

University Centre of the Westfjords

Grading and Student Evaluation Rules

Section 1

*Overview of student evaluation at the University Centre of the Westfjords*

The evaluation of student performance at the University Centre of the Westfjords involves continuing assessment and/or assessment that takes place at the end of a course. In this context, “continuing assessment” means student evaluation that takes place while a course is in progress, through means such as midterm examinations, written assignments, oral and written reports, journals, portfolios, and class participation. Assessment at the end of a course may involve a final exam, a paper, a seminar presentation, a defense, or the evaluation of a practical project.

The instructor in charge of each course decides how student evaluation will take place, in consultation with the program director and the director of education and teaching, and these plans must be communicated to students in a syllabus no later than on the first day of class. After a class begins, changes in student evaluation procedures may be made only with the agreement of all students and instructors participating in the course.

In evaluating student performance, reasonable consideration must be given to students with demonstrable, recognized special needs. This may involve, for example, how assignments are turned in, the location of exams and the amount of time needed for them, or the use of special equipment. Students who request special assistance in working on assignments or taking exams must submit a professional evaluation of how their impairment or illness affects their educational needs.

Section 2

*Role and responsibilities of instructors*

- a) *Preparation of the exam/final paper/project in a course.* Instructors compose exam questions, devise assignments or assign papers in the courses which they are in charge of.
- b) *Explanation of assignments/exam questions.* Students have the right to an explanation of the wording of exam questions or assignments. When needed, instructors must explain the nature of each assignment to the best of their ability. Instructors who are only present for part of a course must answer e-mail questions from students quickly and faithfully while the course is in progress.
- c) *Processing of exam papers/written assignments/final projects in the course.* The instructor in charge of the course makes sure that all course instructors submit grades

for the material they are responsible for. The instructor in charge of the course must in turn submit students' exam papers/written assignments/final projects to the director of education and teaching. These may be destroyed after two years have passed from the end of the course or the date of the examination.

- d) *Turning in grades.* The instructor in charge of the course turns in final grades to the director of education and teaching no later than fourteen days after the end of the course. If there are multiple instructors in the course, they must turn in the grades for their particular parts of the course to the instructor in charge no later than 12 days after the end of the course. Students must be informed if illness or other unavoidable circumstances prevent instructors from submitting grades on time.

### Section 3

#### *Role and responsibilities of the administrative director of education and teaching*

The director of education and teaching ensures that instructors fulfill their responsibilities to students. Instructors must let the director of education and teaching know how they will evaluate students at least two weeks before the course begins. The director of education and teaching and program director can advise instructors on student evaluation matters if needed. The director of education and teaching advises on the interpretation of these student evaluation guidelines. The director of education and teaching makes sure that accommodations are provided to students with special needs.

### Section 4

#### *Outside readers*

An outside reader must normally have a recognized terminal degree (at least a master's or candidate's degree) in a field related to coastal and marine management or to the project or paper which the reader will evaluate. The master's program committee must appoint an outside reader in the following circumstances:

- a) Oral and practical exams
- b) Final projects
- c) On special request by a majority of students or by the instructor in charge of a course, to review student evaluation and its relation to the structure and intended learning outcomes of the course
- d) On request by a student or students who have not achieved a passing grade in a course

## Section 5

### *Registration for courses – course evaluation components – Student absences*

Because courses are taught in one-to-four-week cycles there is no fixed examination period for the Coastal and Marine Management programme at the University Centre of the Westfjords. By the end of each course students should have completed all required work and be ready to begin studying the next course.

It is assumed that all course work is compulsory, except where the teacher specifies otherwise in their course guide.

- a) *Registration for courses.* Students are automatically registered for all compulsory courses when they begin the programme, but they must later register themselves for elective courses. Registration for autumn electives should be completed by 15<sup>th</sup> October each year, for spring courses by 15<sup>th</sup> November, and for summer courses by 15<sup>th</sup> February.
- b) *Absence due to illness.* A student unable to complete assessment work for a particular course due to illness, including sickness of their child/dependent, must inform the University Centre of the fact immediately. A note from a doctor or other specialist regarding the absence must be submitted to the Director of Education and Teaching no later than five days after the course finishes.
  - i. *Exams* – Delayed examinations due to illness are held as soon as possible, two to three days after the student regains their health, but not after a new course has begun. The last opportunity to sit delayed examinations is during the next re-take period at the end of the Christmas or Easter holiday and at the beginning of July.
  - ii. *Project work* – The student can, with the agreement of the course teacher, delay the submission of project work due to registered illness; but work must be submitted before the next re-take period (at the end of the Christmas and Easter holidays and at the beginning of July). If for whatever reason it is not possible to recreate project conditions for the student after their recovery, the teacher may set for the student a different, equivalent form of assessment. It is important for the teacher to remain aware of the importance of ensuring equality of assessment between all students.
- c) *Absence with other legitimate causes.* If a student cannot complete a scheduled assessment due to a different legitimate reason, the same rules apply as for illness. Students inform the Director of Education and Teaching of their absence as quickly as possible and always before the day of the assessment. If the reason is disputed, the Director of the University Centre decides whether or not permission to delay assessment will be granted.
- d) *Absence without legitimate reason.* Students missing scheduled assessments without legitimate reasons are penalised:
  - i. *Exams* – The student is graded 0 and does not have the right to re-sit.

