Rules for Conducting Exams in the Spring Semester 2020¹

PURPOSE AND DELIMITATION

The rules have been drawn up as a result of all students and staff without critical functions being sent home from Aalborg University (hereafter AAU) on Friday, 13th March 2020. As of 14th April 2020, a statement was issued by the Executive Management of AAU that the exams of the remainder of the spring semester 2020 must be conducted online. As of 7th May, a political agreement was reached on the second phase of a controlled reopening of Denmark. This allows each faculty to conduct some exams physically from the 18th May, provided that physical attendance is urgently needed at the specific exam. If an exam is conducted physically, it must be notified at least 14 days before the exam. As of 21st May, the parties of the Danish Parliament signed an agreement to extend phase 2 of the reopening. This agreement has opened up the possibility for universities to conduct oral exams physically. In this connection, the Executive Management has decided that physical exams in bachelor’s projects, master’s theses and master’s (continuing education) projects must be conducted physically. However, students can choose whether they want to take the exam physically or digitally. The Board of Studies may, in consultation with the Head of Studies and the Department, decide whether and to what extent they wish to conduct further oral exams physically. The decision on physical exams applies to both Aalborg, Esbjerg and Copenhagen.

The re-exams in August can be either physical or digital. The Board of Studies may, in consultation with the Head of Studies, decide whether to conduct the exams physically or digitally.

The rules apply to all educational programmes at AAU and are intended to ensure that the exams in the spring semester 2020 are conducted online in a sound manner that is in accordance with current regulations.

The rules apply to digital exams that are conducted until and including 31st August 2020.

The rules are being drawn up in a situation that must be considered as force majeure and where proper solutions must be found. The universities are continuously collaborating on how to handle examinations during the spring semester, which may give rise to updating the rules on an ongoing basis when deemed necessary. The rules are discussed in the Strategic Council for Education and subsequently approved by the Pro-rector.

The rules are a supplement to the Examination Order.

¹ This is a translation of the Danish version of “Regler for afvikling af prøver i forårssemestret 2020”. In case of any discrepancies, the Danish version prevails.
1.0 Conducting oral exams physically

As a result of the extension of phase 2 of the reopening of Denmark, the Executive Management of AAU has decided that the following exams, in general, must be conducted physically:

- Bachelor’s projects
- Master’s theses
- Master’s (continuing education) projects

It is an offer to the students that the final exams must be conducted physically. If the students still want to participate in the exam digitally, they must have the opportunity. Students who wish to participate in the exam digitally must notify their study secretary. The Study Board sets a deadline for the students to notify the study secretary that they wish to participate in the exam digitally.

Since the physical exam is an offer to the students, there is no time limit for notifying students that they have the opportunity to take the exam physically.

The Study Board may, in consultation with the Head of Studies, decide whether and to what extent other students should be able to physically attend oral exams. This must be done in relation to academic and physical conditions. By physical conditions, it is meant that the guidelines of the Danish Health Authority and Campus Services must be complied with in order for the exams to be conducted physically.

The Study Board informs students who are going to other oral exams than the above-mentioned, whether their exam is held digitally or whether they have the opportunity to physically participate in the exam.

The physical oral exams are public, but the Study Board may decide that any observers for oral exams can participate only digitally. The Study Board also has the opportunity to restrict access to the examination rooms for reasons due to terms of space, as AAU continues to be responsible for ensuring that the examinations are conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Danish Health Authority and Campus Services. When the exam is completed, the students and any observers at the exam must leave the university buildings.

The university remains closed to students who do not have to physically attend the oral exam unless they have been granted admission during one of the reopening’s earlier phases.

The examiner is allowed to participate digitally in the oral exams that are conducted physically.
In oral group exams, where some students want to participate physically, while other students want to participate digitally, the Study Board can conduct the exam as a combined physical and digital exam.

