Reintroduction of group exams at TEKNAT and SUND

The new ministerial orders on examinations have opened up the possibility for the use of group exams and the university management has therefore decided to reintroduce this type of exam at AAU – as early as the fall semester for many students. Preben Sørensen, Director of Study Administration, sent an email to students on 31 August 2012 about the introduction of group exams in projects that takes precedence over the current curricula. The purpose of this memorandum is to further inform about the implementation of group exams at TEKNAT and SUND.

Introduction

Aalborg University’s programs are characterized by problem-oriented project work according to the Aalborg model for problem based learning (PBL). The key elements of the PBL model are project and group work where students acquire knowledge and skills in their field and develop the ability to work cooperatively and to work in an analytical and results-oriented manner. Previously, the traditional method of examination in projects in the PBL model was a group exam, referred to here as the project exam.

AAU has extensive experience with this type of exam, and students and staff at AAU as well as prospective employers and external examiners have been very satisfied with the examination format.

When do the changes become effective?

The university management has decided that the project exam will take effect in the first semester of all bachelor’s and bachelor of engineering programs as of the beginning of the academic year 2012/13. Further, the deans of TEKNAT and SUND have decided that the project exam will take effect in the first semester for all new master’s programs as of this academic year. The latter applies to master’s programs in:

- Sustainable Cities
- Public Health
- Global Systems Design
- Integrated Food Studies
- Service Systems Design
- Techno-Anthropology
For all other programs and semesters, the project exam takes effect in the spring semester. The project exam will thus be fully implemented at TEKNAT and SUND by the summer exam period in 2013. For the final project in the summer exam period 2013 (bachelor’s, bachelor of engineering, master’s, and master’s – adult and continuing education) the study board, at the request of the student, may dispense with the use of project exam so that students can take an individual exam on the basis of a joint final project (the same type of exam that has been used in recent years).

**Project exam**
The project exam is held simultaneously for students who have jointly prepared a project. The basis is a joint written project. The exam must be conducted so as to ensure that there is a basis for giving an individual assessment of each student.

The project exam will generally apply to projects in all curricula and thus for all programs. The Dean can however, as an exception, at the request of the study board, approve curricula where examination in some projects takes place in another way, if there are exceptional circumstances.

**Changes to examination rules and curricula**
As a result of the change to the examination format, all curricula must be revised and this will take place during the fall so that all curricula have been revised by February 1, 2013. The detailed timetable will be agreed between the faculties and schools, and the work will be organized so that it requires as few resources as possible. Only in cases where the study board desires group exams in an activity other than projects - or wants an exemption from the group exam in projects – must the study board take a position on this in the fall.

In addition to changes in the curricula, the faculties’ examination policies and procedures must be revised. The examination order stipulates the detailed rules for project exams, including conducting exams, time per group, etc. The revised examination policies and procedures will also be published in the fall.

**Competence development activities**
The change from individual to group exams will place new demands on examiners. Since the group exams were abolished, there have been many new employees at AAU. Conversely, there are still many employees who have solid experience with holding group exams. Therefore, activities aimed at competence development that allow for exchange of experience, achieving common understanding and discussion of any challenges will be implemented. More information will follow as soon as possible.

We are aware that this brief memorandum does not answer all questions concerning the implementation of group exams. We will work further on all aspects of the reintroduction of group exams, and we hope that everyone will contribute positively to ensure the successful reintroduction of project exams at Aalborg University.

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