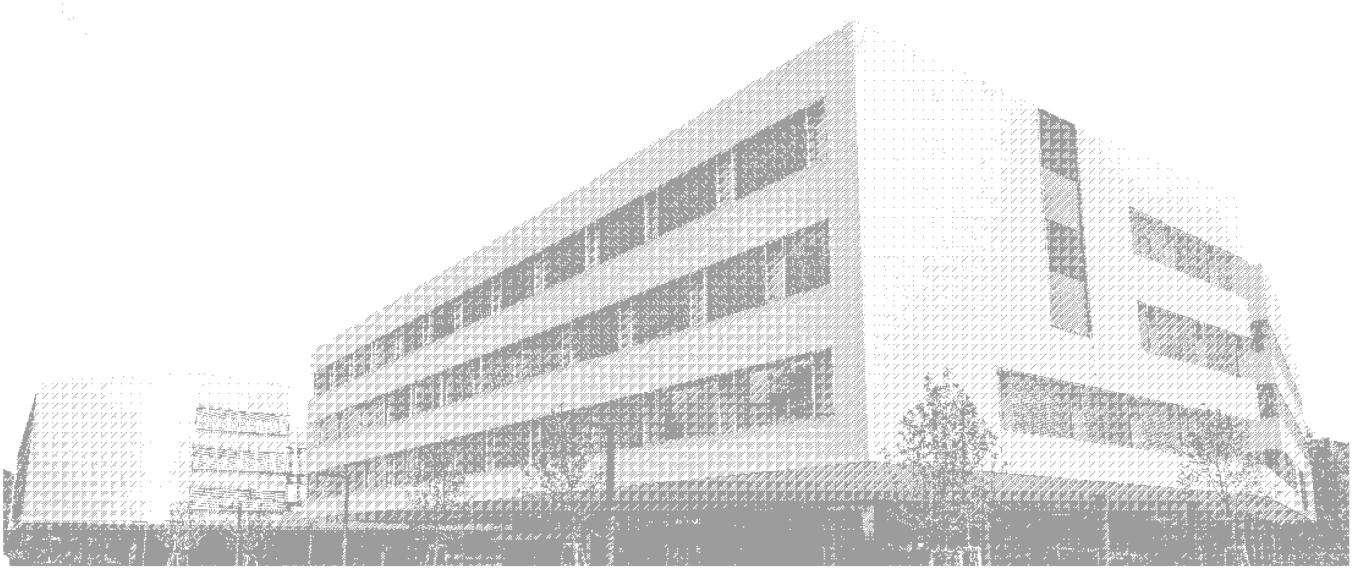
ST. PÖLTEN UNIVERSITY
OF APPLIED SCIENCES



Competence-Oriented Examinations

Guide

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This guide offers a definition of competence-oriented examinations as well as the questions that need to be considered when determining adequate examination types. It also provides an overview of possible and commonly used competence-oriented types of examinations.

