

DECISION 23 – 519

Rapenburg 70
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of the Examination Appeals Board of Leiden University
in the matter of the administrative appeal of

[name], appellant

against

the Board of Examiners of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology,
respondent

The course of the proceedings

In its decision of 18 August 2023, the respondent assessed the appellant's master's thesis for the Master's Programme in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology (hereafter "the Master's Programme") with a grade 6.8.

The appellant sent a letter on 24 August 2023 to lodge an administrative appeal against this decision.

The respondent investigated whether an amicable settlement could be reached. No amicable settlement was reached.

The respondent submitted a letter of defence on 13 September 2023.

The appeal was considered on 27 September 2023 during a public hearing of a chamber of the Examination Appeals Board. The appellant appeared at the hearing with [name] as a witness. [name], [X] of the Board of Examiners, and [name], [X] of the Board of Examiners, appeared on behalf of the respondent.

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Considerations

The appellant disagrees with the assessment of her master's thesis. She feels that she did not receive sufficient supervision during the thesis process which would have resulted in a lower grade. In addition, she argues that the guidelines, on the basis of which the respondent assessed the thesis, were never communicated to her beforehand. She holds that this had led to feedback from the second reviewer that was completely new and could have been avoided had she known the guidelines. The appellant points out that the assessment of her thesis was downgraded because of her use of English, even though she did meet the language requirement for admission to the Master's Programme. She therefore also deems this to be incorrect.

The respondent argues that both the supervision of the thesis process and the assessment of the final thesis were done thoroughly, in line with proper procedures and with great patience and attention. The respondent holds that the appellant has already been accommodated because she continued to receive supervision when writing her master's thesis, even during the summer months. This is highly exceptional as no supervision is normally offered after June. The difference in the assessment of the first and second reviewers of the thesis is merely a difference in emphasis, according to the respondent. While different issues were raised by the two assessors, their final assessments were almost identical. The respondent also disputes the fact that the assessment would be downgraded due to the appellant's use of language. Her use of language was rated 7.0, just slightly higher than the overall final assessment of the thesis.

In accordance with Article 7.61, paragraph two, of the Higher Education and Academic Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, WHW), the Examination Appeals Board must consider whether the contested decision contravenes the law.

At the hearing, the appellant's witness submitted further documents outlining her experiences with supervision on her master's thesis. This is in support of the appellant's position that the supervision she received was inadequate. The Examination Appeals Board did not consider the experience of the witness in its

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assessment since the witness did not submit her master's thesis in the same academic year as the appellant; moreover, the witness attended a different specialisation which, according to the respondent's unrefuted explanation at the hearing, has a different structure. Furthermore, the Examination Appeals Board holds that the experience of the supervision provided by the university to the witness is - in itself - not normative of the supervision the appellant may expect. Supervision of a master's thesis is an interaction between supervisor and student and there are different factors that come into play. The appellant can only rely on the stipulated minimum requirements of the course.

The Examination Appeals Board holds that the respondent has provided good reasoning as to why the supervision and assessment of the appellant's master's thesis was properly executed. Consequently, the appellant's argument that she was not aware of the guidelines does not hold. The same applies to the difference between the feedback from the first and second reviewers, as it became clear at the hearing that those assessments were not substantially different. The Examination Appeals Board endorses the respondent's position that the appellant's use of language did not lead to a lower grade as that part of her thesis was assessed with a higher mark than the final grade.

Since the Examination Appeals Board has not been informed of any other facts or circumstances that could lead to an alternative decision, the appeal must be held unfounded. This means that the contested decision is upheld.

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The decision

The Examination Appeals Board of Leiden University

holds the appeal unfounded

in view of article 7.61 of the Higher Education and Academic Research Act.

Established by a chamber of the Examination Appeals Board, comprised of M.G.A. Berk (Chair), LL.M., Dr C.V. Weeda, Dr A.M.C. van Dissel, T.E.V. Claessen and O. Alagöz (members), in the presence of the Secretary of the Examination Appeals Board, E.M.A. van der Linden, LL.M.

.....,

Chair

.....,

Secretary

Sent on:

Certified true copy,

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