

EPFL



# Assessment handbook

Version 2.0, September 2023

This document is a practical guide to the steps involved in planning and executing formal examinations in accordance with the rules and recommendations currently in force at EPFL. It is a complement to the information available in the [Teaching Guide \(inside.epfl.ch/teaching/grading-and-marking\)](https://inside.epfl.ch/teaching/grading-and-marking) and the Internal directive concerning examinations at EPFL, [Lex 2.6.1](#).

The first three pages are schematic representations of the teacher's responsibilities and tasks:

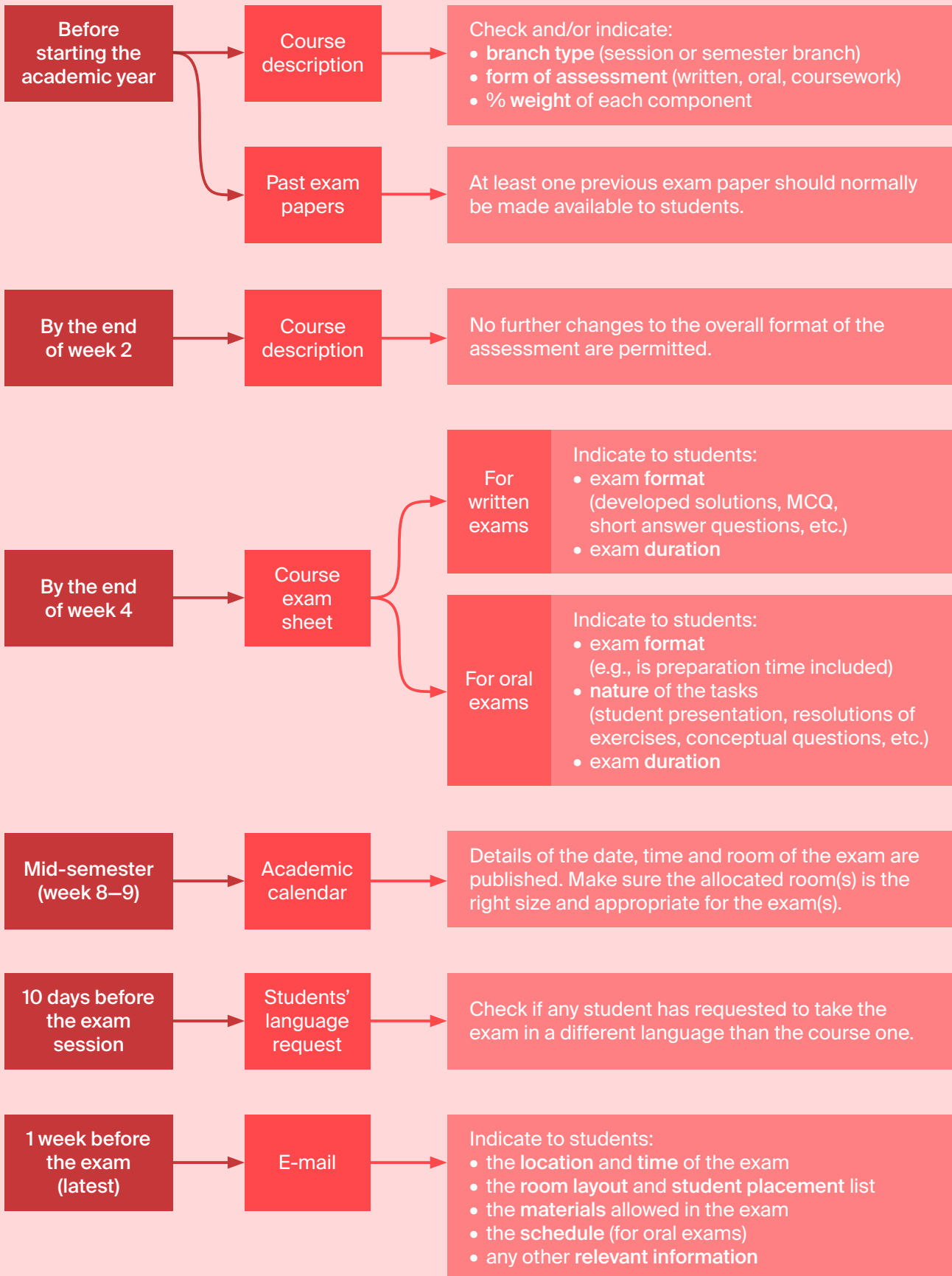
- Before the day of the exam
- During the exam
- After the exam

The remainder of the document gives specific details on various aspects of the examination procedures.