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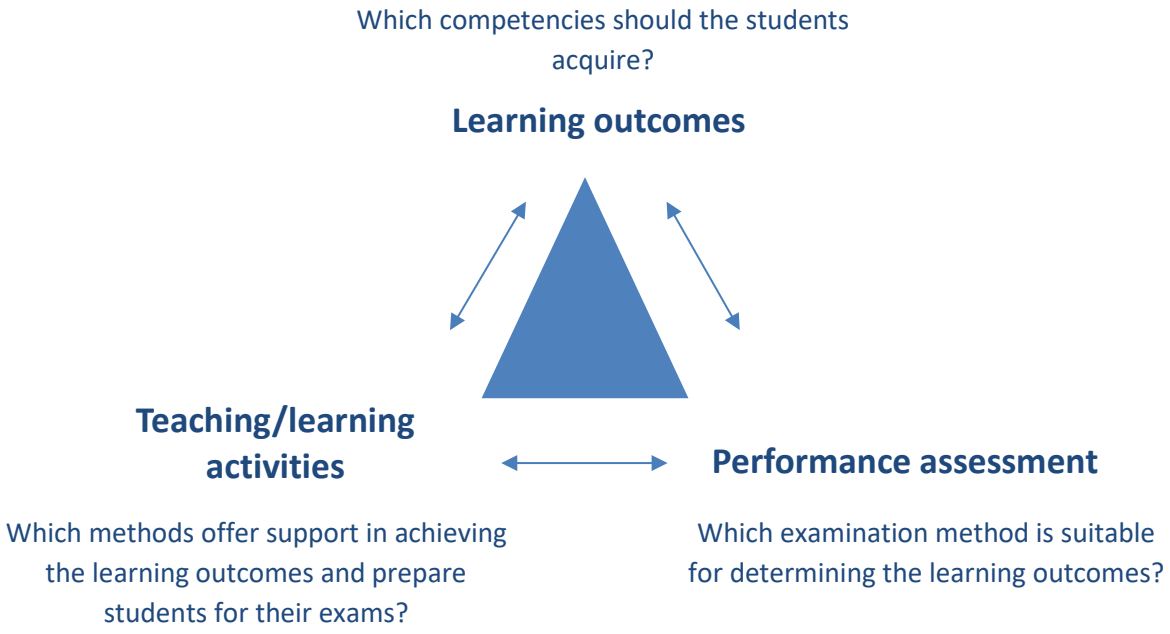
1. Competence-Oriented Examinations

The purpose of an exam is to determine students' learning outcomes. Competence-oriented examinations assess not only factual knowledge but also the competent use of methods and value-based capacity for action (see Wissenschaftsrat 2022). Learning outcomes have to be clearly defined in order to derive an appropriate type of examination. For competence-oriented examining to be possible, learning outcomes have to be formulated as competencies as well. This means that they have to be "[…] understood as qualifications for appropriate, responsible, and successful action in complex, new, and undefined requirement areas with high expectations in terms of the quality of solutions" (translated from German; see Schaper/Soyka 2021). The students' concrete teaching/learning activities (methods) are didactically planned in such a way that they promote the attainment of competence goals and allows for their verification in the form of an exam.

The model of Constructive Alignment according to Biggs (2014) offers an orientation concerning the coherence between focused learning outcomes and competence goals, between learning activities and examination types.



The St. Pölten UAS distinguishes between four examination formats:

1. Oral exams, e.g., discussions, presentations
2. Written exams / proofs of performance, e.g., multiple choice, seminar paper, report

3. Practical/constructive exams/tasks, e.g., demonstration of a skill
4. Completion of projects that are the product of a task

The course type offers assistance with regard to selecting the examination method as its definition already suggests the methodological character of the course. This table helps to select appropriate forms of examination but shall not replace the reflection on the compatibility of competence goals, learning activities, and examination forms.

Course type	Description	Examination methods
Lecture (Vorlesung, VO)	Lectures are courses in which the students acquire knowledge in subareas of their discipline. The lecture serves the purpose of orientation in the discipline with its methods and its embedding in the overall programme. Another objective is to deepen understanding.	The students‘ performance is assessed primarily based on a final written or oral exam. (If the lecture is designed according to the Inverted Classroom model, the didactic concept and the examination mode is of an alternative nature (= formative assessment)).
Exercise (Übung, UE)	Exercises serve to deepen acquired knowledge through practical application in the form of guided or independent implementation of examples on the part of students. In exercises, the students also discuss their own attempts at the solution of tasks.	Exercises are always subject to continuous assessment (immanent examinations). The tasks that the students work on are assessed on the basis of the communicated criteria.
Seminar (SE)	The purpose of seminars is the accompanying development of knowledge and the deepening, reflection, and application of acquired knowledge.	Usually, the students write a final written seminar thesis which is assessed according to the communicated criteria.
Lab (LB)	Labs are for the focused training of the students’ practical and methodological competencies.	Immanent examination: The students‘ performance is assessed based on lab protocols and other competence-oriented tasks that are assessed according to the communicated criteria.
Project (PR)	Projects are courses in which project groups independently work on a certain problem or task. The didactic focus is on both the further development of specialist competencies and the training	The performance is generally assessed on the basis of a written project thesis and/or a project portfolio, and/or a project presentation or project approval.

