, the Vice Chancellor has drawn up Examination regulations at SLU (included as an appendix to these regulations). They also cover rules for coded exams.

### **Take-home exam**

The student is responsible for ensuring that take-home exams are handed in to the examiner within the stipulated time. Take-home exams handed in after the deadline will not necessarily be assessed, but the exam session will be regarded as spent by the student who took on exam task/exam form.

If parts of a take-home exam are to be done individually, this must be clear from the information to the students. An examiner may request that a student provides an oral report of his/her individual work on a take-home exam.

### **Oral exam**

A recording may be made of an oral exam in order to facilitate documentation. It is also possible that several teachers participate in giving the exam.

### **Written assignment**

For the purposes of these regulations, “written assignment” also includes project work, group work etc. of which some form of presentation must be made, individually or in groups, as a basis for assessment.

If a written assignment is to be done individually, this must be clear from the information to the students. An examiner may request that a student provides an oral report of his/her individual work on the written assignment.

A written assignment that is handed in after the stipulated deadline will not necessarily be assessed until the following exam session. It will then count as two spent exam sessions.

### **Independent project (degree project)**

The same rules apply for exams, retake sessions and grading of independent projects (degree projects) as for other courses. However, there are some ways in which independent projects differ from other courses, and this is described in sections 6.2, 6.4, 6.7 and in section 7. Independent project (degree project).

### **6.7 Grading decisions**

All exams must be assessed as soon as possible. Exam results must be communicated no later than 15 weekdays after the exam concerned was held (i.e. when the student sat the exam or handed it in – provided a time was set for the exam or for handing it in). An exam result must be communicated at least 10 days before the corresponding retake session. See also section 4. Course information and documentation.

Grading decisions must always be written in Swedish, but may be translated into English. The grading decision must specify who the examiner was. The decision must also specify any other teachers who participated in the assessment (“joint assessment teachers”).

A pass result on an exam does not entitle a student to retake the exam in order to try to achieve a better grade. However, for independent projects (degree projects) the examiner may permit supplementary work to be done after the deadline and still count as part of that exam. Such supplementary work may affect the grade for the independent project (degree project), provided it is done before the grading decision has been made.

### **Changes to a grading decision**

The basic principle (under the Administrative Procedure Act) is that a favourable decision may not be changed to a less favourable one for the individual. Thus pass grades may not be lowered even at the request of the student, nor if the teacher realises after grading that he/she has given too high a grade.

Exceptions may be made, e.g. when cheating is discovered or when the grading decision contains evident inaccuracies.

If a grading decision contains an evident inaccuracy due to a writing error or a calculation error, or to some similar oversight, the decision may be corrected by the examiner (Ch. 6, Section 23 of the Higher Education Ordinance). Such changes may involve either a raising or a lowering of the grade. Corrections which are unfavourable for a student must be made with great caution and only in very clear-cut cases. Before any such correction is made, the student must normally be given the opportunity to make a statement.

### **Reconsideration of a grading decision**

A grading decision may not be appealed against (Ch. 12, Section 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance). This means that a student is not entitled to an assessment by a second person, but that a student is entitled to request a reconsideration (Section 27 of the Administrative Procedure Act) of the grading decision by the examiner.

Objections to the result should be submitted to the examiner in writing and with a justification. A reconsideration request should be made as soon as possible.

A student who wants an examiner's decision to be reconsidered may, after having read through the assessment, request a copy of his/her exam paper instead of taking the original. The student thereby avoids any suspicion that changes or additions were made to the original after receipt. See also section 4. Course information and documentation.

If an examiner finds that a grading decision is evidently inaccurate due to new circumstances or for some other reason, the examiner may change the decision if this can be done quickly and simply and if it does not mean that the grade is lowered (Ch. 6, Section 24 of the Higher Education Ordinance).

### **6.8 Feedback**

The department (or equivalent) running a course should offer, in connection with the course, opportunities for feedback on the assessment. The faculty determines what form of feedback to use. Feedback may be done outside of scheduled course time, but must be completed before the first retake session. There is no obligation for the department running the course to provide correction templates (or equivalent), but such templates can constitute a form of feedback.

A student is entitled to discuss issues concerning the exam assessment with the examiner. If the student so requests, the examiner must inform him/her about the grounds for the grading decision. After a completed course, a student is entitled to receive information about any remaining requirements before the course can be passed.

The possibility of obtaining the release of exam tasks and answers is described in section 4. Course information and documentation.

### **6.9 Extra exam session**

The student is entitled to an extra exam session if:

- he/she is a student representative on one of SLU's administrative bodies and he/she announces beforehand that the scheduled exam session coincides with a meeting called by the body.
- the scheduled exam session cannot be effected due to circumstances that SLU is responsible for,
- his/her written exam (the student's answers to a written exam) has been misplaced due to SLU's error.

