

Preportr

The necessity of systematic evaluation



Frequent exam deadlines, large number of students and occasional absences of professors in lectures, are the reasons why the systematic assessment is not fully implemented in some faculties of UP. The Rectorate says that in the last two years the monitoring of the observance of syllabuses has not been carried out due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as the teaching process has been conducted online. Students consider systematic assessment as a good method that keeps them active in learning.

Tirana Bytyqi

Assessment and teaching methods are one of the main factors that affect the quality of teaching and student performance.

According to Article 108 of the UP statute, to determine academic success students are guaranteed continuous assessment, with various forms including exam, colloquium, seminar paper, professional practice, practical test during exercises, interpretation and presentation of artistic creativity and other works.

Also, the Bologna System which is implemented by the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” provides for the evaluation to be done systematically.

According to experts of education, the continuous assessment encourages students to engage continuously, increases interest in learning and students’ successes are greater. These methods should be applied with gradual assessment which are also placed in the syllabus

of the courses, which are published for all faculties and departments.

Implementing syllabuses in practice, remains a challenge for some of the UP faculties. Some professors continue to use only the final exam as a tool to assess students.

A research of Preportr that was conducted in August 2018 has shown that to a large extent, UP students are evaluated only with the final exam. The situation in recent years seems to be better, but according to the Rectorate, the pandemic has affected decrease of monitoring of syllabus implementation, in order to have a clearer picture of how systematic assessment methods are being applied.

“Virtual platforms lacked the mechanisms through which professors could make an adequate systematic assessment or the level of digital knowledge of the academic staff has not been such as to enable the full im-

4%

stated that they were not introduced to the syllabus

50%

stated that they are introduced to the syllabus

Respondents' answers through the ECR platform, to the question whether the syllabuses are presented to you by the professors when you start the lectures in the respective subjects

46%

stated that only a few professors introduce syllabus

While on the question whether syllabuses are applied in practice in terms of evaluation, only

27%

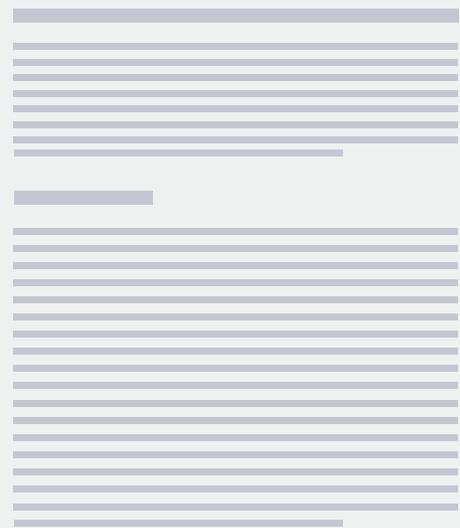
stated that they are applied

plementation of the virtual platform mechanisms,” said Elton Bahtiri, Vice Rector for Quality and Academic Development at UP.

As part of this research, Preporfr, through the ECR platform has published a questionnaire through which it has received answers from UP students on what methods are they evaluated during the semesters and how much of the provisions of the syllabus is respected by the professors at UP.

According to the data obtained from this survey, 50 percent of students have stated that they are introduced to syllabus when they start lectures in relevant subjects. 46% said that only a few professors introduce syllabus at the beginning of lectures and 4% stated that they are not introduced to syllabus at all. When asked how many professors apply the syllabus in practice, 27 percent of them said that they are implemented, 20 percent stated that they are not implemented, while 52 percent answered that only some professors apply the syllabus in practice.

SYLLABUS



The survey data show that one of the main reasons why the syllabuses are partially or not implemented at all, is the lack of will of professors, then the occasional lack of professors in lectures, the large number of students and inadequate infrastructure conditions.

Professors have an obligation to systematic evaluation

Elton Bahtiri, Vice Rector for Quality and Academic Development at UP told Preportr that all professors have an obligation to implement continuous assessment, including intermediate and formative tests or colloquiums, active participation, and not just the final or summative assessment.