2.0 Conducting oral exams digitally

Many of the oral exams scheduled for spring semester 2020 will be conducted digitally. Due to the situation, the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education has made an exemption from the requirements of the Examination Order stating that a supervisor must be present with the student during the examination.

AAU provides some programs to run the digital exams. The Study Board decides which of these programs they would like to use for conducting the digital oral exams. However, it is a requirement that the selected program supports video so that the assessors can see the student or students during the examination. Therefore, the exam must be conducted with camera. Before the exam commences, the assessors must review the room in which the student sits. It is the examiner’s responsibility to ensure that the conditions for holding the exam are met. If the examiner assesses that the conditions for the exam are not met, the examiner must cancel the examination and the student uses an examination attempt. The student is awarded the lowest possible grade (-3 or not passed).

Oral exams may be conducted individually or in groups. In general, students participating in a group exam must sit in each of their rooms. However, the examiner may allow the students to sit in the same room. If the students are allowed to sit in the same room, the examiner may lay down more detailed guidelines in relation to the specific exam. Students must have their student card in the room in which the student sits during the exam, and this must be presented on request. Students who participate in an oral exam without a written submission digitally must complete and submit a solemn declaration, no later than 12.00 noon 2 working days before the oral exam. This applies regardless of whether the solemn declaration is submitted by e-mail or in the Digital Exam System.

Students who participate in an oral exam with written submission digitally (e.g. a project exam) must submit the solemn declaration, no later than 12.00 noon 2 working days before the submission of the project report, if the solemn declaration is submitted by e-mail. If the solemn declaration is submitted in the Digital Exam System, it must be submitted together with the student(s) written assignment paper (e.g. the project report).

The Study Board decides who should receive the solemn declaration at the department. The Study Board that conducts the exam is responsible for ensuring that students are informed about the solemn declaration and how it should be completed. Submitting the solemn declaration is considered a prerequisite for participating in a digital oral exam. If the student does not submit the solemn declaration on time, the student will not be able to participate in the exam. In this case, the student uses an examination attempt and receives the grade "not assessed".

In case of technical issues while conducting oral exams, the assessors must compensate the students by giving them extra time corresponding to the interruptions that occurred during the exam. The assessors must make a concrete, academic assessment of the influence of the interruptions for the examination and, viewed in the light of these, decide how much extra time the student or students should be allocated. If the assessors assess that the examination cannot be completed due to technical issues, the exam can be held at another time.

Audio and/or image recordings are neither allowed during digital exams unless the recordings are included as part of the examination process. AAU then does the recordings.

The assessors must (in the same way as in physical exams) take notes on the examination process (including any technical issues), the performance and the grading process for use in dealing with a possible complaint. The notes must be kept for at least one year, and in addition, until a possible complaint is closed.

The Study Board must inform the students about how the digital oral exam is conducted as quickly as possible and at least 14 days before the exam.
3.0 Conducting written on-site exams digitally

The Study Board must decide whether scheduled exams will be conducted as digital exams without aids at the student's home, or whether the format of the examination should be changed so that the exam can be conducted with aids. If the format of the examination is maintained, the students must complete the assignment from home, and the student must submit it to the Digital Exam System when the examination is over. The Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education has made an exemption from the requirements of the Examination Order stating that a supervisor must be present with the student during the examination. Therefore, it is not a requirement when students participate in digital exams at home during the spring semester 2020.

The Study Boards must be aware that it is not possible to invigilate whether the students use aids that are not allowed, if the on-site exam is conducted in the student's home.

The exams must be attempted to be conducted digitally, but some specific exams may not be converted to digital format. These exams must be extraordinarily postponed until AAU opens up for physical presence again.

Students who participate in a written on-site exam digitally must complete and submit a solemn declaration, no later than 12.00 noon 2 working days before the written exam, if the solemn declaration is submitted by e-mail. If the solemn declaration is submitted in the Digital Exam System, it must be submitted together with the student(s) assignment paper.

