

# Planning and further course of the academic year 2019-2020 at Ghent University

Because of the corona crisis, no more teaching activities with physical presence of students and lecturers take place during the second semester at Ghent University. We have switched from on-campus to online education.

At the moment it is not clear how the corona crisis will evolve. Nevertheless, we want to give all students and lecturers as soon as possible guidance, not only about the education but also about the evaluation activities for the second semester. To this end, we adapt the academic calendar.

This document explains in more detail what this adaptation means.

## 1. Implementing an adapted calendar in the academic year 2019-2020

For the construction of the adapted academic calendar for the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of the academic year 2019-2020, we start from the current classic calendar.

### The current classic calendar

10 FEB	17 FEB	24 FEB	2 MAR	9 MAR	16 MAR	23 MAR	30 MAR	6 APR	13 APR	20 APR	27 APR	4 MAY	11 MAY	18 MAY	25 MAY	1 JUN	8 JUN	15 JUN	22 JUN	29 JUN
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#### LEGEND for the schedules:

Blue: 'regular lessons' as we always know them

Orange: exams

Gray: catch-up week

White: lesson-free → so this is a holiday and/or study week

Green: distance education activities → can be online lessons, but can also be online lessons combined with online evaluation

Green-Orange-Green-Orange: integration of education and evaluations

Purple: intensive exam preparation and booster sessions

### The adapted calendar 2020

→ starting point: periodic on-campus exams can start 1 June

We plan the on-campus exams from 1 June - and not already from 25 May, as foreseen in the current classic calendar. Based on the information we currently have, starting from 1 June is a fairly realistic scenario. Starting the exams before 1 June is still too uncertain at the moment and would therefore involve too great a risk of rescheduling.

We therefore assume that exams with physical presence in the Ghent University buildings will be allowed on 1 June. We take into account that at that moment the social distancing measure (keeping a distance of 1.5 metres) may still be in force. This aspect will be fully taken into account in the scheduling from the outset.

**BACHELOR’S PROGRAMMES (+ linking and preparatory programmes):**

10	17	24	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29
FEB	FEB	FEB	MAR	MAR	MAR	MAR	MAR	APR	APR	APR	APR	MAY	MAY	MAY	MAY	JUN	JUN	JUN	JUN	JUN

For the bachelor's programmes (including linking and preparatory programmes) we organise another **4 weeks of online learning activities** after the Easter break. At the end of these 4 weeks, all contents are transferred. During the Easter break, there are no teaching activities that the students have to follow at the moment or in which immediate interaction with the lecturers is expected.

After the 4 weeks of online teaching activities there will be an **intensive week of exam preparation and booster sessions**. During that week, the lecturers discuss exam questions and answers with the students. After all, we expect the lecturers to tailor their evaluations to the teaching activities they use in online education. Through interaction with the students, the lecturers can answer students' questions about the evaluations and explain difficult parts of the subject matter in more detail. Study counsellors are intensively involved in that week. Lecturers will also involve their educational supervisors, assistants and researchers in this process.

This is followed by a **study week** for the students. In this way, students can process the contents of the educational activities and the information of the intensive exam preparation week as much as possible and prepare for the start of the exams the week after. Moreover, this way we build in an extra buffer in the calendar and we can start the exams on June 1st.

The **examination period takes 5 weeks**, from 1 June to 4 July. Social distancing will be taken into account in the scheduling. The exams are scheduled until 1 July; on 2, 3 and 4 July we organize catch-up exams (for students who missed an exam during this exam period, e.g. due to illness).

We will announce the marks on July 6. On July 7 there is the possibility for feedback (possibly taking into account social distancing). On Friday 14 August we provide a second possibility for (online) feedback.

Online evaluations are also possible in the bachelor’s programs. This can be achieved both by evaluating part of a course online (this evaluation counts for part of the final score and the relevant part of the learning content is omitted for the exam) and by fully evaluating courses online. It is important that the evaluation is geared to the education that the students have received online. This relieves the exam period.