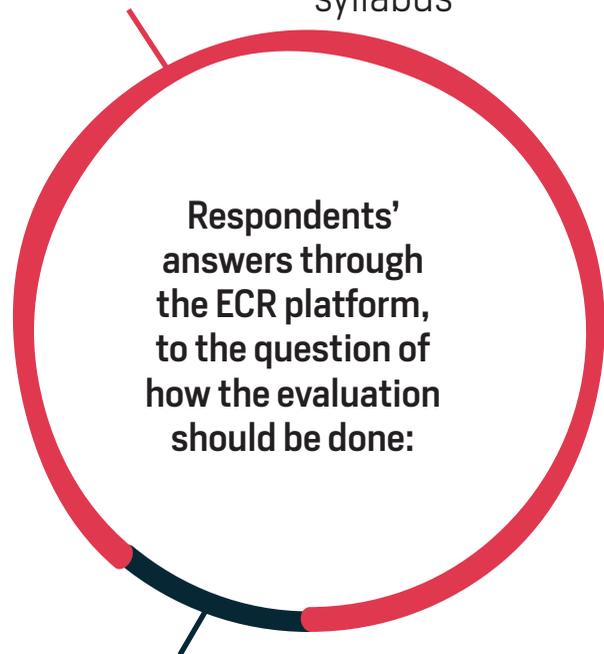
Vice Rector Bahtiri says that the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” constantly provides support to academic staff in developing and advancing their skills and competencies, providing professional training for the basic advanced level.

“The Center for Teaching Excellence (QPM) aims to not only facilitate teaching and learning but also to facilitate the communication of information, and consequently, the improvement of the student-professor relationship. A special training session organized by the QPM is related to systematic assessment or knowledge control and final assessment”, he added.

Avni Berisha, Vice Dean for Teaching at the Faculty of Mathematical and Natural Sciences says that they have not made any measurements or research on whether the syllabuses are applied in the FMNS, but he says that a large part of the professors of this faculty practice systematic assessment.

“Monitoring is challenging because the syllabus does not include details on when the professors perform the assessment, this is in the competence of the professor and it is not possible to go to the professors’ hour by hour and ask them if they respect it or not,” said Berisha.

89% think that according to the syllabus



11% only with final exam



According to the statute of the University of Prishtina, there are three terms for exams, but every year it happens that the senate decides to hold two extraordinary deadlines. Problems arise here because professors cannot keep at the same week the extraordinary deadline with that of the colloquia.

Sefer Avdiaj, Vice Dean for Quality and Science at FMNS

Irregular deadlines hinder systematic evaluation

Sefer Avdiaj, Vice Dean for Quality and Science at the same faculty, says that keeping irregular deadlines is an obstacle to continuous assessment, because professors find it difficult to hold at the same time the exams and colloquium provided by syllabus.

“According to the statute of the University of Prishtina, there are three terms for exams, but every year it happens that the senate decides to hold two extraordinary terms. This is where the problem arises when professors hold extraordinary terms and at the time of these deadlines is also the week of keeping the colloquium. Problems arise here because professors cannot keep the extraordinary deadline in the same week with that of colloquia”, said Avdiaj.

Vice Dean Avdiaj says that in the FMNS, there is not a large number of students and that this makes systematic assessment easier.

According to him, the quality of teaching should be increased by applying gradual assessment, step by step, because this type of assessment encourages students to be active throughout the learning process.

Avdiaj says that another difficulty during the systematic assessment is the acclimatization of students with the assessment methods that are applied in this faculty.

“During the first semester, students have a problem until they learn the methods of assessment and learning, and it takes a very long time until they are taught. Then there are the problems with the second and third year, due to the remaining exams and they have no interest in dealing with lectures until the exams are over. So the system itself has a problem, but the gradual assessment in the FMNS is done correctly”, he stressed out.

Fatos Ukaj, dean at the Faculty of Economics of UP told Preportr that in this faculty, the gradual assessment is implemented by all professors as provided by the syllabus. He also says that the syllabus is a basic requirement to be implemented and that while syllabus contains a description it cannot be that something else to be done in the lecture.

He says that the large number of students is a problem in the Faculty of Economics, but according to him, this does not affect the gradual evaluation during the semester, because most professors do it in order to create an advantage for full-time students.

“Professors usually carry out the tests on Saturdays because we have more space and other assistants help the professor and the assistant of that subject, in the administration of the testing process”, said Ukaj.

According to him, a large number of professors have completed trainings which are mandatory by the University of Prishtina related to student assessment methods and many of them have participated in trainings abroad.

Ukaj says that the engagement of professors in other institutions has been a very problematic phenomenon, but thanks to the law that prohibits elected persons from engaging in more than one job, this phenomenon has been reduced.

“We have provided that those professors are given a schedule after 16:00 because we were obliged to engage those who are regular staff who have the right to teach six hours a week at UP, and we did not have any remarks or complaints that certain professors were missing,” he said.

Syllabus – A contract between professors and students

Xhavit Rexhaj, an expert in the field of education and professor at AAB College, says that the syllabus is a kind of contract between professors and students, and that this contract must be respected, by implementing in practice what is written in the syllabus.

According to him, professors and students should cooperate to achieve learning objectives, meet the needs of students in order to enhance learning and improve their level of performance.

