

ON EXAMINATIONS IN MOROCCAN UNIVERSITIES: TOWARDS A NEW GOVERNANCE OF ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

Within the context of contemporary educational, technological, and institutional transformations, current examination system in Moroccan public universities no longer adequately fulfill its principal functions of assessing student learning, certifying academic achievement, and ensuring the credibility of higher education qualifications. The existing assessment framework is characterized by multiple examination sessions, prolonged assessment periods, and unsatisfactory copy consultation procedures. Consequently, exams have become inefficient, and vulnerable to challenges posed by digital technologies and academic dishonesty. Drawing on international practice systems in higher education assessment, and university governance, I argue that the Moroccan examination system requires a broad reconceptualization and procedural adjustments. I propose an assessment model combining continuous evaluation with a single comprehensive summative examination, greater integration of oral assessment, and more transparent institutional review mechanisms. The article concludes that the proposed reform is essential for strengthening academic integrity, improving institutional efficiency, enhancing educational quality, and reinforcing credibility of Moroccan higher education.

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***Related declarations are provided in the final section of this article.*

* This research combines qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews together with the author's long-standing experience as a faculty member and researcher at the Poly-disciplinary Faculty of Safi, Cadi Ayyad University. This experience provided privileged access to institutional practices, governance processes, and everyday academic realities that would have been difficult to capture through external observation alone. This perspective is complemented by broader international academic experience, including a visiting scholarship at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where the author audited numerous graduate and undergraduate courses in education, English language teaching, curriculum, higher education administration, university teaching and learning, student assessment, faculty development, educational policy, and institutional governance. In addition, he participated in the Summer Cooperative African Language Institute (SCALI 2004) at Indiana University Bloomington, where he completed an intensive faculty development program focusing on language pedagogy, curriculum design, instructional strategies, student assessment, and effective university teaching practices. These experiences provided valuable comparative perspectives on university teaching, learning, and assessment practices. The author's understanding of institutional governance is further informed by several years of professional experience within the Moroccan public administration, including several years of service at the Ministry of Public Services and Administrative Reform. In addition, the author spent four years at the Centre for Administrative Research and Professional Development (Centre de Recherche Administrative et de Perfectionnement) of the National School of Administration, where he administered and coordinated continuing professional training programs for civil servants, contributing to capacity building and administrative modernization within the public sector. This administrative background provided first-hand knowledge of public-sector governance, organizational management, administrative procedures, and institutional reform. It was further enriched through professional training in public service quality management at the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), Malaysia (2003), which offered comparative perspectives on quality assurance, administrative modernization, service delivery, and performance improvement in the public sector. At the same time, the research adopts a reflexive stance by distinguishing personal professional experience from empirical evidence. Interview data, documentary sources, institutional regulations, and relevant legislative texts were systematically used to triangulate observations, confirm interpretations, and minimize the risk of subjective bias. Consequently, the author's experience serves primarily as contextual knowledge that informs the interpretation of findings rather than as evidence in itself, thereby enhancing the credibility, depth, and contextual richness of the analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Examinations have long constituted the essential basis of higher education. They serve as the principal mechanism through which universities evaluate learning, certify academic achievement, and uphold the credibility of academic qualifications. Beyond their pedagogical function, examinations represent a fundamental institutional process that sustains public confidence in universities and ensures that graduates possess the knowledge, skills, and competencies expected by society. The legitimacy of higher education systems therefore depends not only on the quality of teaching but also on the integrity, reliability, and validity of their assessment practices (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Boud & Falchikov, 2007).

Nevertheless, the educational environment in which contemporary universities operate has undergone profound transformations. The rapid expansion of digital technologies, including smartphones, artificial intelligence applications, and instant communication platforms, has altered students' access to information and created unprecedented challenges for maintaining academic integrity during examinations. Simultaneously, higher education has experienced

massification,¹ increasing administrative complexity, and a growing emphasis on competency-based education (CBE)², critical thinking, and authentic assessment. These developments raise a fundamental question: can examination systems designed for a different educational era continue to fulfill their intended educational and institutional functions?

These challenges are particularly evident in Moroccan public universities. Although important reforms have modernized curricula, expanded access to higher education, and restructured academic programs, the organization and governance of assessment have remained largely unchanged.³ The current system, characterized by multiple examination sessions, lengthy examination periods, module compensation policies, and customary copy consultation procedures, places considerable demands on students, faculty members, and university administrations. As a result, assessment has evolved into an increasingly complex administrative process that extends over several months and substantially disrupts instruction, research, and other academic activities while raising growing concerns regarding fairness, efficiency, and academic integrity.

Most informative discussions of university assessment focus on pedagogical questions such as grading, feedback, formative assessment, or academic dishonesty. While these issues are undeniably important, they often disregard a broader institutional question: whether the governance of assessment itself continues to provide an efficient, credible, and educationally meaningful framework for evaluating learning in contemporary universities. This article argues that the challenges facing Moroccan universities should not be understood uniquely as problems of examination design but as manifestations of a broader governance issue. The widespread

¹ Massification refers to the rapid global expansion of higher education from serving an elite minority to enrolling a large proportion of the population. This transformation has generated extensive debate over how to widen access while maintaining academic quality (Trow, 1973, 2006; Altbach et al., 2009).

² CBE is an educational approach in which progression depends primarily on demonstrating clearly defined competencies rather than completing prescribed instructional time or accumulating credits (Frank et al., 2010; Mulder, 2014).

³ Successful educational reform depends not only on the quality of proposed policies but also on the inclusiveness of the reform process itself. A recurring weakness of educational reform in Morocco in general, and of higher education reform in particular, has been the limited and often merely consultative participation of those most directly responsible for teaching, assessment, and student supervision. University instructors occupy a unique position from which to observe the everyday realities of learning, assessment, curriculum implementation, student behavior, and institutional constraints. Their accumulated practical experience therefore constitutes an indispensable source of evidence for identifying systemic problems and designing realistic solutions. When reforms are conceived predominantly through centralized administrative processes, without sustained and meaningful consultation with faculty members, there is a greater risk that they will address formal structures rather than the operational realities of university life. Effective and sustainable reform consequently requires governance mechanisms that ensure the systematic participation of instructors and other academic practitioners throughout the diagnosis, design, implementation, and evaluation of higher education reforms.

challenges caused by digital technologies to usual written examinations, together with the significant opportunity costs associated with repeated examination sessions, copy consultation procedures, and administrative complexities, suggest that the current model requires a more fundamental reconsideration than incremental procedural adjustments. The Moroccan case is therefore examined not as an isolated national phenomenon but as an illustration of wider international debates concerning the future governance of assessment in higher education.

Accordingly, this article advocates moving beyond the customary examination paradigm toward assessment governance. Rather than proposing a new assessment technique, it advances assessment governance as an integrative conceptual framework through which university assessment may be analyzed, organized, and reformed. The framework is structured around four interrelated principles, validity,⁴ academic integrity,⁵ institutional efficiency,⁶ and educational value,⁷ which together provide the analytical basis for evaluating existing assessment systems and guiding future reform.

Building on these four principles, the article explores how assessment governance can be improved through reforms to progression policies, retake examinations, compensation mechanisms, oral assessment, and institutional review processes. The remainder of this article is organized into four sections. Section one reviews the principal dimensions of effective assessment in higher education and identifies the four analytical dimensions that underpin the study: validity, academic integrity, institutional efficiency, and educational value. Section two develops the concept of assessment governance as the article's conceptual framework and explains why assessment should be understood as a broader institutional governance issue rather than merely a pedagogical activity. Section three critically analyzes the governance of the Moroccan assessment system by examining its principal structural challenges in light of these four dimensions. Section four proposes an integrated framework for assessment governance based on the aforementioned principles. The article concludes by discussing the implications of this framework for the future governance of assessment in Moroccan higher education.

⁴ Validity refers to the extent to which assessment generates trustworthy evidence that supports the intended interpretation and use of assessment results (Messick, 1989).

⁵ Academic integrity encompasses the ethical principles of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage that underpin teaching, learning, research, and assessment (ICAI, 2021).

⁶ Institutional efficiency refers to the proportionate use of financial, human, administrative, and organizational resources to achieve educational objectives while minimizing unnecessary procedural burdens (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

⁷ Educational value refers to the extent to which assessment contributes to meaningful learning, intellectual development, and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies beyond the mere certification of achievement (Biesta, 2009).

1. DIMENSIONS OF EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Research on higher education assessment has expanded considerably over the past four decades, producing diverse theoretical perspectives concerning what constitutes effective assessment. Although authors differ in terminology and emphasis, there is broad consensus that assessment systems should do more than allocate grades or certify achievement. They need to produce valid judgments of student learning. They must preserve academic integrity, and support meaningful educational development. Likewise, they are required to operate within governance structures capable of ensuring fairness, transparency, and institutional accountability. Building upon these complementary components of learning, this article identifies four interrelated dimensions that together provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing assessment systems: *validity*, *academic integrity*, *institutional efficiency*, and *educational value*.

Validity has traditionally occupied a central position in educational assessment theory. Messick (1989) defines it not simply as a property of an assessment instrument but as the extent to which evidence and theory support the interpretations and uses of assessment results. In other words, assessment is meaningful only if it accurately measures the knowledge, skills, and competencies it claims to evaluate. Building upon this perspective, Biggs and Tang (2011) argue that assessment must be constructively aligned with intended learning outcomes and teaching activities so that students are evaluated according to the competencies a program seeks to develop. Consequently, validity constitutes the primary condition upon which all assessment systems depend, since even procedurally efficient examinations lose their educational significance if they fail to generate authentic evidence of student learning.

The second dimension concerns academic integrity, which has become one of the defining challenges of contemporary higher education. It actually extends beyond the prevention of cheating and plagiarism. It incorporates the ethical doctrines that ensure honesty, fairness, trust, responsibility, and respect in all academic activities (International Center for Academic Integrity [ICAI], 2021). Bretag (2016) further argues that academic integrity should be understood as a shared institutional responsibility requiring coherent policies, assessment design, and educational practices rather than merely disciplinary sanctions. Similarly, McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño (2012) demonstrate that the credibility of university qualifications ultimately depends upon society's confidence that assessment outcomes genuinely reflect students' own work. As digital technologies continue to transform higher education, safeguarding academic integrity has

therefore become an essential condition for preserving the legitimacy and public trust of university assessment.

The literature has also increasingly emphasized the educational value of assessment. Traditional approaches regarded assessment primarily as a mechanism for grading and certification, whereas contemporary scholarship views it as a powerful motivator of learning itself. Black and Wiliam (1998) and Sadler (1989) have demonstrated that well-designed assessment provides meaningful feedback capable of improving learning rather than simply measuring it. Likewise, Boud (2000) has introduced the concept of sustainable assessment, arguing that assessment should prepare students for lifelong learning by developing their capacity for self-evaluation and informed judgment. From a broader philosophical perspective, Biesta (2009) warns against reducing education to measurable performance indicators, emphasizing that assessment should eventually contribute to students' intellectual, ethical, and professional development. These perceptions jointly suggest that the educational quality of assessment should be judged not only by the grades it produces but also by the extent to which it promotes meaningful learning and disciplinary mastery.

While validity, academic integrity, and educational value have received extensive scholarly attention, considerably less emphasis has been placed on the *institutional efficiency* of assessment systems. Existing research on higher education governance and educational effectiveness has primarily examined efficiency in relation to institutional performance, quality assurance, and resource management rather than assessment procedures themselves (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015; OECD, 2021). Nevertheless, universities operate under financial, governmental, and legislative constraints that require assessment systems not only to produce valid educational outcomes but also to utilize institutional resources responsibly. An assessment system that utilizes disproportionate amounts of teaching time, administrative effort, financial resources, and organizational capacity ultimately affects the university's broader educational mission. Institutional efficiency should therefore be regarded as an essential analytical dimension for evaluating contemporary assessment systems, complementing the pedagogical and ethical perspectives that have traditionally dominated the literature.

