**ANALYZING**

**THE CASES OF UT STUDENTS’ FINAL EXAMINATION RESULT**

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**Abstract**

Subtheme: Quality Assurance in Open University

The outcome of students’ learning process can be measured in many ways. One of them is through final examination at the end of each semester (UAS). Universitas Terbuka (UT) conducts UAS concurrently at every UT Regional Offices and UT branch offices overseas. This execution of UAS has been approved both nationally and internationally, as UT already has quality assurance system. UAS is categorized into two big programs: primary teacher program, and non-primary teacher program. Since the exam schedules for both programs are different, UT eventually needs to execute UAS four times in a year, twice for primary teacher program, and twice for non-primary teacher program. However, in 2016.2, UT’s Examination Center reported that there were cases (557,455 administrative cases, and 558,536 exam-rule violation cases) during UAS exam which caused the UAS score result to be withheld. This study provides qualitative descriptive analysis on the UAS cases at the UT Regional Offices in Bogor and in Bengkulu during the 2016.2 period. The investigation was carried out through document study, and by interviewing the sampling students, relevant UT staff, and UAS committee. The analysis begins with data review of the number of students’ registration, which is then followed by mapping out the number of occurrences and type of UAS cases. Next, we analyse the root cause of these UAS cases. Lastly, we discuss the solution and improvement activities as UT best practices.

Keywords: Distance Learning, Examination, Quality Assurance

1. **BACKGROUND**

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is a state institution of higher education in Indonesia which implements a distance and open learning system. UT has thousands of students who are spread all over Indonesia as well as abroad. In every semester, UT evaluates its students learning process and results through different format, such as final examination (Ujian Akhir Semester/UAS), tutorials, practic or practicum, final assignment and academic papers. The evaluation is carried out to measure students’ understanding and mastery on the subjects (Tim Penulis UT, 2016). This evaluation is in line with government regulations (Peraturan Pemerintah 19/2005, article 22 paragraph 1) which stated that learning evaluation should include cognitive, psychomotor and affective aspect based on charcteristics of each of the learning subject.

Furthermore, Purwanto (1984) stated that after completing a series of learning processes in one semester, the most important feedback expected by the students is the result of final examination. Students need the feedback not only to determine whether they have successfully passed the subjects but also to know their level of achievement throughout the course. Therefore, in UT, final examination becomes main focus of students’ academic activities. Belawati (2000) emphasizes that UAS is the primary control that defines the credibility of UT as education institutions. As consequences, ÚAS should be held and organized well.

There are number of cases where UAS results that could not be issued by UT. In the second semester of 2016 (2016.2), for example, UT Examination Center released that there were many cases (including 557,455 administrative cases and 558,536 exam-rule violation cases) during the exam that caused the exam score result to be withheld. Students, in this case, are unable to get their exam results immediately. They are indeed upset and raised their complaints to UT requesting clarifications on why they are unable to get their exam results. As consequences, UT should face and overcome students’ complaints which are obviously time-consuming. These complaints have become a quite prominent issues faced by UT and the students since 2016.2. UT staffs get frustrated over these recurring problems. The students, on the other hand, are disappointed and not satisfied with support services provided by UT. The students felt upset knowing that they have already paid or registered for the exams but receive no feedback at all. In addition, it is feared that students’ learning motivation may decline in the future. These issues indicate that there are still gaps between UT as an institution and its students’ expectations. UT procedures and policies still do not meet students’ expectations and even worse, the credibility of UT in the future may be at risk.

This report comprises the descriptive analysis study on UAS 2016.2 cases in UT regional offices Bogor and Bengkulu. This study aims at formulating best practices to anticipate and handle if the similar cases occur in the future. The report starts with the overview of UT and its regional office and followed by a brief decription of UAS as well as quality assurance. Description of number and type of examination result in 2016.2 are mapped and elaborated in Section 4 ”Findings”. In section 5 “Discussion”, the root causes of UAS cases are analysed and discussed. Lastly, suggested solutions and recommendations to anticipate and avoid the occurance of UAS cases are described in section 6 “Improvement Activities” and 7 “Conclusion”.

1. **OVERVIEW**
	1. **UniversitasTerbuka and Its Regional Offices**

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is established as 45th higher education institution in Indonesia based on government regulations (Surat Keputusan Presiden RI) No.41/1984. Its vision is to be one of a center of excellence in the world by 2020. UT has four faculties and one graduate program that offer around 46 study programs at various levels, including master, bachelor, diploma and certification program. In order to manage the courses offered by faculties and graduate program, UT classifies the courses into primary teacher program and non-primary teacher program. Primary teacher program is specially designed for elementary school teachers’ education and childhood teacher education, while non-primary teacher program includes any other courses beside primary teacher program. Since the exam schedules for both programs are different, UT eventually needs to execute final examinations (UAS) four times in a year, twice for primary teacher program and twice for non-primary teacher program. The activity of UAS of both programs are carried out in UT regional offices.