“The monitoring system should be set by the rectorate. Syllabuses, lectures, presentations, assessment tests, relationship with students, participation in lectures, methods of communicating with students should be monitored as well as setting up focus groups with students, etc.

Xhavit Rexhaj, expert of Education.

Rexhaj says that if students are not at the center of this assessment process and if professors do not understand that they are at the service of their students, there will be no reforms in this regard.

“If the syllabus foresees the construction of the grade, while the teacher evaluates only with a final test, it is a violation of the syllabus, a violation of the contract,” he says.

Professor Rexhaj says that irregular terms of exams affect the improper assessment of students and their learning, because those deadlines push the student to be more passive during lectures, devoting only to exams.

According to him, in Kosovo there is a backward system of student evaluation and that there are endless deadlines for exams.

“It is a system in which both the teacher and the student wait to see who is surrendering first. Up to 30-40% of students are exceptions who are dedicated and who complete tests, exams and lectures on time,” he said.

Rexhaj says that the relevant institutions should monitor the evaluation process in order to have a success in implementing the systematic evaluation, so that in addition to the external quality assurance done by the Accreditation Agency, internal assurance to be provided also by the university.

“The monitoring system should be set by the rectorate. Syllabuses, lectures, presentations, assessment tests, relationship with students, participation in lectures, methods of communicating with students should be monitored as well as setting up focus groups with students, etc. So if a monitoring system is established where none of these I mentioned violates academic freedom, I believe that then a seriousness will be shown”, he stressed.

Professor Rexhaj thinks that such a grading system only with the final exam encourages copying by students, because the student has to complete the course only with an exam which determines the final grade.

“Alternative tests, closed-ended tests, are an invitation to copy, what the definition lesson tests, what the professor understands from that definition, he understands that the student remembers well, but not that he knows the meaning of what he says”, he expresses.

The lack of student representation

Professor Xhavit Rexhaj says that the student union has an important role and can influence the monitoring of the implementation of proper assessment by professors, but according to him, the latter do not work in the interests of students, but in their political interests.

“While student unions pursue narrow interests of groups, clans and parties, there can be no improve-

ment in teaching, because the biggest underestimation of students at UP is made by student organizations,” he added.

Regarding the engagement of students in this regard, the Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Fatos Ukaj says that students are not active at all and do not deal with the problems of students for which they have a mandate and primary task.

“The students’ union at the Faculty of Economics is very little active or engaged, because they deal more with their own interests and do not cooperate with us to build views of what is needed, to show the problems and complaints of students,” he said.

Preporfr has talked to some students of UP faculties about how they are evaluated by professors in relevant subjects.

Muke Shkreta, a master level student at the Faculty of Education, says that during her studies, she conducted a research with second, third and fourth year students in all departments of the Faculty of Education, where she surveyed about 400 students.

This research has shown that students from departments who have had large numbers of students, have been less satisfied with the way of assessment.

“The Department of Pedagogy has been evaluated most highly when it comes to gradual evaluation, while the primary and preschool programs were evaluated in general for domination of final exams. These departments have a larger number of students,” said Shkreta.

She says that from the research data, it has resulted that there are some professors who during the lectures have spent their time with useless conversations just to fill the teaching hour.

Shkreta says that in general among those professors, the evaluation was extremely poor, because the students did not benefit in the lectures and could not give the maximum in the final exam, when the vast majority of the basic things that are required in exams, the professor had no idea if they were spoken during lectures.

“During the interviews and focus groups with students, it has resulted that in some groups the lectures and exercises are held with a formality. In cases when exercises and lectures were held in this way, the evaluation was at a very low level”, said Shkreta.



During the interviews and focus groups with students, it turned out that in some groups lectures and exercises were held with a formality. In cases where exercises and lectures were held in this way, the assessment was at a very low level.

Muke Shkreta, student at the Faculty of Education.

For her experience as a student, she says that she has more success when she is evaluated gradually because she engages more in lectures and exercises, this method of evaluation, according to her, pushes her to have continuous engagement and enables her to have a better result.

“As a student, I have benefited more in those subjects where I have been evaluated with gradual evaluation”, she said.

As for the complaints of students who are dissatisfied with the types of assessment, she says that students do not have the courage to address these complaints to the competent persons, because they lack the courage and have the impression that professors can take revenge on them.

“A large part respects the assessment as provided by the syllabus, but there are also professors who do not respect their syllabus requirements for the evaluation of students”, says Adhuron Hoti, a student at the Faculty of Agriculture.

Antika Bytyqi, a student at the Faculty of Law, says that the commitment during a semester to be finalized only with one final exam is not fair, because this type of assessment is an imposition of learning mechanically.

“The tendency for copying is evident when only one final exam is held, especially in branches that have a large number of students, as is the case with the Faculty of Law,” she said.



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