UNIVERSITÄT BONN

Rheinische
Friedrich-Wilhelms-
Universität Bonn

BZH
Hochschullehre

Bonner Zentrum
für Hochschullehre

# Concept and Execution of Open Book Written Examinations

## I. Definition

Open book written examinations are inherently undertaken without proctors. The use of aids is explicitly allowed, meaning the students can solve the examination tasks using their notes, textbooks, research literature or internet resources. Cooperation with another person is not allowed, however.

## II. Notes on didactic implementation

Because of the special nature of such open book examinations, the examination questions must be constructed with specific didactic considerations in mind. They should explore acquired knowledge, previous work and the frameworks of discussion raised throughout the course and require that students demonstrate an ability to reorganize and synthesize material during the examination.

The examination tasks should therefore not be centered around purely —researchable— factual knowledge. They should instead be designed to provide feedback on whether student and teacher have successfully achieved their mutual mission of taxonomically challenging learning/teaching goals —such as transfer, synthesis, evaluation, etc.

The following methodologies are especially suitable for open book written examinations:

- Application of knowledge
- Analysis or assessment of data based on complex criteria, including those formulated by students themselves
- Solving problems using learned information
- Application of theories to concrete situations and, for example, an evaluation of potential consequences
- Analysis of theories and form and expansion on analogies
- Conception of experimental designs
- Discussion of pros and cons of controversial questions

## III. Tips for formulation and design of tasks

The following is intended to provide several practical tips on the formulation and design of examination tasks.

- Select tasks with open answer formats.

- Frame the tasks with care, i.e. tasks should ideally refer to concrete course content or typical theoretical approaches and practical methodologies from your discipline and/or practical application situations.
- Provide guidance on the use of aids (documents from courses, research literature, etc.) and refer to these in the explanation of the tasks.
- Formulate the tasks clearly and concisely. Whenever possible, have the tasks proofread by a colleague to eliminate errors.
- Provide an estimated working time and point value for the tasks.
- Work with a total character limit and select a reasonable number of tasks.
- The goal should never be to test who can type fastest or handle stress best, even indirectly.
- If you are composing a written examination in Word or on paper using the "Übung" eCampus tool, then indicate how you would like the uploaded documents to be named and which format (such as one collated PDF file) should be selected. For written examinations on paper, you should also define whether the signed originals should be submitted by post.

# IV. Organization and procedure

### IV.1. Selection of the format

eCampus provides you with a variety of formats to handle the organizational procedures for your open book written examination. Standard written examinations are usually executed with the "Test" and "Übung" tools. We recommend that you familiarize yourself with the settings on these tools in advance.

eCampus Test tool → video tutorial on settings:

https://www.ecampus-services.uni-bonn.de/de/anleitungen-und-links/anleitungen/video-tutorials

eCampus Übung (paper/pencil, Word) → short description

https://www.ecampus-services.uni-bonn.de/de/anleitungen-und-links/anleitungen/uebungen-erstellen-und-verwalten

### IV.2. Before the written examination

Instructions on taking the examination should be made available to the students in advance of the examination (approx. 14 days), with an **emergency contact** indicated in the event of technical problems, including an email address and/or phone number.

Inform students in advance about the type and scope of requirements (types of tasks, processing times, permissibility of aids). Define clear rules on how literature should be handled, such as whether direct quotes are desired and how these are to be cited.

Where possible, allow the students to try sample tasks to familiarize themselves with new types of tasks.

**IV.3. During the written examination**

**Separate the actual working time and the overall time window** for the examination; i.e. estimate a working time that reflects the intended standard written exam, somewhere between roughly 60–180 minutes. But also build in an extra 60 minutes for technical processes, such as loading the tasks and upload/download of the written examination and uploading of affirmation in lieu of an oath and documentation of ID, where necessary.

**Technical disruptions:** § 7 Para 6 of the *Corona Epidemie Hochschulverordnung* stipulates that "technical disruptions that are not the fault of the examination candidate" should not disadvantage the student. At the same time, these technical disruptions must be reported and protocoled immediately, even where they only involve poor image or sound quality. For this reason, an emergency contact must be provided and guidelines must be created on the extent to which technical problems must be documented—such as through screenshots.

**IV.4. After the written examination**

Grading of open book written examinations is challenging. Design a grading scheme or criteria in advance of the examination that accounts for answers to open questions. These are often difficult to predict and as such are tougher to correct automatically.

**Affirmation in lieu of an oath on examinations**

Please note: Insofar as this affirmation is transmitted solely electronically as a scan or photo, please retain the original for documentation purposes. The signed original can be requested after the examination.

**1.** Personal information (Please fill out in print letters)

Last name:

First name:

Student ID number:

Degree program:

**2. Information on the examination**

Complete name of the examination:

If applicable, name of the sub-module examination:

Examiner:

Examination date:

Dear Sir or Madam,

I hereby swear that I completed the examination detailed above completely on my own and without any impermissible external assistance or through the use of non-permitted aids. I am aware that cheating during the execution of an examination (as detailed in § 63 Para 5 of the Higher Education Act NRW) is a violation of the legal regulations for examinations and an administrative offense. The submission of false affirmation in lieu of an oath is a criminal offense.

Signed at, date                                   Signature:

**Notes on copyright**

Please note: Instructional materials and examination tasks/problems and grading schemes and sample solutions are copyright protected. Any use outside the concrete instructional and examination context (such as uploads onto platforms, printing in scripts, propagation for other students or third parties—in print or digital form) is illegal. Beyond this, such actions can lead to claims of injunction and indemnification.