Cooperatively, these four dimensions suggest that assessment should be understood not merely as a pedagogical technique but as an integrated institutional system whose quality simultaneously depends on educational, ethical, organizational, and governance considerations. Drawing on these complementary standpoints, the following sections examine the Moroccan

assessment system in light of validity, academic integrity, institutional efficiency, and educational value. Although these dimensions have been widely discussed individually within the literature concerned, they have rarely been integrated into a single framework for analyzing the governance of university assessment systems. The present article adopts this integrative standpoint and argues that the effectiveness of assessment should be evaluated through merging these multiple perspectives of validity, academic integrity, institutional efficiency, and educational value.

2. FROM ASSESSMENT THEORY TO ASSESSMENT GOVERNANCE

Assessment has always occupied a central place within education because it supports teaching, promotes learning, and provides the evidence upon which the certification of student knowledge and competencies is based. Beyond this certification function, assessment regulates students' progression through academic programs, supports curriculum implementation, and safeguards the credibility of university qualifications. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of an education system depends not only on the quality of its teaching but also on the effectiveness, fairness, and integrity of its assessment practices (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Boud & Falchikov, 2007). As Knight (2002) argues, assessment has gradually become one of the defining features of higher education, shaping both teaching practices and students' approaches to learning.

Traditional conceptions of assessment distinguish primarily between *summative assessment*, intended to certify learning outcomes, and *formative assessment*, designed to support learning through continuous feedback (cf. Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1989). More recently, however, higher education scholarship has emphasized that assessment should move beyond the simple measurement of knowledge towards the evaluation of competencies, critical thinking, professional judgment, and lifelong learning capacities (cf. Boud & Falchikov, 2007). The two authors argue that assessment should prepare students not only to succeed in a particular course but also to continue learning effectively throughout their personal and professional lives. Within this perspective, assessment is increasingly viewed as an integral component of the learning process rather than merely its final stage.

One of the most influential developments in contemporary assessment theory has been the emergence of constructive alignment, according to which learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment methods should be coherently aligned to support student learning (cf. Biggs & Tang, 2011). Under this model, assessment determines not only how students are evaluated but

also how they learn. When examinations reward memorization, students tend to adopt surface approaches to learning. Oppositely, when assessment values analysis, synthesis, and problem-solving, students are more likely to engage in deeper forms of learning and understanding. Consequently, the design of assessment has a profound influence on educational quality.

Parallel to these pedagogical developments, increasing attention has been devoted to authentic assessment, which seeks to evaluate students through tasks that reflect real-world professional practice rather than isolated exercises in information recall (cf. Gulikers et al., 2004). Authentic assessment reflects the growing recognition that contemporary graduates are expected not merely to reproduce disciplinary knowledge but also to demonstrate the capacity to apply that knowledge in complex and changeable contexts. This shift has become particularly significant in professions such as architecture, medicine, engineering, law, and teacher education, where professional competence extends well beyond factual knowledge.

The growing emphasis on CBE has further transformed contemporary conceptions of assessment in higher education. Unlike traditional content-oriented models that primarily emphasize the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge, CBE focuses on students' demonstrated ability to integrate and apply knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional judgment in authentic contexts (Frank et al., 2010; Mulder, 2014). Within this perspective, assessment is expected to verify that learners have achieved clearly defined competencies rather than merely accumulated credits or passed individual examinations. Consequently, educational progression should reflect the attainment of essential learning outcomes and professional competencies, particularly in disciplines where deficiencies in foundational knowledge may compromise subsequent learning or professional practice. CBE therefore reinforces the principle that assessment should prioritize demonstrated mastery over procedural progression, encouraging universities to design evaluation systems which ensure that students exhibit mastery of each essential competency underpinning their program of study, rather than relying solely on collective academic performance.

The rapid digital transformation of higher education has further complicated the assessment interpretations. Smartphones, artificial intelligence applications, online communication platforms, and unrestricted access to digital information have intensely changed the conditions under which traditional written examinations were originally conceived. As a result, universities worldwide increasingly confront questions concerning academic integrity, assessment validity, and the credibility of qualifications (Bretag, 2016; McCabe et al., 2012). These developments have demonstrated that assessment can no longer be understood solely as a pedagogical activity.

It has become a strategic institutional matter requiring coherent policies capable of ensuring both educational quality and nationwide trust.

Therefore, this article argues that these transformations call for a broader understanding of assessment governance.⁸ Although the concept has received comparatively limited explicit attention within assessment scholarship, it provides a useful analytical framework for examining how universities organize, regulate, implement, and evaluate assessment practices. Assessment governance encompasses the institutional rules, administrative procedures, quality assurance mechanisms, ethical standards, progression policies, and accountability processes that collectively shape how evaluation operates within a university. It thus extends beyond examination techniques to include decisions concerning examination calendars, retake policies, module compensation, oral assessment, appeals and review procedures, academic integrity regulations, and the allocation of institutional resources.

Drawing upon the preceding literature, I adopt assessment governance as the principal conceptual framework for analyzing university examinations. Rather than treating assessment as a purely pedagogical activity, this concept emphasizes the institutional arrangements through which assessment is designed, implemented, monitored, and continuously improved. I propose that an effective assessment system should satisfy the four interrelated principles identified in the previous section: validity, academic integrity, institutional efficiency, and educational value. These principles are therefore employed as complementary analytical lenses for evaluating the Moroccan examination system. Together, these principles establish the conceptual basis of the assessment governance framework developed throughout the remainder of this article.

3. DIAGNOSING THE GOVERNANCE OF ASSESSMENT IN MOROCCAN UNIVERSITIES

Building on the conceptual framework developed in the previous section, I consider the Moroccan assessment system in light of the four dimensions of assessment governance previously identified. From this perspective, the challenges affecting university examinations are not interpreted as isolated procedural deficiencies or technical shortcomings, but as manifestations of broader structural weaknesses in assessment governance. Accordingly, the analysis moves beyond a fragmented examination of individual problems to demonstrate how

⁸ The expression assessment governance is not yet a standardized theoretical construct within higher education assessment scholarship. It is used here as an integrative analytical concept that brings together insights from assessment theory, university governance, and quality assurance in order to examine how institutional arrangements shape assessment practices (Messick, 1989; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Boud & Falchikov, 2007).

these challenges collectively undermine the organization, credibility, and overall effectiveness of university assessment.

Although examinations remain the principal mechanism through which universities certify academic achievement and confer qualifications, their current organization is increasingly being called into question. The resulting debate extends beyond their capacity to measure student learning accurately and fairly. They also relate to their ability to safeguard academic integrity, sustain public confidence in the value and legitimacy of university degrees, and effectively fulfill the educational mission of higher education institutions. These concerns have become particularly critical in an era characterized by rapid digital transformation, competency-based educational reforms, expanding student enrolments, and persistent institutional resource constraints. Together, these developments require assessment systems that are not only administratively efficient but also pedagogically meaningful, socially credible, and capable of producing valid and reliable evidence of student learning.⁹

3.1 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, EXAMINATION RELIABILITY, AND ASSESSMENT CREDIBILITY

The current examination system in Moroccan public universities exhibits a number of structural weaknesses that undermine the credibility and effectiveness of student assessment. Rather than functioning primarily as a mechanism for evaluating learning, examinations have gradually become an administratively burdensome process that consumes considerable institutional resources. At the same time, doubts have emerged regarding their capacity to provide valid and reliable evidence of students' knowledge and competencies. Rapid technological change, expanding administrative requirements, and the persistence of traditional examination procedures have further increased the complexity and cost of assessment without proportionately improving its educational value. These developments suggest that the existing examination model requires fundamental reconsideration rather than incremental procedural adjustments.

One of the most significant challenges facing contemporary assessment systems is the rapid evolution of technology-assisted academic misconduct. Advances in digital technologies have fundamentally transformed the conditions under which conventional written examinations were originally conceived. Smartphones, smartwatches, wireless earpieces, encrypted messaging

⁹ The observations developed throughout this section are informed not only by the international literature reviewed previously but also by the author's repeated experience supervising examinations in Moroccan public universities over several academic years. Although these observations do not constitute statistical evidence, they provide valuable qualitative insight into recurring practices and institutional challenges encountered during the organization, supervision, correction, and administration of university examinations.

platforms, and, more recently, generative artificial intelligence have progressively reduced the effectiveness of traditional invigilation practices. As a result, universities are increasingly confronted with fundamental questions regarding the validity, credibility, and long-term sustainability of examination-based assessment as the principal basis for certifying student learning.

The arguments advanced in this article are informed not only by the international literature but also by the author's extensive experience of supervising university examinations in Moroccan public higher education over several years.¹⁰ Repeated invigilation across numerous examination sessions has revealed increasingly sophisticated forms of technology-assisted misconduct involving smartphones, smartwatches, miniature wireless devices, and artificial intelligence applications. These observations also suggest that such practices are no longer confined to academically weak students. On the contrary, instances of misconduct have also involved students who otherwise demonstrate satisfactory or even high academic performance, indicating that technological cheating is increasingly driven more by opportunity and normalized examination practices than by inadequate preparation. While these observations do not constitute statistical evidence, they nevertheless provide valuable insight into the practical realities confronting university instructors responsible for safeguarding academic integrity.

The widespread availability of smartphones, smartwatches, wireless earpieces, artificial intelligence applications, and encrypted messaging platforms has created opportunities for cheating that were largely unimaginable only a decade ago.¹¹ During examinations, some

¹⁰ During successive examination sessions, multiple instances of technology-assisted academic misconduct were regularly detected despite systematic invigilation. The examples reported here are intended solely to illustrate recurring patterns encountered in professional practice rather than to provide statistical estimates of their prevalence.

¹¹ Current examination regulations generally permit students to enter the examination room during the first thirty minutes after the official starting time and prohibit candidates from leaving before thirty minutes have elapsed. Although these provisions were originally intended to accommodate unavoidable delays and preserve examination order, they create significant vulnerabilities in the digital era. Within this interval, examination questions may be photographed and transmitted electronically to collaborators outside the examination room or to generative artificial intelligence systems capable of rapidly generating examination answers before communicating them back to candidates. Consequently, the period intended to facilitate orderly examination administration may inadvertently become a window of opportunity for technology-assisted academic misconduct. This observation is further supported by personal communications with Professor Abdellah Ghazi and Professor Mohamed Saissi, whose extensive experience in Moroccan public education administration and examination management confirms that these procedures have become increasingly susceptible to technologically facilitated academic misconduct. From the perspective of assessment governance, these procedures warrant reconsideration. Students should be required to arrive at least ten to fifteen minutes before the official starting time to allow identity verification, seating arrangements, and the collection of unauthorized electronic devices. Once examination papers have been distributed, late entry should not normally be permitted except under exceptional circumstances formally authorized and documented by the administration. Similarly, candidates leaving the examination room during the early stages of the examination should be subject to carefully regulated procedures to prevent the unauthorized transmission of

students photograph examination papers and transmit them electronically to external collaborators or artificial intelligence applications capable of generating immediate responses. Others conceal mobile phones in clothing, bags, furniture, or other locations within the examination room, communicate through miniature wireless devices, or use smartwatches and other connected technologies to access unauthorized information. Faculty members also increasingly report situations in which students obtain completed examination scripts from classmates near the end of the examination period and request additional time to reproduce substantial portions of those answers. Although the prevalence of these practices inevitably varies across institutions and disciplines, they illustrate the growing mismatch between traditional invigilation procedures and contemporary digital technologies.

Beyond technological misconduct, the current examination system generates a range of procedural difficulties that further weaken the credibility of assessment. Following the publication of examination results, faculty members frequently encounter requests for grade reconsideration based on personal, medical, financial, family, transportation, or other exceptional circumstances. While many of these situations undoubtedly reflect genuine hardship and deserve institutional attention, their individual treatment by course instructors often places considerable pressure on academic staff and blurs the distinction between pedagogical evaluation and discretionary decision-making.¹² The cumulative effect is that examinations become not only instruments of assessment but also occasions for negotiation, exception management, and

examination content. Such measures would substantially reduce opportunities for technology-assisted misconduct while strengthening examination security, procedural fairness, and the credibility of assessment.