The Study Board decides who should receive the solemn declaration at the department. The Study Board that conducts the exam is responsible for ensuring that students are informed about the solemn declaration and how it should be completed.

Submitting the solemn declaration is considered a prerequisite for participating in a digital on-site exam. If the student does not submit the solemn declaration on time, the student will not be able to take the exam. In this case, the student uses an examination attempt and receives the grade "not assessed".

The Study Boards must conduct digital on-site exams without the use of the digital invigilation system ITX Flex.

4.0 Exemption from current curriculum

Due to the current situation, it is possible to apply for an exemption from the current curriculum after the deadline for submission of exemption curriculums. Exemption from the current curriculum must be applied for if the Study Board wants to conduct an exam in another way than described in the curriculum. It is Educational Law that processes exemptions from current curriculums on behalf of the Pro-dean of Education. If the application for exemption contains academic matters, the decision on exemption is made in concert with the Pro-dean of Education.

If a Study Board wants exemption from a current curriculum, the application for exemption must be sent to studieordninger@adm.aau.dk. Students must be informed about the form of the exam no later than 14 days before the exam. Therefore, the application for exemption must be submitted, processed and approved in order to comply with this deadline.

Changing from physical to digital examinations does not require an exemption from the curriculum, e.g. conducting a digital oral exam that should have been oral at AAU, or a change from a written exam at AAU to a written exam at home.
### 4.1 Exemption to change the form of examination

There may be some forms of exams that can be difficult or impossible to conduct digitally. This applies, for example, on-site exams where the students have to sit in a hall for a certain number of hours and answer an assignment that they are given on the spot. Therefore, it may be necessary to apply for exemption from the exam format. Students still have the opportunity to submit written exams in the Digital Exam System during the home period. Therefore, the Study Board does not need to apply for an exemption if the exam format is maintained, the only change being that the exam is conducted digitally at the student's home.

If the duration of the on-site exam is specified in the curriculum, the Study Board can apply for an exemption for the on-site exam to be replaced by a written assignment at home, which is carried out on e.g. 24 hours, 48 hours, 72 hours or a week. If the duration of the examination is not specified in the curriculum, the Study Board can decide to change the duration of the examination. In that case, it will not require an exemption from the curriculum. It is only important that the scope and degree of difficulty of the examination assignment correspond to the time available to the student for the examination. It is also possible to exempt, so that a written examination will instead be conducted as an oral examination if it is considered academically meaningful.

The Study Board may also apply for an exemption for a written examination to be conducted as an oral examination instead, if the Study Board considers it academically meaningful.

Finally, the Study Board can apply for exemption from the exam format if the exam form is "continuous evaluation/active participation". Such an exemption can only be granted if the Study Board considers that it is not possible to make a continuous evaluation, because the lectures has been changed from physical to digital.

It must be stated in the application for exemption which module it is, when the exam is conducted and which form of examination is wanted.

If, as a result of the COVID-19 situation, the Study Board has applied for a change of the exam format, but after the extended reopening wants to change the exam format back to the original exam format, it will require the Study Board to apply for a new exemption.

#### 4.1.1 Special exam conditions

If a change of exam format is approved, it may be of importance to students with physical or mental functional impairments. These students may need to apply for new or other special exam conditions to be equal with other students in the exam situation. Therefore, the Study Board must process exemption applications for special exam conditions as soon as possible.

#### 4.1.2 Project exams (including final projects)

As the semester is underway and the students have started their projects, it is not possible to exempt from the examination format in project examinations, so students do not have to take the oral examination. First, because the students write the project jointly with the expectation that their individual performance will be assessed at the oral examination. Therefore, it is difficult to make an individual assessment of the students based on the written assignment alone. Second, it is an integrated part of AAU's way of conducting project exams that the written project report is followed by an oral exam. This also applies to projects prepared by a single student.

Therefore, it will be necessary to conduct the oral exam digitally in accordance with Section 1.0.