- ii. *Project work* – The student is graded 0 for the assessment component and does not have the right to re-take.
- e) *Fail grades*. It is possible to re-take under paragraphs i. and ii. if the student was graded at least 3 for the assessment in question (30% of the total available. Not rounded up).
  - i. *Exams* – If a student does not achieve the minimum pass grade he/she may re-take the exam. The re-take period is at the end of the Christmas and Easter holidays and at the beginning of July.
  - ii. *Project/coursework* – If a fail grade is awarded before the course ends it is desirable for work to be re-submitted before the next course begins (Monday at 08.00). If grading is not provided before the next course begins, re-submission should occur before the end of the term and never later than the next examination re-take period (see 1. above).
    - 1. *Compulsory projects*- It is permitted to re-take all compulsory projects a student fails.
    - 2. *Elective projects* – It is permitted to re-take one elective project for each course. If a student fails more than one, he/she chooses which one to re-take.

If a student does not achieve the minimum required grade in both main assessment and the re-take, the whole course must be taken again.

- f) *Examination fee*. The University Centre of the Westfjords is permitted to charge a fee for the re-sitting of exams and payment is due at the time of registration. Charges are based on the University of Akureyri re-sit fee, which in 2012-2013 is 6,000 krónur.
- g) *Repeated fails*. Students may re-take assessments in two core courses. If a student fails more than two of the core courses he/she fails the programme and must re-apply to begin the programme again at the start of a new academic year.
- h) *Plagiarism and cheating in exams*. If a student is suspected of misconduct in project work or examination, the course teacher shall report the student to the Director of Education and Teaching. If a student is found guilty of plagiarism, the course teacher must inform the Director of Education and Teaching immediately. The case will then be brought to the Master's Committee which will impose appropriate sanctions in consultation with the Director of Education and Teaching and the Academic Director of Coastal and Marine Management. Cases of plagiarism are dealt with in accordance with University Centre of the Westfjords rules on plagiarism.

## Section 6

### *Grades*

- a) *Final course grade*. The instructor in charge of the course calculates each student's final course grade. If a student has received a passing grade on one component of the course but has not performed well enough to receive a passing grade, the grade for the component which the student passed is valid only during the school year in question.

If an outside reader is brought in, the instructor and the outside reader each submit an independent evaluation, and the two grades are weighted equally in calculating the final grade (50% each). Students must perform at a minimum level in all components of their evaluation, unless otherwise specified. The minimum passing grade for both individual course components and the course as a whole is normally 5 and may never be lower. The master's program committee, in consultation with the course instructor and the program director, may decide that a course will be graded on a pass-fail basis (S indicates pass). The director of education and teaching is responsible for entering, posting, and retaining final grades.

- b) *Explanations for grades.* The instructor in charge shall send students a breakdown of their course grade within 3 days from the final grade's posting. The breakdown should be according to criteria (f. e. Rubrics) given to students in a syllabus at the beginning of a course. Students have the right to an explanation from the instructor of the evaluation for all assignments if they request this within 15 days of a grade's posting. An explanation of an evaluation means that the instructor explains the grade for each component according to criteria given beforehand by the beginning of the course (f. e. Rubrics).
- c) *Nomination of an outside reader.* Students who have not passed a course or who do not accept an instructor's evaluation, even after receiving an explanation, may request (in writing, within four weeks of the grade's posting) that an outside reader be appointed.
- d) *Calculating grades.* Final course grades must end in whole or half integers and may range from 0 to 10, as follows:

0–2,4% means a grade of 0,0	47,5–52,4% means a grade of 5,0
2,5–7,4% 0,5	52,5–57,4% 5,5
7,5–12,4% 1,0	57,5–62,4% 6,0
12,5–17,4% 1,5	62,5–67,4% 6,5
17,5–22,4% 2,0	67,5–72,4% 7,0
22,5–27,4% 2,5	72,5–77,4% 7,5
27,5–32,4% 3,0	77,5–82,4% 8,0
32,5–37,4% 3,5	82,5–87,4% 8,5
37,5–42,4% 4,0	87,5–92,4% 9,0
42,5–47,4% 4,5	92,5–97,4% 9,5
	97,5–100% 10,0

- e) *Other types of grades.* The following letters may also be used in grading:

S (pass – *staðið*), L (completed – *lokið*), M (evaluated – *metið*), F (absent – *fjarverandi*), V (illness – *veikindi*), Ó (incomplete – *ólokið*).

- f) *Final program grade.* The final program grade is a weighted average of all final course grades. The final program grade is calculated to two decimal places and 9,00-10,00 is a distinguished grade, 7,25-8,99 a first-class grade, 6,00-7,24 a second-class grade and 5,00-5,99 a third-class grade.

## Section 7

### *Effective date*

These rules are modeled after the student performance evaluation rules at the University of Akureyri, which in turn were set under the authority of the law on public universities, #85/2008, and the regulations of the University of Akureyri, #387/2009. These rules take effect on 1 September 2010.

*Approved at a meeting of the master's program committee in Coastal and Marine Management at the University Centre of the Westfjords in Ísafjörður, September 17, 2010.*

Revised in Oktober 2012

Peter Weiss, director of the University Centre of the Westfjords