¹² Many of the personal, financial, family, transportation, or health-related difficulties invoked after examinations should primarily be addressed through higher education policy rather than through discretionary academic decisions. If higher education is regarded as a national investment, the State has a corresponding responsibility to create the minimum social and material conditions necessary for effective learning. Admission to publicly funded universities should be based on transparent academic criteria and institutional capacity, while admitted students should be provided, to the greatest extent possible, with the essential conditions required for successful study. These include access to affordable university housing, at least one nutritious daily meal through university restaurants, adequate health and psychological support services, financial assistance for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, reliable transportation where necessary, and learning environments conducive to academic success. Expecting students to achieve satisfactory academic performance, while lacking these basic conditions, places them at a structural disadvantage and transfers broader social responsibilities onto individual instructors during examination and grading processes. Once these essential conditions have been reasonably secured, however, students also bear corresponding responsibilities. They are expected to attend classes regularly, engage seriously with their studies, respect university regulations, and demonstrate satisfactory academic progress. Students who consistently fail to meet these obligations despite adequate institutional support may be more appropriately redirected toward alternative educational pathways, vocational training, or other forms of professional preparation better suited to their interests and abilities. Higher education should remain both academically demanding and socially responsible: public support should facilitate genuine learning, not indefinitely compensate for the absence of academic commitment. Hence, fair assessment presupposes fair learning conditions. In other words, academic responsibility cannot be separated from institutional responsibility.

administrative mediation, thereby increasing workloads while exposing academic decisions to perceptions of inconsistency or unfairness.

Faculty members also frequently observe that students' behavior during examinations varies considerably according to the perceived strictness of invigilators. Informal conversations with students often reveal that some deliberately avoid examination rooms supervised by instructors known for rigorous invigilation, while others openly acknowledge having become accustomed to relying on unauthorized technological assistance during examinations. Although these observations remain qualitative in nature, they suggest that the effectiveness of current examination procedures depends heavily on the vigilance of individual instructors rather than on the robustness of the assessment system itself.¹³ A credible assessment system should not rely primarily on individual vigilance to preserve academic integrity; rather, it should be institutionally designed to minimize opportunities for misconduct irrespective of the particular invigilator present.¹⁴

¹³ Based on the author's repeated experience supervising examinations in Moroccan public universities, examination misconduct increasingly extends beyond the discreet use of unauthorized materials to forms of open resistance against examination regulations. Some students openly request assistance from classmates during examinations, attempt to copy from neighboring candidates despite repeated warnings, refuse to surrender mobile phones when requested by invigilators, or challenge instructions prohibiting the use of electronic devices. In certain situations, students behave as though access to unauthorized assistance constitutes an accepted entitlement rather than a violation of academic integrity. These observations do not imply that such behavior characterizes the student population as a whole. They nevertheless illustrate an important governance concern: when examination rules are inconsistently enforced, repeated tolerance of misconduct may gradually normalize behaviors that undermine both faculty authority and the credibility of university assessment.

¹⁴ Preventive measures should operate simultaneously at the institutional, procedural, and professional levels. Institutions may strengthen examination security by requiring students to deposit mobile phones, smartwatches, earphones, and other electronic devices outside the examination room or in secure storage areas before examinations begin; implementing randomized seating arrangements where appropriate; verifying student identity systematically; providing clear examination regulations before each examination; and, where legally permissible, proportionate, and respectful of privacy legislation, employing video surveillance or other appropriate technological safeguards in high-risk examination settings. Such institutional measures, however, cannot substitute for the professional responsibility of invigilators, whose conduct remains an indispensable component of examination integrity. Faculty members entrusted with examination supervision have an academic and ethical obligation to maintain continuous, active, and impartial vigilance throughout the examination period. They should remain present in the examination room for the entire duration of the examination except in cases of genuine necessity or formally arranged replacement. Practices that reduce effective supervision - including leaving the examination room for personal reasons such as smoking, engaging in prolonged conversations with colleagues, reading or sending personal text messages, browsing social media, making unnecessary telephone calls, working on unrelated administrative tasks, or otherwise allowing attention to drift away from examination supervision - should be avoided. Invigilators should actively circulate throughout the examination room, maintain visual oversight of all candidates, verify compliance with examination regulations, respond promptly and consistently to suspected misconduct, and ensure that examination conditions remain fair and equitable for every student. They should likewise refrain from using personal mobile phones during examinations except where strictly required for emergencies or official institutional communication. Equally important, invigilators must maintain strict impartiality and should never provide unauthorized explanations, hints, model answers, additional time without authorization, or any other form of assistance that could advantage particular students. Nor should they tolerate, ignore, or facilitate academic misconduct through deliberate inattention, selective enforcement of regulations, or passive acceptance of cheating practices. Reports from various

Taken together, these developments suggest that the principal challenge facing Moroccan universities is not merely the existence of individual acts of misconduct but the declining capacity of the current examination model to generate valid, equitable, and defensible evidence of student learning under contemporary conditions. When assessment procedures require increasingly intensive surveillance while simultaneously becoming easier to circumvent through rapidly evolving digital technologies, the problem extends beyond examination security itself. Universities must reconsider whether the traditional examination model continues to provide an appropriate foundation for certifying academic achievement. The issue is therefore fundamentally one of assessment governance rather than invigilation alone.

This perspective is consistent with the growing recognition that assessment systems should be evaluated not only in terms of their pedagogical effectiveness but also with regard to their organizational sustainability and their contribution to the broader educational mission of the university. Within this broader framework of assessment governance, examination correction practices represent another critical dimension, as the validity and reliability of learning outcomes assessment depend not only on the quality of examination design but also on the consistency, fairness, and transparency of grading procedures. In Moroccan universities, the absence of fully standardized grading practices may lead instructors to apply different correction criteria to similar responses, particularly in essay-based examinations and disciplines requiring qualitative judgment. Such inconsistencies may compromise the comparability of assessment outcomes, thereby affecting both the credibility of grading processes and the overall integrity of institutional quality assurance. Marking schemes are not always explicitly clear, and the interpretation of evaluation criteria may vary among examiners, potentially affecting the comparability and consistency of assessment outcomes. Because evaluation criteria are not always fully standardized, qualitative assessment may be more susceptible to differences in

educational systems, including publicized cases involving national secondary-school examinations, demonstrate that breaches of examination integrity may arise not only from student misconduct but also from negligence or inappropriate conduct on the part of examination supervisors. Consequently, higher education institutions should establish clear codes of conduct governing examination invigilation, provide systematic training for all invigilators, define standardized examination procedures, and implement appropriate mechanisms of accountability where professional duties are seriously neglected. Ultimately, effective assessment governance requires an appropriate balance between robust institutional safeguards and conscientious professional practice. Examination integrity should never depend exclusively on the diligence of individual invigilators, yet neither can even the most sophisticated institutional safeguards compensate for negligent or unethical supervision. The integrity of university examinations is therefore a shared institutional responsibility: assessment systems must be designed to minimize opportunities for misconduct, while invigilators must discharge their professional duties with the diligence, impartiality, and vigilance expected of those entrusted with safeguarding the credibility of academic qualifications.

professional judgment and interpretation among examiners, particularly in disciplines relying on open-ended responses.

These challenges may be further aggravated by structural and organizational constraints. Large student enrollments, repeated examination sessions, and compressed marking schedules frequently generate substantial marking workloads, increasing pressure on professors and limiting the time available for careful correction, individualized feedback, and consistent application of assessment criteria. When multiple instructors participate in grading the same examination, the absence of systematic calibration or moderation procedures¹⁵ may further contribute to inconsistencies in the application of assessment standards. Similarly, delays in grade publication, limited opportunities to review corrected examination papers,¹⁶ and variations in appeal procedures may reduce the transparency of the assessment process and weaken students' confidence in the fairness of grading decisions. Under such conditions, assessment increasingly risks functioning primarily as a certification mechanism rather than as a process that actively supports learning and academic development, as students often receive little more than a final grade without sufficient explanation of the strengths and weaknesses of their performance or the reasons underlying evaluation decisions.

From a pedagogical perspective, these structural and organizational constraints extend beyond administrative efficiency and directly affect the educational value of assessment. When correction is conducted under significant workload pressures, the process tends to remain predominantly summative, with limited opportunities for meaningful feedback that could help students understand their mistakes, consolidate learning, and improve future performance. As a result, assessment may contribute more to academic certification than to learning itself. Furthermore, inconsistencies may arise from differences in academic judgment, uneven

¹⁵ In some cases, instructors engage in informal calibration or moderation by agreeing in advance on the criteria to prioritize during marking or by using a shared marking scheme for exam correction. However, such practices appear to be relatively uncommon and are often implemented at the discretion of individual faculty members rather than as a systematic institutional process. Anecdotal observations suggest that instructors teaching the same module to different student groups often design and administer their own examinations independently. For example, within English Studies programs, first-semester Grammar assessments may differ substantially in format, content, and level of difficulty across groups, potentially leading to inconsistencies in the comparability and perceived fairness of assessment outcomes.

¹⁶ This observation should not be interpreted as suggesting that students are denied access to their corrected examination scripts. As part of teaching practices, the author systematically makes corrected examination papers available to students, either during face-to-face review sessions, usually online, or through emails. Students are also offered the opportunity to discuss their mistakes and receive clarification regarding the evaluation criteria and expected answers. Although these practices aim to strengthen the formative function of assessment, experience indicates that relatively few students take advantage of these opportunities for feedback. Those who do attend consultation sessions frequently seek reconsideration of their grades or request exceptional leniency rather than engaging primarily in a discussion of the academic feedback and the mistakes identified in their work.

correction practices, clerical errors during grade processing, and the absence of systematic moderation or verification procedures.¹⁷ Without effective quality assurance mechanisms, such errors and inconsistencies may remain undetected, potentially affecting both the reliability and the perceived fairness of examination outcomes.

More fundamentally, these issues raise broader questions concerning the governance and quality assurance of assessment practices within Moroccan higher education. Rather than reflecting isolated administrative shortcomings, they point to systemic weaknesses in the design, organization, and oversight of assessment. Variations in grading procedures, limited standardization of correction practices, and the continued reliance on traditional examination formats may undermine the production of valid and reliable evidence of student learning, particularly in competency-based curricula where accurate assessment of disciplinary knowledge, critical thinking, and professional competencies are essential.

To examine these issues systematically, the remainder of this section is organized around five interrelated dimensions of assessment governance. It first explores examination overload and the fragmentation of the academic calendar, before analyzing the challenges posed by academic integrity in the digital era, the institutional and educational costs of the current assessment model, the effectiveness of retake examinations and module compensation mechanisms, and finally the governance of copy consultation procedures. Together, these dimensions demonstrate that the limitations of the current assessment framework are structural rather than merely operational, thereby establishing the analytical foundation for the alternative governance model proposed in the following section.

3.2. EXAMINATION OVERLOAD AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

One of the most overlooked weaknesses of the current examination system in Moroccan public universities concerns the excessive amount of institutional time devoted to assessment. Although examinations are intended to evaluate student learning, their organization has progressively

¹⁷ Based on the author's professional experience within Moroccan public higher education, examination correction practices may vary considerably among instructors. In addition to many colleagues who devote substantial time and effort to careful marking and constructive feedback, the author has also observed practices that raise concerns regarding assessment reliability. These include situations in which examination scripts appear to receive only very limited scrutiny before grades are assigned, inconsistencies between the quality of students' responses and the marks awarded, clerical errors during the transfer or processing of grades, and instances in which grades are modified during consultation sessions without a clearly documented academic justification. Although these observations do not permit generalization to the higher education system as a whole, they illustrate the importance of transparent correction procedures, standardized marking criteria, and robust quality assurance mechanisms to safeguard the validity, fairness, and credibility of assessment.

expanded into a prolonged administrative process that occupies a substantial portion of the academic year. The cumulative effect of ordinary examination sessions, systematic retake examinations, correction periods, copy consultation procedures, deliberation meetings, and administrative validation considerably extends the duration of assessment activities, often at the expense of teaching continuity, research productivity, curriculum development, and academic supervision.