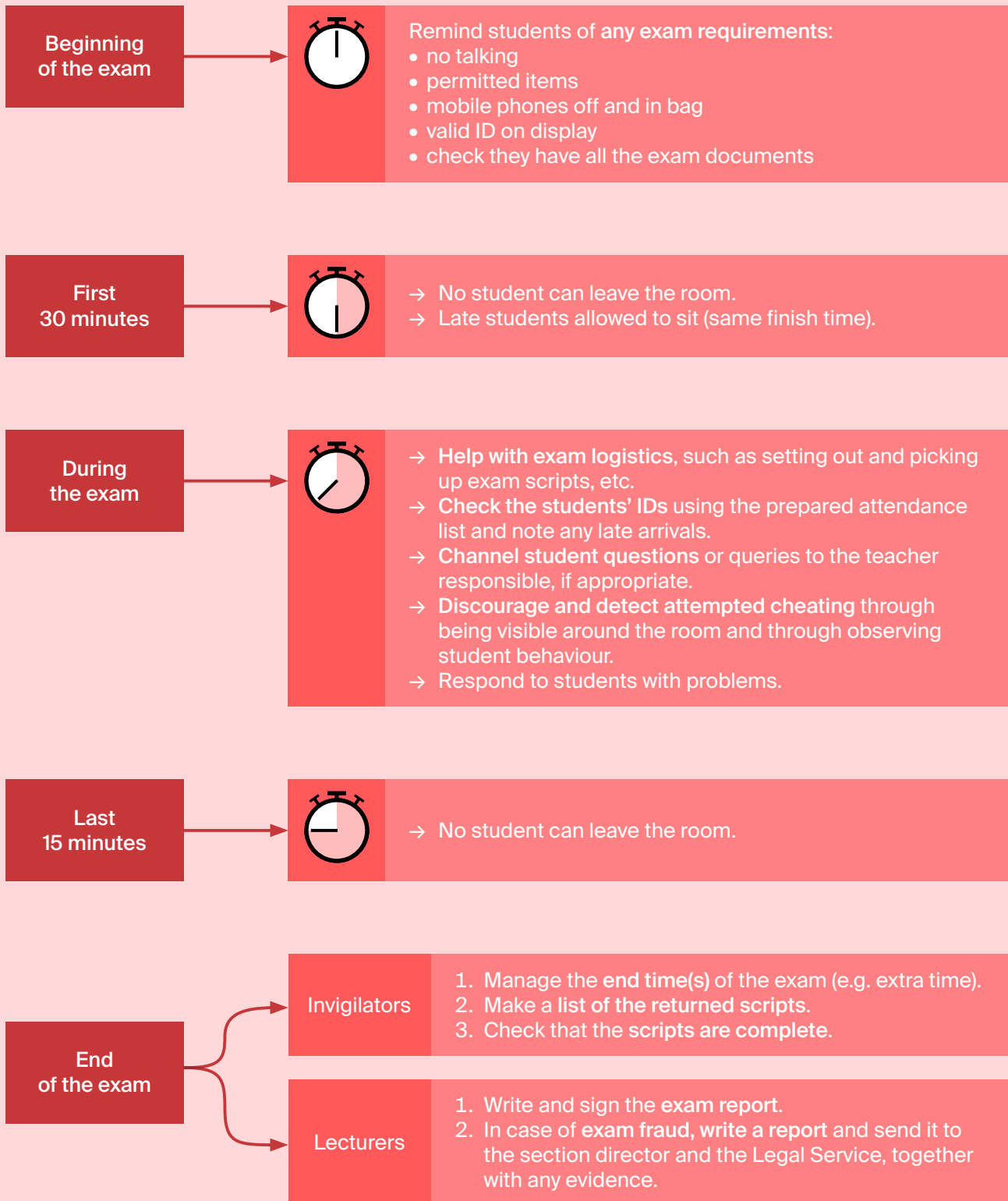
This document was prepared by the Teaching Support Center (CAPE).