UT regional offices are the service unit providing UT services domestically and internationally. UT regional office is UT technical unit in the location where it provides various administrative and academic services. Overall, UT now has 40 regional offices which are spread over in different provinces in Indonesia. Two of them are located in Bogor and Bengkulu.

Operationally, UT regional office is responsible for organizing student examination in addition to its role as UT’s information center, registration counters, modules distributor, study group or tutorial coordinator and other technical fields. Therefore, regional office acts as UT’s extension at a very strategic position as it deals directly with the students. To execute these duties and responsibilities, regional office doesn’t work alone. It established several partnerships with public and private institutions. However, in this case, students registration, learning process and examination, are organized and executed by UT regional office, while the instruments and policies are determined by UT head office. Any student who has registered for courses is automatically registered as candidate for final examination participants.

Each of UT regional office manages its students separately. The students are located either in cities or remote areas and have diverse background of cultures, conditions, ages, life styles or habits. In primary teacher program, the students learn in group based on their city or district, while in non-primary teacher program, they normally learn individually.

UT Headquarter developed standardised policies and procedure for all activities and processes conducted by UT regional office. These policies and procedures are established to ensure the quality of services are consistent and controlled thus satisfy the customers and ensure continuous improvement. UT needs to maintain the quality by managing current available resources as well as internal processes.

* 1. **Final Examination and Quality Assurance**

Final examination (Ujian Akhir Semester, UAS) serves as the main quality control tool to maintain UT’s credibility as academic institution, since its result is the main instrument to evaluate the students’ learning progress and achivement. UT has put a high attention to final examination management service level, starting from preparing UAS activity to issuing UAS result. This commitment is not easily executed as Belawati (2000) stated that organising UAS is a very challenging activity at UT in terms of managing the students, examination schedule, as well as the examination location.

In terms of quality assurance (QA), UT has obtained both national and international accreditations. Nationally, UT has earned the accreditation from Badan Akreditasi Perguruan Tinggi (BAN-PT), and internationally, UT has been awarded the Internasional Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), Standard Agency (ISA) and ISO 9001:2008 in Distant Learning Management from SGS and SAI Global. However, Suparman dan Zuhairi (2004) explained that the QA is not an effort to create a quality, but instead, an effort to improve the quality comprehensively, sistematically, and sustainably.

The existence of the UT QA system guidelines called “*simintas*” indicates that UT already has an internal QA mechanism, whereby the implementation of QA system becomes shared responsibility of management and staffs, both at UT central and all its regional offices. The focus of this QA is to adequately provide superior services to the customers, in this case, to fulfill students’ needs for products, learning processes, and other services to support the graduates to possess the expected competencies. Superior service is the best service provided to the customers, either internal or external customers, based on service procedures and standards. This service aims to achieve customers’ satisfaction. (Pusmintas, 2011).

The success of conducting UAS in UT relies heavily on the discipline to respect and comply with standard procedure contained in the UT QA system guidelines. In “Proctor Working Guidelines at examination room”, for example, there are a number of points consisting the duties and responsibilities, including: circulating the attendance list to be signed by participants who are attending final exam; and signing the result form of examination participants (examination-sheet/Lembar-Jawaban-Ujian/LJU or examination-book/Buku-Jawaban-Ujian/BJU). The person in charge of these duties and responsibilities has to strictly adhere to the regulations.

1. **THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

The study is a qualitative descriptive analysis on the UAS cases at the UT regional offices in Bogor and Bengkulu during the period of 2016.2. The investigation was carried out by analyzing the documents and by interviewing the students, relevant UT staff, and UAS committee. The analysis begins with data review of the number of students’ registration. Registration process is done so that the students names can be officially listed as UAS participants. During the registration, a student has to submit a complete set of requested documents in order to obtain a billing and then to pay the bill through UT-appointed banks. The students are then expected to study hard by making full use of UT study materials and/or other resources in order to prepare well for the UAS. The determination in studying will help to relieve anxiety level and boost confidence in facing the UAS. Atfer UAS, the students will receive their UAS results. Some UAS results may encounter certain issues/problems. These problematic UAS cases are then mapped according to their frequency and types. Next, due to time constraint, these cases will be elaborated further but only with the data of UT Bogor alone. Then, the root cause will be investigated through a deeper study on the documents from UT Bogor and Bengkulu, and through some restricted interviews with UT staff, UAS officers and students. Lastly, it discusses on the solution and improvement activities to find UT best practices. In short, the framework of the study is as follows in ‘Fig. 1”:

Fig. 1. The Framework of the Study

UAS preparation

Registration

Learning Process

UAS Activity

UAS Result

The Cases of UAS Result

Mapping of UAS Cases (Frequencies & Types)

Analyzing UAS Cases

Interviewing UT Staff, Students, UAS Commitee

Reviewing Document

The Root Cause of UAS Cases

Solution and Improvement Activities encegahan

1. **FINDINGS**
	1. **The Number of Students and Examination Participants**

Table 1 shows the total number of UT students and UT students registered in UT regional office Bogor and Bengkulu in the period 2016.2:

Table 1. The Number of Students 2016.2

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Primary Teacher Program | Non-Primary Teacher Program | Total |
| UT at all | 216,041 | 111,121 | 327,162 |
| UT Bogor  | 5,269 | 3,854 | 9,123 |
| UT Bengkulu  | 3,965 | 4,762 | 8,727 |

Source: Sync Monitor of UT

In contrast, Table 2 shows the number of students registered as UAS participants in 2016.2 in UT Bogor and Bengkulu:

Table 2. The Number of UAS Participations 2016.2

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Primary Teacher Program | Non-Primary Teacher Program | Total |
| UT Bogor | 4,645 | 3,527 | 8,172 |
| UT Bengkulu | 3.448 | 4.223 | 7.671 |

Source: Sync Monitor of UT

Table 1 data is based on the number of bills generated by UT, while Table 2 data is based on the number of students who have fully-paid their bills and therefore automatically registered as UAS participants.

* 1. **The Cases of Final Examination Result**

UT Examination Center released data shows that there were many cases during exam in the period of 2016.2 which caused the exam score result to be withheld: 557,455 administrative cases, and 558,536 exam-rule violation cases. The cases reported by UT Bogor and UT Bengkulu in 2016.2 are categorized in the Table 3 below:

Table 3. The Number and the Types of UAS Cases 2016.2

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Case | UT Bogor | UT Bengkulu |
| Primary Teacher Program | Non-Primary Teacher Program | Total | Primary Teacher Program | Non-Primary Teacher Program | Total |
| Registration Fee | 24 | - | 24 | 10 | - | 10 |
| Joki Punishment | 41 | 19 | 60 | 102 | 182 | 284 |
| Incomplete Personal Data | 510 | - | 510 | 626 | - | 626 |
| Administration | 51 | - | 51 | 53 | - | 53 |
| Semester Package Left Behind | 6,764 | - | 6,764 | *403* | - | 403 |
| Practicum | - | 13 | 13 | *34* | 8 | 42 |
| Signature Differences | - | 10 | 10 | *19* | 51 | 70 |
| Unregistration | - | 13 | 13 | - | 37 | 37 |
| Total  | 7,390 | 55 | 7,445 | 1,247 | 278 | 1,525 |

Source: Processed internal document of UT Bogor and Bengkulu 2016.2

Table 3 shows that the cases occurred in those two UT regional offices are of similar type, both in primary teacher program and in non-primary teacher program. However, as a whole, there are more cases occurred in primary teacher program as compared to non-primary teacher program; 99,26 % in UT Bogor and 81,77 % in UT Bengkulu. To elaborate further, below is a more detailed breakdown of the cases of primary teacher program in UT Bogor, which can be considered as a representation of UT Bengkulu as well:

* + 1. *Registration Fee*: 24 cases

This refers to those cases where students who have fully-paid the Registration fee and obtained the receipt but their names were not found in UAS participants list. One possible reason for this is glitch/error in the Banking system during bill payment. Another reason is that when students are late for bill payment, but due to their valid excuses, UT still considered them for UAS eventhough the system was unable to accept late payment.

The 24 cases recorded in UT Bogor did not actually come from 24 different students, but rather only from 7 students: 5 students with 15 cases in Bogor District, 1 student with 5 cases in Bogor Town, 1 student with 4 cases in Cianjur. Each of these students were registering up to 6 subjects.

* + 1. *Joki*: 41 cases

This kind of case occurs when a student is found to have someone else to sit in the exam on behalf of him/her or when a student is found to be using any sort of communication device (e.g. mobile phone) during the UAS. In 2016.2, there were a total of 41 cases recorded in UT Bogor: 4 students committing 23 cases in Bogor District and 3 students committing 18 cases in Bogor Town. Each of these students were taking 5-6 subjects. In other words, these 41 cases were actually only due to 7 students. As per UT regulation (SK Rektor No.58 Year 2016), if a student is caught with this case in just 1 subject, then all the other subjects that the student is taking in the same semester will be automatically graded as E.

