

Guidelines on

Viewing Exam Scripts

Part of the Handbook for Studying and Teaching

Version 3.0

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Please note that the English version of these guidelines is purely for your convenience and is not legally binding. Only the German version is legally binding.

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1. Legal Basis

The provision of § 64 (2) number 10 of the Higher Education Act of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (Hochschulgesetz; HG) stipulates that the university examination regulations must specify the process for viewing exam scripts and making copies or replications of the original. At RWTH, this process is regulated in § 22 of the General Examination Regulations (GER), § 25 of the General Examination Regulations Governing Bachelor's Degree Programs in Teacher Education (GER LAB), and § 25 of the General Examination Regulations Governing Master's Degree Programs in Teacher Education (GER M.Ed. 2017).

Every student has the right to view their exam scripts, regardless of whether they passed the respective exam. The reason for this is, that, without sufficient information on the process determining their performance and corresponding subsequent assessment, students would be unable to verify whether their right to equal opportunities according to exam law has been respected. They, therefore, could not adequately substantiate a possible objection to the assessment and claim a reassessment. Since the effective legal protection under Article 19.4 of German Basic Law (GG) would otherwise not be guaranteed here, students must be given the opportunity to view their exam scripts.

2. The Subject Matter of the Exam Viewing

The right to view an exam applies after each completed exam. This not only includes the final exam for a module but also any oral or written partial exams. The documents that may be viewed include:

- assessed written exam tasks
- any related evaluation from the examiners
- the examiners' reports, and
- any copies of work that the examiners have made comments on.

The **grading system** is also a key part of the exam assessment and must be disclosed in accordance with exam law. Statistics on the distribution of grades and a scale of the individual grade ranges must also be published.

On the other hand, students are not entitled to view

- **any handwritten notes** made by examiners during oral exams,
- drafts or notes of **preliminary considerations** for the evaluation of written or oral exams,
- **sample solutions** or general proposed solutions. These are not related to the evaluation of the individual exam, but rather give examiners general and non-binding guidance.

3. Holding the Exam Viewing Session

An exam viewing may take place after each completed exam, i.e. once the written exam has been returned or the result of an oral exam has been announced. If an exam consists of several different parts, it may be the case that the viewing session is only held once all the parts have been completed.

The viewing session must be held under suitable conditions for students, for example:

- There must be sufficient space and supervisory staff to make it possible for all interested parties to sit and view their exam scripts without long wait times.
- The period of time each student is granted to view their exam script is defined in the examination regulations according to and based on the duration of the respective exam – see § 22 (1), sentence 5 GER, § 25 (1), sentence 5 GER LAB, or § 25 (1), sentence 5 GER M.Ed. 2017 respectively.

This means the viewing session is:

- at least 10 minutes if the written exam lasts up to 60 minutes
- at least 20 minutes if the written exam lasts between 60 and 120 minutes
- at least 30 minutes if the written exam exceeds 120 minutes.

The duration and place of the session is determined by the examiner, who will announce this information when the exam is held, or at the very latest, when the grades are announced.

- Students may take notes during the session. **It is recommended students are provided with suitable, recognizable writing material such as colored pens,** as this can reduce the risk of documents being manipulated.
- Corrections must be explained at the session or in writing at a later stage.
- Students must present a **photo ID** (BlueCard or an official photo ID) prior to the session for identification.
- If a large number of students attend the viewing session, it is recommended that an issuing and return list of the exam scripts be carried out, or a preregistration system with appointment allocations be implemented.
- Students shall be given the opportunity to make copies of exam papers as part of the exam viewing process. This right to make copies can be implemented in a variety of ways. It is up to the examiners which specific method they choose. For example, physical copies can be made using a photocopier or photographs of the exam papers can be taken using a smartphone or tablet. The opportunity to make copies does not necessarily have to be granted during the regular, official viewing session.

Viewing Exam Scripts

Examiners may, therefore, also send encrypted copies of the exam papers by email after the regular, official viewing session. Students are not legally entitled to a specific copying method.

- If copies are provided, the Cease and Desist Declaration in the appendix of these guidelines (Appendix 2) can be submitted for signature.

4. Viewing Exam Scripts Outside the Official Session

If a student cannot attend the official viewing session for significant reasons, and for example, provides a medical certificate or proof of participation in a simultaneous viewing session, the original exam scripts can be viewed at the department in charge, which is usually the respective chair or institute. The examiners may also send copies of the exam script via email if the student has evidenced weighty reasons for not being able to attend the regular, official viewing session.

5. Authorizing a Representative

In principle, only the student themselves may view their own exam script. However, they can nominate an individual to represent them in their place at the viewing with a written authorization. A template for this is available in the appendix.

The representative shall be admitted to the exam viewing upon presentation of their photo ID (BlueCard or an official photo ID). The representative shall be granted the same rights as the examinee in the viewing session. It should be noted, however, that either the student **or** the authorized representative may attend the viewing session but not both.

6. Alterations at an Exam Viewing

Since the original exam scripts are made available during viewing sessions, there is a risk of the original written script being altered. However, such alterations can no longer lead to an attempt at deception being declared – which would automatically result in a subsequent grade of 5.0 for the exam – since the exam-taking and assessment process is already finished by the time of the viewing session.

If there is suspicion that an exam script has been altered, criminal charges can be filed on account of document forgery. Division 1.1 – Academic Affairs, Examination and University Law will report such cases.

Appendix 1: Authorization of a Representative

Authorization of a Representative

Exam (Date): _____

Examiner: _____

Student Authorizing a Representative

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Student ID Number: _____

Authorized Representative:

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Student ID Number (if applicable): _____

The representative must present their photo ID (BlueCard or an official photo ID) to be admitted to the viewing session.

Declaration

I hereby authorize the individual specified under "Authorized Representative" to exercise my right to view my script for the written exam indicated above.

Place, Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 2: Cease and Desist Declaration

Cease and Desist Declaration

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Student ID Number: _____

Name of Exam: _____

Date of the Viewing Session: _____

Alternative a): Examinee's Declaration:

I hereby declare that I will not distribute the copies available to me either in written or digital form and that I will not make their content accessible to any other individuals. I am aware that the dissemination and publication of any exam tasks could be considered a copyright infringement.

Alternative b): Declaration of the Authorized Representative:

I hereby declare that I will not distribute the copies available to me either in written or digital form and that I will only make their content accessible to the individual who has authorized me to view them. I am aware that the dissemination and publication of any exam tasks could be considered a copyright infringement.

(Note: please cross out the option that does not apply.)

Place, Date: _____

Signature: _____