



**UNIVERSITEIT  
GENT**

# OMBUDSOFFICE: A DIRECT IMPACT ON QA OF GHENT

## UNIVERSITY

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# OMBUDS@UGENT: A BRIEF HISTORY

- Installed in 1988
- Ombudsperson = head of educational quality assurance office
- Office: pillar of the QA (not juridical)
- Faculty ombudsperson + Faculty PhD ombudsperson

# WHAT DO WE DO? TWO TASKS

## COMPLAINTS

- Complaints/questions regarding the EEC
- Legal position of students
- ‘unfair’ situations experienced by students within the EEC framework

# WHAT DO WE DO?

## INTERNAL APPEALS

- Examination decisions
- Examination-related disciplinary decisions
- APEL-procedure
- Binding conditions for enrolment
- Refusal of enrolment
- Refusal of facilities for students with special status due to functional impairment.

# WHAT DON'T WE DO?

- Housing troubles
- Complaints about student meals
- Personal problems
- ...

# IMPACT OF OMBUDS ON EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Expertise in EEC-working group: bottlenecks, indistinctness are detected through ombuds/internal appeal
- Advising faculties regarding quality assurance process: concrete advice f.i. oral examination, ECTS-files
- Involved in writing quality reports (f.i. postgraduate programs, master theses) based on expertise
- Workshops regarding do's and don'ts as a teacher
- Annual Ombudsday for all ombudspersons at GU