* + 1. *Incomplete Personal Data*: 510 cases

This case happens when a student does not submit all the required documents during the initial registration process. These 510 cases indeed were due to 510 different individuals: 199 students from Bogor District, 107 students from Bogor Town, 144 students from Cianjur District, 16 students from Sukabumi district and 44 students from Sukabumi Town.

* + 1. *Administration*: 51 cases

These consists of a few issues: (a) Practice score is not yet published upon deadline (38 cases); (b) different signatures are observed between the examination sheet/workbook vs. attendance list (12 cases); and (c) examination sheet was not signed by the student (1 case) or by the UAS examiner. In the case of Practice score, the subject grade will not appear on the exam result eventhough there is no problem during the exam (UAS). This is because the subject final grade is a combination of Practice score and Exam score. But, in the case of different signature or no signature at all, it is simply because the student does not follow the rule. The rule states that a student must put the same signature on his/her examination sheet/workbook and on the attendance list.

* + 1. *Semester Package Left Behind*: 6,764 cases

This issue occurs when a student does not pay tuition fee for 1 or more semester-packages. Based on the regulation of the primary teacher program, every semester-package should be taken by the student in a certain period in a consecutive way. The semester package which is not paid by the students is known as semester-package left behind. The student, in this case, will still be liable to pay the semester-package in the next semester. But, in addition, the student will still need to pay extra for the tutorial sessions which were initially provided for free. Hence, due to this increase in cost/fee, there will normaly be delay in the payment. When the payment is often delayed, the student forgets to keep his/her bill properly and then asks for the bill to be re-printed. This re-printing of billing will eventually increase the number of unfinished cases. For UT Bogor, this case has the highest occurrence out of all the cases: 6385 cases coming from Self-paying students and 379 cases from students with scholarship.

1. **DISCUSSIONS**

Issues during UAS may arise because of several reasons: students’ physical condition, how responsible and caring are the UT staff, how discipline are the examiner/proctors during the UAS, and how reliable is computer system. This starts from the UAS preparation stage (registration and studying process) until the execution of the UAS itself. UAS result really depends on the above factors.

According to UT staff, students in the Primary Teacher Program are divided into study groups. All the admininstrative stuff including subject registration is managed collectively by the leader of the study group. Hence the students have high dependency on their study group leader. This eventually causes some data inaccuracies during registration. A very contrast situation happens for the students in the non-primary teacher program. They normally come in person to register, hence, the data input is very accurate. This is further supported by Sadjati, I.M., Pertiwi,P.R., and Yuliana, R. (2011) who stated that if the students encounter difficulty in filling in the forms, there would be UT staff who would help them to rectify any potential mistakes. The accuracy of data during registration will certainly affect the accuracy of data of UAS participants.

During the study period (tutorial), there are students who still think that a good tutorial grade would guarantee a passing grade in UAS. This means that the tutors have yet to generate enough confidence in the minds of the students in facing the UAS. The students still care less of their UAS preparation, physically and mentally. In actual fact, UT regulation states that tutorial grade will contribute to the final grade only when the UAS score is more than 30%.

During the investigation of UAS cases, it was found that both students and proctor in the examination room have contributed greatly to the examination sheet error. The students may have committed the violation, and the examiner/proctor tends to ignore and let it happen. This is definitely in contrast to the idea that the exam regulations and proctor’s working guide must be strictly followed. The students expect clarity from the examiner/proctor when providing guidelines and giving instructions on how to fill in the LJU, proctors’ punctuality, proctor’s thoroughness in checking and signing the students LJU (Sadjati, I.M., Pertiwi, P.R., and Yuliana, E., 2011).

Moreover, for the many complaints issued by students and UT staffs indicated that the information or commitment to the rules and regulations of examination are still poorly understood by the examination committee and especially by the students. In such case, (Sara, D.V., Kurniawati, Y., and Tampubolon, J.K., 2009) reinforces that proctor does not understand the condition of UT students which is diverse in ages, habits, experiences, and so forth. He/she assumed that filling up one’s particular on the examination sheet is a simple task that can easily be done by the students without any assistance. (Sara, D.V., Yunus, M., and Rusyana, E., 2011). Based on the data on the administrative mishaps before and during UAS, Sembiring, G.(2009) has even explained that UAS administrative case has become a major issue in 2008.2, when there were 100,602 out of 1,993,569 (5 %) UAS sheets in UT that could not be issued within the time window.

