

# FACULTY COUNCIL OF THE TILBURG SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

*TERM 2018-2019, CYCLE 6*

**Authors:** Daan van Os, Guus Vlaskamp

In order to support students at our Faculty best, and in line with practices at other faculties at this University, Student Party ECCO wishes to implement a structure under which students are entitled to receive a third exam opportunity in order to complete their final and last course. Such an additional exam opportunity will be provided in the case when the student complies with the specific conditions that are attached to such a policy. The present memorandum serves to outline our motivation for implementation of such a structure, as well as alleviate any present objections that people may have (part I), the implementation as Student Party ECCO wishes it to be the case, as well as the conditions to which such a policy will be subject to (part II) and the actions it requires from the Management Team of the Tilburg School of Economics and Management in order to implement the proposed policy (part III).

## I

In a memorandum submitted to the Faculty Council in the third cycle of the present academic year, the Management Team of TiSEM has delineated the extent to which students at the Faculty have to redo an entire academic year due to their failure to finish their final course. The amount of students that experience such a situation is, in the opinion of the Faculty Council, sufficiently high that further measures are necessary in order to support these students in the pursuit of their diploma. We propose that this may best be achieved by providing the concerned students with an additional exam opportunity for their final course. We are motivated to do so by various reasons, which we will now further explain.

With the introduction of the study loan system in the Netherlands in the academic year 2015-2016, the financial

burden on students has increased significantly. Students, more than before, report high levels of stress and study-related failure due to external financial pressures which impose a financial burden on students to graduate within the tightest time window possible<sup>1</sup>. In the hypothetical situation in which a student fails his or her final course, that student shall in the next academic year be subjected to a payment of the full legal tuition fees that are legally imposed on him or her, equal to an amount of 2,060 euro in the academic year 2018-2019. It is the opinion of the undersigned members of the Faculty Council that this, in the absence of a system in which students pay tuition fees per ECTS and are hence subjected to an all-or-nothing tuition fee system, is an undue financial burden placed on students that justifies the installation of a final exam opportunity which enables them to prevent such a financial burden.

TiSEM has presented itself as a Faculty that is well-grounded and keeps close ties to the society that it studies. This, it tries to achieve by conducting research on this society, but also by educating students and researchers to responsible decision makers that actively may take part in today's society. The undersigned members of the Faculty Council deem it a very undesirable situation when a student needs to postpone his entrance into the labour market by a year if this situation would be due to his or her failure to complete the final course of his or her study program. The installation of a structure in which the student is allowed to retake his or her final exam once again, allows this student to achieve his or her academic credentials that allow this student to take his or her role in society in a manner that reflects our Faculty's core principles.

In addition to this, the Faculty itself has a financial incentive to enable these students to pass their final course without the delay of an entire academic year. The funding awarded to students which take longer to complete their degree than the amount of time that is standardly awarded to the program, are not funded by the Government. Therefore, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research puts an incentive on Universities and Faculties to enable

---

<sup>1</sup> Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg, *Onderzoek: groot aandeel lenende studenten ervaart prestatiedruk en psychische klachten door leenstelsel*, retrieved from: <https://www.iso.nl/2019/01/onderzoek-groot-aandeel-lenende-studenten-ervaart-prestatiedruk-en-psychische-klachten-door-leenstelsel/> on June 1, 2019

students to finish their study program within the time that is generally needed to complete such a program. By providing an additional exam opportunity for people who are on the brink of finishing their study program, the Faculty not only prevents the students from an undue financial burden, but also itself.

Not only financial incentives should guide the Faculty in enabling the third chance for students. Having the students obtaining their degree within normal time windows also enhances the faculty's standing in rankings regarding this measurement. We do not argue that the implementation of this policy decreases the academic standard that is expected of students, as students still need to be able to pass the third chance exam. Such an exam still needs to be reflective of the academic learning objectives that course instructors have set at the beginning of their course.