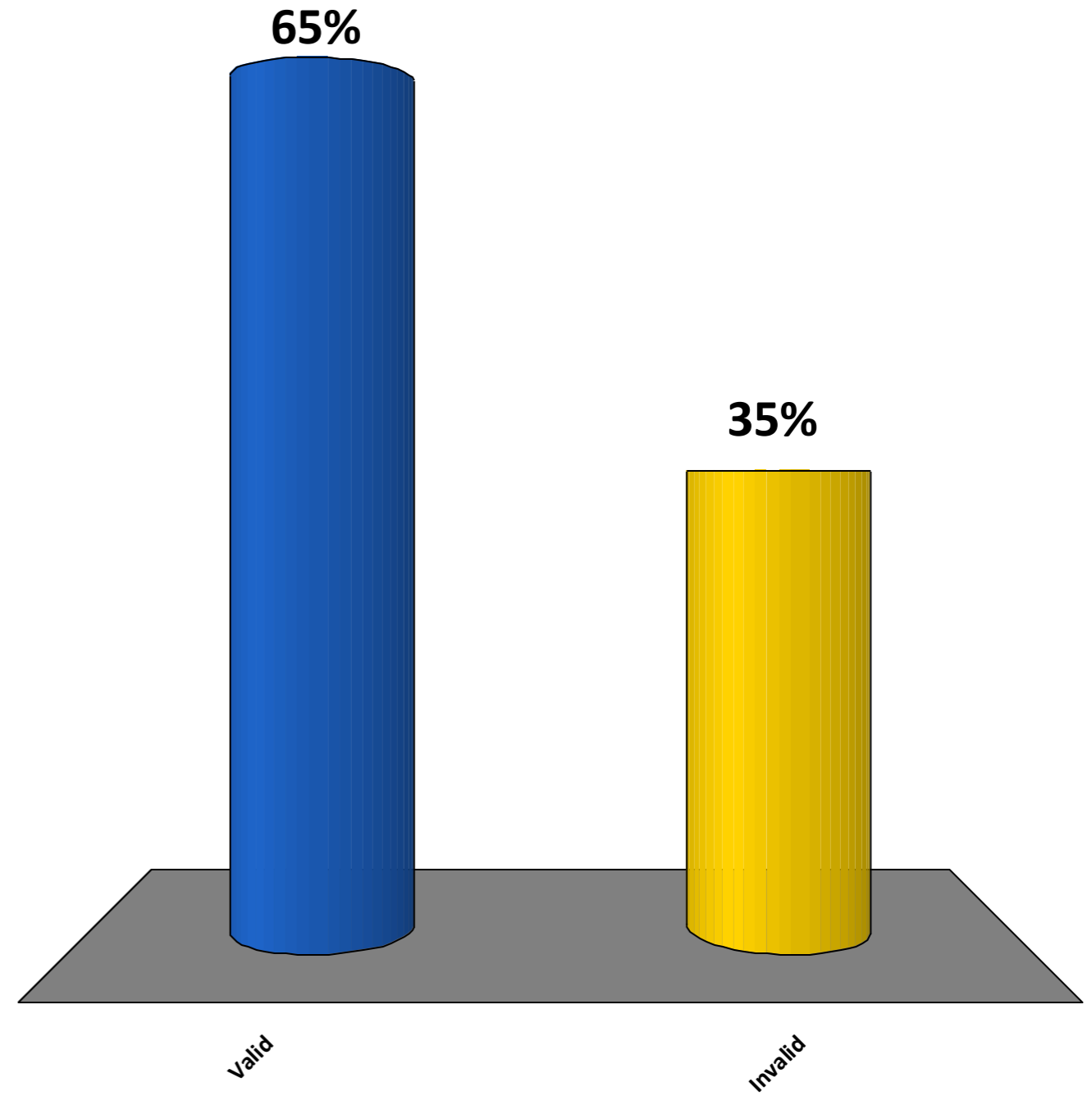
# CASE 1: APEL-PROCEDURE

- Student achieves credit at UA for statistics (3 ects)
- Ba2: comes to Ghent and wants to be exempted for the 'statistics and information course' (5 ects)
- Exemption is refused:
  - $\neq$  ECTS credits
  - Course UA not on the same level as UG course
- Correct or not?



# CASE 1: YOUR OPINION?

- ✓ A. Valid
- B. Invalid



