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Contact:	Deputy Head of Academic Services and his staff

DIRECTIVE

Deploying continuous performance assessment in teaching

This English translation is for information purposes only. The German version is the legally binding version.

The Rector,

Pursuant to Art. 9, Para. 2 of the ETH Zurich Organisational Ordinance of 16 December 2003¹, in association with Art. 8, Para. 3 of the ETH Zurich Ordinance on Performance Assessments of 22 May 2012²,

has issued the following directive:

Art. 1 Concept, definition and objective

¹ The concept of “continuous performance assessment” may only be applied in course units which are assessed via session examinations or end-of-semester examinations.

² Continuous performance assessment is a means of assessing performance within the course unit context during the semester. It contributes towards the overall performance assessment result, although the final examination via session examination or end-of-semester examination continues to be the more decisive element.

³ Continuous performance assessment serves the following different goals:

- a. It requires students to perform in areas which cannot be assessed or graded in the final examination framework. Examples of continuous performance assessment tasks are excursions which are integrated into the course unit; completion of a course unit computer exercise; authorship of a project paper or case study; or delivery of a presentation.
- b. It gives students feedback on their learning progress and helps them to actively follow the teaching during the semester, continually process course material, and complete the associated exercises.

¹ RSETHZ 201.021

² SR 414.135.1

Art. 2 Policy

¹ To foster students' personal responsibility and scope for designing their own studies, the deployment of continuous performance assessment should be targeted and moderate.

² Simple presence in the classroom may not be declared a continuous performance assessment task.

³ Continuous performance assessment to further learning as per Art. 1, Para. 3 (b) should be designed as an incentive.

⁴ The workload involved in completing continuous performance assessment tasks must be adequately taken into account as part of the total workload of the respective course unit. Care must also be taken to ensure that the student workload during the semester remains balanced and that single subjects do not demand attention which is disproportionate.

⁵ Misunderstandings and legal uncertainties can be avoided by designing continuous performance assessment tasks which are as simple in form as possible.

⁶ Lecturers are primarily responsible for adhering to the tenets of Para. 1-5. Recipient degree programmes also have a say regarding continuous performance assessment in compulsory and core subjects (see Art. 9).

⁷ Lecturers are responsible for planning, conducting, marking and administering the results of continuous performance assessment tasks.

Art. 3 Types of continuous performance assessment

This directive differentiates between three types of continuous performance assessment:

- a. Compulsory continuous performance assessment
Compulsory continuous performance assessment targets the goal set out in Art. 1, Para. 3 (a).
- b. Interim examinations
Interim examinations target the goal set out in Art. 1, Para. 3 (b).
- c. Learning tasks
Learning tasks target the goal set out in Art. 1, Para. 3 (b).

Art. 4 Compulsory continuous performance assessment

¹ Compulsory continuous performance assessment involves clearly delineated tasks such as the examples provided in Art. 1, Para. 3 (a) which must be completed within the course unit framework and graded individually.

² The following possibilities apply to the marking of compulsory continuous performance assessment tasks:

- a. The compulsory continuous performance assessment task need not be passed on its own; it is awarded a grade which counts proportionally towards the total course unit grade.
- b. The compulsory continuous performance assessment task must be passed on its own; it is assessed on a pass/fail basis.
- c. The compulsory continuous performance assessment task must be passed on its own and counts proportionally towards the total course unit grade; it is graded (grades of 4 and above signify a pass; grades below 4 signify failure).

³ Not completing or failing to pass a compulsory continuous performance assessment task means that the corresponding course unit cannot be passed. If students in this situation do not deregister from the final examination their failure of the course unit will be officially decreed «no show». If students fail or do not complete a compulsory continuous performance assessment task, lecturers must inform them of this in writing before the deregistration deadline.

⁴ The share contributed by graded compulsory continuous performance assessment to the total course unit grade may not exceed 50%.

⁵ Compulsory continuous performance assessment as per Para. 2 (b) and (c) (pass/fail) is not permitted in course units which are part of an examination block (because failing or not completing a continuous performance assessment task would endanger completion of the entire examination block). The Rector rules on any exceptions.

Art. 5 Interim examinations

¹ Interim examinations are conducted once or twice during the semester. They focus the study behaviour of students and give them feedback on their learning progress.

² Sitting interim examinations is recommended for students, but is not mandatory.

³ Interim examinations are conducted under examination conditions and are graded individually.

⁴ Grades from interim examinations are computed proportionally towards the total course unit grade if they improve it. The share of these grades in the total grade may not exceed 30%. If they would worsen the total grade, however, they are disregarded. They therefore function as a bonus, but not as a penalty. Students can still achieve the maximum grade of 6 in the course unit even if they only sit the final examination.

⁵ Note that the level of difficulty of interim and final examinations is similar.

Art. 6 Learning tasks

¹ Learning tasks, which involve low-threshold activities such as short exercises corrected in class, quizzes, and presentations of solutions to exercises, focus students' learning behaviour during the semester by providing feedback on their learning progress. Several learning tasks – typically 5-10 – should be offered during the semester.

² Although participation in learning tasks is recommended for students, it is not mandatory.

³ Learning tasks which have been completed and handed in can improve the total course unit grade by up to 0.25 grade points. The maximum bonus may be achieved by successfully completing a defined number of the learning tasks offered. Students can still achieve the maximum grade of 6 in the course unit even if they only sit the final examination.

