

Guidelines issued by the Office for Studies of the Masaryk University Rector's Office No. 1/2020

Methodology of Distance Examination and Course Completion

(in the wording effective from 27 April 2020)

Act on Special Rules for Education and Decision-Making at Higher Education Institutions in 2020 (hereinafter referred to as the "Act on Special Rules") states that in the period when personal presence of students or academic community members is restricted, a higher educational institution is allowed to perform examinations (including the final state examination and defence of a doctoral thesis) and to verify other study duties in a remote mode. The MU Crisis Board (hereinafter referred to as "CB") recommends performing contact examinations or other contact forms of instruction only in cases of absolute necessity for the entire spring semester including the examination period. Where legal regulations permit contact examination or contact forms of instruction, but the examination and the instruction may be performed in the remote mode, the CB recommends preferring the remote mode for the entire spring semester including the examination period.

The framework for examinations in the "spring 2020" is provided by the Decision of the Rector of MU No. 4/2020 "[Special study rules in the spring semester 2020](#)" and the Decision of the Rector of MU No. 6/2020 "[Emergency measures in response to the risk of COVID-19 infection](#)".¹

These Guidelines should help all MU employees understand the forms of distance examination and course completion. These are temporary recommendations, although certain knowledge may be of permanent value and may be applied in the future. The MU Study and Examination Regulations remain valid; the measures apply mainly to the manner of use of available information and communication instruments. The current situation in connection with the nationwide state of emergency is regulated by the Rector's measures.

1. Basic principles

- To enable the completion of the spring semester 2020 with the least possible number of exceptions while respecting the requirements of the law, government measures and internal regulations.
- Necessity to meet the needs of students who suffer from the lack of contact teaching and those who have been involved in volunteering and working activities.
- After investigating the possibilities of technical means of remote communication to work with the prospect of their long-term use.
- Courses whose completion does not allow for the remote mode may be taught in the intensive form upon the decision of the programme guarantor; in extreme cases, the "S" grade may be awarded.
- To respect the specifics of faculties and individual programmes which must be enabled defining their needs; at the same time, they may use the existing forms of online testing/examining at the individual units and the experience of modern technology pioneers while encouraging those who have not made use of online teaching yet.

¹ The Emergency Measures are expected to be amended depending on the current situation and public authorities' regulations.

- To use the assistance of technicians and user support teams (IS MU user support, MU Institute of Computer Science, IT support at the faculties), including the constantly expanding knowledge base is.muni.cz/samostudium.
- The Teiresiás Centre shall verify whether the conditions of written and oral examination, or as the case maybe, FSE of students with special needs comply with such needs, and shall make the adequate technical and organizational adaptations, if necessary. When applying the distance form, the Centre needs sufficient time to make arrangements with the course teacher or final state examination (hereinafter referred to as “FSE”) guarantor on the expected steps, and to propose an alternate technical solution (preparation and provision of a procedure that is technically equivalent and accessible). The employees of the Teiresias Centre’s Office for Studies address the individual teachers and guarantors; however, they would like to ask the teachers of students with special needs to give the information to the relevant student advisor of the Teiresias Centre as soon as they decide on the form and content of the examination, if possible 5 days in advance for final course examinations and 2 weeks for FSEs (Rector’s Directive No. 8/2014).

2. Preparation for examinations

- The adequate form (e.g. testing vs an oral exam or their combination) and the environment must be selected first. For written tests, ROPOT application in the IS MU is recommended (a faculty technician will help with the correct setting), for oral examining, we recommend the platform MS Teams including the training provided by the Institute of Computer Science staff. However, the faculties may choose other platforms and options (Moodle Test, Zoom, etc.).
- The examiner must subsequently adapt the form of written tests. In general, “open book” examination should be chosen; questions focused on the simple testing of knowledge are not suitable for the online mode. Examples of suitable questions are to be found at <https://it.muni.cz/distančni-zkouseni-na-mu#doporuceni>.
- Properly and provably inform students of changes in the requirements for the completion of a course (methods and manner of evaluation) and manner and procedure of online testing at least 3 weeks before the first date of the examination.
- Make clear whether the examination will be recorded. This is possible only upon a (recorded) consent of all participants (except for the FSE, which is regulated by the Act on Special Rules). Recording without the consent poses a breach of personal data protection regulations and may be considered a disciplinary offence and a breach of the MU Code of Ethics.
- In case the requirements announced by public authorities permit, students may be offered to take the examination using the MU facilities, both in the form of lending certain devices and sitting for an exam in the MU premises.
- For FSEs and other oral examinations held online with the use of video conferencing technologies, a longer time may be necessary (at least 5 minutes before for the potential solution of minor technical issues and sufficient time for the exam itself, in particular if advanced functions of video conferencing tools, such as breakout rooms, are used).

3. Types of distance examinations

Oral examination

Oral examinations may take place via video conference between the teacher and the student. MU has purchased licenses and programmes that enable video conferences (in particular the officially supported MS Teams and a limited number of licenses for Zoom), the faculty technician and user support teams are ready to provide training to teachers and to assist with the environment setting. For basic instructions see <https://is.muni.cz/do/mu/samostudium/pages/zkouseni.html#ustni>.