# DECISION IAC

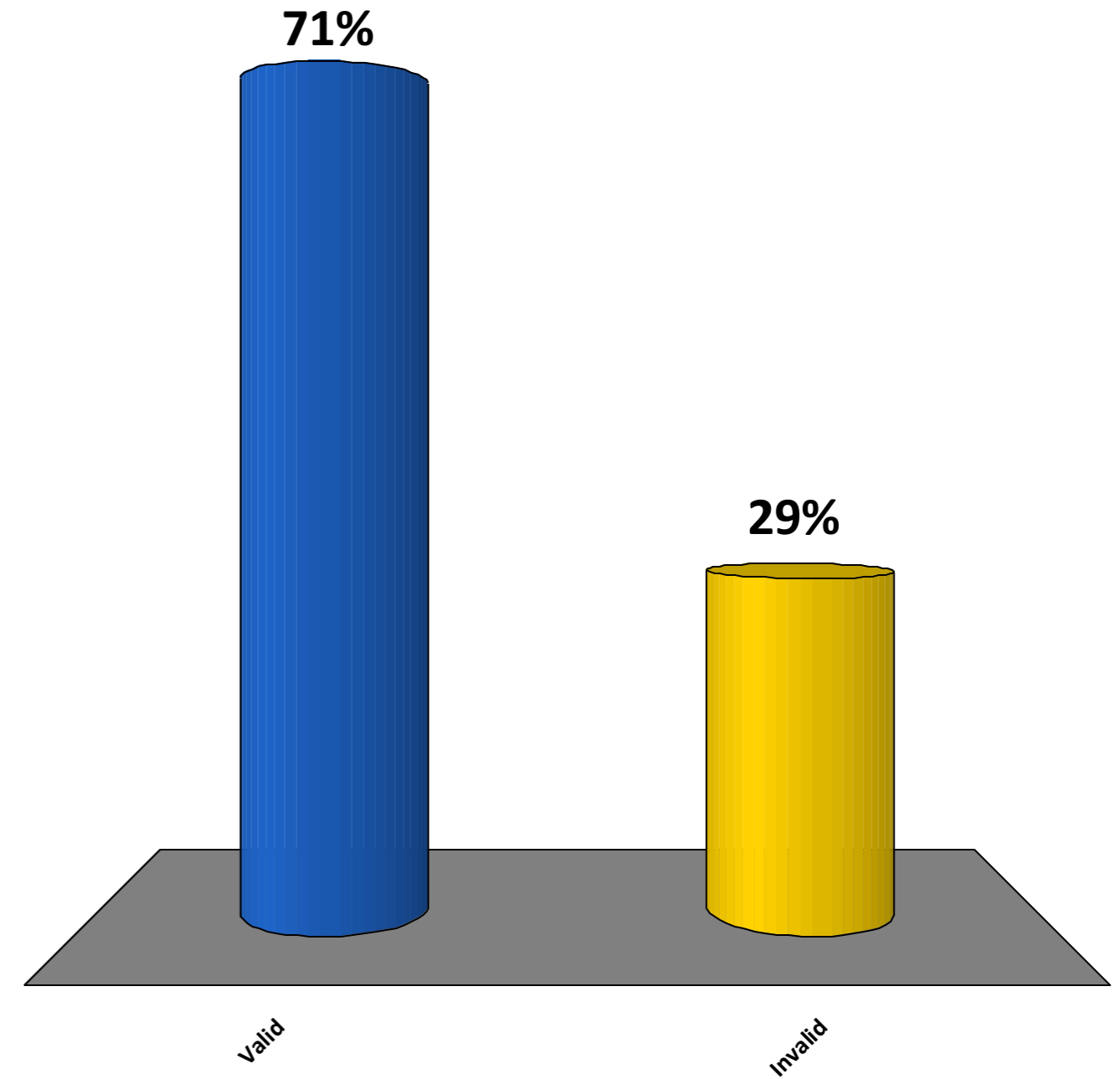
- After investigating the ECTS-file at UA and UG, the final learning outcomes were so similar that a refusal of exemption was not fair in a juridical way.
- Teacher UA same level teacher GU
- Ombuds advised the professor involved to rewrite the ECTS-file with special attention for the actual learning outcomes that are tested