**Please note! This is the September 2023 version. Consult the [Teaching Guide](#) for the latest version.**

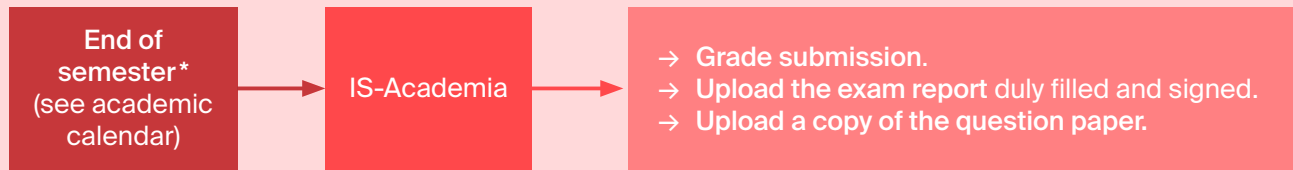
# Before the exam



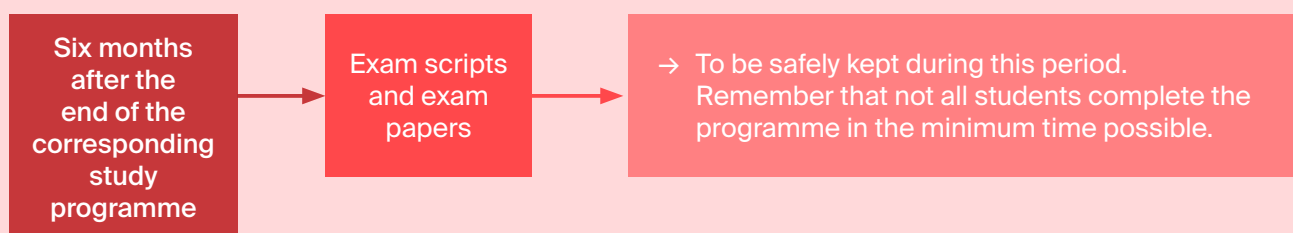
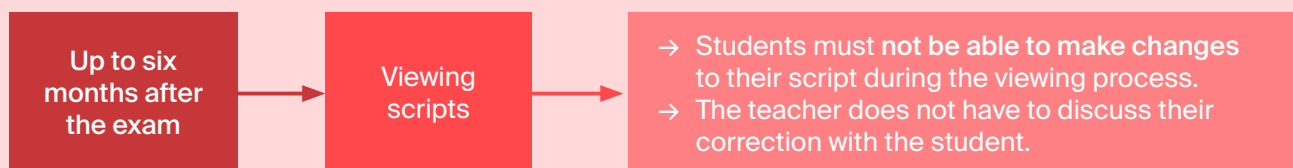
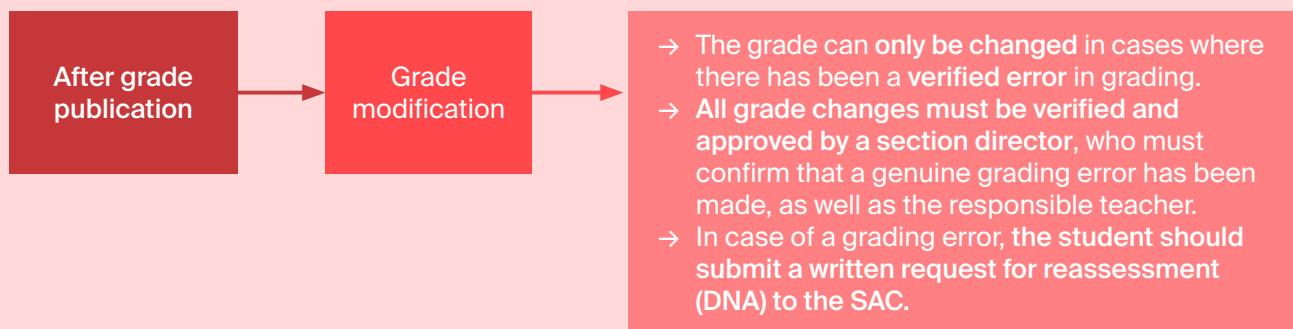
# On the day of the exam



# After the exam



\* The procedure for submission of grades is set out by the Registrar's Office. Depending on the format of the evaluation (continuous assessment, project or end of semester exam) the dates may vary, so it is advisable to check the deadlines in the academic calendar for each of your exams every semester.



# Exam and assessment regulations and recommendations

The EPFL examination regulations cover many aspects of student evaluation and grading (written and oral examination, mid-term test, semester and master project). They apply to the:

- **CMS** (*Cours de mathématiques spéciales*),
- **Bachelor**,
- **Master**,
- **PhD levels** (in some cases).

The objective of these regulations is to guarantee that the examinations are conducted in a consistent and appropriate manner, and that any form of cheating is prevented (or, if necessary, documented). They aim to ensure that marks assigned to a student adequately reflect the student's performance.

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# A summary of EPFL assessment rules

## 1. General assessment regulations

For each course, the course description (*fiche de cours*, publicly visible on IS-Academia) – prepared by the lecturer(s) and validated by the relevant section – outlines whether the course is a:

- ‘**Session branch**’ in which case the assessment **must include** an oral or written exam during the end of semester exam session, but **may also include** assessment(s) during the semester; the session exam must make up a substantial proportion of the overall grade.
- ‘**Semester branch**’ in which case the assessments **take place entirely during the semester**, with no final exam in the exam session.

### 1.1 Grading

For each course, students are **awarded a grade on a 1–6 scale**, including half points (e.g. 5.5, 4.5 etc.) and quarter points (e.g. 4.75, 5.25, etc.).

A course may be graded based on a number of different assessment components (e.g. multiple pieces of coursework, or coursework plus a session exam). For each component, a “0” can only be awarded:

- if the student does not attend a test,
- if they fail to answer any question, or
- if they do not submit an assignment on time.

If the overall mark for the course as a whole is **less than 1** when all assessment components are taken into account, and no valid reason is given by the student for missing exam(s) and/or not submitting work, a **grade of NA (not acquired)** is awarded.

| <i>EPFL</i>    | <b>Grade awarded</b> | <b>Description</b>        |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>marking</i> | 6; 5.75              | excellent                 |
| <i>scheme</i>  | 5.5; 5.25            | very good                 |
|                | 5; 4.75              | good                      |
|                | 4.5; 4.25            | satisfactory              |
|                | 4                    | minimum pass              |
|                | 3.75–1               | fail                      |
|                | NA                   | overall score less than 1 |

It is up to the lecturer to decide how assessments are to be marked (out of 20, out of 100, etc.) and how these marks are converted into grades: you can use your own professional judgement (which you should be able to explain if required) as to what level of performance constitutes “excellent”, “very good”, “good”, “satisfactory”, “minimum pass”, “fail” and “NA”. However, the overall marking scheme should always correspond to the table shown. In other words, 4 is a “minimum pass”; 4.25 – 4.5 stands for “satisfactory”, and so on.



Where a course has multiple assessment components (e.g. a mid-term and a final exam), **the sum of the marks available for each component must be 100% of the marks for the course** (e.g. 40% for mid-term and 60% for the final exam). **It is not permissible to have 'bonus' tests** (e.g. 100% available for the final exam, with the possibility to increase the course mark by up to 20% via a mid-term test).

In cases where more than one person is involved in assessment, the lecturer for the course is responsible for checking personally all work whose level has been judged inadequate (0 and 1 to 3.75).