In some exceptional cases, an exemption may be granted for the oral exam to be conducted individually on the basis of a joint project report. The Pro-dean has the opportunity to approve an exemption application if there is an academic justification for the oral exam to be conducted individually. No exemption will be granted
for reasons other than academic ones. Applications justified in e.g. technical issues cannot be accepted, as the systems provided by the University support the variety of oral group exams digitally.

4.2 Exemption from prerequisites for participating in exams
Some Study Boards have laid down prerequisites for students to participate in the exams. For example, that students must actively participate in the lectures, or that students must continuously submit physical assignments or models in order to take the exam.

At first, the Study Board must assess whether it is possible to maintain the prerequisites in a way that the students can continue to comply with them. For example, by handing in assignments digitally, checking out digital attendance for lectures or the like.

If it is not possible to maintain the prerequisites as a result of the home period, the Study Board must apply for an exemption from the current curriculum. The Study Board must state in the application for exemption that the Study Board wants exemption from the prerequisites in the module, because the students cannot fulfil the prerequisites during the home period.

4.3 Exemption from learning objectives
The home period may cause the students to be unable to meet experimental learning objectives, since they cannot access e.g. laboratories. If the Study Board does not assess that the experimental work can be obtained after the home period, Educational Law may, on behalf of the Pro-dean of Education, in exceptional cases exempt from the learning objectives. If an exemption from the learning objectives is granted, the exemption will apply to the ordinary exam and the re-examination held in the same exam period.

It is important to distinguish between experimental master’s thesis (long master's thesis) and ordinary projects that contain an element of experiment, laboratory exercise or the like.

Long master’s thesis
It is stated in the Ministerial Order, that if the thesis is more than 30 ECTS points, it must be of an experimental nature. Therefore, there can be no exception to the fact that there must be an experimental element in the long master’s thesis. Therefore, it is not possible to exempt from the requirement that master’s theses above 30 ECTS points must be of an experimental nature. If there are some specific issues, it must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, if another academic solution can be found, where the thesis can still be considered as of experimental nature. If it is not possible to find another academic solution, it will be necessary to postpone the deadline of submission.

Other projects
For other projects, it is not directly stated by Order that these projects must be of experimental nature. However, it is important to continue to ensure that the students acquire the competences that appear in the competence profile of the programme. In these cases, an exemption can be applied for e.g. to move the experimental learning objectives to a project later in the education, if it is academically meaningful.

4.4 Exemption from the requirement of external examination
There may be digital exams where it is difficult to find an external examiner. If it is not possible to find an external examiner, an exemption from the requirement of external examination can be granted in two cases:

1) If the programme continues to meet the requirement of one-third external examination, even if the specific exam is conducted with internal evaluation.
2) If it is possible to move the external examination to one or more other modules later in the programme, so that the programme as a whole complies with the requirement for one-third external examination.

If it is not possible to comply with the requirement for one-third external examination, the exemption to conduct the exam with internal assessment will not be granted. In that case, it will be necessary to postpone the exam.

5.0 Postponement of exams

Students are expected to be active during their home period. This also means that they are expected to participate in the exams that are being conducted digitally. This means that the students cannot necessarily deregister for exams or postpone the submission of their project exams.

If the student wish to deregister from the exam or wish to postpone, the student must write an application for exemption from the deadline of submission to the Study Board. The application must be in writing and reasoned, and the student must provide any documentation. The Study Board that processes the application has the opportunity to grant an exemption if special circumstances apply.

There may be some exams that cannot be conducted within the current rules. If it is not possible to conduct the exams in accordance with the rules and in an academically sound manner, the exams must be postponed.

CONTACT / RESPONSIBILITY

The rules are drawn up by Study Service. The regulations have been discussed in the Strategic Council for Education and subsequently approved by the Pro-rector.

If there are questions regarding the regulations, they can be sent to:

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Christina Buhl, cbu@adm.aau.dk