In most Moroccan public universities, each semester is followed by two successive examination sessions: an ordinary session and a systematic retake session. Although retake examinations were originally introduced to provide students facing temporary academic difficulties with an additional opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the required learning outcomes, their progressive institutionalization has considerably expanded the time, resources, and administrative effort devoted to assessment. Rather than remaining an exceptional remedial mechanism, the retake session has become a routine and predictable component of the academic calendar. As a result, universities are effectively required to organize two full examination operations for each semester. This entails preparing separate examination timetables, allocating classrooms, mobilizing invigilators, designing and reproducing examination papers, correcting copies, and convening deliberation committees for both sessions. The cumulative administrative and logistical burden is considerable, absorbing substantial financial, human, and organizational resources. Consequently, a significant share of institutional capacity is devoted to managing repeated examination procedures rather than strengthening teaching, research, pedagogical innovation, or student academic support.

Beyond these administrative and organizational implications, the current examination system also exhibits four structural characteristics that raise broader questions of assessment governance: prolonged assessment periods, examination correction practices, module compensation mechanisms, and copy consultation procedures. These issues are examined in turn below.¹⁸

¹⁸ The term copy consultation refers to the procedure through which students are granted access to their corrected examination papers after the publication of examination results. Introduced with the implementation of the Licence–Master–Doctorat (LMD) reform beginning in the 2003-2004 academic year, it aims to promote transparency, allow students to verify grading decisions, and identify possible marking errors. As an important component of examination accountability in Moroccan higher education, script consultation contributes to procedural fairness. However, if insufficiently regulated and supervised, it may expose students and faculty members to undue pressure, coercive interactions, or attempts to influence grading decisions through personal or non-academic means. Such risks, including gender-related vulnerabilities affecting female students in certain contexts, underscore the need for

The implications of this organizational model extend beyond administrative efficiency to affect the university's core academic functions. Lengthy assessment periods fragment the academic calendar, interrupt the continuity of teaching, and reduce opportunities for curriculum enrichment, project-based learning, laboratory activities, fieldwork, and student supervision. Faculty members frequently experience examination periods as prolonged intervals during which teaching activities are curtailed while administrative responsibilities intensify. The cumulative effect is a progressive reallocation of academic time and institutional attention away from teaching, research, pedagogical innovation, and student development toward the administration of assessment.

In research-intensive universities, academic staff are expected to fulfill multiple missions simultaneously, including teaching, research, supervision, curriculum development, community engagement, and institutional service. Assessment systems should therefore be designed so that the time devoted to examinations remains proportionate to these broader academic responsibilities rather than progressively displacing them.

From the perspective of assessment governance, an effective assessment system should be evaluated not only by its capacity to produce valid evidence of student learning but also by its efficient use of institutional time and resources. Assessment should support, rather than constrain, the university's educational mission. An assessment system that absorbs a disproportionate share of institutional time and academic capacity ultimately weakens the very educational objectives it is intended to serve.

This perspective is consistent with contemporary assessment scholarship, which increasingly views assessment not merely as a mechanism for assigning grades but also as a process that generates meaningful feedback to improve subsequent learning. When assessment systems consume substantial institutional resources while offering limited opportunities for formative feedback, their educational value becomes difficult to justify despite the considerable organizational effort they require.

This situation also raises important questions regarding the efficient use of public resources. Universities operate within increasingly constrained financial and human-resource environments that require careful prioritization of institutional activities. Each additional examination session generates not only direct costs associated with logistics, staffing, infrastructure, and

transparent, formally regulated, and institutionally supervised procedures governing copy consultation and grade appeals.

administrative coordination, but also substantial opportunity costs arising from reduced research activity, postponed curriculum development, delayed pedagogical innovation, and diminished opportunities for faculty development. From the perspective of assessment governance, these opportunity costs deserve consideration alongside more traditional pedagogical concerns. An assessment system should not only produce reliable evaluations of student learning but should also do so in a manner that makes responsible use of institutional resources.

Furthermore, the existence of multiple examination sessions may unintentionally influence students' learning strategies. When successive opportunities for reassessment become institutionalized, some students may perceive the ordinary examination as only one stage within a broader process rather than as the principal occasion for demonstrating mastery of course learning outcomes. This may weaken incentives for sustained engagement throughout the semester and encourage some students to postpone serious academic effort until subsequent examination opportunities. Although such behavior naturally varies among students, the assessment system itself may inadvertently encourage strategic rather than educational approaches to learning.

These observations do not imply that universities should eliminate all forms of academic support for students experiencing genuine difficulties. Rather, they suggest that the current balance between educational support and institutional efficiency requires fundamental reconsideration. Assessment systems should maximize educational value while minimizing unnecessary procedural complexity. From this perspective, reducing the multiplication of examination sessions would not merely simplify university administration; it would enable institutions to redirect valuable academic time, financial resources, and faculty effort toward teaching, research, curriculum development, pedagogical innovation, and student support. Ultimately, the effectiveness of an assessment system should be judged not by the number of examinations it administers, but by the quality, credibility, and educational value of the evidence of learning that it generates.

3.3. RETAKE EXAMINATIONS AND COMPENSATION POLICIES: BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Among the defining characteristics of the current Moroccan university assessment system are the systematic organization of retake examinations and the widespread use of compensation mechanisms between course modules. Both practices were originally introduced to promote

student progression and reduce academic failure by providing additional opportunities for success. From the perspective of educational equity, such measures may indeed assist students experiencing temporary personal or academic difficulties. However, when they become routine rather than exceptional, important questions arise concerning their pedagogical effectiveness, their impact on student learning behaviors, and their compatibility with the fundamental objectives of higher education assessment.

Contemporary assessment literature increasingly emphasizes that the primary purpose of university assessment is not simply to facilitate progression through academic programs but to certify that students have genuinely achieved the intended learning outcomes associated with each course or program (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Sadler, 1989). Within competency-based education, progression is expected to reflect demonstrated mastery rather than the accumulation or compensation of grades (Frank et al., 2010; Mulder, 2014). Assessment therefore serves a certification function as much as a pedagogical one: it provides evidence that graduates possess the knowledge, skills, and competencies required by their discipline and by society. When students' progress despite failing to demonstrate mastery of essential learning outcomes, the credibility of academic qualifications may gradually be weakened..

The distinction between progression and certification lies at the heart of the present argument. Progression is an educational process intended to support students' learning throughout a program of study, whereas certification constitutes a public responsibility through which universities guarantee that graduates have attained the minimum competencies expected of their discipline and profession. Consequently, the primary objective of university assessment should not be to maximize progression rates but to preserve the credibility of academic certification. When progression systematically takes precedence over the certification of competence, the value of university qualifications and public confidence in higher education may gradually be undermined.

One important consequence of emphasizing progression over certification concerns the behavioral incentives created by assessment policies. The routine availability of retake examinations may produce unintended behavioral effects. While many students undoubtedly use these opportunities responsibly, the institutionalization of systematic reassessment can encourage some students to postpone academic effort, viewing the ordinary examination as one of several

opportunities rather than as the principal occasion for demonstrating competence.¹⁹ In such circumstances, assessment risks to become an iterative administrative process rather than a meaningful educational milestone. This concern is consistent with broader research suggesting that assessment systems significantly influence students' approaches to learning, their motivation, and the allocation of study effort (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). Assessment policies should therefore encourage sustained engagement throughout the semester while preserving the ordinary examination as the principal demonstration of competence, with reassessment remaining an exceptional mechanism rather than a routine stage of academic progression.

Another important feature of the current assessment system concerns module compensation mechanisms. It constitutes an institutional arrangement through which students may validate an academic semester or year based on their overall academic performance, even when some individual modules have not reached the required passing threshold. Such mechanisms are intended to promote academic continuity, provide flexibility within the assessment system, and reduce failure rates. However, these institutional objectives may produce tension with competency-based assessment, as students may progress despite not demonstrating satisfactory achievement in all modules. This distinction between overall academic performance and the validation of module-specific competencies raises questions about the extent to which final academic results accurately reflect students' mastery of the intended learning outcomes associated with each module.

The pedagogical rationale underlying compensation assumes that strong performance in some modules can offset weaker performance in others for the purposes of academic progression. Such an assumption, however, treats modules as functionally interchangeable despite their differing contributions to program learning outcomes. Competency-based curricula recognize that not all modules contribute equally to the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and competencies expected of graduates. This assumption becomes particularly problematic in higher education

¹⁹ Although systematic empirical data on this behavior remain limited, circumstantial observations reported by many professors suggest that the predictable availability of retake examinations may influence students' examination strategies. Some students attend the ordinary examination merely to satisfy attendance requirements or submit a blank or nearly blank paper after writing only their identification details, leaving once institutional regulations permit them to exit the examination room. Others openly state that they deliberately chose not to prepare adequately for a particular module because they intend to take the retake examination instead, considering it a planned second opportunity rather than an exceptional remedial mechanism. While such behavior certainly does not characterize the majority of students, its existence illustrates how assessment policies may unintentionally shape students' perceptions of academic effort, reducing the ordinary examination from the principal occasion for demonstrating competence to the first stage of a two-step assessment strategy.

disciplines characterized by cumulative learning, where deficiencies in foundational subjects may significantly compromise students' ability to succeed in subsequent coursework. While compensation may be pedagogically justifiable for elective or complementary modules, it appears considerably more difficult to defend when applied to core disciplinary courses that constitute the intellectual foundations of a degree program.

Compensation may therefore permit students to graduate despite insufficient mastery of core disciplinary competencies, provided that higher grades obtained in complementary or less central modules raise the overall average. This issue is particularly problematic in professionally oriented programs, where certain modules constitute foundational disciplinary competencies that are indispensable for subsequent academic progression and professional practice. A typical illustration can be found in English Studies programs, where a student may obtain a high grade in a complementary language course, such as French, while receiving a failing grade in a core module such as English Grammar, yet still validate the semester through compensation. Although the student successfully progresses academically, this outcome raises questions about whether the assessment system adequately guarantees mastery of the disciplinary knowledge and competencies that the program is designed to develop. This example illustrates how administrative validation may diverge from competency certification. Although the student progresses academically, the assessment system may fail to ensure mastery of the essential disciplinary knowledge that the program is intended to certify. More broadly, such situations raise important questions regarding the alignment between academic validation procedures, program learning outcomes, and the competencies that graduates are expected to demonstrate upon completion of their studies.

This distinction reflects a central principle of competency-based education: academic certification should be based on demonstrated competence in each essential domain rather than on overall numerical averages (Frank et al., 2010). Universities are responsible not only for facilitating student progression but also for assuring society that graduates have attained the minimum competencies expected within their discipline or profession. Consequently, progression should remain the outcome of demonstrated learning rather than an objective pursued independently of it. More broadly, this distinction raises fundamental questions about how universities should reconcile educational support with their responsibility to certify competence.

This critique does not imply that universities should adopt excessively punitive assessment systems or disregard the diverse circumstances affecting student performance. Rather, it suggests that educational support should increasingly take the form of early academic intervention, continuous assessment, tutoring, and pedagogical assistance throughout the learning process, instead of relying predominantly on repeated examination opportunities after learning has already concluded. Assessment governance should therefore seek an appropriate balance between educational support and academic standards, ensuring that flexibility does not compromise the credibility, reliability, and educational value of university qualifications.

3.4 COPY CONSULTATION AND THE GOVERNANCE OF ACADEMIC DECISIONS

The consultation of examination scripts is an important component of assessment transparency. It allows students to understand how their work was evaluated, identify possible clerical or procedural errors, and receive clarification regarding the application of assessment criteria. Properly organized consultation procedures can therefore strengthen confidence in academic decisions and provide institutions with an important mechanism for accountability.²⁰ However, transparency should not be confused with the unrestricted renegotiation of grades. A distinction must be maintained between reviewing whether an assessment decision was reached accurately and fairly, on the one hand, and challenging the academic judgment of the examiner merely because the outcome is unsatisfactory, on the other. Formal appeal systems commonly recognize this distinction by permitting challenges based on procedural irregularities, factual errors, or circumstances materially affecting an assessment, while limiting appeals based solely on disagreement with academic judgment.