	of methodological, social, and self-competencies.	
Excursion (EX)	Within the framework of excursions (field trips), the student come into direct contact with the professional field in the form of visits to topic- and/or practice-relevant institutions.	Immanent examination: Pre- and post-processing tasks (e.g., excursion reports) of students are assessed based on the communicated criteria.
Integrated course (Integrierte Lehrveranstaltung, ILV)	Integrated courses are a combination of lectures and exercises/seminars. Presentation, discussion, and exercise phases alternate in the structure of the course. The concrete process is laid down in the course descriptions.	Depending on the concrete didactic design of the ILV, it is assessed either in the form of continuous assessment or with a final individual exam. The concrete examination mode is explained in the course descriptions.
Professional internship (Berufspraktikum, BP)	In their professional internships, the students put acquired competencies to practical use and develop them further in institutions of the professional field.	The students write an internship report or portfolio that is assessed according to the communicated criteria.
Bachelor thesis (Bachelorarbeit, BA)	Based on scientific criteria, students work on a question relevant for their discipline and, in doing so, receive supervision from a professional expert.	The bachelor thesis is assessed based on the communicated criteria.
Master thesis (Masterarbeit, MA)	Based on scientific criteria, students work on a question relevant for their discipline, thus proving their competence for independent scientific work. In doing so, they receive supervision from a professional expert.	The master thesis is assessed based on the communicated criteria.
Workshop (WS)	The purpose of workshops is to find solutions to problems and/or to promote the development of new ideas and innovations. Workshops are characterised by a cooperative working and moderated.	The students write a report and/or a portfolio, and/or a seminar thesis.

List of References

Biggs, John (2014). Constructive Alignment in University Teaching. HERSDA Review of Higher Education, Vol I, p. 5-22. URL: https://www.herdsa.org.au/system/files/HERDSARHE2014v01p05_0.pdf. (downloaded on 10/06/2023).

Schaper, Niclas & Soyka, Chantal (2021). Kompetenzorientiertes Prüfen. Grundlagen, präsenz- und onlinegestützte Formate, Bewertung und Rückmeldung kompetenzorientierter Prüfungsleistungen. In Berendt, Brigitte; Fleischmann, Andreas; Schaper, Niclas; Sczyrba, Birgit; Wiemer, Matthias; Wildt, Johannes (eds.) Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre. DUZ Verlag.

Wissenschaftsrat (2022). Empfehlungen für eine zukunftsfähige Ausgestaltung von Studium und Lehre. URL: https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/2022/9699-22.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=13. (downloaded on 10/06/2023).

Further Valuable Material

An exciting and comprehensive research-based article on the topic of competence-oriented examinations:
Schaper, Niclas & Soyka, Chantal (2021). Kompetenzorientiertes Prüfen. Grundlagen, präsenz- und onlinegestützte Formate, Bewertung und Rückmeldung kompetenzorientierter Prüfungsleistungen. In Berendt, Brigitte; Fleischmann, Andreas; Schaper, Niclas; Sczyrba, Birgit; Wiemer, Matthias; Wildt, Johannes (eds.) Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre. DUZ Verlag. Direct link

A great collection of helpful documents on examination methods by the University of Mainz:
https://www.zq.uni-mainz.de/handreichungen/

How to grade the achievement of competence goals in the area of attitudes and values is shown on the website of the American Association of Colleges and Universities:
https://www.aacu.org/initiatives/value-initiative/value-rubrics