# CASE 2: EVALUATION METHODS

- Students receive 6/20 grade (fail): they passed the group assignment but refused to take part in the MC-exam because it was not mentioned in the ECTS-file
- ECTS-file = part of the contract between UGent & student
- Start academic year: only announcement of changes after focusgroup of students → no official change

# CASE 2: YOUR OPINION

- A. Valid
- ✓ B. Invalid



# DECISION IAC

- Change of evaluation method was well communicated
- MC-exam added on demand of students
- Practice exam organised
- Rigid interpretation of the ECTS-file

# EXTERNAL APPEAL (BRUSSELS, GOV. ED)

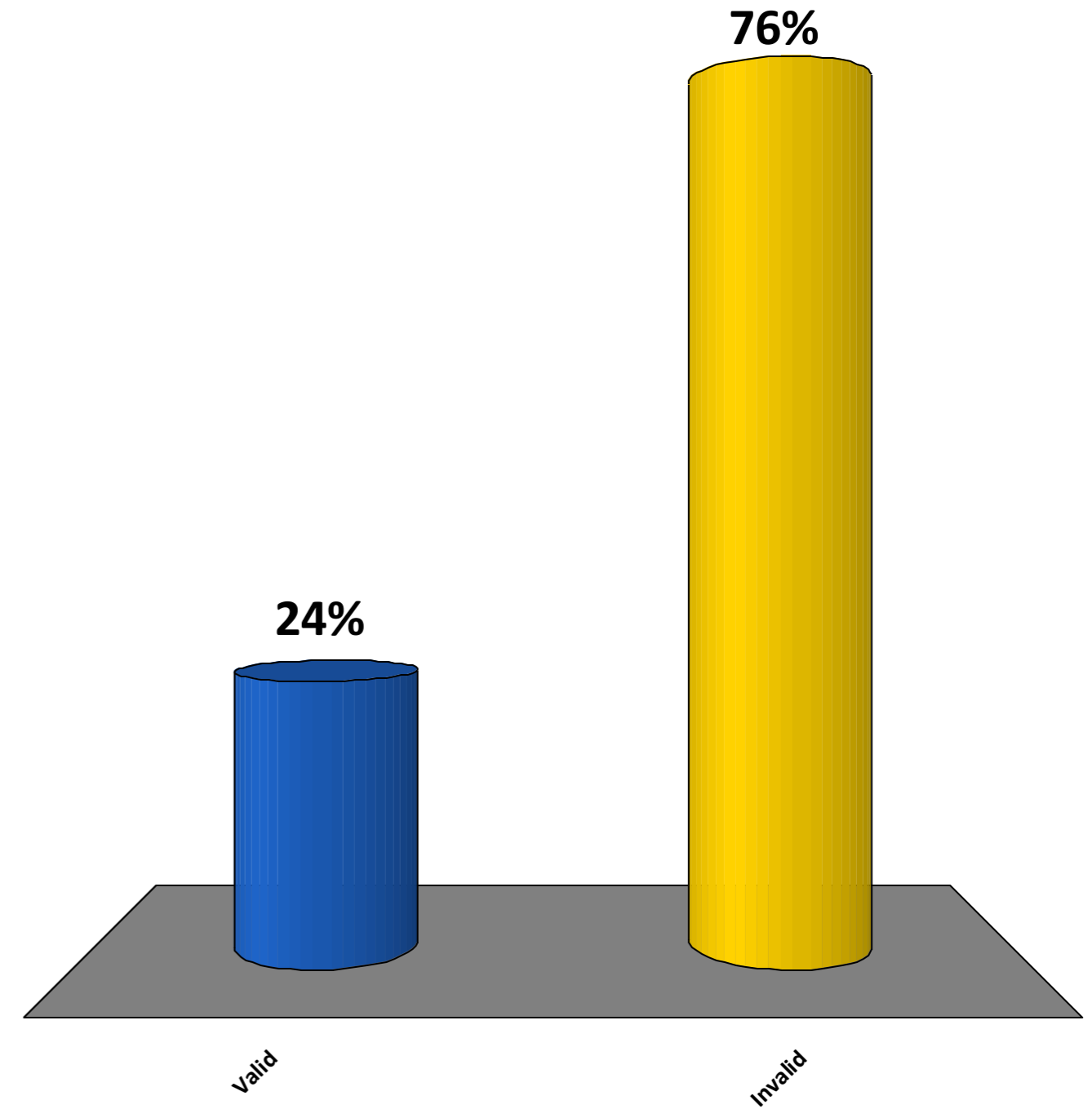
- Valid: Codex Higher Education: changes in contract can only be done by mutual agreement
- There is, in this case, no proof of mutual agreement
- Group assignment (less competencies tested) → not the decision nor choice of the students
- Only evaluation methods as mentioned in the ECTS-file are valid for exam grades
- Students went from 6 → 16, no one had retakes!

