

Guidelines on the topic of

Viewing of Exam Scripts

as part of the Handbook for Study, Teaching and Learning

Please note that the English version of the present guideline is for your convenience only and is not legally binding. Only the German version is legally binding.

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1) Legal Basis

Post-exam viewing sessions make it possible for students to view the examination scripts after the grades have been finalized.

Section 64(2) No. 10 of the NRW Higher Education Act (HG) stipulates that the Examination Regulations shall provide provisions on the viewing of examination documents by the students. These documents include written examinations and papers, assessments of these by the examiners, and examination reports. Students may also view structural outlines created by the examiner and copies of the examination script/paper if they contain remarks by the examiner, in case that examiners refer to these documents in their evaluation of the examination performance.

Students do not have the right to view written notes made by the examiners during oral exams. Viewing sessions can be arranged after each completed exam, i.e. after the return of the exam scripts, or after the publication of the results of an oral exam, etc. If an assessment consists of several partial exams, it can be stipulated that the viewing of the exam documents takes place after completion of all partial exams. All students have the right to view their exam scripts, regardless of whether they passed or failed the exam.

2) Implementation

The post-exam review session must be held under adequate conditions for the student, i.e.

- a) There must be sufficient space and sufficient staff to make it possible for all interested students to view their exam scripts (while sitting down) without long waiting times.
- b) The period of time each student is given to view his or her exam script is defined in the Framework Examination Regulations and in the individual Examination Regulations. The time given each student to view the exam script depends on the duration of the exam. The location and duration of the review session are determined by the examiners and announced prior to or during the exam, or with the publication of the exam results at the latest.

The time each student is given for the review is

- at least 20 minutes for exams with a duration of up to 120 minutes
- at least 30 minutes for exams with a duration of more than 120 minutes

- c) When asked, examiners must be able to explain the corrections. If it is not possible to explain the corrections during the review session, the explanation must be provided in writing at a later stage.
- d) Before the examination scripts are handed out to the students, they must present their student ID cards.
- e) The examining chairs/departments decide whether the review session takes place under examination conditions, i.e. whether or not it is allowed to bring bags, writing materials, cell phones, etc. to the review session. This decision will be announced on the department's bulletin board.
- f) In case of a large number of participants, it is advisable to put a registration and appointment process in place.
- g) If a large number of students is viewing their exam scripts at the same time, it is advisable to keep a list with which to record the handing out and return of exam scripts.

3) Copies of Exam Scripts

If a student raises objections against the exam assessment and demands to inspect further examination records, he or she has the right to obtain copies of these records. The notice of objection must be filed in writing with the Board of Examiners. In the objection process the student cannot be debarred from obtaining these copies. Students are not permitted, however, to make copies or photos of the exam scripts, e.g. by using a cell phone camera, during the post-exam review session.

Students are also not permitted to make a written copy of the exam scripts. The exam scripts are to be viewed, not copied during the review session. However, students are allowed to make notes; if necessary, they must be provided with writing materials to do so.

4) Sample Solutions and Grading

Generally, students do not have the right to be provided with sample solutions. The right to review the exam scripts aims at making administrative processes transparent, such as the student's performance in a written exam, its assessment by the examiner, and the examination transcript of an oral exam. A sample solution is to provide a general, non-committal guideline for the examiners; it bears no relation at all to the student's examination performance. They do not form a part of the administrative processes around examinations and thus the student does not have the right to review a sample solution. However, if the students do not have access to a sample solution, the examiners must be able to adequately explain all corrections. Whether or not sample solutions will be provided in the review session may be announced at the date of the examination.

Against this background, the faculties have the following options:

- a) To display sample solutions at the post-exam review session (optionally combined with an announcement of doing so, see above)
- b) Not to provide sample solutions at the review session. In this case, it must be guaranteed that the corrections can be explained during the session.

Examiners of final theses have to provide an expert opinion on the quality of the thesis which adequately describes the reasons for the grade.

The grading scale used provides an integral element for the assessment of the exam. As it is part of the legally relevant framework conditions of the exam, the grading scale is to be made public. Furthermore, information on the distribution of grades is to be published.

5) Appeal Against Examination Decisions

As soon as the grade is officially announced, the period of appeal starts (one month, with information on applicable legal remedies). Objections against assessments of exams are to be made within this period. Taking into account current case law, for equal opportunities reasons, it is not permitted to change the grade to a lower grade during the appeal process.

6) Authorization of a Representative

On principle, only the student has the right to view his or her exam scripts. However, he or she can nominate a representative by writing a note of authorization. This representative is to be admitted to the post-exam review session upon presentation of his or her identity card. Concerning the viewing procedure, the representative has the same rights as the examinee. If the student is represented by an attorney, the attorney is to be granted access to all relevant exam documents. This is done by the faculty. As a rule, students are represented by an attorney only in case of a subsequent appeal process. In this case, Department 1.0 is to be notified.