

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

Methodology of Remote Examination and Course Completion

(in the version effective from 20 January 2021)

An amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1 January 2021 replaced the Act on Special Rules for Education and Decision-Making at Higher Education Institutions in 2020 and on Evaluation of the Period of Study for the Purposes of Other Acts, and *inter alia* enabled higher education institutions to use remote communication means in teaching, inspection of studies, or examinations regardless of the mode in which the degree programme is studied. The MU Crisis Board (hereinafter referred to as "CB") recommends performing in-person examinations only in cases of absolute necessity. Where legal regulations permit in-person examinations or in-person forms of instruction, but the examination and the instruction may be performed in the remote mode, the CB recommends preferring the remote mode.

These Guidelines should help all MU employees understand the forms of remote 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 means.

1. Basic principles

- To enable the completion of the autumn 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 in-person 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.
- To respect the specifics of faculties and individual programmes which must have the possibility to define 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.
- 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.
- MU has legitimate interest in making an official recording of oral and written examinations for the purpose of unbiased processing of a request for the review of the assessment in accordance with Section 41 of the MU Study and Examination Regulations, or of a dispute connected with the use of unauthorized recordings. In case the dean decides on making recordings of an examination, he/she shall determine the manner or instrument for making the recordings, the group of persons entitled to handle them, the storage place for keeping the recordings and the storage period. It is recommended that the recordings be kept for the minimum period of 30 days of the date of the oral examination assessment, during which the student may lodge a request for the assessment review.
- The consent of the student or the examiner to making the recording is not required; however, the student must be informed that the recording is to be made.
- The Teiresiás Centre shall verify whether the conditions of written and oral examination, or as the case maybe, final state examinations of students with special needs comply with such needs, and

shall make the adequate technical and organizational adaptations, if necessary. When applying the remote 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, the 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.).
- Oral examinations may be more suitable for courses focused on knowledge acquisition; an interview with a specific topic and targeted questions may significantly reduce the chances of cheating. Some teachers examine two students at a time and let them interact.
- If the examiner chooses a written test, he/she must adequately adjust its form. 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/distancni-zkouseni-na-mu#doporuceni> and in the text <https://is.muni.cz/do/mu/samostudium/docs/openbook-metodika.pdf>.
- To inform students properly and provably 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.
- Recording the FSEs is governed by Section 95c of the Higher Education Act. The possibilities of recording other examinations and its manner shall depend on the dean’s decision.
- In case the requirements announced by public authorities permit, students may be offered to take the remote examination using 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 remote 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 may 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 the exam will be recorded by the faculty, 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/distancni-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 remote 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. The IS MU application "When do my students take examinations?" may be useful to prevent a collision of examination dates (in case the number of dates is reduced).
- 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). Preventing the examined student's use of the internet is not feasible.
- Discuss the setting of homework vaults that minimizes the possibilities of fraud with faculty technicians and user support teams.
- It is advisable to maintain online connection with students also during a written test, which in particular concerns first-year students. Their questions and problems can be discussed in the chat of the meeting (so as not to disturb the other students); the teacher can also have a private chat with the student by means of "Breakout Rooms".
- Identification of students (with ISIC or ID) should be made individually (e.g. in "Breakout Rooms") to prevent compromising personal data.

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:

- The FSEs (including the defence) are open to the public. Under Section 95c of the Higher Education Act, a higher education institution may use remote communication means during final state examinations and exclude the presence of the public, provided that an audio-visual recording of the FSE is made, which shall be kept for 5 years. The recording may be provided only to a public authority in the exercise of its powers upon request (recordings are not made from a session of the board evaluating a candidate). It must be observed that the relevant part of the Act (a special emergency authorization of the higher education institution) is only applicable if that part of the Act has been activated by any of the public administration actions listed therein.
- Protocols of FSE (including the thesis defence) are filled in directly in the IS MU.
- 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.¹ Submission of a printed version shall not be a prerequisite for being allowed to take the FSE.
- It is advisable to make use of help by an assistant (in various documents referred to as a secretary or assistant) of the board, who need not be, and usually is not a member of the board (this is common practice at some units). The board assistant is knowledgeable of technical specifics of remote examining, he/she verifies the identity of examined students, hosts the remote 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 a common practice of students choosing random questions, [MS Forms](#) or any online [random number generator](#) 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 with the possibility of integration into MS Teams, Google Forms, Survio, etc.) may be used. Secret ballot in the IS MU is stipulated for the final state examination and doctoral thesis defence in doctoral studies.
- 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 assistant (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.
- It is recommended to contact the faculty e-technician and is-technician and the relevant IT department for the correct setting of the FSE process, including provision of manuals, guidelines and training with regard to the specifics of the faculty.

These Guidelines repeal Guidelines No. 1/2020 of 27 April 2020 effective from 1 June 2020.

Michal Bulant
Vice-Rector for Education and Quality

Brno, 19 January 2021

¹ See also Section 47b(4) of the Higher Education Act regarding sending a copy of the thesis with postponed publication.