# CASE 3: FINAL COMPETENCES - DELIBERATION

- Student asks deliberation for linking programme.
- Passed all courses of the MA (inadmissable)
- Fails only one course in linking programme, several times
- Last grade: 8/20 (12 points deficit, max = 6)
- Student has full time job (requires the diploma)

# CASE 3: YOUR OPINION

- ✓ A. Valid
- B. Invalid





# DECISION IAC

A-typical decision because:

- No exceptional circumstances (job = external factor, doesn't convince/show that – internal- final competencies/course objectives have been met)
- For no other student, not even in a more favourable position with a fail grade, was made an exception
- Linking programme: specific finality: has to help students with a professional BA-degree to reach the academic scientific and disciplinary competences of an academic BA in order to start an academic MA.

→ Specific finality = conclusive argument (external appeal)

# DECISION IAC

- Student passed course B that builds on course A (fail)
  - Final competences course A and B: completely the same (B had more competences)
  - Content course A and B: completely the same
- The objectives of the linking programme were met.

# DECISION IAC

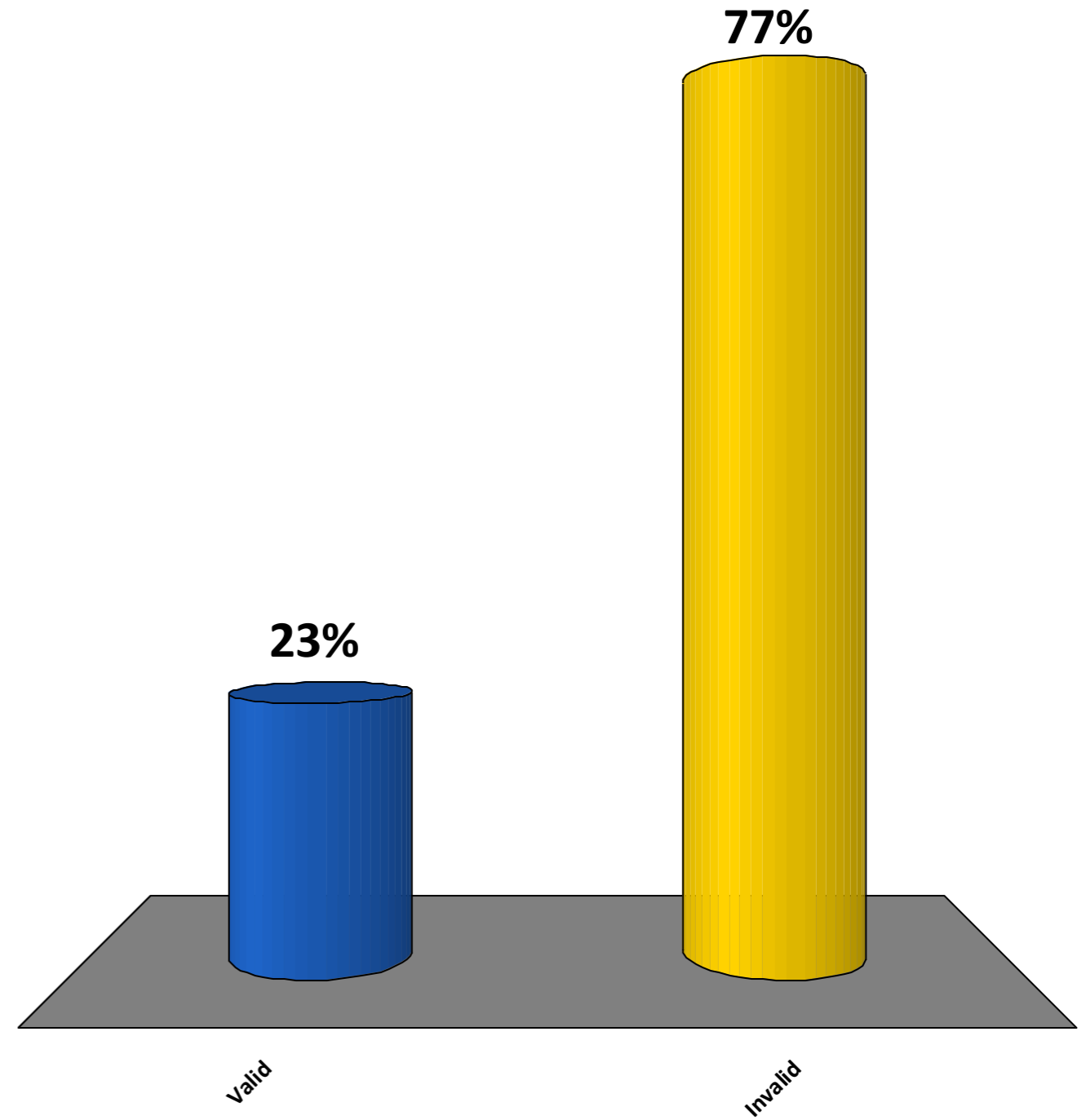
- Student passed the linking programma (despite the 8/20) but the real reason (A – B course) was deliberately not mentioned in the decision. Reason: students could skip course A or ask to pass the linking programme despite a fail grade.
- External appeal court would have overruled ‘invalid’ (final competences are similar → must be seen as acquired)
- Teacher is urged to change the ECTS-files

# CASE 4: CALCULATION OF THE EXAMINATION MARK

- Student receives 8/20 in accordance with the “calculation of the examination mark” in the ECTS-file:  
“the final grade is the sum of parts. If for one of the parts, the student scores less than 8/20, the final grade will be the lowest grade scored.”
- Partial grades: 14/20 (40%) – 7,6/20 (35%) – 11/20 (15%) en 18/20 (5%)
- Good student: 797/1000 and 0,4 short for passing the course