**The exceptions to this marking scheme are required assignments carried out outside EPFL (e.g. an industrial placement), which can only be awarded an "R" (*réussite* – pass) or "E" (*échec* – fail) grade.**

## 1.2 **Grade submission**

The procedure for submission of grades is set out by the Registrar's Office (Service académique, SAC). Depending on the type of course and format of the evaluation (continuous assessment, project or end of semester exam) the deadlines differ, so you need to check the deadlines for each of your exams every semester. The deadlines are available on the academic calendar for each semester.

**Do not inform students of the marks they have obtained for an exam held during an examination session.** The only exception is in the case of a master project: you can tell a candidate whether or not they have succeeded in a master project, but without giving the mark. According to article 19 of the Ordinance on study evaluation (Lex 2.6.0.1), only the associate vice president for education can notify students of any decision regarding success or failure related to grades or credits for each subject/course.

## 1.3 **Changing the grade**

After a grade has been submitted, **it can only be changed in cases where there has been a verified error in grading.** All grade changes must be verified and approved by a section director, who must confirm that a genuine grading error has been made, as well as the responsible teacher. Special care should be taken in cases where a change in grade will alter a student's award level. It is not advisable to tell a student, or allow them to infer that a mark was given with a certain degree of flexibility.

**In the case of a student who believes their grade is wrong, they have various options and they should be directed to the Student Services for more details.** Information about the relevant procedures is available here: [epfl.ch/education/studies/en/rules-and-procedures/request\\_reassment/](http://epfl.ch/education/studies/en/rules-and-procedures/request_reassment/)

## 1.4 **Keeping exam scripts and exam papers**

Students' scripts (full sets of exam question papers plus students' answer sheets) are to be kept for six months after the end of the corresponding study programme. Remember that not all students complete the programme in the minimum time possible. Therefore, in practice this means:

- For 1st year preparatory programmes: 1.5 years after the exam.
- For bachelor programmes, 2nd year: 4.5 years after the exam.
- For bachelor programmes, 3rd year: 3.5 years after the exam.
- For master programmes: 3.5 years after the exam.
- For master projects: 1 year after the end of the project.

## 1.5 Procedure for the adaptation of examination procedures for people with disabilities

Students with special needs may apply to the Student Affairs (SAE) for support measures for teaching and assessment.

The SAE will send you a list of beneficiaries and the means of support decided on the basis of the medical certificates presented. There are three types of measures, and you are responsible for implementing them:

- Extension of examination time.
- Placement in a quiet area (i.e., in the front row so as not to be distracted by others, or in a separate room).
- Provision of a secure tablet for consulting the exam and writing answers. It is specifically configured by the Poséidon service. You are responsible for organising the loan by completing a request on [go.epfl.ch/tablet\\_for\\_exam](http://go.epfl.ch/tablet_for_exam).

For more information, see [Lex 2.6.5](#) or contact [sae.amenagements@epfl.ch](mailto:sae.amenagements@epfl.ch).

## 2. Rules for supervised written exams

The following rules apply to supervised written exams, whether they are conducted during the end of semester exam period or during the semester. The information provided here is a summary of the rules; for full details please consult the Directive and Ordinance on exams in the *Polylex* ([Lex 2.6.1](#) and [2.6.0.1](#)).

### 2.1 Planning

#### 2.1.1 *Writing the exam paper*

The teacher responsible for the course is also responsible for personally supervising the preparation of the examination. This includes making sure that confidentiality is maintained during all phases of the assessment development procedure. **New questions must be used for each examination.** Whenever possible, the teacher selects questions requiring detailed answers in order to make cheating difficult or easily detectable.

The teacher also:

- resolves, before the examination, any problems arising with regard to written examinations,
- checks the level of difficulty of the exam, and
- verifies that all the necessary information for solving the set problems appears on the question papers.

For multiple choice tests, the teacher **prepares several versions of the test**, varying the sequence of the questions. Software for automatic randomisation of MCQ exam papers, as well as their automated marking, is available at EPFL. More information can be obtained from the Propedeutic Center (CePro), [moodle.epfl.ch/course/view.php?id=16420](http://moodle.epfl.ch/course/view.php?id=16420).

The **language** used for exams is the same as that used for teaching the course. A student is entitled to give their answers in French in exams set in English, and the student may be authorised to give answers in English if the exam is prepared in French. In the second case, however, **the student must make a written request** to the teaching staff member at the time of enrolment for the examination or test concerned (normally at least ten days before the exam period begins).

..... If a teacher wishes to have further feedback on their assessment, they can request it from the academic commission of their section.

### 2.1.2 *Laying out the room*

**The lecturer is responsible for laying out the exam room:**

- You must check in advance to ensure that there is **enough space** for the exam in the room allocated. The Registrar's Office (SAC) will generally allocate exam rooms towards the end of April for spring semesters and in mid-November for autumn semesters. You can find the plans of the rooms on [go.epfl.ch/salles-examen](http://go.epfl.ch/salles-examen).
- **Places should be pre-allocated** to each candidate in order to avoid communication between students.
- It is advisable that students are seated in such a way that there is **sufficient distance** between them to avoid cheating. Students should occupy only every second place in the rows of seats and should not be placed in staggered rows. NB: In a lecture theatre with tiered seating, alternate rows must be left empty (a higher student density is possible if different examinations are to be conducted simultaneously).
- Students should be sent the **seating plan** one week before the exam at the latest, to avoid congestion at the start of the exam. Remember to also prepare several copies of the seating plan for posting in the exam room on the day of the exam.