Recommendations for guarantors and teachers:

- Try the selected technology and its operation in advance with the help of a technician.
- Determine in advance (ideally by the dean's decision) the method of resolving potential technical difficulties that will lead to the interruption of the exam (loss of connection etc.); inform students of the method. The loss of connection must not result in negative evaluation of the student; the exam may be either recognized as successfully passed or cancelled (depending on the progress and degree of completion).
- Examined students must prove their identity (e.g. by showing their ISIC or identity card to the camera), the students must be notified that their recording the exam is not acceptable and told what the procedure will be in case the connection is lost (see above).
- Inspecting the student's environment or fairness of conditions of the oral examination are not supported in terms of technology, ethics or law. Teachers are recommended to modify the questions and process of the exam so that it is not essential for the evaluation whether the student might find facts on the internet or in his/her own notes. Video conferencing software enables sharing the student's desktop and his/her procedure of searching the relevant information; the teacher may then evaluate for instance such aspects as the correct choice of electronic sources, their relevance and trustworthiness, and discuss the choices with the student. Concrete recommendations regarding the modification of questions are to be found at <https://it.muni.cz/distančni-zkouseni-na-mu>.
- The use of proctoring systems for the direct monitoring of the online examination (software for monitoring the student's eye movements, his/her typing on the keyboard, noises in the microphone, blocking the student's computer and mobile phone) is not a path that the university might want to take. The joint statement of the IS MU and Institute of Computer Science regarding the use of proctoring systems for monitoring online examinations is available at <https://is.muni.cz/do/mu/samostudium/docs/stanovisko-proctoring.pdf>.
- The distance form of examining is especially suitable for courses completed with a colloquium. The above mentioned tools enable the discussion of participants and work in groups with subsequent presentation etc.

Written examination

Written examinations, which were held in faculty classrooms, can be replaced with online testing or submission of assignments and texts to homework vaults in the IS, Moodle etc. The questions must be formulated in the "open book" form.

Recommendations for guarantors and teachers:

- Limit the time for taking the test and the total number of resits. The testing tools enable this. Teachers should be aware that it is technically impossible to prevent the disclosure of the test questions to students who will sit for the exam at a later date.
- For written tests, it is possible to determine a very large number of questions (that will disable answering them all) and make the evaluation according to the results, in line with the ECTS. This should limit undesired cooperation among students due to the lack of time and natural competitiveness.
- Inspecting the student's environment or fairness of conditions of the written examination are not supported due to technological, ethical and legal reasons (see above).
- Discuss the setting of homework vaults that minimizes the possibilities of fraud with faculty technicians and user support teams.

Final state examination and diploma thesis defence

The above mentioned principles apply to oral or written testing during the FSE; however, there are other requirements of the law or internal regulations concerning the FSEs:

- Subjects of the FSE (including the defence) are public. The Act on Special Rules stipulates that public access to the examination may be replaced by making an audio or audio-visual recording, which shall be kept for 5 years (recordings are not made from a session of the board evaluating an applicant). The recording may be provided only to public authorities in the exercise of their powers. The retention of recordings shall be regulated in the IS MU.
- Protocols of FSE (including the thesis defence) shall be filled in directly in the IS MU.²
- Diploma theses shall be submitted electronically to the IS MU in the prescribed method. If a faculty decides on other forms of thesis submission (typically the printed form), it is recommended that such theses are submitted after the quarantine measures are lifted.³ Submission of a printed version shall not be a prerequisite for being allowed to take the FSE.
- It is advisable to make use of assistance by the secretary (assistant)⁴ of the board who need not be, and usually is not a member of the board (this is a usual practice at some units). The secretary is knowledgeable of technical specifics of distance examining, he/she verifies the identity of examined students, hosts the distance examination through the selected tool, takes care of making an audio-visual recording and prepares a draft of the electronic report of a final state examination or defence.
- If there is an established practice of students choosing random questions, [MS Forms](#) or any [random number generator](#) on the internet may be used.
- During the examination or defence, short forms of presentation should be used (e.g. an extract from the external examiner's report etc.); precise questions must be asked.
- The board may vote only after the examined person is disconnected; alternately, the voting application in the IS MU or in a communication environment (e.g. Zoom) or in an external tool (MS Forms, Google Forms, Survio, etc.) may be used. If secret ballot is stipulated (final state examination and doctoral dissertation defence),⁵ the IS MU E-volby application with the appropriate setting shall be used.
- The examined person shall be informed of the voting result and such notification shall be made individually or collectively at a set time, according to the dean's decision.
- The chair of the board together with the secretary (or another authorized person) shall check whether the FSE protocol has been completed correctly including all outcomes of the exam, voting etc.
- All board members shall subsequently confirm the FSE protocol. The board's decision shall be signed by the dean with a qualified electronic signature.
- The steps involved in the preparation and process of the FSE are described at <http://it.muni.cz/distančni-forma-szz>. Instructions concerning the distance FSE in MS Teams including videos are at <http://it.muni.cz/distančni-forma-szz/prubeh>.

Michal Bulant
Vice-Rector for Education and Quality

Brno, 27 April 2020

²The IS MU application is under preparation, details shall be added.

³ See also Section 47b(4) Higher Education Act regarding sending a copy of the thesis with postponed publication.

⁴ In the IS MU and operating instructions, this is a Secretary or an Assistant.

⁵ Art. 34(5) MU Study and Examination Regulations.