Each study programme committee, together with the quality assurance staff, all lecturers and student representatives, maintains an overview of the online educational activities, the evaluations, and the study load. For each course unit, every student will receive detailed information about the method of evaluation via Ufora at the latest on 8 April. Students will also receive their exam schedule as soon as possible and no later than 15 April.

## MASTER'S PROGRAMMES (+ Advanced Master's programmes 'ManaMa's'):

In the master's programmes (including advanced master's programmes 'ManaMa's') different scenarios are possible. For all scenarios, each study programme committee, together with the quality assurance staff, all lecturers and student representatives, maintains an overview of the online educational activities, the evaluations, and the study load.

### Scenario 1 (preferred scenario)

10	17	24	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29
FEB	FEB	FEB	MAR	MAR	MAR	MAR	MAR	APR	APR	APR	APR	MAY	MAY	MAY	MAY	JUN	JUN	JUN	JUN	JUN

In the first scenario, lecturers of master's degree courses make maximum use of online evaluation. Online evaluation is considered here in a broad sense. Evaluations via 1-on-1 online conversations (online 'oral exam'), testing via Curios, uploading the results of individual and group assignments, case discussions, recordings,... in Ufora, etc. are examples of this.

In December 2019, Ghent University's Board of Governors approved the possibility of opting for a 'flexible calendar' for the academic year 2020-2021. In a 'flexible calendar' teaching and examination periods are no longer strictly defined, but a period is planned in which lessons and evaluations are integrated. For the Master's programmes, we introduce in this scenario the flexible version of the calendar from 20 April to 4 July. During the Easter break, there are no educational activities that the students have to follow at the moment or in which immediate interaction with the lecturers is expected.

In the period after the Easter break, both online teaching activities and online evaluations can take place. It is important in this regard that the evaluation is geared to the education that the students have received online.

We strongly encourage lecturers of master's subjects to make full use of online evaluation. Scenario 1 is therefore the preferred scenario.

### Scenario 2

10	17	24	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29
FEB	FEB	FEB	MAR	MAR	MAR	MAR	MAR	APR	APR	APR	APR	MAY	MAY	MAY	MAY	JUN	JUN	JUN	JUN	JUN

The second scenario applies to master's programmes where online evaluation is less or hardly possible. In that case, we follow the calendar of the bachelor's programmes (see above). The on-campus exams of these master's programmes start on June 1 at the earliest.

### Scenario 3

Any mixture of the two scenarios above is possible.

For each course unit, every student will receive detailed information about the method of evaluation via Ufora at the latest on 8 April. Students will also receive their exam schedule as soon as possible and no later than 15 April.

## POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES and PERMANENT TRAINING

Postgraduate programmes and permanent training often have their own calendar. As long as they follow the general Ghent University corona policy, faculties can make specific agreements about the planning and further course of the academic year 2019-2020 for these programmes and training courses.

### Maximum and optimal scheduling

There will be new exam schedules for each study programme. Exam schedules that have already been communicated will therefore no longer apply. The new exam schedules will take into account the social distancing measures. In this way, we will try to keep the risk of late rescheduling of exams as low as possible.

In order to achieve this, we have worked out the following approach:

- In each room 3 exams will take place per day (starting at 8h30, 13h00 and 17h30).
- Each exam session lasts a maximum of 3 hours. Lecturers should adjust the size of their exams to this maximum duration.
- Examinations must contain clear and unambiguous instructions. Social distancing measures may require us to organise simultaneous exam sessions, where the same exam is held in different rooms at the same time. As a result, lecturers will not always be able to give an oral explanation at the start of the exam.
- We leave an hour and a half between each examination block. This allows students to leave and enter the exam rooms in a safe way. In between we disinfect the examination rooms.
- Students who are given more time to take the exam because of a special status, will do so in a separate room. As a result, they will not be hindered by the change of students and the disinfection of the examination rooms between the examination blocks.
- We only use PC rooms for on-campus evaluations for which the use of ICT tools is necessary.
- Examinations can also be taken on June 1 (Whit Monday) and on Saturdays, but not on Sundays.
- If necessary, we rent external locations near our campuses to hold exams.

Students will receive their exam schedule as soon as possible and no later than 15 April.