## 2.2 **Supervising the written exams**

### 2.2.1 *Supervision of exams*

**The course lecturer is responsible for personally supervising the exam.** For exams held during end of semester examination sessions, **the teacher must be present at the examination.** In the event of unforeseen circumstances preventing a teacher from attending, the associate vice president for education appoints a substitute (a professor, a MER or a lecturer) based on the suggestion of the teacher.

**The course lecturer is also responsible for organising the supervision of the examination,** instructing assistant invigilators about their duties and behaviour and about how they should reply to students' questions.

### 2.2.2 *Permitted materials*

In an exam, a student may only use those materials (documentation, forms, notes, electronic instruments, etc.) which have been explicitly **specified by the teacher prior to the examination** (at least one week before the exam).

### 2.2.3 *Checking students' identity*

During the exam session, **each student must have their student card or another form of photo ID such as a passport or residence permit on the desk in front of them.** The teacher (or invigilator in the case of multiple rooms) is responsible for checking the identity of students, who must present their student card or some other form of identification bearing a photo when requested to do so.

A pre-prepared **attendance list** (e.g. exported from IS-Academia) **must be used for checking students' presence,** and any late arrivals noted.

- 2.2.4 | **Students leaving the exam room**  
Students are in principle allowed to leave the exam room to go to the toilet during the exam, provided that appropriate supervision is available.
- If a student asks to leave the room before the end of an examination period for another reason, they must first hand in their exam script, which will not be returned to the student.
- A student may only interrupt an exam for a duly **justified reason**, such as an illness or accident which has occurred or become apparent **during** the exam (see section 2.4). The student must immediately inform the Registrar's Office and submit the necessary supporting documents within three days. For written exams during the end of semester exam period, the associate vice president for education decides if the reason given is valid. For written exams during the semester, the decision is taken by the section director, informed by the teacher concerned.
- 2.2.5 | **End of written exams**  
At the end of the exam, the teacher makes a list of returned scripts and checks that each script handed in is complete.
- Teachers must **fill in a report** on written exams completed during the end of semester exam period. This needs to be uploaded to IS-Academia together with a copy of the exam paper in pdf format. The deadline is the same as for the submission of exam grades.
- French and English language versions of the exam report forms are available here:  
[epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.6.2\\_prot\\_examen\\_fr.pdf](http://epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.6.2_prot_examen_fr.pdf)  
[epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.6.2\\_prot\\_examen\\_en.pdf](http://epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.6.2_prot_examen_en.pdf)
- 2.3 | **“Make-up” written exams**  
Extra exams, for example to allow a student who was close to passing to improve their grade, are expressly forbidden.
- 2.4 | **Request for an exam to be ignored for medical reasons**  
If a student chooses to sit an exam despite feeling unwell or knowing that they are ill, their grade will be valid and cannot be ignored. If a student feels so unwell that their grade may be affected, they should not sit the exam and submit a medical certificate within the required deadline (currently three days).

### 3. Rules for oral exams

The following rules apply to oral exams conducted during the end of semester exam period. The information provided here is a summary of the rules; for full details please consult the Directive and Ordinance on exams in the *Polylex* (Lex 2.6.1 and 2.6.0.1).

#### 3.1 Planning

##### 3.1.1 *Scheduling oral exams*

The teacher is responsible for scheduling the oral exam, but may delegate this to the class representative(s). Class representatives may use student lists and appropriate software to do this, in consultation with the teacher.

##### 3.1.2 *Observers*

All oral exams conducted during the end of semester examination sessions **must take place in the presence of an observer**. The presence of an observer is not necessary for oral tests conducted during the semester. The observer attends the oral examination and ensures that it proceeds smoothly by playing the role of supervisor and conciliator.

The observer is proposed by the course teacher and approved by the section, which then informs the Registrar's Office. Colleagues of the teacher (e.g. same unit, laboratory) cannot perform the function of observer for the subject taught by the teacher.

#### 3.2 Supervising the oral exams

##### 3.2.1 *Keeping notes*

Both the lecturer responsible and the observer take notes concerning each oral test. These notes may be requested by the conference for the ratification of exam results or, should the need arise, the appeal authorities (see Lex 2.6.1, art. 12).

##### 3.2.2 *Feedback to students during oral exams*

It is recommended that you avoid making comments to the candidate that might be interpreted as an indication of their grade. This includes comments made at the end of the exam such as, "Very good, you can go".

##### 3.2.3 *End of oral exams*

As with written exams, **an exam report must be completed** for oral exams conducted during the end of semester exam period. This is uploaded to IS-Academia together with the grades (same deadline).

#### 3.3 "Make-up" oral exams

Extra exams, for example to allow a student who was close to passing to improve their grade, are expressly forbidden. The only exception to this is in the case of a student missing an oral exam for a valid reason. Here, the oral may be rescheduled within the current assessment period.

## 4. Rules for continuous assessment

Continuous assessments may be supervised examinations of students in class time or unsupervised assessments, where students have access to external information (see Lex 2.6.1, art. 1), for example:

- exercises done at home,
- open-book remote exams,
- coursework
- semester and master projects.

For any classes assessed during the final exam session (“session branch”), teachers can also include continuous assessments as part of the final class grade, but must still set a final exam during the exam session. This final exam must account for a substantial proportion of the overall grade.