# CASE 4: YOUR OPINION

- ✓ A. Valid
- B. Invalid



# DECISION IAC

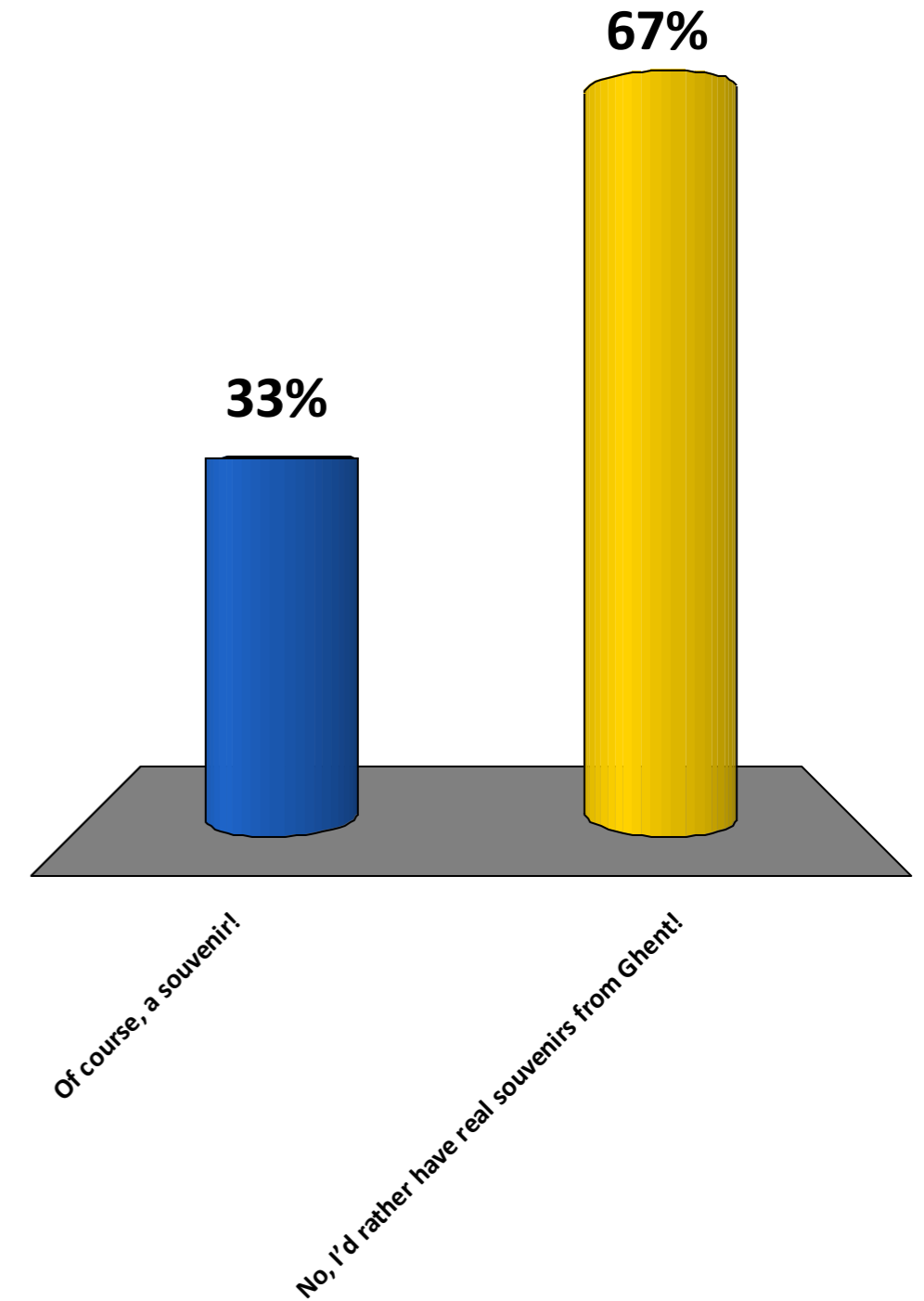
- Partial grade 7,6/20 is stern but correct
- Only fail of the student: 797/1000 is a high score for BA
- Pass = realising the final competences more than the sum of four parts.
- Only 0,4 points short (35% of total score) → 8/20 is a heavy penalty
- Decisive character small grade, four subgrades = a lot, especially because there is a penalty in each subgrade, a total grade of 797/1000 → 8/20 is unreasonable

# SOME PERSPECTIVE

- Only 'flagrant' cases used
- The student is usually not 'right'.
  - 2013-2014: **113** appeals → **21** (partly) valid (= 19%)
  - 2014-2015: **131** appeals → **41** (partly) valid (= 31%)
  - 2015-2016: **157** appeals → **45** (partly) valid (= 29%)
  - External appeal: **21** students (out of 112) → **4** valid

# DO YOU TAKE THIS GADGET HOME?

- A. Of course, a souvenir!
- ✓ B. No, I'd rather have real souvenirs from Ghent!







**THANK  
YOU  
FOR  
YOUR  
ATTENTION**