Such extra exam sessions must be offered no later than a week after the scheduled session, or no later than a week after the discovery that the written exam has been misplaced. The exact time of the extra

exam session is to be determined in consultation with the student in question. Exception: for compulsory elements, the provisions in section 6.11 apply.

#### **6.10 Retake sessions (renewed exam)**

Students who receive a fail grade on a scheduled exam, or do not participate in it, are to be offered a first retake session in connection with the course. Such a retake session must be offered no earlier than 10 weekdays and no later than 25 weekdays after the results of the scheduled exam have been communicated. The session is only offered if there is a need for it among the students on the present course iteration, but when it is offered, students from earlier course iterations may also participate.

A second opportunity to retake the exam must be offered less than a year after the beginning of the course. Additionally, the student may participate in further exam sessions in connection with the next course iteration.

For written assignments, the first opportunity for a retake session is to be offered in connection with the course. A second opportunity must be offered less than a year after the beginning of the course. Additionally, the student may participate in further exam sessions in connection with the next course iteration.

For oral presentations, the examiner determines the time of the session. At least one opportunity for a retake session must be offered per year for this type of exam as well. For compulsory elements, the provisions in section 6.11 apply.

Time limits for awarding higher than pass grades are described in section 6.4.

#### **Limitations**

An ongoing assessment in an exam must be completed (with a grading decision/a communicated result) before the student is entitled to participate in the associated retake session.

The total number of exam sessions and work placements (or equivalent) may only be limited if not doing so would lead to an unreasonable waste of resources. Any such limitation must be specified in the course syllabus. If a limit is imposed on the total number of exam sessions, the student must be entitled to at least five (5) exam sessions for each exam included on a course (Ch. 6, Section 21 of the Higher Education Ordinance). Each occasion on which the student sits an exam is counted as an exam session. An exam which the student has started is counted as a spent exam session.

If a limit is imposed on the possibility of doing work placements and corresponding training periods, the student must be entitled to at least two (2) work placement periods (or equivalent) if that is required in order to receive a pass grade on a course (Ch. 6, Section 21 of the Higher Education Ordinance).

The rule at SLU is that a student who has been admitted to and registered on a course is entitled to teaching and/or supervision during the course iteration he/she was admitted to. After the course has finished, the student is entitled to participate in the compulsory elements (which require attendance/participation) of a future course iteration, while observing the limitations specified in section 6.11.

#### **Changes to reading lists and grading criteria**

Exams are geared towards the intended learning outcomes of the course and drawn up in accordance with current reading lists (or equivalent) as well as with current grading criteria (including specified requirements for a pass grade). It is the student's responsibility to inform him/herself about changes to reading lists and grading criteria. An examiner may decide to make an exception for a student who was admitted to an earlier course iteration, if there are reasons for it.

### **Changes to the course**

When a new or revised course syllabus is adopted, this must also include transitional rules for how the exams can be completed by a student who was admitted under a previous course syllabus and did not achieve a pass grade. In the first instance, exams for the new course syllabus must be used, but adaptations may need to be made in order for the intended learning outcomes of the previous course iteration to be achieved.

### **Cancelled course**

When a course is cancelled, the overall transitional rule is that at least three retake sessions are to be offered within two years of the last course iteration. It is the responsibility of the department running the course to inform affected students of these possibilities. For compulsory elements, section 6.11 applies.

If there are special reasons, a student may be given the opportunity of another retake session on a cancelled course. In this context, “special reasons” refers to those specified in section 6.11, as well as extended studies abroad. The application must be in writing and be well justified by the student. The faculty responsible decides whether or not to offer a further retake session.

### **6.11 Compulsory elements**

Compulsory elements (obligations, compulsory attendance, compulsory participation) must be justifiable with reference to the intended learning outcomes for the course. If a course contains compulsory elements, these must be specified in the course syllabus. No later than at the beginning of the course, all requirements for a pass grade must be communicated for the course iteration in question. As a rule, compulsory elements may not be moved within or added to the timetable as it was communicated at the beginning of the course.

A student who has been admitted to and registered on a course is entitled to receive teaching and/or supervision during the course iteration he/she was admitted to. A student who for special reasons is unable to participate in compulsory elements must be given the opportunity to recover those elements in a suitable way, as determined by the examiner. If possible, this is done in connection with the current course iteration. However, certain compulsory elements can only be completed during a future course iteration. A student who is absent during a compulsory element without special reasons cannot expect to be offered any special solution to the problems that may follow. The “special reasons” referred to above are defined in section 6.12.

### **Supplementary assignments**

The examiner may determine that a supplementary assignment (make-up assignment) can replace compulsory elements, if there are reasons for this and if it is possible with regard to the intended learning outcomes and resources of the course. The content and scope of the assignment must correspond to the element it is replacing.

