



CBE Z22003138 Master's thesis assessment

DECISION

in the matter of A., hereinafter also referred to as the Appellant,

and

the examiner of the Master's thesis for the International Relations degree programme of the Faculty of Arts, hereinafter also referred to as the Defence,

concerning the mark awarded to the Appellant's Master's thesis for the degree programme in International Relations.

I. Description of the disputed decision

The decision of 11 July 2022 by the examiner of the Master's thesis to award a mark of 6 to the Appellant.

II. The hearing

The appeal was heard in an open session on Thursday, 1 September 2022 where the Appellant appeared in person. The Defence, represented by V., appeared at the hearing via video link.

III. Origin and course of the proceedings

The Appellant wrote a thesis to complete his Master's degree programme in International Relations. The Appellant was awarded a mark of 6 for this thesis. The Appellant lodged an appeal against this mark to the Board of Appeal for Examinations via the Central Portal for the Legal Protection of Student Rights (CLRS) on 20 July 2022. No settlement meeting was held because the parties had already met on 20 July 2022. The appeal was subsequently dealt with by the Board of Appeal on 1 September 2022.

IV. The parties' positions

The **Appellant's** position, as set out in the appeal and further explained at the hearing, can be summarized as follows. The Appellant believes that he was not given sufficient feedback from his supervisor during the thesis process. In addition, there were not enough contact moments with his supervisor. Several other students had the same experience with this examiner. The Appellant also argues that he does not consider the second assessor's feedback respectful. The Appellant feels discriminated against by the statements made by the Defence. The Defence told the Appellant that his qualifications were weak because he comes from Mexico, and that he lacks basic skills. This greatly affected the Appellant.

The **Defence** defended itself as follows in the statement of defence and at the hearing.. The Defence does not agree with the Appellant's position.

The Appellant received extensive feedback during the thesis process. However, the Appellant did not act on all the feedback. An example of this is feedback on the research design. In addition, the Appellant did not request further contact moments. Obviously, he could have done that if he needed them.

The assessment was carried out using the Assessment Form, which led to both assessors coming to the same final mark. The motivation behind the final mark of 6 can be found on this form. In summary, the Appellant lacks the academic skills needed to write a good thesis.

Finally, the Defence argues that he certainly did not tell the Appellant that he is a weak student because he comes from Mexico. The Defence did say that it might have been a good idea if the Appellant had followed a pre-Master's programme first because then he would have been better prepared for the academic requirements set for a student in the Master's degree programme.



The Defence emphasizes that this comment is completely unrelated to the Appellant's country of origin.

The Defence believes that the mark was arrived at with due care, and requests the Board to declare the appeal unfounded.

V. Review

The Board points out that the content of the appeal must be tested against Article 7.61.2 of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). The question is whether a legal rule or legal principle has been transgressed. A content-related assessment of whether an examination component was correctly awarded a certain mark falls outside of this assessment framework. However, the Board can check whether the Defence has made its decision based on proper grounds. To this end, the Board of Appeal can assess whether the assessment procedure has been followed with due care.

The Appellant, briefly summarized, argues that he received insufficient feedback and had insufficient contact moments with his supervisor during the thesis process. In addition, the Appellant argues that he does not consider the second assessor's feedback to be respectful. Finally, the Appellant argues that he feels discriminated against by the Defence.

The Board of Appeal has made the following considerations with regard to these claims. It has appeared to the Board that the Defence has provided the Appellant with feedback on several occasions during the entire thesis process and that there was email contact about the thesis on several occasions. From the feedback given on the work submitted thus far, it can be unequivocally concluded that the thesis needed improvement in order to arrive at a good final version.

Both the supervisor and the second assessor assessed the thesis using an Assessment Form, leading to no major differences in the final assessment.

Furthermore, the Board does not concur with the Appellant's claim that the second assessor's feedback was disrespectful. Nor does the Board concur with the Appellant's claim that there was discrimination by the Defence. This serious accusation is posited by the Appellant but subsequently not substantiated in any way.

Given all the facts and circumstances, the Board of Appeal thus concludes that there is no reason to judge that the assessment of the Appellant's Master's thesis was careless. The disputed decision can therefore be upheld.

VI. Decision

The Board of Appeal for Examinations declares the Appellant's appeal unfounded.

Thus established on 6 September 2022 by Dr E. van Wolde, chair, Dr P.G. Tassenaar, and W. van der Laan, members, in the presence of M.E.A. Donkersloot, secretary.

Chair

Secretary

In accordance with the General Administrative Law Act and Article 7.66 of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW – *Wet op het Hoger onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk onderzoek*), interested parties have the right to appeal against this decision to the national Higher Education Appeals Tribunal (CBHO – *College*



***van Beroep voor het Hoger Onderwijs*), P.O Box 16137, 2500 BC The Hague within
six weeks of the decision being sent to them.**