### Emergency scenario

➔ on-campus exams can only start later in June (no later than 15 June)

We have worked out a first emergency scenario for the situation in which starting on-campus exams on 1 June is not possible. In order to leave enough time for on-campus exams, it is necessary to start on 15 June at the latest.

The on-campus exams that were scheduled between 1 June and the effective start of the exams will be rescheduled if necessary. However, the end date of the examination period is retained: 4 July. The

period that precedes the effective start of the on-campus examinations becomes a study period for the students.

The more lecturers have decided to evaluate online from the outset, the easier it will be to switch to this emergency scenario if necessary.

If it is still not possible to organize exams on campus on 15 June, we will start a second emergency scenario. In that case, only online exams will be possible until 4 July.

Ghent University is preparing for each of these scenarios, but of course we hope that we will not have to apply the emergency scenarios. In any case, a rest and holiday period will remain guaranteed. The exam period for on-campus exams in this scenario will start on August 10th.

## 2. General principles

- **Maintain the rhythm and pace of the teaching weeks for the offer of learning contents and the acquisition of competences**

It is important that students are offered the course material at the rate at which they would receive this under normal circumstances. Students are provided with an offer that stimulates this rhythm as much as possible. Regular online contact with students is important.

Students should be given the opportunity to ask questions, to consult with the lecturer and fellow students and to get answers to their questions. It is not sufficient to offer but self-study. Self-study can be a good foundation, but is always supplemented with or preceded by other online learning activities.

- **Maintain the current calendar as much as possible and optimal restart of the next academic year**

When drawing up the adapted calendar and the emergency scenarios for the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020, we have strived to preserve the current calendar as much as possible. This also gives students the highest possible certainty and guidance that the rhythm they are used to can be maintained. It is also important that the restart of the new academic year can proceed as optimally as possible and that we keep the impact of the corona crisis to a minimum.

- **Guarantee a holiday period for students and staff**

We deliberately choose not to hold any exams in the period from 5 July to 10 August. Many students and staff have already planned holidays in this period. Many students also planned holiday jobs, among other things to finance their studies. This period is also necessary to provide both students and staff with a period of mental rest after the difficult period of the corona crisis and the drastic switch to online education. We want to guarantee this period to support and strengthen the mental well-being of students and staff.

- **Focus on remote evaluation**

Lecturers align their evaluation methods with their teaching methods. Online education goes hand in hand with online evaluation. We encourage lecturers to work with online evaluation. In a first phase, this can be a way for both the student and the lecturers to evaluate how far the student has progressed in processing the subject matter. The lecturer gives feedback. In a later phase online evaluation can also partially or completely replace an on-campus exam.

For the master's subjects, we strongly encourage lecturers to evaluate online. In master's courses, typically more complex competencies are tested. These can almost always be assessed via online evaluations such as 1-on-1 online conversations (online 'oral exam'), testing via Curios, uploading the results of individual and group assignments, case discussions, image recordings,... in Ufora, etc. The use of online evaluation as much as possible also facilitates following the other principles.

- **Focus on remote alternatives for practicals, master's theses and work placement.s**

We will (partially) replace the practicals by (an) alternative assignment(s). Practical(s) that necessarily need to be offered as practicals and that contain unique and essential training competences (learning outcomes at program level) will be integrated in an existing course unit of the next model program year without increasing the study load, or exceptionally will be taken at a later stage.

Master's theses that are hampered by the corona crisis can still be completed with the available information. If this information is too limited, they will be reoriented.

Work placements can take place remotely and (partially) be replaced by an alternative (internship) assignment. For work placements that are part of study programmes for which specific professional regulations exist, special arrangements are worked out in consultation with the competent authority. More information will follow as soon as it is available.

More specific information on alternatives to practicals, master's theses and work placements is available via "onderwijstips" (educational tips)

(<https://onderwijstips.ugent.be/en/tips/coronamaatregelen-alternatieve-onderwijsactiviteit/>)

- **Students in the last master's year must be able to graduate**

Students who are in the last master's year and who can graduate and enter the labour market this academic year are guaranteed that this is possible. If additional measures are required to achieve this, they will be tailored to the student (e.g. in the case of work placements in the context of regulated professions).