For any continuous assessment task:

- The teacher must ensure that the work has indeed been carried out by the student examined and it **has not been plagiarised**. For further details on EPFL’s plagiarism policy, see [go.epfl.ch/plagiat](http://go.epfl.ch/plagiat).
- Continuous assessments may include questions that are corrected automatically (such as Moodle quizzes) or questions where the identity of the student answering is not necessarily checked (such as graded exercises), but taken together, these can account for **no more than one-sixth of a student’s overall course grade**.
- Wherever possible, students should be provided feedback on graded continuous assessment activities in order to be able to improve their performance.
- In the case of **group work or team-based assessments**, the teacher must ensure that the mark obtained for group work actually corresponds to the work contributed by each student. In case of pronounced differences, the teacher must attribute individually assessed marks.
- Student assistants who are master students can correct assignments for bachelor classes, provided that the assistant is overseen by a PhD student or the class teacher.

The assessment method and grading percentages must be specified in the course description (see section 1).

### 4.1 Developing coursework questions

The teacher responsible for the course is also responsible for personally supervising the preparation of the exam material. This includes making sure that confidentiality is maintained during all phases of the assessment development procedure.

**New questions must be used each year.** Whenever possible, the teacher selects questions requiring detailed answers, in order to make cheating difficult or easily detectable.

The information provided here is a summary of the rules that apply to coursework; for full details please consult the Regulations and Ordinance on exams in the *Polylex*.

## 4.2 **Justified absences during continuous assessment**

If a student is absent during a test which takes place in the semester (e.g. a mid-term) and this absence is justified (e.g. with a medical certificate) three solutions exist:

1. Where feasible, the teacher should organize a make-up test during the current semester. This is at the discretion of the teacher. The format of the test must remain the same.
2. Assign an M to the final result and the student only retakes the missed test(s) the following year.
3. Assign a grade of 0 for the missed test and calculate the final result keeping the initial weights.

To be fair to all students, it is not possible to simply ignore the missed test and use only the remaining assessments to calculate the overall grade.

## 4.3. **Grading in-class activities**

It is not permissible to grade attendance in class; grades can be awarded by evaluating the outcomes of the activities undertaken in class where those activities relate directly to explicitly stated learning objectives in the course description. The students should be aware of the grading criteria and you should be consistent.

## 4.4 **Managing plagiarism in coursework**

Teachers should take all reasonable steps to detect and prevent plagiarism in graded coursework. EPFL uses the iThenticate tools provided by Turnitin. These tools are available via a Turnitin plug-in in Moodle. A guide can be found here: [go.epfl.ch/how-to-turnitin](http://go.epfl.ch/how-to-turnitin).

Combining multiple assessment methods (e.g. oral presentation with project report) is a useful strategy used by teachers to detect potential plagiarism.

In the case of any suspected fraud and/or cheating, the teacher writes a report which they then send to the section director and Legal Service together with evidence of the compromising or suspected item or behaviour.

For further details on EPFL's plagiarism policy, see [go.epfl.ch/plagiat](http://go.epfl.ch/plagiat).

# Assessment organisation and logistics

## A. Exam invigilation guidelines for teacher or lead invigilator

This section describes the rules for supervision of supervised written exams as well as some recommendations for organising the logistics of the exam.

### A.1 Before the day of the exam

As soon as you have been informed of the exam room(s) you have been allocated, **you should check that they are big enough to seat all students**, ensuring that there is an empty seat between every two students. See [section 2.1.2](#) for more information.

You also need to check that there are **sufficient invigilators** in place to supervise the number of students/rooms.

If you ask the Print Center (Repro) to print your exam, please be aware that it is advisable to submit it at least two weeks in advance to ensure the exam is ready on time.

### A.2 On the day of the exam

→ Based on the seat assignment sent to the students at least a week before the exam, **mark out the place allocated to each student in the exam room** (e.g. using “post-it” notes), and **post a map or list of assigned seating numbers outside the exam hall** (it is recommended to post more than one to avoid congestion).

→ Ensure that all invigilators are briefed and given student lists, emergency telephone numbers, etc.

→ Ensure that invigilators have a working phone (e.g. mobile phone) in each exam room.

→ Check toilets near the exam hall to ensure that no unauthorised materials have been concealed there.

### A.3 At the beginning of the exam

**No student can leave the room during the first 30 minutes of the exam**, and a student who arrives late during those first 30 minutes is **allowed to sit the exam but their finish time remains the same** (i.e. they do not get extra time). After the first 30 minutes of the test, a student arriving late may sit the exam on condition that no other student has yet left the room(s) for any reason.



At the beginning of the exam you should notify students of any exam requirements. These will normally include:

- **No talking** inside the exam hall during the exam.
- A reminder that **only materials which have been explicitly authorised by the teacher can be in the students' possession** and that students must ensure they are not using any unauthorised materials (such as 'smart' watches, phones or other communication devices, calculators with a programmable memory, notes, bags etc.).
- A reminder to switch off mobile phones and all other devices (e.g. Apple Watches) and put them in their bags while they are in the room.
- A valid photo ID (ideally a student card) must be on display throughout the exam.
- A reminder to students to check that they have received all of the required exam documents (check the number of pages on the exam paper, ensure they have any permitted formula sheets, etc.).

## A.4 During the exam

The invigilator has the following roles in the exam:

- To help with **exam logistics**, such as setting out places and picking up exam scripts etc.
- To **check the student IDs** using the prepared attendance list and note any late arrivals.
- To manage the **start and end of the exam**.
- To **channel** student questions or queries to the teacher responsible, if appropriate.
- To **discourage and detect attempted cheating** through being visible around the room and through observing student behaviour and collecting evidence when necessary.
- **Responding** to students with problems.