Previously, it has been argued that several measures have been implemented in order to facilitate a swift enrolment into the master for a student coming from a bachelor program. One of such measures is the double entry moments for most master programs at our Faculty. We do recognise this as a positive development, however we do wish to emphasise that this is a separate discussion that bears little to no overlap with the present discussion. The double entry moments still do not solve the issue of a student having to redo a course from the second semester, as this student would not be allowed to enrol in the February enrolment moment after all.

Furthermore, several teachers have previously argued that the implementation of an additional exam opportunity puts an additional burden on the course instructors as they need to prepare an additional exam. We recognise the requirement of an additional exam, however, this practice is also the case in current situations when the Exam Committee grants a student with an additional exam opportunity. Additionally, we do see this as a problem of how teachers are compensated for their exam preparation, rather than as an issue that solemnly arises from the implementation of the policy that we here propose. Furthermore, this is an issue that might be resolved by allowing this third chance exam to take place in the form of an oral or digital examination, which may lessen the burden placed on the course instructors.

For several teachers at this Faculty, the above mentioned counterarguments for the presented proposal have accumulated in the argument that the implementation of the present proposal decreases the academic level of students and hence decreases the value of a scientific degree. We disagree with this statement. The difference between having to redo the final exam in the next academic year and being provided with an additional resit moment is purely and only the time in between these exam opportunities. To state that the creation of this additional exam opportunity decreases the academic level required from students is as to state that the ability of instructors and teachers to create a new, academic worthy exam decreases. We do not recognise this trend and hence see no objective support for this argument. Students, under all circumstances, will be presented with an exam that is worthy of the scientific standards that we adhere to at this Faculty, whether they may participate in the first, second or third exam opportunity.

## II

The undersigned members of the Faculty Council wish to implement a structure under which students are allowed to retake their final exam of their study program a third time. We acknowledge that this proposal is met by various reservations, which are understandable but in our opinion do not justify the postponement of the implementation of such a policy. However, in order to comply with these reservations, we wish to suggest the following conditions to which students need to comply in order to be eligible for this third exam opportunity. This part of the document shall serve to outline the practical conditions to which this structure will be subjected.

It is the opinion of ECCO that students may only be offered to participate in an additional exam opportunity when they have previously engaged in the two precluding exam opportunities. In case the student does not satisfy this requirement, the possibility to participate in a third exam opportunity shall be left to the discretion of the Exam Committee, which may afford such an opportunity based on the hardship clause in the Education and Exam Regulations. However, in all instances in which the student complies with the other conditions and has participated in the two previous exam opportunities, this third chance opportunity must be awarded. The additional exam opportunity must be held in

the same academic year as the other exams. This would apply to bachelors in the first place and could possibly be extended to master students when the regulation has been positively evaluated. It would apply to students for the duration of their pursuit for passing their final course.

Secondly, we also suggest the installation of a minimum grade that must be obtained in either one of the two previous exam opportunities. This condition is installed in order to prevent students from taking part in the first two exam opportunities solemnly for the fact that they then would be able to participate in the third exam opportunity. We hence propose that the student must have at least one of the two precluding exam opportunities graded with the grade of at least 4.

Thirdly, we also suggest that the policy as we propose it to be implemented does not apply for the thesis that is part of most bachelor and master programs. Hence, a thesis cannot be graded for a third time, unless the Exam Committee decides otherwise based on the hardship clause. Therefore, the regulation only applies to courses of 6 ECTS.

Fourthly, we also suggest that the regulation only applies to courses taught at TiSEM. Courses from other faculties that students participate in are not eligible for a third exam opportunity.

### **III**

Hence, the undersigned members of the Faculty Council ask the Management Team of TiSEM to take all necessary steps to implement the policy proposed in this document. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Asking the Education Committees to which this policy would apply for their advice on the matter.
- (2) Asking the Faculty Council for their consent on this memorandum.
- (3) Incorporating the proposed policy, including the conditions attached to it, into the Education and Exam Regulations.

We propose that the regulation proposed as in this document will be effective as of the academic year of 2020-2021.

Signed by all members of Student Party ECCO, 27-06-2019.

---