Oral exams – definitely worth it!

Prof. Dr. Sarah M. Springman, Rector
Refresh teaching, 25.02.2021
Assessment options

Why? to promote and to prove achievement in learning

How we assess students influences how they learn (e.g. Eric Mazur)

- Examination from the beginnings up to, perhaps, medieval times by **oral debate**, critical thinking, argumentation….
- After >1000 years of **written exams** for the civil service in Imperial China, 16th century
- **Computer-based online exams**, 21st century
Combining answers to the «Why?» and the «What?» of oral examinations leading onto the «How, Where & When?»

Anderson & Krathwohl’s
Taxonomy of Educational Objectives
Teaching at ETH

Oral (former 2nd Vordiplom)

Written (former 1st Vordiplom)

Written (Bachelors)

Oral (Masters)

60 students @ 3 per 1 hr

60 students @ 1 per 0.5 hr
What is the role of professors and assistants prior to, and during, oral exams? What are the benefits of co-examining? Sharing the load, quality control. What are the benefits of having multiple assistants? Speed-writing, concentration, quality control. Organising for sustainability & quality: 0800-1000, coffee, 1030-1230, lunch & coffee, 1330-1530, more coffee (!), 1600-1800 – a good 8 hr working day! Up to 2 weeks needed. Not all ‘full-time’
Oral examination: The opening gambit

- sketch on whiteboard
- drawing
- photograph
- ...
- ease nerves
- help candidate to get started

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**Examiner**

Sessionsprüfung: Entwurf und Konstruktion in Geotechnik Wintersemester 2010

Sessionsprüfung Bauingenieurwissenschaften
Prüfungsfach: Entwurf + Konstruktion in Geotechnik
Examinatoren: SPRINGMAN Sarah, RÜEGGER Rudolf
Datum: 3. Februar 2010
Kandidat: Rafael

Grundaufgabe:

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<th>Teilaufgabe</th>
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**Assistant’s record**

Sessionsprüfung: Entwurf und Konstruktion in Geotechnik Wintersemester 2010

Grundaufgabe:

Die Rektorin
Oral examination: recording the student’s performance
Oral examination: asking questions, judging the examinee’s performance
Subconscious assessment of examinee’s progress

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* Fainted
Marking the oral examination: thin slicing, discussion, review, decision & subsequent quality control
Delivering quality, balance & value in oral examinations? You decide!