### **Future course iteration**

A student's absence from a compulsory element may mean that the student has to attend the missed element during a future course iteration. This may apply for e.g. work placements, laboratory sessions, seminars, excursions or clinic stays.

A student who had special reasons for his/her absence during the first course iteration is entitled to participate in the missed element during a future course iteration. Further participation in another, later course iteration may be granted if there are special reasons as specified in section 6.12.

A student who did not have special reasons for his/her absence during the first course iteration has the opportunity to participate in the missed element during a future course iteration, subject to availability.

A student who is going to participate in teaching after the first course iteration (for which the student was registered for the first time) is over, must be re-registered in Ladok. Re-registration may also be done on a course which is no longer being offered. However, if the student only needs to sit an exam, no re-registration is necessary.

### **Cancelled course**

In connection with the decision to cancel a course, transitional rules must be drawn up for how the compulsory elements of the course may be completed by students who did not pass the course. The scope of these measures is to be determined by how many students are affected and by what types of compulsory elements are included. The affected students must be offered at least one opportunity to fulfill compulsory requirements within two years of the final course iteration. The department running the course is responsible for informing affected students about these opportunities.

If there are special reasons, a student may be given a further opportunity to complete compulsory elements. "Special reasons" here refers to those specified in section 6.12, as well as to extended studies abroad. The application must be in writing and be well justified by the student. The decision to offer a further opportunity is taken by the faculty responsible.

### **6.12 Special reasons**

The regulations refer in several places to "special reasons".

Unless otherwise specified, "special reasons" comprise the following circumstances:

- student's illness
- medical reasons connected to student's pregnancy
- family matters
- extended family matters
- adapted study form due to documented functional disability
- student union commission
- public commission
- call-up for duty in civil or total defence services

For the purposes of these regulations, "family matters" refers above all to the birth of a child, temporary care of a sick child, and serious illnesses, deaths and funerals within the immediate family. "Serious illness" refers to an illness which requires the student to be present. The student's immediate family here includes the student's spouse, cohabiting partner, children and cohabiting partner's children.

For the purposes of these regulations, "extended family matters" refers above all to more serious illness, imminent or occurred deaths, and funerals within the extended family. "More serious illness" means life-threatening or acute illnesses requiring the student's presence. The student's extended family here includes the student's parents, parents-in-law, grandparents, foster parents and siblings. A cohabiting partner's parents are regarded as parents-in-law.

For the purposes of these regulations, "student union commission" refers to a commission as student representative in one of SLU's administrative bodies, SLUSS's bodies or cooperation agencies.

For the purposes of these regulations, "public commission" refers to a commission (not employment) as lay judge, a commission at a national or municipal authority, or a commission related to general or municipal elections.

If a student becomes prevented from sitting an exam or participating in a compulsory element due to a special reason, the department running the course (course leader or equivalent) should be notified of

this beforehand, if possible. The examiner may request documentation to corroborate the student's claim about a special reason.

### 6.13 Complaints

Students shall primarily contact the examiner regarding complaints about the assessment. Also see section 6.7, Review of grading decision, as well as 11, Student influence, and 12, Disciplinary measures.

### 6.14 Additional SLU documents

- Procedural routines in cases of suspected cheating in higher education at SLU  
<https://internt.slu.se/Documents/internwebben/ledningskansliet/gur/procedural-routines-if-suspected-cheating.pdf>
- Regulations, section
  - 4. Course information and documentation
  - 12. Disciplinary measures
- Guidelines for assessment and grading at SLU (Riktlinjer för examination och betygssättning vid SLU, in Swedish)  
<https://internt.slu.se/Documents/internwebben/ledningskansliet/gur/riktlinjer-examination-betygssattning.pdf>
- Guidelines at SLU for support to students with functional impairments (Riktlinjer vid SLU för stöd till studenter med funktionsnedsättning, in Swedish)  
[https://internt.slu.se/Documents/internwebben/sus-docs/SVL/Riktlinjer\\_funktionsnedsattning.pdf](https://internt.slu.se/Documents/internwebben/sus-docs/SVL/Riktlinjer_funktionsnedsattning.pdf)
- Action plan for equal opportunities  
<https://internt.slu.se/Documents/internwebben/jep-personal/personal-dokument/likavillkor/Action%20Plan%20Equal%20Opportunities%20Work%202012.pdf>
- SLU policy and action plan with regard to cheating and plagiarism within higher education, 2010 to 2011)  
<https://internt.slu.se/Documents/internwebben/ledningskansliet/gur/policy-and-action-plan-against-cheating-and-plagiarism-2010-2011.pdf>
- Examination regulations at SLU (included as an appendix in the Regulations)  
<https://internt.slu.se/Documents/internwebben/ledningskansliet/gur/examination-regulations.pdf>