### A.4.1 *Dealing with student questions*

**Exam regulations require that the teacher is present for exams.** If a teacher is not present in an exam room for a period of time (e.g., the exam is spread across multiple rooms), then the teacher must be contactable by phone. **If a student has a query, this should be relayed to the teacher.**

In order to ensure equal treatment of all students, **teachers will normally not answer queries unless an exam question is completely unclear** (e.g. due to a translation or language problem), or unless there is a serious error in the exam question.

Exam regulations recommend that teachers avoid introducing additional or rectifying material related to question papers during the examination. Where a serious problem or error in a question is identified during the exam it can be communicated to all students via an announcement. Ideally it will also be noted on a board if one is available.

### A.4.2 *Discouraging and detecting cheating*

In order to discourage attempted exam fraud, **invigilators should be highly visible in the exam hall.** They should move regularly throughout the exam hall. Invigilators should avoid engaging in behaviour which might suggest they are not paying attention (reading, using their phone, sitting in one part of the room etc.)

**Checking students' ID:** Students must display a valid photo ID on the desk during the exam. An exam attendance list must be maintained (e.g. students may be asked to sign an attendance list when the ID check is taking place).

**Presence of unauthorised materials:** Exam regulations state that only material (documentation, forms, notes, electronic instruments, etc.) explicitly specified by the teacher prior to the examination is authorised.

If a student is found to be in possession of unauthorised materials ('smart' watches, phones, unauthorised calculators, notes etc.):

- The invigilator should, whenever possible, **confiscate or photograph** the item in question.
- The invigilator must immediately **make a note** describing what has been discovered and how.
- The invigilator **may mark on the student's script** the point at which the item was discovered.
- The teacher, section or Registrar's Office **may be called**, if necessary.
- The student **can be allowed to complete the exam**, if appropriate.

**Unauthorised communication:** Students are not permitted to communicate with each other in an exam (by talking, passing notes, or by reading from another student's script, for example). Nor are they allowed to communicate with someone outside the exam room (using a concealed microphone and small earpiece receiver, for example).

Where an invigilator detects unauthorised communication:

- The invigilator should, whenever possible, **confiscate or photograph** any relevant materials (a note which has been passed, or a receiver earpiece, for example).
- The invigilator should immediately **make a note** describing the communication witnessed.
- The invigilator **may mark on the student's script** the point at which the communication was discovered.
- The teacher, section or Registrar's Office **may be called**, if necessary.
- The student **can be allowed to complete the exam**, if appropriate.

#### A.4.3 *Helping students with problems*

A student should be permitted to go to the toilet during an exam, providing that they are supervised.

In the case of a medical emergency on campus, call 021 693 3000 (from a mobile phone) or 115 (from an internal landline).

#### A.5 **At the end of the exam**

The teacher and/or invigilator(s) must ensure that the end of the examination is managed in an organised way.

**No students can leave during the last 15 minutes of scheduled exam time.** Everyone must put down pens when instructed. Students are asked to **stay silent and seated until all scripts are collected** from students while they sit at their desk. They can then leave (but must stay silent if there are still other students working in the exam room).

**The invigilators should ensure that they have the required completed answer sheets from all students who were present during the exam** (using the exam ID check/attendance sheet as a reference). Any missing answer sheets/scripts should be noted in writing at this time for the **exam report** (this will ensure a student cannot later claim that their sheet was handed in during the exam but was lost by the teacher).

## A.6

### After the exam

For all examinations conducted during an exam session, **the teacher completes and uploads a report confirming that the exams have taken place in conformity with the internal directive concerning examinations at EPFL (Lex 2.6.1)**. This report needs to be uploaded to IS-Academia together with a copy of the exam paper in pdf format. The deadline is the same as for the submission of exam grades.

In the case of any suspected **exam fraud**, the teacher writes a report concerning any suspected cheating, which they then send to the **section director and Legal Service** together with evidence of the compromising or suspected item or behaviour.

French and English language versions of the exam report forms are available here:  
[epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.6.2\\_prot\\_examen\\_fr.pdf](http://epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.6.2_prot_examen_fr.pdf)  
[epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.6.2\\_prot\\_examen\\_en.pdf](http://epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.6.2_prot_examen_en.pdf)

## B. Communication with students regarding exams

This section describes the rules for communicating with students regarding assessment and provides some additional recommendations.

### B.1

#### Communicating the basic assessment format

The basic details of the assessment are included in the course description (*fiche de cours*). This includes whether it is:

- Session branch or semester branch.
- The form of assessments used (written; oral; coursework).
- The percentage weighting of each component.

The rules set by the teachers for the assessments, including the weight of each assessment for the final grade, should not be modified after the second week of the semester, since the students may have already planned their work for the first assessment.

### B.2

#### Communicating more detail on the exam format

The teacher should make available to students by the end of the fourth week of the semester a course exam sheet, which provides more detail on the nature of the assessment(s). This should include:

##### For written exams

- The exam format (developed solutions, MCQ, short answer questions etc.).
- The exam duration.

##### For oral exams

- The exam format (e.g. is preparation time included).
- The nature of the test tasks (student presentation, resolutions of exercises, conceptual questions etc.).
- The exam duration.