When consultation procedures are insufficiently regulated, meetings intended to clarify assessment outcomes may become occasions for persistent negotiation over marks. Students may request additional points because of illness, family or financial difficulties, scholarship requirements, graduation deadlines, transportation problems, or the consequences of failing a module. Such circumstances may be genuine and deserving of institutional consideration.

²⁰ Personal communication from Professor Abdelkrim El Aoul, whose professional experience spans many years of teaching and student assessment within the Moroccan public education system, indicates that effective copy consultation does not necessarily require face-to-face meetings between instructors and students. Under this approach, students submit formal consultation requests through the faculty administration, which forwards them to the concerned professor. The latter then provides a written explanation of the grading decision, identifies any clerical or calculation errors where applicable, and returns the response electronically to the administration, with a copy sent to the student when appropriate. The correspondence is archived as part of the official institutional record, thereby ensuring transparency, preserving documentary evidence, reducing unnecessary interpersonal confrontation, and protecting both students and faculty members.

Nevertheless, they do not, in themselves, constitute evidence that the assessed work has met the required academic standard. Leaving individual instructors to respond informally to such requests places them in the difficult position of balancing legitimate empathy for students with their institutional responsibility to apply academic standards consistently.

Unstructured consultation practices may also expose faculty members to interpersonal pressure. This may range from repeated requests for meetings, emails, telephone calls, persistent demands for reconsideration, and accusations of favoritism or unfairness. In more serious cases, grade disputes may involve verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, online targeting, or aggressive confrontation. These severe incidents, once largely associated with high schools, have gradually become more frequent in universities. Hence, universities should ensure that consultation procedures take place within a secure institutional environment supported by appropriate administrative and security arrangements.²¹ This concern is consistent with a broader body of international research demonstrating that psychological, physical, and sexual harassment can adversely affect employee well-being (Kim, 2024; De Vito et al., 2026). Research in higher education has likewise documented the emotional and professional consequences of bullying, hostile communications, aggressive interactions, and sexual harassment affecting academic staff and the wider university environment (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Keashly & Neuman, 2010).

The cumulative consequences of these interactions may extend beyond the consultation session itself. Large numbers of requests can considerably increase faculty workload, particularly in high-enrolment courses. Persistent confrontations may contribute to anxiety, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction. They may also encourage defensive assessment practices, such as unjustified grade increases intended to avoid conflict, or reluctance to provide detailed feedback that might generate further disputes. In this sense, faculty safety and

²¹ Beyond incidents directly related to examination procedures, the broader security environment of the university may also influence the conditions under which assessment and post-assessment activities are conducted. Universities may occasionally face situations involving verbal abuse directed at academic staff, harassment of students, alcohol or substance consumption on campus, unauthorized intrusions into academic spaces, or other forms of disruptive behavior that exceed ordinary disciplinary matters. Although such incidents should not be generalized to all institutions, they illustrate the importance of maintaining appropriate campus security arrangements. Universities should ensure the regular presence of adequately trained security personnel and, where circumstances require, effective coordination with public security authorities in order to protect students, faculty members, administrative staff, and university property. Assessment governance ultimately depends not only on sound examination regulations but also on a safe institutional environment in which academic activities can be conducted without intimidation, disruption, or threats to personal safety.

workplace well-being are not separate from assessment quality: instructors who lack institutional protection may find it more difficult to exercise independent and consistent academic judgment.

Consultation procedures also raise questions of privacy and confidentiality. Examination scripts, grades, personal circumstances, and appeal documents contain sensitive information that should not be discussed publicly or made accessible to unauthorized persons. Consultations conducted in crowded rooms, corridors, or other unsuitable settings may compromise confidentiality. Similarly, unauthorized recordings, the circulation of partial accounts on social media, or public campaigns against individual instructors may intensify disputes before institutional review mechanisms have been completed. Effective governance must therefore protect students' right to information while safeguarding privacy, procedural fairness, and the professional dignity of all parties.

A particularly serious integrity risk arises when the authority to assess, award marks, authorize progression, or supervise academic work is used to obtain sexual access to students. In the international literature, this conduct is variously described as sexual coercion, *quid pro quo* sexual harassment, "sex for grades," or, in some African studies, "sexually transmitted marks." These expressions refer to situations in which an academic benefit, such as a passing grade, improved marks, favorable supervision, admission to a program, or protection from academic disadvantage, is explicitly or implicitly conditioned upon compliance with sexual demands. Such conduct is not a consensual exchange between actors of equal standing. It constitutes an abuse of institutional authority because the staff member controls, or is perceived to control, decisions that may substantially affect the student's academic future.

The phenomenon is difficult to measure precisely because it is frequently concealed and underreported. Students may fear academic retaliation, reputational damage, disbelief, exposure of private information, or the loss of educational opportunities. They may also be uncertain about where to report misconduct, particularly where the alleged perpetrator participates in assessment, supervision, departmental decision-making, or institutional governance. Bondestam and Lundqvist's (2020) systematic review of research on sexual harassment in higher education identifies hierarchical structures, precarious academic positions, normalized gender inequalities, cultures of silence, inadequate leadership, and ineffective reporting mechanisms as conditions that allow harassment to persist. The review further demonstrates that sexual harassment can have serious psychological, educational, and professional consequences for those affected.

Accordingly, a low number of formal complaints cannot be interpreted as reliable evidence that the problem is absent or insignificant.

Empirical research from African higher education confirms that the relationship between sex, assessment, and institutional power is not merely hypothetical. Morley's (2011) study of higher education in Ghana and Tanzania showed how gendered and hierarchical power relations could normalize what she described as a "sexual contract," whereby some academics viewed sexual access to female students as an entitlement associated with their authority over academic assessment. Similarly, Ncube (2019) examined the "sexually transmitted marks" phenomenon as a form of academic corruption that compromises both academic integrity and the credibility of academic qualifications. UNESCO has likewise identified "sex for grades/support" as a form of gender-based violence and has emphasized the importance of institutional prevention mechanisms and safer-campus policies.

The hidden character of sexual coercion has also been documented beyond Africa. Analyzing more than 2,000 accounts of sexual harassment in academic settings, Karami et al. (2020) identified sexual coercion as a recurring form of misconduct. This form of harassment involved offering or withholding academic benefits in exchange for sexual compliance. The authors also documented retaliation against individuals who rejected such advances or reported the misconduct. Likewise, the qualitative review by Tarzia et al. (2023) showed that students' experiences of sexual violence in higher education are shaped by institutional cultures, unequal power relations, fear of disclosure, and dissatisfaction with institutional responses. Together, these studies demonstrate that the abuse of evaluative and supervisory authority constitutes an internationally recognized governance problem rather than a phenomenon confined to particular national or regional contexts.

In Morocco, the issue became particularly visible through the proceedings associated with Hassan I University in Settat. The case entered the public domain in 2021 after electronic conversations allegedly involving lecturers and students circulated on social media and prompted criminal investigations. In January 2022, a professor of economics at the university was sentenced by a court in Settat to two years' imprisonment after being found guilty of offences reported as including sexual harassment, violence, and indecent assault in a case publicly described as involving academic advantages in exchange for sexual favors.²² Subsequent

²² Academic advantages associated with sexual coercion may take various forms depending on the authority exercised by the perpetrator. They may include promises of higher grades or passing marks in exchange for sexual

proceedings involved other faculty members; the reported outcomes were not uniform, as some defendants were convicted while others were acquitted. This variation is important and should be acknowledged because the existence of a public scandal does not remove the need to distinguish allegations from legally established responsibility.

The Settat proceedings were not the only allegations to attract public attention. Contemporary reporting also referred to complaints and investigations involving students and faculty members in other Moroccan institutions, including a higher-education institution in Oujda. These reports demonstrate that the issue has entered public and institutional debate but do not constitute a representative empirical measure of Moroccan higher education. Accordingly, the available evidence establishes the existence of documented cases, allegations, public testimony, and judicial proceedings, but does not permit reliable conclusions regarding the national prevalence of the phenomenon.

This evidentiary limitation should not lead to the exclusion of sexual coercion from an analysis of assessment governance. Hidden practices are, by definition, unlikely to be captured adequately through ordinary administrative statistics, particularly where reporting may expose students to retaliation, stigma, or legal and social consequences. The combination of international scholarship, African empirical research, UNESCO initiatives, and Moroccan judicial cases provides sufficient grounds to recognize sexual coercion as a genuine institutional risk, while avoiding unsupported generalizations about its frequency. The purpose of including the issue is therefore not to characterize Moroccan universities collectively, but to identify a severe form of abuse that assessment systems must be designed to prevent, detect, investigate, and sanction.

Sexual coercion should also be situated within the wider range of improper attempts to influence academic decisions. These may include gifts, personal favors, intervention by influential relatives or external actors, falsification or alteration of documents, impersonation in consultation or appeal procedures, manipulation of examination records, intimidation of students or instructors, and retaliation against individuals who report suspected misconduct. Although

favors (*quid pro quo* sexual harassment); threats to fail a student, delay graduation, or assign unfavorable evaluations following refusal of sexual advances; preferential access to thesis supervision, research funding, recommendation letters, scholarships, or academic progression; pressure exerted through the supervision of master's or doctoral research; and the allocation of desirable internships, fieldwork opportunities, exchange programs, or other educational benefits conditioned upon sexual compliance. Although these situations differ in their specific manifestations, they share a common characteristic: the abuse of evaluative or supervisory authority to obtain sexual access.

these practices differ greatly in seriousness, they share a common governance problem: academic decisions become vulnerable when they depend excessively on private interactions, undocumented discretion, and concentrated individual authority.

Effective prevention consequently requires more than general ethical declarations. Universities need clearly communicated prohibitions on the abuse of evaluative authority, confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms, protection against retaliation, appropriate academic, psychological, and legal support for complainants, independent investigation procedures, and safeguards ensuring that the alleged perpetrator plays no role in subsequent decisions concerning the complainant's assessment, supervision, progression, or graduation. Such procedures must protect complainants without presuming guilt and safeguard respondents without dismissing complaints. Sexual coercion in assessment should therefore be recognized simultaneously as sexual harassment, an abuse of authority, a violation of student rights, and a form of academic corruption that undermines the validity and credibility of academic certification.

At the same time, allegations against faculty members must be treated with procedural seriousness. Students should have safe and credible channels through which to report misconduct, discrimination, coercion, or abuse of authority. Faculty members must likewise be protected from intimidation, reputational attacks, and unsupported accusations. Fair governance requires neither automatic acceptance nor automatic dismissal of complaints, but confidential, impartial, evidence-based investigation conducted by appropriately constituted institutional bodies. This protects complainants, respondents, and the credibility of the institution itself.

The central weakness is therefore not the principle of script consultation but the absence, or inconsistent application, of sufficiently clear institutional procedures. When consultation practices vary between instructors, departments, or faculties, students may receive unequal treatment and academic personnel may be left to manage difficult disputes individually. The resulting inconsistency can undermine both student confidence and faculty authority. It can also generate significant administrative burdens through repeated meetings, document collection, committee coordination, and the manual tracking of complaints and decisions. Research on student complaints has similarly emphasized the effects of lengthy procedures, unclear expectations, and poorly managed grievance processes on institutional workload and student–staff relationships.

Effective post-assessment governance should consequently establish a clear distinction between consultation, correction, and appeal. Consultation should enable students to inspect their work and understand the basis of the grade. Correction should address identifiable errors such as inaccurate calculation, omitted answers, or incorrect data entry. A formal appeal should be reserved for documented procedural irregularities, relevant circumstances not previously considered through the appropriate process, or credible allegations of misconduct. Disagreement with an examiner's legitimate academic judgment should not, by itself, constitute sufficient grounds for changing a grade.

Universities should therefore provide standardized consultation periods, suitable and secure meeting conditions, written appeal criteria, defined submission deadlines, documented decision-making procedures, and review bodies that are institutionally responsible for resolving disputes. Consultations involving a foreseeable risk of confrontation may require the presence of another staff member or designated administrative representative. Digital systems can also assist by recording requests, preserving documents, communicating decisions, and reducing dependence on informal exchanges.

