



Dealing with generative AI systems in the context of academic exams: Suggestions for decision-making processes for examiners

Objective

The overarching goal is to ensure that academic examinations conducted in writing and without supervision are still assessing the skills required for achieving the course objectives. This also applies to written and unsupervised coursework.

These include: Final theses (Bachelor's and Master's), term papers, seminar papers, open book exams, posters, presentation slides and texts, lecture texts, programming tasks, etc.

Suggestions for decision-making processes

In order to make it easier for examiners to decide how to conduct their examinations, Figure 1 shows possible decision paths that should help to ensure the value of written academic examinations.

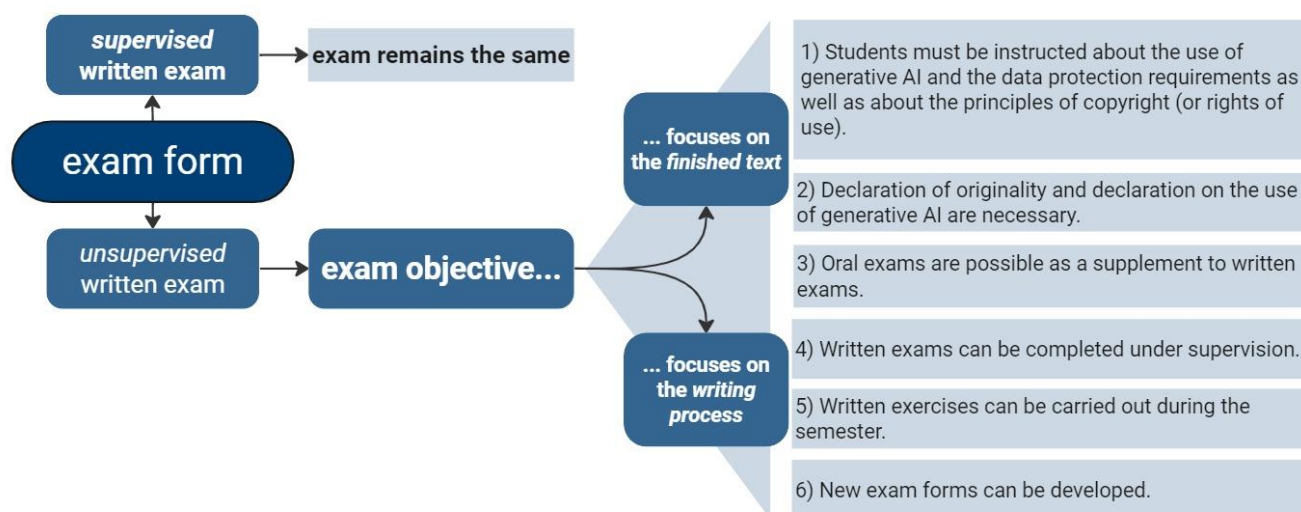


Figure 1: Depiction of possible decision paths for written unsupervised examinations, taking into account AI systems as potential tools for the creation of scientific texts.

It should be noted that the developments surrounding generative AI systems are dynamic in nature. These suggestions on decision-making paths are therefore not exhaustive and the appropriateness of examination forms will likely require more frequent critical reflection in the future than in the past.

If written examinations or coursework are to be completed without supervision, the question currently arises as to whether the focus of the examination is more on the finished academic text or rather on active and independent academic writing itself. This has the following consequences:

When the focus is more on the finished academic text:

1. The use of generative AI systems must also be done according to the principles of good research practice and be legally compliant when students are completing examinations or coursework without supervision. This applies in particular to copyright and rights of use as well as data protection issues. Examiners and module supervisors need to explain this to their students. This makes it necessary for the examiners and module supervisors to deal with these issues actively and independently.

2. In addition to the declaration of originality, the paper must be accompanied by an appendix describing the use of generative AI systems in the creation of the paper. The Examinations Office website provides a sample that can or must be modified depending on the requirements of the subject and the specific examination. Examiners are obliged to independently inform themselves about the possible uses of generative AI systems for their discipline and the task.

3. An unsupervised written examination can be supplemented with an oral examination in the form of a colloquium. The aim is not to check whether the work has been created without the use of generative AI systems or whether the information on the use of generative AI systems has been provided in full. Rather, the aim is to check whether the author has understood the topic to such an extent that they can engage in academic discourse on it.

When the focus is more on academic writing itself:

4. If the focus is on academic writing skills per se as a competence objective, it is no longer possible to check the acquisition of these skills with an unsupervised written examination against the background of the general availability of generative AI. Supervised written work can be an alternative.

5. Instead of an examination at the end of the semester to test academic writing skills, shorter writing exercises during the semester can also be useful. Students must be appropriately prepared for these formats, as well.

6. Other forms of examination to assess writing skills can be developed. As for all examinations, the examinees must have been instructed in the principles of good research practice.

In any case, the assigned task plays a key role in unsupervised written examinations: If tasks are set in such a way that they can be solved entirely by simply adopting the results of generative AI systems, then they are unsuitable.