This also applies to students in (shortened) educational masters. We desperately need our teachers and will do everything we can to find solutions for these students as well.

- **Avoid extension of the study duration and shifting subjects and contents**

When drawing up the further planning of the semester and the adjusted academic calendar for the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020, no courses are shifted. Master's theses, work placements and practicals can also be completed as much as possible. Shifting contents to next academic year is only exceptionally permitted for unique and essential programme competences (learning outcomes at the programme level). This will be considered on a case by case basis. In this way, extension of the study duration is avoided.

- **Focus on the competences instead of the learning content**

The ECTS course descriptions are important to clearly communicate and guarantee expectations between lecturers and students. However, we are currently in a period of force majeure. In order to deal with this force majeure situation, it may be necessary to deviate exceptionally from the information on the ECTS course descriptions. Lecturers may therefore choose to focus as much as possible on alternative teaching methods and evaluations that nevertheless pursue the same or part

of the final competences. A choice for these alternative forms does not affect the validity of the evaluations. However, it is important that lecturers communicate clearly via Ufora about these adjustments and how the final grading will be arrived at. The basic principles for evaluation and testing (validity, reliability and transparency) will of course continue to apply.

Final competencies can also be achieved in other ways. Less essential components (learning content) of courses can be cancelled if necessary.

Therefore a one-to-one relationship (i.e. number of hours, number of tasks, number of evaluation moments, form of the activities, ...) between education and the evaluations that were planned and the online educational activities and evaluations that will now be used, is not always necessary. However, monitoring the total study load is essential.

The study programme committees ensure that the programme competences (learning outcomes at programme level) are acquired by all students.

### 3. Support at different levels

#### Support measures for lecturers, study programme committees and faculties

We realise that it is not easy for students and lecturers to make the drastic switch to online education and online evaluations in such a short period of time. That is why we propose a series of support measures:

- Faculties are supported by the central services through general frameworks and policy principles.
- Study programme committees are supported by their faculty in the elaboration of concrete plans for online education and evaluation, for alternatives to practicals, work placements, and master's theses, for monitoring clear and correct communication with students via Ufora, for coordination between lecturers and for the timing and monitoring of the study load.
- Lecturers can count on central support with regard to online education and online evaluation, both on the technical level as well as on the pedagogical-didactical content via ['onderwijstips'](#) (teaching tips). Study programme committees support (teams of) lecturers in developing online education and evaluation and in formulating the messages on Ufora. Lecturers can also count on faculty support through the study (track) counsellors and the other employees of the Faculty Education Service ('FDO'). Lecturers are also advised to use the educational supervisors, assistants and researchers ('OAP') to support online education and evaluation. In this way, students can receive maximum support and guidance during their studies.

#### Communication and guidance of students

- Students are kept informed through their faculty and/or programme of study about the concrete elaboration of the policy with regard to online education and evaluation.

- Students can count on the support of the study (track) counsellors.
- Via Ufora, students receive timely and clear instructions from their lecturers regarding the specific online education and the online evaluations for each of the subjects.
- Students can contact their lecturers, the study programme, and the study (track) counsellors with specific questions.
- For students we have set up the Ufora site [student@warmUGent](mailto:student@warmUGent), which provides extra study tips, study advice and information aimed at the mental well-being of students.
- Students have the possibility to apply for a special status due to exceptional social or individual circumstances (via oasis or the helpdesk) if they have problems accessing and/or participating in online education.

### Extra attention for foreign students and students in international joint courses

It is possible that for foreign students, both regular international students and exchange students, specific agreements may have to be put in place.

Some foreign students will stay at Ghent University; others will (compulsorily) return to their country of origin or have already done so, although they will continue to follow Ghent University lessons from abroad. Returning to Belgium to take an exam will not always be possible or admissible in that case. Not all international students will therefore be able to take part in the possible on-campus exams. They should be given the opportunity to be evaluated online.

For students in international joint study programmes, the faculties, in consultation with the partner institutions of these international joint study programmes, should make specific agreements and inform their students about these.