The objective of post-assessment governance should not be to prevent students from questioning possible errors or reporting genuine wrongdoing. Rather, it should ensure that academic decisions are transparent, confidential, procedurally fair, and consistently applied, while protecting faculty members from inappropriate pressure and students from arbitrary or abusive authority. By separating legitimate review from informal grade negotiation, universities can strengthen academic integrity, faculty well-being, student rights, and public confidence in the credibility of academic certification.

Ultimately, the issue is not whether students should have the right to consult their examination scripts or challenge academic decisions. Transparency, accountability, and procedural fairness remain essential components of legitimate assessment systems. The challenge lies in ensuring that these rights are exercised within institutional frameworks that simultaneously protect students, preserve faculty independence, and safeguard the integrity of academic judgment. Without robust governance structures, post-assessment interactions may expose both students and instructors to inappropriate pressures, conflicts of interest, intimidation, and abuses of authority, thereby undermining confidence in academic certification. The various risks discussed in this section, from undue influence and document manipulation to sexual coercion and false accusations, should therefore be understood not as isolated ethical failures but as governance

vulnerabilities requiring institutional rather than merely individual responses. In light of these considerations, the quality of a university assessment system depends not only on the technical soundness of its examinations but also on the effectiveness of the governance mechanisms that ensure academic decisions remain transparent, independent, and trustworthy throughout the entire assessment process.

4. FROM EXAMINATION ADMINISTRATION TO AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK OF ASSESSMENT GOVERNANCE

The primary objective of assessment governance is not merely the administration of examinations but the systematic generation of accurate evidence of student learning. Such a perspective reframes assessment governance as a strategic institutional function concerned not only with the effective management of assessment processes but also with safeguarding the quality, credibility, and educational significance of the evidence on which academic judgments are based. Rather than advocating a uniform assessment model applicable across all higher education institutions, I propose an integrated framework for assessment governance that recognizes the diversity of institutional contexts while establishing a coherent set of guiding principles. The framework is supported by four interrelated and mutually reinforcing principles, validity, academic integrity, institutional efficiency, and educational value, which together provide a comprehensive basis for designing, implementing, and evaluating assessment systems that produce sound academic judgments of student learning while supporting the broader educational mission of universities. These principles shift the focus of assessment governance from compliance with administrative procedures to the creation of assessment systems that are educationally purposeful, academically robust, and institutionally sustainable. Within this framework, universities retain the flexibility to adopt governance structures and organizational models that reflect their specific missions,²³ disciplinary traditions, regulatory environments, and

²³ The emphasis on institutional flexibility within a common governance framework is consistent with the broader trajectory of public-sector reform in Morocco, particularly the principles of advanced regionalization (*régionalisation avancée*), decentralization (*décentralisation*), and administrative deconcentration (*déconcentration*), which seek to redistribute decision-making authority while maintaining national coherence through shared strategic objectives and common regulatory standards. In this perspective, the proposed assessment governance framework does not prescribe a uniform organizational structure; rather, it articulates a set of common governance principles that institutions may implement through organizational arrangements adapted to their respective contexts, capacities, and priorities, provided that these arrangements continue to ensure the validity, integrity, efficiency, and educational value of assessment. This governance philosophy is consistent with the Moroccan constitutional framework, notably Article 1, which establishes advanced regionalization as a fundamental principle of the territorial organization of the Kingdom; Articles 136-146 concerning territorial collectivities; Article 145 defining the role of the Wali within the deconcentrated administration of the State; and Articles 154-157, which establish the principles of good governance, accountability, and quality in public services (Kingdom of Morocco, 2011).

operational capacities, provided that these models consistently uphold the four foundational principles and demonstrate their capacity to generate credible evidence of student achievement in support of institutional quality and public confidence in higher education.

This perspective also requires a conceptual shift from governing examinations as isolated administrative events to governing assessment as an integrated institutional system that encompasses the design, implementation, validation, quality assurance, and continuous improvement of assessment practices. Such an integrated conception of assessment governance also recognizes that the quality of assessment depends not only on the technical design of assessment instruments but also on the educational environment in which assessment takes place. Effective governance therefore requires institutional policies that promote regular student attendance,²⁴ active engagement with learning activities and assigned coursework, and standards of professional conduct characterized by mutual respect among students, faculty members, administrative staff, and the wider university community.²⁵ Although these elements are not themselves assessment methods, they constitute important institutional conditions that support meaningful learning and create the conditions under which valid assessment can occur. By fostering a culture of responsibility, engagement, and professionalism, they also reinforce the broader educational mission of higher education.

²⁴ Monitoring student attendance in large-enrolment courses presents significant practical challenges. In lecture-based modules enrolling several hundred students, manually calling names is generally impractical and consumes valuable teaching time, while paper attendance sheets are vulnerable to inaccuracies and proxy signing by students on behalf of absent classmates. Institutions may therefore consider implementing secure electronic attendance systems, such as student identification card scanners or comparable digital verification technologies installed at classroom entrances. However, electronic registration alone does not guarantee actual classroom attendance. Institutions should therefore ensure that attendance control mechanisms are implemented rigorously. For example, some students may scan their identification cards without subsequently attending the class, while others may attempt to register the attendance of absent classmates by scanning multiple cards. Where electronic attendance systems are employed, they should therefore be complemented by appropriate verification measures, such as strategically positioned surveillance cameras, supervised entry procedures, or comparable monitoring mechanisms, to ensure that attendance records accurately reflect students' physical presence throughout the teaching session. Although such systems require initial investment, they can improve the accuracy, efficiency, and transparency of attendance monitoring while reducing administrative burden. Where appropriate and consistent with institutional policies, similar technologies may also contribute to monitoring faculty attendance as part of broader institutional accountability and quality assurance mechanisms.

²⁵ Professional conduct constitutes a fundamental condition of university membership rather than merely an aspirational value. Across higher education systems worldwide, students, faculty members, and staff are expected to interact with one another in a manner consistent with mutual respect, civility, and academic professionalism. Respect for members of the academic community is not optional; it forms part of the ethical obligations associated with participation in scholarly life and the exercise of academic freedom. Consequently, persistent or serious acts of disrespect, including harassment, intimidation, threats, abusive behavior, discrimination, or repeated disruption of the academic environment, may constitute grounds for disciplinary sanctions, including suspension or expulsion, following appropriate institutional procedures and due process. A university cannot effectively fulfill its educational mission when individuals refuse to accord basic respect to those responsible for teaching, learning, research, and institutional governance. Membership of an academic community therefore entails both the right to learn and the reciprocal responsibility to respect the dignity, authority, and rights of others.

4.1. VALIDITY AS THE FOUNDATION OF ASSESSMENT GOVERNANCE

The first and most fundamental principle of assessment governance is validity. The primary purpose of any assessment system is not merely to administer examinations or assign grades, but to generate valid and reliable evidence that students have achieved the intended learning outcomes.²⁶ Accordingly, the effectiveness of assessment governance should be judged by the extent to which assessment results accurately represent students' knowledge, competencies, and abilities. Administrative efficiency, procedural compliance, and examination security remain important institutional objectives, but they cannot compensate for assessment practices that fail to produce valid evidence of learning.

From this perspective, the findings presented in the previous section suggest that many of the weaknesses observed in the Moroccan university examination system stem from an excessive reliance on traditional written examinations as the principal, and in many cases the exclusive, basis for academic certification. While written examinations remain an essential assessment instrument, their growing vulnerability to technological forms of academic misconduct, combined with the increasing complexity of contemporary learning outcomes, raises important questions regarding their capacity to provide sufficiently valid evidence of student achievement when used in isolation.

Assessment governance should therefore promote the diversification of assessment methods and encourage the use of multiple sources of evidence when making academic judgments. Rather than relying exclusively on a single high-stakes examination, assessment decisions should be informed by complementary forms of evaluation, including written examinations, projects, seminar presentations, portfolios,²⁷ laboratory work, research reports, practical exercises, continuous assessment, and other authentic learning activities. Such an approach draws upon the principles of programmatic assessment, whereby complex competencies are evaluated through

²⁶ Examinations serve important pedagogical as well as certification functions. Beyond their role in assigning grades, they provide students with structured opportunities to demonstrate the knowledge and competencies acquired during a course, receive feedback on their performance, and identify areas requiring further development. For instructors, examination results constitute valuable evidence for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, identifying common learning difficulties, and informing subsequent improvements to course design and instructional practices.

²⁷ In educational contexts, a portfolio is a systematic and purposeful collection of a student's work, including essays, research assignments, presentations and academic reports, compiled over time to document learning, demonstrate competencies, highlight achievements, and reflect personal growth. Widely recognized as an authentic alternative to traditional forms of assessment, portfolios emphasize both the learning process and its outcomes by encouraging students to actively reflect on their educational experiences, assume greater responsibility for their own learning, and provide a more comprehensive representation of their knowledge, skills, and development.

the longitudinal accumulation of multiple sources of evidence rather than a single assessment event.²⁸

Within this framework, oral assessment should assume a renewed role in higher education.²⁹ Oral examinations need not replace written examinations; rather, they should complement them particularly in situations where additional verification of student learning is warranted. To ensure their systematic implementation rather than occasional use, higher education institutions should formally integrate oral assessment into their assessment regulations and program structures. Assessment regulations should specify the circumstances under which oral examinations or oral verification are required in designated modules identified by program teams according to disciplinary requirements, intended learning outcomes, and the level of risk associated with academic misconduct. Institutionalizing oral assessment in this manner would restore an assessment practice that was widely embedded in Moroccan higher education before the

²⁸ Contemporary assessment scholarship offers several complementary models for operationalizing assessment validity through multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single high-stakes examination. These include programmatic assessment, in which decisions are based on the longitudinal aggregation of diverse assessment data; assessment triangulation, whereby written examinations, oral examinations, projects, presentations, and workplace-based assessments collectively support academic judgments; and assessment for learning, which combines formative and summative evidence to improve both learning and certification. Institutions may adapt these models according to disciplinary requirements, available resources, and program learning outcomes. An illustrative institutional model might involve students first completing a comprehensive end-of-year written examination. Students demonstrating satisfactory achievement would pass on the basis of this evidence, whereas those obtaining borderline results (for example, between 7.00/20 and 9.99/20, depending on institutional regulations) could be invited to a supplementary assessment designed to generate additional evidence of learning. Such supplementary assessment might combine a written component with an individual oral examination aimed at verifying conceptual understanding, analytical reasoning, and the authenticity of the student's knowledge. The final academic judgment would therefore be based on the combined evidence generated through these complementary assessment activities rather than on the outcome of a single examination. Such an approach illustrates how multiple assessment methods can simultaneously strengthen assessment validity, reinforce academic integrity, and limit oral examinations to situations where additional evidence is pedagogically justified. This illustrative model is intended solely to demonstrate how institutional assessment governance may combine multiple sources of evidence to improve the validity and defensibility of academic decisions; institutions should adapt such arrangements to their own regulatory frameworks and educational contexts. The common principle across these approaches is that no single assessment method can adequately capture the full range of students' knowledge, competencies, and professional abilities. Beyond their pedagogical advantages, oral examinations also contribute to the broader governance of assessment. By enabling examiners to verify students' conceptual understanding, reasoning processes, and the authenticity of their responses through direct interaction, they strengthen the validity of academic judgments while making technology-assisted academic misconduct more difficult. When used selectively to verify borderline results or cases where additional evidence of learning is required, oral assessment may also reduce the need for large-scale supplementary examination sessions, thereby improving institutional efficiency without compromising assessment quality.

²⁹ Oral examinations refer to assessment procedures in which students demonstrate their knowledge, reasoning, and understanding through direct verbal interaction with one or more examiners. Unlike conventional written examinations, oral assessments enable examiners to probe students' depth of understanding, request clarification, evaluate reasoning processes, and verify the authenticity of students' responses through immediate dialogue. In addition to assessing subject knowledge, they provide evidence of communication skills, critical thinking, argumentation, and professional competence. For these reasons, oral examinations continue to play an important role in many higher education systems and professional disciplines, particularly where higher-order cognitive abilities and the verification of individual learning are considered essential.

introduction of the LMD reform³⁰, while adapting it to contemporary educational and technological challenges. Oral verification may be particularly appropriate in modules characterized by high levels of technological academic misconduct, in courses assessing complex analytical or professional competencies, or when examination results raise reasonable questions regarding the authenticity of students' performance. By enabling direct interaction between students and examiners, oral assessment provides an additional source of evidence that strengthens confidence in academic judgments while reducing opportunities for technology-assisted misconduct.