In terms of emotion, there are students who feel anxious and panic when facing UAS. They are low in confidence level and worry that they would fail miserably. They would then start to be pragmatic and would not hesitate to commit exam-rule violations such as cheating, asking for answer from other students, even browsing for the answer on the internet via mobile phone. Niels, G.J., 2002 mentioned that students cheat because they do not have enough time to complete the assignment, they are lazy but wanting to get a good grade (IPK) without having to study hard before the exam. Rindfleisch dan Heide (in Stillerud, 2002) added that a person commits academic dishonesty because he/she believes that he/she should be able to win the competition and to control uncertainties around him/her. This bad habit (cheating) should ideally never happen, if his/her has enough preparation physically and mentally. To maintain the quality of UAS execution in UT, through SK Rektor No.58 Year 2016, UT rector has decided to enforce an academic penalty of grade E on that particular subject (for the case of cheating) and on all of the registered subjects in the same semester (for the case of Joki).

An imperfect computerized system of the UT-appointed banks has also contributed to the UAS problematic cases. Students who have paid the tuition fee may not be listed as UAS participants. This is mainly because there is an error/glitch on the computer system. In addition, if the glitch/error happens on the last day of payment period, the payment date will be delayed as it can only be processed on the next day. For this case, however, UAS grading process would still be done despite some delay.

1. **SOLUTIONS AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

In fact, UT has made various efforts to solve such error on issuing examination sheet. Indriasih (2001) suggested the improvement of proctors’ performance. Setiawati, I. (2002) suggested the improvement of certain points on the guideline. While Sudirah, et al (2005) suggested that the description, duties and responsibilities of proctors needs to be more socialized. However, even though the suggestions have been implemented, the execution is not easy and still requires a lot of attention and comprehension. Therefore, Tampubolon, J.K., and Kurniawati, Y. (2005) suggested that UT regional office intensively gives clear direction to proctors and socialize the procedure of filling up examination sheet and administration to UT students in every learning activity. For example, in new student orientation or in tutorials activities.

The campaign about the importance of accuracy and precision of the registration, tutorials, and examinations administration can be conducted in these activities, i.e. to check the accuracy and validity of proof of registration and examination participant ID card immediately upon receipt. This is to anticipate the discrepancy between real facts with the data keyed in UT database. In addition, the original form of examination sheet should be introduced and the technical steps to fill it out should be clearly explained. This explanation should not only be conveyed orally or by pictures, but also be given as on-hand experience to students. New students need to be trained to fill out the examination sheet so that they are familiar with UT system. Students can also be asked to simulate filling out their particulars on examination sheet sample provided by the tutor/course coordinator before every tutorial test. This opportunity can be deemed as a strategy for the success on the final examination. In fact, the success of UT students’ is not only determined by the ability to absorb the theoretical concepts and answer the questions, but also by performing administrative discipline and technical accuracy in taking examination (including the process of filling up the particulars on examination sheet).

This advice is raised as UT regional office has very strategic position to avoid/eliminate the activities/processes during examination implementation that does not comply with the regulation. By being ISO 9001:2000 certified, it is indicated that deviation from regulation should not occur and should be anticipated as UT regional office is considered capable of performing work procedures in accordance with standard guidelines. In other words, UT regional office is considered capable to maintain the commitment to service at UT based on the regulation, standard and ethics.

In addition, the existing system needs to be improved so as not to negatively-affect the students. From the execution point of view, there needs to be a new breakthrough solution to tackle problems coming from external factors. To ensure that the one attending the exam is the real student (and not someone who sits in for other), it was proposed that the students who is taking the exam no longer need to sign both the LJU and BJU, but to scan their fingerprints instead. Meanwhile, to avoid the use of mobile phones during the exam, each exam location may be provided with a small metal detector (although still considered too idealistic) to facilitate the examiners in ensuring the examination rooms are clear from any mobile phones. Other supporting facilities also need improvement, such as making posters or banners or circulars about things students should not do during UAS (e.g. cooperating between one another and using communication tools).

1. **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that as an institution that provides distance higher education with a vision to be a center of excellence in the world by 2020, UT should continue to improve itself and work hard to find best practices. UT needs to put a higher priority in providing excellent services in order to build and maintain its good image. UT has to be aware and understand the student’s needs and wisely responds to their complaints/issues. As the expected outcome of this effort, both UT and students will be equally satisfied: UT will be satisfied for its success in assisting the students starting from registration process until they obtain their learning results, and students will be satisfied because they receive excellent service from UT. In other words, having a better system to satisfy both UT and its students is expected in the future. This would mean that the credibility of UT is well preserved and the vision to be one of centers of excellence amongst distant higher education institutions in the world by 2020 can hopefully be realized.

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