### B.3 Exam past papers

Past exam papers are a useful study tool for students and at least one **previous exam question sheet should be made available** to students (justifiable exceptions include multiple choice exams, when the exam format has changed considerably, or when the course has been substantially revised). The exam regulations stipulate that for supervised written exams, “new questions must be used for each examination” (Lex 2.6.1, art. 8.1). There should therefore normally be no practical obstacle to making past exam question papers available to students.

A correction sheet for the previous exam papers is useful for the students but is not obligatory.

### B.4 Pre-exam communication

For **session written exams**, at least a week before the exam, the teacher must send an e-mail to students specifying:

- the location and time of the exam,
- the room layout and student placement list,
- the materials students are allowed to have in the exam,
- any other relevant information.

For **oral exams**, the teacher has overall responsibility for developing the schedule but may delegate this to the class representative(s) (see section 3). The schedule must be communicated to students at least one week before the exam.

### B.5 Viewing scripts

After they have been notified of their results, **students may ask the responsible teaching staff member to consult their exam scripts** within a period of six months following the examination (see Ordinance on the evaluation of bachelor and master studies, Lex 2.6.0.1, art. 15).

The viewing of scripts needs to take place on the Lausanne campus. Please contact your section if you need to book a room for this purpose.

**Students must not be able to make changes to their script during the viewing process.** Ideally students will get to view a copy of their script (rather than the original). Where students do view the original, viewing of the script must be carefully supervised.

During the viewing session, the **teacher does not have to discuss their correction with the student.** Such viewing sessions are not primarily intended to be used for discussing a grade. However, if a brief explanation can avoid subsequent formal action on the basis of a misunderstanding, everyone will benefit. If a student does not understand a correction or wishes to contest it, they should follow the procedure for appealing a grade by contacting the SAC (Registrar’s Office) via the Student Services.

Teachers schedule the viewing time within normal working hours, and within a reasonable time period after a viewing request is made. It is possible to schedule multiple students to view a copy of their script at the same time. In large classes, it can be helpful to involve the class representatives in the planning of script viewing.

## C. Assessing group work

It is possible to grade students on the basis of work which they have completed as a group (e.g. a group project submission or report). The teacher is, however, required to have some mechanism to differentiate the individual students' contributions (it is not required to precisely weight each student's contribution – only to address pronounced differences in contribution).

There are a number of strategies that can be used to identify such pronounced differences and to differentiate grades if required (each of which have some strengths and weaknesses):

- Group submissions can be accompanied by an **oral presentation** which allows teachers to question each team member on their contribution.
- Each student can be allocated a task in the group and can report on that **specific task**.
- The group submission can be accompanied by a (shorter) **individual submission** which allows each individual to demonstrate their own grasp of the material.

Groupwork is often intended to assess both technical knowledge and transversal skills (such as team leadership or project management). Different components of a submission can be used by teachers to assign a weight to transversal as well as technical skills taught in a course (for example, an individual report may be used to assess a student's learning on project management, while technical knowledge may be assessed through the group submission).

It should be noted that grades are awarded by the teacher and so students cannot be used for peer grading within teams. Peer feedback from one student to another remains, however, a valuable learning strategy.

## D. Grading advice

### D.1 Assigning grades

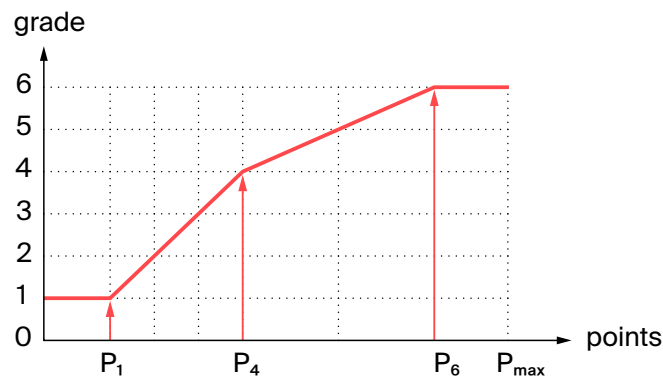
The teacher has considerable flexibility in terms of how they convert marks into grades. While strategies like normalizing grades on a Gaussian distribution are widely used internationally, under the EPFL system, **grades should be related to attainment of particular learning goals** and not to comparisons with other students.

A proposed strategy for achieving this is the following.

First, identify what level of performance you would associate with two specific points on your scale:

- ‘Excellent’ (grade 6) should be reserved for students who show real mastery of the learning goals. The assessment should be designed so it is normal for some students to get a 6 (although this may not happen every year).
- ‘Minimum pass’ (grade 4) should reflect those who have shown that they have more or less achieved the learning outcomes outlined for the course without showing more than a basic competence.

Once you have defined the “excellent” and “minimum pass” grades, the marks corresponding to the intermediate levels can be read by linear interpolation between grades 6 and 4, and between grades 4 and 1.



Since teachers design a new assessment each year, it is normal that there will be some variability in difficulty of exams, and thus it is not required that the same relationship between marks and grades is applied each year. In altering the mark to grade conversion, however, the focus remains on attainment of learning goals rather than on comparison between students in a cohort.

### D.2 Criteria rubric

To make the assessment transparent, clear to students, and objective, you can use a clear grid which reminds you what marks are assigned for. This can be shared with the TAs and the students.

For more information you can visit [go.epfl.ch/grading](http://go.epfl.ch/grading).





For any further information,  
you can contact the  
Teaching Support Center  
(CAPE) at [cape@epfl.ch](mailto:cape@epfl.ch)