



Basic Considerations for Online Exams

As the University moves from on-campus invigilated examinations to off-campus and online modes of assessment, the following basic considerations need to be addressed to ensure academic rigour underpins the move to online examinations. While the mode and type of assessment will likely change, the expectations for students to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes at the set standards should not alter.

This document is intended to assist staff with their decisions, to add clarity to your communications to students about expectations, and to enable equitable learning opportunities for all.

Basic considerations when replacing on-campus exams with online exams

- Provide alternative assessment for students who cannot undertake online exams (e.g. students who do not have ready access to their own computer, cannot come to the library to use a computer, do not have sufficient Wi-Fi allowance, or are on a Learning Access Plan that precludes online access). Ensure however, that the alternative is comparable.
- Ensure that the student workload is fair and equitable by:
 - Timetabling online exams to ensure exams are evenly distributed. NB however, if it is a final invigilated exam, it still falls within the purview of the Campus Registrar
 - Checking that the number of exam questions is realistic and achievable in the time allocated (i.e. do not use time pressure at this time if it is really not warranted)
 - Setting a mock exam to provide students with the opportunity to become familiar with the format of the exam, the technical requirements, and so that they have the time to make adjustments to their new online environments
 - Managing student anxiety with clear, timely and consistent communication about exam requirements
- Ensure that identified learning outcomes are assessed (as published in the course outline) in the exam, unless they have already been sufficiently assessed by earlier assessments
- Ensure that the online exam or alternative assessment task is peer reviewed (the peer reviewers need not be from the same discipline)
- Ensure that the assessment is approved by Associate Dean Learning and Teaching (or equivalent), or the Dean.

On-line timed exams

Online timed exams should be conducted in one of two ways, either as a:

1. Turnitin time-limited exam paper (open book exams), or
2. Blackboard online test.

Blackboard online tests require students to have uninterrupted internet access for the entire duration of the test. While most students will do the right thing in these instances, this type of assessment does have integrity risks.

Turnitin does not require students to have uninterrupted internet access.

Considerations for online take-home 24hr time-limited exams (open book)

The distinction made here between this type of open book and 'regular' open book exams is that the former is conducted within a relatively short window of time. In addition, the questions and the answers are uploaded to Blackboard.

Unless you are using online proctoring (such as ExamSoft), a take-home exam will usually be open book and open web

- Avoid questions which require rote learning or memorisation, or which have answers that can be easily answered via a google or Wikipedia search
- Use questions that require students to apply their knowledge through critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information – such as in scenarios and problem-based case studies
- Include a final short reflective question where the student can provide evidence of their learning against the learning outcomes identified
- Check for School conventions for expected word-count. Higher assessment weightings may require a higher word count.
- Require responses to be referenced in-text and include a reference list
- Open the exam for 24 hours to reduce students' anxiety and subsequent feelings that they need to find "help" i.e. breach academic integrity
- Advise students that course coordinators "reserve the right to ask for students for their working documents" so as to check the authenticity of when it was created and by whom
- Require submissions through Turnitin:
 - Release the exam paper and allow submissions for a specified date and time – e.g. 9am Tuesday to 9am Wednesday
 - Change the Turnitin settings to allow students to only submit once
 - See the example from the SoE (Fremantle) for the protocol to set up your online Turnitin test: ["SOE Turnitin Exams STAFF instruction"](#) and ["Turnitin Exams STUDENT instructions"](#) .

Additional considerations for online timed exams, in addition to those above

- Online timed exams should be no more than 60 - 120 minutes. This means that there may need to be two separate exam times covering part 1 and part 2
- Condense longer exams by removing questions on topics which have been previously assessed, or which ask for simple recall of facts
- Before releasing then exam ask a peer to review it
- Before the exam, publish the structure of the exam to students
- Students should be advised of who to contact with queries during the exam
- Academic staff and administrative support must be available for the duration of the exam to answer student questions and resolve technical difficulties
- Carefully investigate claims of technical difficulties together with IT and the student
- If a student experiences a technical issue the Course Coordinator will need to assess how much of the paper they have completed. It may be that the student will need to complete a different paper later. In some cases, students will be asked to submit a Special Consideration application.

Blackboard online tests:

- Are best suited for multiple choice, reordering, matching, true/false and short answer questions
- Allow adaptive release for timed exams by choosing either a:
 - a) Single specified date and time - e.g. Tuesday 9.00 to 10.00am; or
 - b) Non-specified time within a 12-hour period - e.g. a 1-hour exam
- Allow customisation to avoid cheating by choosing to:
 - Randomise the test questions (via question pools), particularly non-specified timed exams need to use question randomisation (question pools feature in Blackboard) to avoid cheating
 - Release one question at a time, so that students must answer a question before moving on to the next
- See the LTO's "[Exams – using Bb tests for Staff](#)" for instructions to set up your online test
- See the LTO's "[Exams – using Bb Tests GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS for STUDENTS](#)" and "[Exams – using Bb Tests SPECIFIC instructions for STUDENTS](#)".

Related resources:

Consider an alternative form of assessment (see the section on 'Assessment in Practice' on the LTO Webpage '[Resources and support](#)')

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