Art. 7 Combining different continuous performance assessment tasks

It is in principle possible to combine different continuous performance assessment tasks (as per Art. 4-6) in the same course unit. The share contributed by graded continuous performance assessment to the total course unit grade may not exceed 50%.

Art. 8 Description in Course Catalogue

¹ Continuous performance assessment tasks must be described in full in the Course Catalogue under "Additional information on mode of examination". Details must include:

- a. The type and number of continuous performance assessment tasks
- b. Roughly when they will be set during the semester
- c. How they will be assessed (graded and/or marked pass/fail) and the grade weighting

² Continuous performance assessment tasks which are not listed in the Course Catalogue may not be marked or graded.

Art. 9 Approval and coordination

¹ The following stipulations apply to compulsory continuous assessment tasks and interim examinations deployed in compulsory or core subjects:

- a. The approval of the Director of Studies of the respective (recipient) degree programme is required when they are introduced or significantly changed.
- b. The Director of Studies of the respective degree programme informs the responsible department Teaching Commission of any approvals granted.
- c. The department Teaching Commission may express an opinion and require changes if grounds are provided.

- d. The Director of Studies may withdraw approval if grounds are sufficient, particularly in the context of (c) above.
- e. The Rector has the final say in disputes.

² Learning tasks do not require approval. They may be deployed at the discretion of the lecturer.

³ The Director of Studies of the respective degree programme is the contact person if there are difficulties implementing continuous performance assessment.

Art. 10 Timing of examinations and repetitions

¹ Compulsory continuous performance assessment

- a. Completion of a compulsory continuous performance assessment task deployed in a course unit is recognised for students who sit the final examination before the course unit is offered again. This applies to both the first and second attempts at the examination, as long as these are undertaken before the course unit is offered again.
- b. If students sit the final examination a year after attending the course unit, they must repeat the course unit and repeat the compulsory continuous performance assessment task. This requirement applies independent of whether the examination is a first or a second attempt (the principle being that the content and all modalities of the last course unit attended apply). The special cases mentioned in Para. 3 are excepted.
- c. Deviations from (b) are possible if they are listed in the Course Catalogue.
- d. In individual cases the Director of Studies may approve exceptions to (b).

² Interim examinations and learning tasks

- a. Completion of a continuous performance assessment task deployed in a course unit is recognised for students who sit the final examination before the course unit is offered again. This applies to both the first and second attempts at the examination, as long as these are undertaken before the course unit is offered again.
- b. If students sit the final examination a year after attending the course unit – independent of whether the examination is a first or a second attempt – the continuous performance assessment tasks they completed in the previous year are no longer recognised. Recognition only proceeds if they repeat the course unit and complete the continuous performance assessment task; otherwise no continuous performance assessment tasks are recognised (the principle being that the content and all modalities of the last course unit attended apply). The special cases mentioned in Para. 3 are excepted.
- c. (b) also applies if the course unit in the previous year did not yet include continuous performance assessment tasks.

³ Course units which are examined in the framework of two-semester courses or examination blocks, where the first examination is only possible one semester after they were attended, are excepted from the provisions of Para. 1 (b) and 2 (b). In these

cases a completed continuous performance assessment task may still be recognised even a year after the course unit was attended. Students may choose whether to have the completed continuous performance assessment task recognised or whether to repeat the course unit and undertake the task again. If they choose the latter it is always the most recent continuous performance assessment task which counts towards the total course unit grade.

⁴ For course units which take place every two years or even more seldom, a completed continuous performance assessment task is recognised for every examination attempt undertaken before the course unit is offered again.

Art. 11 Handling of absences and non-fulfilment of requirements

¹ Voluntary continuous performance assessment tasks need not be subject to any special rules regarding absence. Students who do not complete them or achieve bad results in them lose the chance of a bonus, but do not reduce their chances in the final examination.

² In the context of compulsory continuous performance assessment tasks it should be noted that insufficient or non-completion of these means that the student must repeat the subject in order to pass the performance assessment. This extends the duration of studies. A possibility for completing the continuous performance assessment task should therefore be offered, at least where there is an excuse for an absence.

Art. 12 Reporting of results and storage of documents

¹ Students should be informed promptly of the results obtained via continuous performance assessment. At the minimum this involves communicating the grade or pass/fail mark and providing a sample solution. The communication is non-binding.

² It is not possible to contest results obtained via continuous performance assessment. A request for reconsideration or an appeal may only be lodged against the total course unit grade after the latter has been communicated.

³ Documents regarding compulsory continuous performance assessment tasks and interim examinations count as examination documents as described in Art. 23, Para. 3 of the ETH Zurich Ordinance on Performance Assessments⁽³⁾. They remain with lecturers, and must be stored for two years after total grades have been communicated. They are subject to the same rules which govern the viewing of examinations. Lecturers may choose whether they wish to show them only together with the final examination.

⁴ The original documents from learning tasks, or their copies, may be returned to students after they have been corrected and the results recorded.

³ SR 414.135.1

Art. 13 Exceptions

Any type of continuous performance assessment which deviates from these guidelines requires the approval of the Rector.

Art. 14 Entry into effect

This directive enters into effect on 1 August 2018 and applies from Autumn Semester 2018 onwards. In Spring Semester 2018 it is to be regarded as a recommendation.

Zurich, 22 December 2017

Rector, ETH Zurich
Prof. Dr Sarah M. Springman