Internationally, oral examinations remain an established component of university assessment in many higher education systems, particularly across continental Europe. In countries such as Italy, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland, oral examinations are frequently administered as compulsory assessments either alongside or following written examinations. In many universities and degree programs, students are required to pass both the written and oral components independently for the successful completion of a course or examination. Consequently, failure in the oral examination may result in failure of the overall assessment despite satisfactory performance in the written component, requiring students to retake the examination or, where institutional regulations so provide, repeat the course or, in some cases, the academic year.

Oral examinations are used to evaluate not only factual knowledge but also students' reasoning, analytical skills, problem-solving abilities, oral communication, interpretative capacities, and ability to articulate and defend disciplinary knowledge effectively.³¹ These international practices

³⁰ Although the present article focuses on assessment governance rather than program architecture, it is worth noting that the duration of degree programs has important implications for the quality of student learning and assessment. The current three-year Bachelor's (Licence) structure adopted under the LMD system has, in the author's view, significantly reduced the time available for disciplinary consolidation, methodological training, and the development of research competencies. This compressed structure may also contribute to difficulties in the international recognition and comparability of Moroccan Bachelor's degrees, particularly in higher education systems where undergraduate programs normally extend over four years. A four-year Bachelor's degree would provide greater opportunities for progressive knowledge acquisition and should culminate in an independent research project, as was common in the pre-LMD system. Likewise, Master's programs would benefit from a minimum duration of three years, with the final year primarily devoted to independent research under faculty supervision. Such reforms would strengthen academic preparation, promote research skills, and enhance the international competitiveness and recognition of Moroccan higher education qualifications.

³¹ Although oral examinations are particularly visible in professions such as medicine, law, and engineering because of their implications for public safety and professional competence, they are equally valuable across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. In language studies and linguistics, oral assessment enables instructors to evaluate spoken language proficiency, pronunciation, fluency, interactional competence, grammatical knowledge, syntactic and semantic analysis, discourse analysis, and the ability to explain and defend linguistic arguments spontaneously. In literature, it provides opportunities to assess close textual analysis, interpretation, critical reasoning, and the capacity to construct and defend evidence-based arguments. In communication studies,

demonstrate that oral assessment constitutes a well-established and academically recognized method of evaluating student learning, providing a valuable comparative perspective for discussions on strengthening assessment validity in Moroccan higher education.

The governance implications of this principle extend beyond the choice of assessment methods. Universities should design or redesign assessment systems according to the nature of the competencies being evaluated, the educational objectives of individual modules, and the level of assurance required for academic certification. Consequently, assessment governance should prioritize the production of credible, valid, and sufficiently robust evidence of learning rather than the uniform application of standardized examination procedures across all disciplines and learning contexts.

In essence, assessment governance should shift its central question from *"Has the student passed the examination?"* to *"Has the institution obtained sufficient, valid, and trustworthy evidence that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved?"* This reconceptualization places evidence of learning, rather than examination performance alone, at the center of academic decision-making. This principle constitutes the conceptual foundation of the governance framework developed in this study, upon which the remaining principles, academic integrity, transparency, procedural fairness, and institutional accountability, are progressively built.

4.2. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY THROUGH ASSESSMENT DESIGN

If validity constitutes the primary objective of assessment governance, academic integrity represents the principal condition under which valid assessment evidence can be generated. Assessment results can only be considered trustworthy when the institution is reasonably confident that they reflect students' own knowledge, skills, and competencies rather than unauthorized assistance, technological manipulation, or other forms of academic misconduct. Consequently, academic integrity should not be understood solely as a disciplinary issue

oral examinations are especially well suited to evaluating communication competence, rhetorical effectiveness, persuasive argumentation, media analysis, and the application of communication theories to authentic situations. Similar advantages arise in disciplines such as philosophy, history, sociology, political science, psychology, and economics, where students are expected not merely to reproduce factual knowledge but to analyze complex issues, justify interpretations, synthesize evidence, respond to counterarguments, and demonstrate independent critical judgment. More generally, oral assessment is particularly appropriate whenever intended learning outcomes include reasoning, interpretation, professional judgment, oral communication, or the ability to defend disciplinary knowledge rather than simply recall information. Consequently, the examples cited in the text are illustrative rather than exhaustive; the educational value of oral assessment depends less on the discipline itself than on the nature of the competencies and learning outcomes being assessed.

addressed through institutional sanctions after misconduct has occurred, but as a fundamental design principle that should shape the architecture of assessment itself.

Traditionally, universities have addressed academic misconduct through purely basic systems of surveillance and control. Examination regulations, invigilation procedures, plagiarism detection software, identity verification mechanisms, and disciplinary committees all contribute to protecting the integrity of assessment processes. While such measures remain necessary, the rapid evolution of generative artificial intelligence and other digital technologies has exposed important limitations of approaches that rely primarily on surveillance, detection, and disciplinary sanctions.³² As opportunities for unauthorized assistance continue to expand, institutions face increasing difficulties in distinguishing genuine student achievement from externally generated work through surveillance alone.

Assessment governance should therefore adopt a preventive rather than exclusively reactive approach.³³ Instead of concentrating institutional efforts on detecting misconduct after it occurs, assessment systems should be designed in ways that reduce opportunities for academic dishonesty while simultaneously increasing the value of authentic learning. In this perspective, assessment design becomes the first line of defense for academic integrity.

Several complementary assessment strategies may contribute to this objective. First, greater diversification of assessment methods reduces dependence on a single assessment event and limits the consequences of misconduct occurring in any individual examination. Second, authentic assessments requiring students to analyze unfamiliar situations, justify decisions, solve

³² Recent experience in Moroccan higher education suggests that academic misconduct has become increasingly diverse and technologically sophisticated. In addition to traditional forms of misconduct, such as copying from neighboring candidates, exchanging information during examinations, or using concealed notes, students may exploit a growing range of digital technologies, including programmable calculators, smartphones, smart-watches, wireless earpieces, miniature cameras, and, more recently, generative artificial intelligence capable of producing sophisticated written responses. Similar trends have been documented internationally, where advances in digital and wearable technologies have significantly complicated the detection of examination fraud (see, e.g., Lancaster & Clarke, 2016). These developments reinforce the argument that sustainable academic integrity cannot depend exclusively on surveillance and detection, but requires assessment designs that reduce opportunities and incentives for misconduct while strengthening the verification of authentic learning.

³³ Although the present study does not seek to measure perceptions of academic misconduct quantitatively, informal discussions conducted by the author with both faculty members and students reveal a noteworthy convergence of views. Faculty members generally perceive academic misconduct as having become increasingly difficult to control despite the progressive reinforcement of invigilation and disciplinary measures. Students, for their part, frequently express disapproval of cheating on ethical and educational grounds, recognizing that it ultimately undermines their own learning and professional development. Many nevertheless report feeling powerless to influence the behavior of their peers, viewing academic misconduct as a widespread phenomenon that individual students cannot effectively prevent. These observations further support the argument that sustainable academic integrity cannot rely solely on individual vigilance or punitive measures, but requires assessment systems whose design itself reduces opportunities and incentives for misconduct.

complex problems, or apply knowledge to realistic professional contexts are generally more resistant to unauthorized assistance than assessments based primarily on factual recall. Third, oral examinations or oral verification sessions may serve as effective mechanisms for confirming authorship and verifying students' understanding of written assignments, projects, dissertations, or examination scripts, particularly in situations where doubts regarding authenticity arise. Finally, the combination of written examinations, coursework, presentations, portfolios, laboratory work, practical exercises, and oral assessment enables institutions to triangulate evidence of learning, making it considerably more difficult for isolated instances of misconduct to determine certification outcomes.

This preventive conception of academic integrity does not imply that surveillance and disciplinary procedures become unnecessary. Rather, they should assume a complementary role within a broader assessment governance strategy. Institutional regulations must continue to define academic misconduct clearly, establish transparent investigative procedures, and apply sanctions consistently when violations occur. However, effective governance recognizes that no surveillance system can entirely eliminate opportunities for misconduct. Sustainable academic integrity therefore depends less on the capacity to detect every violation than on designing assessment systems in which dishonest behavior becomes both more difficult and less advantageous.

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence further reinforces the importance of this design-oriented approach. Instead of attempting to prohibit technologies whose educational and professional use is becoming increasingly widespread, universities should develop assessment practices capable of distinguishing genuine understanding from superficial content production. Assessments that require students to explain their reasoning, defend their methodological choices, integrate multiple sources of evidence, respond to follow-up questioning, or demonstrate competence through direct performance are substantially more robust than assessments that evaluate only the final written product. In this context, oral assessment regains renewed importance not as a return to traditional examination practices, but as a contemporary mechanism for verifying learning within increasingly digital educational environments.

Ultimately, academic integrity should no longer be viewed primarily as a matter of controlling student behavior but as a characteristic of well-designed assessment systems. The central question of assessment governance should therefore evolve from "*How can institutions detect cheating?*" to "*How can assessment be designed so that genuine learning becomes the most*

effective path to academic success?" By embedding integrity within assessment design itself, universities strengthen both the validity of academic judgments and the credibility of the qualifications they award.

4.3. PROPORTIONATE GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFICIENCY

Effective assessment governance should not only produce valid and trustworthy evidence of learning but should also ensure that institutional resources are used proportionately to achieve these objectives. Universities operate within finite financial, administrative, technological, and human capacities. Consequently, assessment systems should be designed to maximize educational value while minimizing unnecessary procedural complexity. Institutional efficiency should therefore be understood not as an objective that competes with educational quality, but as a condition that enables universities to sustain high-quality assessment practices over time.

In many higher education systems, assessment regulations have progressively evolved through the addition of new procedures intended to address emerging challenges, including strengthened examination security, expanded appeals mechanisms, additional administrative controls, and increasingly detailed regulatory requirements. While many of these measures are individually justifiable, their cumulative effect may produce assessment systems that become administratively burdensome without necessarily improving the validity or integrity of academic decisions. Excessive procedural complexity may consume considerable institutional resources while generating only marginal educational benefits.³⁴

Assessment governance should therefore be guided by the principle of proportionality. Regulatory interventions should be proportionate to the risks they are intended to address and should avoid creating administrative burdens that exceed their educational contribution. Not every assessment activity requires the same level of procedural control, documentation, or verification. Instead, governance mechanisms should be calibrated according to factors such as the academic stakes of the assessment, the vulnerability of the assessment method to academic misconduct, the nature of the learning outcomes being evaluated, and the potential consequences of erroneous certification decisions.

³⁴ Assessment imposes substantial demands on both students and faculty members. For students, examinations often represent periods of heightened workload and psychological pressure, particularly when several high-stakes assessments are concentrated within a short period. For instructors, the design of high-quality examinations, invigilation, grading, moderation, and feedback require considerable academic and administrative effort. These resource implications further support the importance of designing assessment systems that maximize educational value while avoiding unnecessary procedural duplication.

A proportionate approach also requires universities to reconsider the organization of assessment throughout the academic year. Rather than increasing the number of assessment events, institutions should prioritize fewer but more carefully designed assessments capable of generating richer evidence of student learning.³⁵ Well-constructed assessments that integrate higher-order reasoning, authentic problem-solving, oral verification where appropriate, and continuous evidence of learning may provide greater educational value than repeated examinations assessing similar competencies. Such an approach not only strengthens assessment validity but also reduces unnecessary pressure on students, faculty members, and administrative services.

