



## EXAMINATION APPEALS BOARD

No 2020/44/965

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Decision on the appeal of Ms [name], Appellant, student number [student number], student of the Amsterdam University College (AUC), against the grade awarded for her paper *lifestyle and health in a biochemical perspective* for the subject of *Metabolic Chemistry* by the examining professor C.J.M. de Vries, hereinafter the examiner.

### I. The proceedings

Appellant submitted a notice of appeal to the Examination Appeals Board, hereinafter the Board, on 11 July 2020, against the grade awarded by the examiner on 17 June 2020.

On 7 August 2020 the Board requested the Examination Board of the AUC, hereinafter the Examination Board, to explore the possibility of an amicable settlement of the dispute with Appellant and the examiner. The Examination Board invited Appellant to a meeting on 15 September 2020. An amicable settlement could not be reached. The Examination Board submitted a written defence on 17 September 2020.

The Board dealt with the appeal during a video call session on 2 November 2020. Appellant appeared, accompanied by her tutor L. Galeotti. A.E. Brown (vice-chair) and A.C. Lankreijer (member) attended on behalf of the Examination Board. Also present were the examiner and the coordinator of Metabolic Biochemistry, F. Hochstenbach. Parties gave an oral explanation of their points of view.

### II. Facts

Based on the documents and the statements made during the session, the Board assumes the following facts.

Appellant took the subject of Metabolic Biochemistry. The final grade for the subject consists of several components. Due to the switch to online teaching because of the Covid-19 pandemic, 30% of the final grade now consists of the grade awarded for a paper. Appellant submitted a paper to the examiner.

The grading criteria for the paper are:

- . originality and appropriateness of the topic
- . biochemical insight into the topic at hand and its relation to the course
- . creativity of thought by showing independent critical thinking
- . clarity of writing.

The examiner awarded Appellant 60 out of 100 points for her work.

### **III. Parties' points of view**

Appellant states that the description of the grading criteria for the paper says nothing about the weighting of the individual criteria. It is not clear to her what the awarded grade of 60 out of 100 points is based on. The feedback she received from the examiner also makes no reference to the grading criteria as mentioned in the guide. For instance, she received fewer points because she added new information in the discussion section of her paper that had not been previously introduced in the paper. Appellant initially intended to take on board another research aspect in her paper, but she abandoned this idea because it would have made her paper too long. She is now unable to ascertain how this choice affected the awarded grade. Appellant now wants to receive a new grade with a specification of the weight assigned to each criterion (with a grading rubric).

The Examination Board and the examiner stand by their point of view that Appellant's work was correctly graded and insist that there is no reason to re-grade Appellant's work. The subject is intended as a preparation for the thesis that students are required to write for their graduation. Insofar as the grading criteria are too vague for Appellant, she could have asked her supervisor or examiner about this before the assessment took place. But Appellant did not do this. The feedback that Appellant received on her work from the examiner is intended to give her guidance on how to write her thesis. Three years ago, the Department conducted a calibration of how the papers are graded among the examiners. The examiners met the set quality requirements. Three examples of papers are made available to students. This gives students sufficient information on how the examiners apply and weight the criteria. For the rest, the component is too small to design a specific grading rubric for it.

### **IV. Considerations of the Board**

The notice of appeal was submitted within the time limit and also meets the other legal requirements. The Board states first and foremost that its authority is too restricted to assess the question whether defendant's decision is in breach of the law (Art. 7.61 (2) of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW)). The Board is not authorized to form an opinion on the examiner's assessment of a student's 'knowledge and ability'. The Board shall therefore judge whether the assessment and grade are not obviously unreasonable from a procedural perspective and whether the assessment was conducted in the correct manner. Appellant disagrees with the examiner and Examination Board as to whether the assessment of Appellant's work was sufficiently transparent.

In the run-up to the assessment, Appellant did not use the opportunity to seek clarification about the criteria from her supervisor or examiner. That said, the criteria on which the grade of 60 out of 100 points is based should in all events be clear to Appellant. The applied grading procedure, after all, must not just be transparent before, but also after, the assessment. The comments that the examiner made about Appellant's work contain no mention of the criteria as referred to in the guide. The fact that the examiner gave the feedback in order to provide Appellant with better guidelines and suggestions for writing her thesis (in a subsequent academic year) does not detract from Appellant's right to have insight into how her paper was assessed and graded in the light of the criteria contained in the Metabolic Biochemistry guide. Appellant's appeal is, to this extent, well-founded.

This leads to the following decision.

### **V. Decision**

The Board declares that the appeal is well-founded and orders the examiner to re-grade the paper within 14 days, with due regard to the considerations underlying the Board's decision.

Thus drawn up in Amsterdam, on 3 December 2020, by A.J.G.M. van Montfort, Chair, J.J. Beishuizen and J.R. Hulst, members, in the presence of F. Donner, Secretary.

A.J.G.M. Montfort,  
Chair

F. Donner,  
Secretary

The party involved can submit a notice of appeal against a decision of the Examination Appeals Board, stating reasons, to the Higher Education Examination Appeals Board, P.O. Box 16137, 2500 BC The Hague. The term for submitting a notice of appeal is six weeks. The court registry fees are €48.