



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

Recommendations regarding written hall examinations that need adapting due to COVID-19

These recommendations have been drawn up by a group for alternative examination formats upon assignment by the Strategic Council for Education at Umeå University. The group consists of directors of studies, distinguished teachers, student representatives, a legal officer and representatives from the Centre for Educational Development (UPL). The advice is not complicated but require a great deal of effort to be implemented. But please consider that the more time you spend on adapting your examination formats and exams, the more they can fulfil legal certainty, and the study situation for your students improves. As a lecturer you should be able to motivate your choice of examination format in relation to the expected learning outcomes of the course and the restrictions at Umeå University due to COVID-19.

The recommendations may be changed if new national or local guidelines are introduced.

Glossary for this purpose

basis for assessment	– bedömningsanvisning
expected learning outcomes	– förväntade studieresultat (FSR)
oral examination	– muntlig examination
take-home examination	– hemtentamen
video-monitored written examination	– videoövervakad salstentamen
written hall examination	– salstentamen

Recommendations for adapting written hall examinations

Firstly: Convert a written hall examination to a take-home examination

To the extent possible, convert written hall examinations to take-home examinations according to practice. Expected learning outcomes in the categories *Competence and skills* or *Judgement and approach* (Swedish: *Färdighet och förmåga*, and *Värderingsförmåga och förhållningssätt*) can generally be assessed in other ways than through written hall examinations, and these alternatives should be prioritised to release the pressure on the Examination Services and examination halls.

1. Please bear in mind that a take-home examination is another assessment method compared to a written hall examination. Avoid questions for which the answer can easily be found online or in course literature. Instead, please formulate the questions so that the students need to describe their understanding for the course contents using their own words.
2. The more you require your students to write in each take-home examination question, the more freedom the students get in each answer. This ultimately makes it even more important that you know how you will later assess answers. Spend ample time preparing the instructions for each question and the basis for assessment. Also, try to divide big questions into smaller ones to make each one easier to assess. Additionally, make sure that the basis for assessment matches the instructions so you can assess the

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students' answers based on the terms that you have given the students in the instructions.

3. Setting up instructions and basis for assessment for examinations is **NOT** a job for a single person to undertake. This is a team activity. Ask colleagues or others to read through your instructions and basis for assessment and provide feedback on what might need clarification.

Secondly: Keep the written hall examination, or parts of it

Due to the subject content of some courses, there may be expected learning outcomes that need to be examined specifically with the help of a well-constructed written hall examination. This particularly applies to some expected learning outcomes in the category *Knowledge and understanding* (Swedish: *Kunskap och förståelse*) in which, for instance, some detailed knowledge in a certain subject is in focus. If you have identified one or more such expected learning outcomes in your course, and you assess that there are no reasonable alternatives to holding a written hall examination to assess these, then please follow the instructions under *Necessary measures regarding written hall examinations* on <https://www.umu.se/en/covid-19/employment/examination/>.

Please note! Examinations that were previously aimed at both measuring understanding and judgement/approach should be divided into one written hall examination measuring knowledge and understanding and one take-home examination measuring judgement and approach to relieve the pressure on the Examination Services and examination halls. This division should also contribute to being able to keep the examination time within the maximum of four hours.

Please note! If a student wishes to or needs to abstain from sitting a written hall examination due to the risk of infection, the student can be offered an alternative oral examination with video surveillance (see further down).

Thirdly: Convert a written hall examination to an oral examination

An oral examination can also be used as an alternative to a written hall examination, either individually or in a group. The main principles are the same as for any written examination, but the student gives his or her answers orally and in real time instead of in writing. Students are monitored through video and assessed by one or more teachers.

Recording an examination is allowed and is recommended to simplify potential reassessments. Please also read [Umeå universitets skrift om GDPR](#) and [the Swedish Higher Education Authority's \(UKÄ\) Rättssäker examination \(page 106\)](#). Similar to all other assessment, you are recommended to write clear basis for assessment prior to the examination date to reduce the risk of arbitrary or gratuitous assessment. This basis for assessment should also be known to the students to the extent possible.

Fourthly: Reschedule the examination

If you cannot convert your written hall examination to a take-home examination or an oral examination, and there is no available space in the examination halls during your desired period, please postpone the examination in contact with the Examination Services. If so, please follow the instructions under Rescheduling a course, course module or examination, and deviations from a programme syllabus on <https://www.umu.se/en/covid-19/employment/examination/>

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Advising against video-monitored written examinations

Remote video-monitored examinations through online tools such as Zoom, Teams, Skype or equivalent cannot be equated with a written hall examination monitored by an invigilator. These online tools have neither been developed nor adapted for monitoring of written assessment of knowledge. For this reason, the security flaws are many, and they mean that students who intend to cheat can easily do so without neither the invigilator nor the examiner being able to detect this.

Video-monitoring through online video conferencing tools is not to be equated with legal certainty, and reasonable requirements regarding quality can hence not be satisfied. This must be understood in relation to the Vice-Chancellor's decision Written examinations in exam halls (FS 1.1-2360-20) that clarifies that online examinations must be implemented ensuring that "*legal certainty can be maintained and that reasonable demands on quality can be satisfied.*" Video-monitoring using online video conferencing tools gives a false sense of security – not real security.

It has come to our attention that lecturers both at Umeå University and other universities have chosen to convert written hall examinations to online examination in which the students sit the exam whilst being monitored in Zoom. With reference to the above, the group behind this document wishes to advise against such assessment methods.

Please note that on page 3 of Umeå universitets skrift om GDPR (in Swedish only) states that video-monitoring through Zoom does not violate against the General Data Protection Regulation. However, despite this, it should not be interpreted as it is encouraged to conduct video-monitored written examinations. Video-monitoring through, for instance, Zoom is advised against in all forms of written examination, even if such monitoring is not in violation against the General Data Protection Regulation.

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