

STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – CASE STUDY

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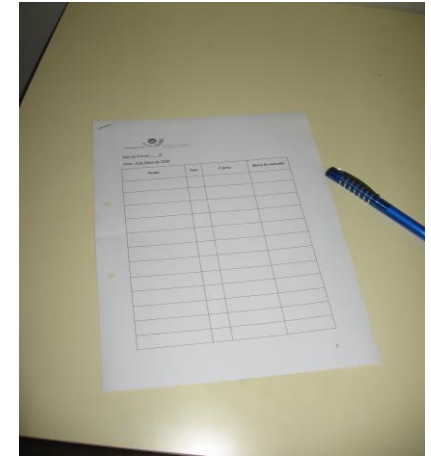
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1. Introduction

Assessment:

- a major component of the didactic activity;
- stated in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Helsinki (2005);
- has a formative function;
- complies with norms.



2. Research objective

Accomplishing a comparative analysis of students' assessment practices within:

- *Transilvania* University of Brasov
- The University of Lisbon
- the institutions of the French networks ENSAM and ENESAD.

3. Research methodology

Qualitative methods:

- the study of academic documents
- interviews
- the spontaneous observation.

4. Themes identified

1. assessment forms: initial, dynamic, final;
2. weight of dynamic evaluations in the final mark;
3. types of items: oral/ written questions, practical exams, projects;
4. dominant functions of assessment.

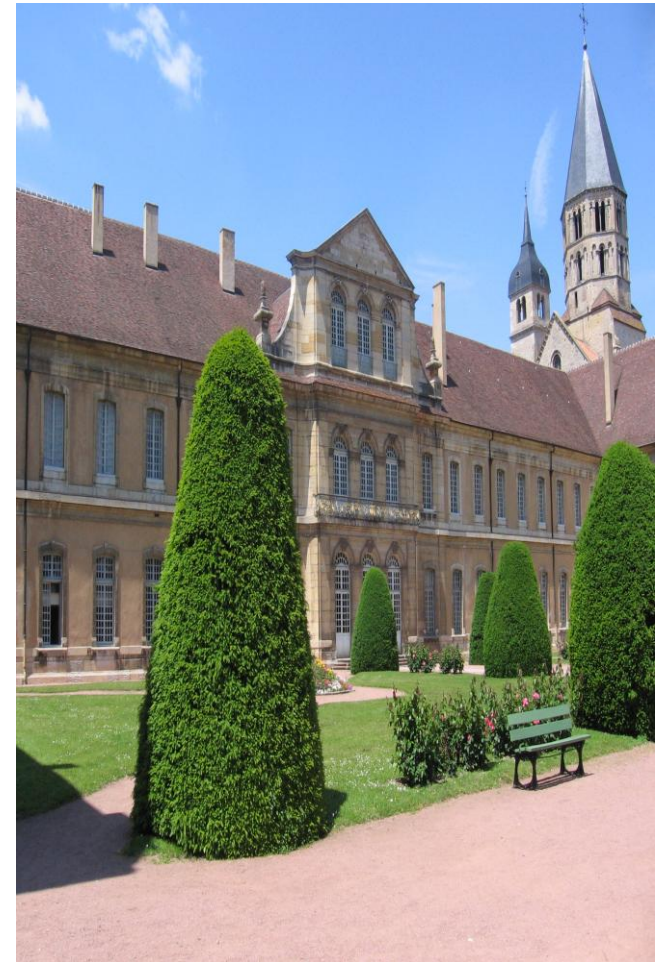
5. Admission at *Transilvania* University



- File-based contest (great majority of the faculties):
 - high school graduation GPA
 - high school cumulative GPA.
- Exam-based contest.

6. Admission at ENSAM and ENESAD

- admission exam organized within the institutes;
- written and oral exam in:
 - Mathematics
 - Physics
 - Foreign Languages.



7. Admission exam in Portugal

- admission at national level, coordinated by the National Commission for Admission in (Public) Higher Education;
- definite number of vacancies (some dedicated for particular categories);
- students are allowed to register for a maximum of six different universities;
- the entrance examination grade:
 - 50% high school graduation GPA
 - 50% results at national tests.



8. Admission at the University of Lisbon



- National tests organized in July and September;
- subjects may be chosen;
- each university/ faculty can decide on
 - a minimum grade (for the cumulative GPA and for the national tests);
 - the type of national test compulsory for each faculty.

9. The University of Lisbon: examples

- Medicine:
 - Mathematics
 - Biology and Geography
 - Physics and Chemistry;
- Education Sciences (one of three sets):
 - Geography and Portuguese
 - History and Portuguese
 - Mathematics Applied in Sciences and Portuguese.



10. The University of Lisbon: Maiores de 23

- people over 23, who do not fulfil the conditions for ordinary enrolment;
- written examination and interview in the faculty chosen;
- the Jury elaborates the tests and analyzes the CVs.

11. Partial conclusion

- in Romania, the admission contest remains just a standard proposed by ARACIS;
- the impact on the future students' preparation is + or -?
- in France and Portugal, admission is a laborious activity, accepted and valorised at national level.

12. Advantages of dynamic assessment

- imposes rhythm to learning;
- “unburdens” the session of exams;
- students receive descriptive feedback and may detect problem areas;
- changes the relationship student-teacher;
- changes students’ attitudes towards learning and assessment;
- offers teachers the opportunity to enhance the quality of the course.

14. Dynamic assessment at...

ENSAM and ENESAD

- homework
- projects
- partial exams;
- ongoing assessment:
60% of the final grade
- 2/3 per semester.

University of Lisbon

- practical work
(individual or in groups)
- presentations during
the course
- written tests.

15. Dynamic assessment at the three universities

- similarities in teachers' and students' declarations;
- it is difficult to appraise the quality of the dynamic assessment and the ways to use its improvement effects.

16. Final assessment at *Transilvania* University

- takes place during two strictly established periods of the year;
- demanding period for students, generating tiredness;
- exams may be retaken several times;
- teachers' attitude varies:
 - teachers with a great variety of requirements;
 - indulgent teachers;
 - teachers who aim at a diminished amount of correction work.

17. Final assessment at ENSAM and ENESAD

- no predetermined, unique interval for the final assessment;
- examination is scheduled one week after the course has finished;
- overload during one determined time span can be avoided;
- transversal subjects are assessed by means of a publicly defended project;
- exams may be retaken twice only.

18. Final assessment at the University of Lisbon

- oral or written exams;
- three assessment periods within each semester: 1st period; 2nd period; special period;
- students have the possibility to improve the grade during another period or even during the next year.

19. Conclusions

- assessment - a major preoccupation for students, teachers and institutions;
- economic and social organizations involved;
- attitudes towards assessment are based on a philosophy of continuous progress;
- focus on competences, not on fragmentary objectives;
- continuous assessment has gained ground;
- the introduction of the “continuous improvement device”.