Institutional efficiency further depends on reducing avoidable administrative processes that consume significant time without substantially improving educational outcomes.³⁶ For example, assessment systems characterized by numerous examination sessions, repeated resit examinations, and extensive post-examination administrative procedures may impose considerable organizational costs while offering limited additional assurance regarding student achievement. A governance perspective therefore encourages institutions to evaluate assessment procedures not only according to their legal compliance but also according to their demonstrable contribution to educational quality.

Digital technologies provide important opportunities for improving institutional efficiency when implemented within a coherent governance framework. Secure digital assessment platforms, automated administrative workflows, centralized examination management systems, and assessment data analytics may simplify administrative operations and facilitate evidence-based

³⁵ While examinations remain indispensable components of higher education assessment, their concentration within limited examination periods may generate considerable psychological pressure for students. Excessive reliance on high-stakes examinations can encourage short-term memorization, increase anxiety, and shift students' attention from sustained learning toward examination performance. Diversifying assessment throughout the academic year may therefore contribute not only to improved assessment validity but also to a more balanced and supportive learning environment.

³⁶ An illustrative example of proportionate assessment governance and institutional efficiency was introduced under the deanship of Professor Abdessamad Charif through the implementation of a compulsory preliminary examination registration procedure. Under this system, students intending to sit the ordinary examination are required to confirm their participation before the examination period, enabling the faculty to estimate actual attendance more accurately. This allows examination papers to be printed according to the expected number of candidates rather than the total number of students formally enrolled in the module. Previously, modules with approximately 1,000 registered students could require the printing of 1,000 examination papers even though only about 400 students ultimately attended the examination, resulting in considerable waste of paper, printing resources, staff time, and public funds. Students who do not complete the preliminary registration are normally not permitted to sit the ordinary examination but may, where justified by legitimate circumstances, be authorized to take the retake examination following administrative approval. This example illustrates how relatively simple administrative reforms can improve examination planning, reduce unnecessary expenditure, strengthen institutional efficiency, and enhance assessment governance while preserving appropriate flexibility for exceptional cases.

decision-making. However, technological innovation should remain subordinate to pedagogical objectives. Digital solutions should enhance assessment quality and governance rather than merely automate inefficient procedures or introduce additional layers of administrative complexity.

Viewed through this governance perspective, institutional efficiency should be understood as the intelligent allocation of institutional resources in support of educational quality rather than the simple reduction of costs or administrative effort. The central question of assessment governance should therefore evolve from *"How can universities administer more examinations and procedures?"* to *"How can institutional resources best support the production of valid, reliable, and educationally meaningful evidence of student learning?"* By embracing proportionate governance, universities enhance both the sustainability of their assessment systems and their capacity to fulfill their academic mission.

4.4. ENHANCING THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment governance should extend beyond ensuring valid certification and academic integrity to maximize the educational value of assessment itself. Assessment is not merely a mechanism for measuring learning outcomes at the conclusion of instruction; it also constitutes one of the most powerful influences on how, what, and why students learn.³⁷ Consequently, assessment systems should be governed not only according to their capacity to produce defensible academic decisions, but also according to their contribution to meaningful and sustained learning.

Traditional assessment systems often prioritize certification over learning. When assessment is dominated by high-stakes written examinations, students may adopt strategic learning behaviors focused primarily on memorization, short-term performance, and examination success rather than on deep understanding, critical reasoning, and the long-term development of professional competencies. While such examinations remain valuable instruments for evaluating certain

³⁷ Although examinations are often discussed primarily as instruments of certification, they also serve important educational functions. In addition to providing evidence of learning, they require students to organize their work, manage time effectively, retain and retrieve knowledge, analyze information critically, solve problems, communicate ideas clearly (particularly in oral and essay-based assessments), and perform under conditions of academic pressure. These experiences contribute to the development of transferable competencies such as critical thinking, self-regulation, resilience, and professional discipline. The objective of assessment governance should therefore not be to reduce examinations per se, but to ensure that they are proportionately designed and integrated within diversified assessment systems that maximize both their assessment validity and their educational value.

forms of knowledge, their educational impact becomes limited when they constitute the principal or exclusive basis for academic progression.

Assessment governance should therefore encourage assessment practices that promote learning throughout the educational process rather than concentrating evaluation within isolated examination periods. Continuous assessment, authentic assessment tasks, project-based learning, portfolios, practical exercises, oral presentations, and structured oral examinations each provide opportunities for students to demonstrate learning while simultaneously developing higher-order cognitive, analytical, communicative, and professional skills.³⁸ By engaging students in diverse forms of intellectual activity, these assessment methods transform assessment from a purely evaluative exercise into an integral component of the learning process.

The educational value of assessment also depends upon the quality of feedback generated through assessment activities. Assessment should not merely communicate whether students have succeeded or failed; it should provide meaningful information that enables them to understand their strengths, identify areas requiring improvement, and regulate their own learning. Assessment outcomes also provide valuable evidence for instructors, allowing them to identify common misconceptions, evaluate the effectiveness of instructional strategies, and adapt subsequent teaching accordingly. Assessment governance should therefore promote assessment systems that generate informative feedback for both students and educators, thereby supporting continuous educational improvement.

A further dimension of educational value concerns the alignment between assessment and the competencies expected of graduates in contemporary professional and social contexts. Universities increasingly seek to develop graduates capable of critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, ethical judgment, collaboration, and lifelong learning. These complex competencies cannot always be adequately evaluated through conventional written examinations alone. Assessment governance should therefore encourage assessment methods that require students to analyze unfamiliar situations, justify decisions, integrate knowledge across disciplines, communicate their reasoning, and demonstrate the practical application of what they

³⁸ Case-based, project-based, and oral forms of assessment contribute to the development and evaluation of a broad range of transferable competencies that are difficult to measure through traditional written examinations alone. These include: (1) problem-solving; (2) the use of analytical tools, whether quantitative or qualitative depending on the context; (3) decision-making in complex situations; (4) the capacity to cope with ambiguity and uncertainty; and (5) public speaking and oral communication skills. Such competencies are widely recognized as essential attributes of contemporary graduates and are particularly relevant in professionally oriented disciplines.

have learned. Such approaches strengthen both the educational relevance and the societal value of higher education qualifications.

This principle acquires particular importance in an era characterized by rapid technological change and widespread access to artificial intelligence. As information becomes increasingly accessible and AI systems become capable of generating sophisticated written content, the educational purpose of assessment should progressively shift from evaluating the reproduction of information toward evaluating understanding, reasoning, creativity, critical analysis, and the capacity to apply knowledge in complex contexts. Assessment governance should therefore encourage learning experiences that cultivate intellectual autonomy and responsible professional judgment rather than rewarding the simple reproduction of readily available information.

Accordingly, assessment governance should shift its central question from "How should learning be measured?" to "How can assessment itself become a powerful instrument for improving learning?" By recognizing assessment as an integral component of the educational process rather than merely a mechanism of certification, universities strengthen not only the quality of academic decisions but also the quality of learning they seek to promote.

The four principles proposed above should not be understood as independent or competing objectives, but as complementary and mutually reinforcing dimensions of effective assessment governance. Validity establishes the fundamental purpose of assessment by ensuring that academic decisions are based on trustworthy evidence of learning. Academic integrity safeguards the authenticity of that evidence by promoting assessment designs that minimize opportunities for misconduct while reducing excessive reliance on surveillance alone. Institutional efficiency ensures that assessment systems remain proportionate, sustainable, and capable of achieving their educational objectives without imposing unnecessary administrative burdens. Finally, enhancing the educational value of assessment recognizes that assessment should not merely certify learning but should actively contribute to its development through meaningful feedback, authentic assessment practices, and the promotion of higher-order cognitive and professional competencies.

Considered collectively, these four principles constitute an integrated governance framework that reconceptualizes assessment as a strategic institutional function rather than a collection of isolated examination procedures. Instead of evaluating assessment systems primarily according to their administrative capacity to organize examinations, enforce regulations, or produce grades,

the proposed framework encourages universities to govern assessment according to its contribution to four interdependent objectives: generating valid evidence of learning, protecting academic integrity, ensuring efficient and proportionate institutional processes, and maximizing educational impact. By balancing these dimensions within a coherent governance model, higher education institutions can strengthen the credibility of academic certification, improve the quality of student learning, and enhance public confidence in the qualifications they award. Such an integrated approach provides a conceptual foundation for rethinking assessment governance in response to the evolving pedagogical, technological, and societal challenges facing contemporary higher education.

CONCLUSION

The rapid transformation of higher education, accelerated by digital technologies and the emergence of generative artificial intelligence, has fundamentally challenged many of the assumptions upon which traditional university examination systems were built. While these technological developments have intensified concerns regarding academic misconduct, they have also exposed structural weaknesses that long predate artificial intelligence itself, including excessive reliance on high-stakes written examinations, fragmented assessment practices, procedural complexity, and the limited capacity of conventional assessment methods to provide sufficiently rich evidence of student learning. Although the Moroccan higher education system provided the empirical context for this study, many of the challenges identified are shared by universities worldwide as they seek to preserve the credibility, fairness, and educational value of academic assessment under rapidly evolving conditions.

This article has argued that responding effectively to these challenges requires moving beyond isolated procedural reforms toward a broader reconceptualization of assessment governance. Rather than treating assessment primarily as an administrative process concerned with organizing examinations, preventing misconduct, or assigning grades, universities should view assessment as a strategic institutional function concerned with the production, verification, and use of evidence of student learning. Within this perspective, the quality of assessment governance should be evaluated not by the number of examinations administered or regulations enforced, but by its capacity to generate trustworthy academic judgments while simultaneously supporting learning, protecting academic integrity, and ensuring the efficient use of institutional resources.

To support this reconceptualization, the article proposed an integrated framework for assessment governance structured around four complementary principles. The first principle establishes validity as the fundamental objective of assessment by emphasizing the production of reliable evidence of learning. The second reframes academic integrity as a consequence of assessment design rather than surveillance alone. The third introduces institutional efficiency and proportionate governance as necessary conditions for sustainable assessment systems capable of balancing educational quality with organizational capacity. The fourth recognizes that assessment should not merely certify learning but should actively contribute to its development by promoting meaningful feedback, authentic learning experiences, and higher-order competencies. Considered together, these principles provide a coherent conceptual foundation for designing assessment systems that are simultaneously more robust, more equitable, and more educationally meaningful.

Beyond its contribution to discussions of academic integrity and examination reform, this study seeks to reposition assessment governance as an emerging field of inquiry within higher education policy and institutional governance. In this respect, the article's principal contribution lies not in proposing a new assessment technique, but in advancing assessment governance as an integrative conceptual framework through which the design, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement of university assessment can be understood and guided. The challenges associated with artificial intelligence should therefore not be viewed solely as technological problems requiring improved detection mechanisms, but as catalysts encouraging universities to reconsider more fundamental questions concerning the purposes, organization, and governance of assessment itself. In this respect, the future of higher education assessment may depend less on developing increasingly sophisticated methods of detecting misconduct than on designing assessment systems that produce richer evidence of learning, reward authentic intellectual engagement, and remain resilient in increasingly complex educational environments.

The framework proposed in this article is intentionally conceptual and therefore invites further empirical investigation. Future research may examine how the four governance principles operate across different disciplinary contexts, institutional settings, and national higher education systems, as well as their implications for assessment policy, academic regulations, and quality assurance mechanisms. Comparative studies evaluating governance models across universities and countries could further refine the framework and contribute to the development of evidence-informed approaches to assessment governance.

More fundamentally, universities have reached a point at which preserving the credibility of higher education qualifications cannot depend solely upon stronger invigilation, stricter regulations, or more sophisticated technologies for detecting misconduct. The more fundamental challenge is to develop assessment systems capable of producing trustworthy evidence of learning while remaining educationally meaningful, institutionally sustainable, and socially legitimate. Reconceiving assessment through the lens of governance offers one possible pathway toward achieving these objectives. By introducing assessment governance as a coherent conceptual framework integrating validity, academic integrity, institutional efficiency, and educational value, this article contributes to the growing literature on higher education assessment while providing a foundation for future theoretical development, empirical research, and policy reform. More broadly, it seeks to support the continuing effort to ensure that higher education fulfills both its academic mission and its wider public responsibility in an era of profound technological and societal change.

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