



## Guidance for digital / paperless assessment of taught courses

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<b>Contents</b>		<b>Page</b>
	Rationale for digital / paperless assessments	<b>2</b>
<b>1</b>	General concerns that are common to all forms of digital assessment	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>		

# Guidance for digital / paperless assessment of taught courses

## Rationale for digital / paperless assessments

A change from paper-based to digital assessments was being considered for some examination formats prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic necessitated a more rapid transition to the latter format than was originally planned and systems needed to be put in place quickly for remote ± proctored digital assessments, rather than the conventional exam hall/invigorated setting. There are many advantages to digital/paperless assessment, which means that a return to pre-pandemic assessment formats would be a retrograde step. However, we need to ensure that our digital assessments are reliable and robust, moving forward.

The main advantages of digital/paperless assessments are as follows:

We have embraced a 'paperless' approach to our curricula, with paper-based handouts now used infrequently. Much of the learning material is accessible in a digital format (via Learn) and students are familiar with this digital environment for their learning. This includes undertaking formative assessments online, which can be better aligned with the summative assessment experience when also delivered digitally.

Most students are using digital devices (rather than hand-written notes) for their learning and are less accustomed to spending long periods of time writing using pen and paper.

Better opportunities for timely feedback. Most annotated written scripts returned to Exams Office are not viewed by students after the examination. Thus, a huge effort on the part of

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difficult to achieve in a paper-

Scheduling of assessments should be carefully considered with communication between the relevant course team, Exams Office and LEARN team in order to minimise, where possible, the load on the cloud-based system during busy periods. Examinations should be scheduled during UK normal working hours. It is possible that international students will return to their home country during the revision period, but students should be informed that the expectation is that they return to the UK to undertake the examinations. We may consider a request to undertake remote online assessments from abroad, although the time-zone difference will need to be accepted and no dispensation will be made in terms of the timing of the examination.

Examinations should normally be time-limited once they have started and consideration given to the duration of the test period, with longer periods of assessment delivered in 'chunks' with breaks in between. Some extra time (e.g. 15 minutes) may be permitted to allow acclimation with the online environment. Where the test is 'open' for an extended period, clear guidance should be provided in terms of expectations of how much time should be spent completing the examination.

The security of questions is a concern. Online (non-proctored) delivery may release the questions into the public domain. Consideration should be given in terms of re-use of questions following delivery in an online environment. This may require more new questions being written, with less reliance on 'banked' questions. This would have advantages in terms of provision of feedback, where model answers could be released/discussed with students without security concerns.

There is an increased risk of academic misconduct (cheating or collaboration) with remote online assessments, compared with invigilated examinations. Students are expected to sign up to an "academic honesty and integrity" statement. Academic (mis)conduct of students needs to be monitored for summative assessments, either through review of proctored recordings or use of plagiarism software for submitted pieces of work.

A proctoring solution (Proctorio) is currently embedded within Moodle and should be employed for summative assessment of factual knowledge (e.g. MCQ) using the LEARN Quiz environment. Students must have a proctored formative assessment in advance, so that they can experience this online environment before any proctored



**Digital format:**

Online delivery currently via Moodle Quiz, although other software solutions should be evaluated. The examination could be either 'open-book' or proctored. The former is recommended for questions that are designed to assess problem-solving/application of knowledge rather than factual recall. Invigilated assessment accommodation should be made available for those students who require it, although there may be limitations for physical resources that on-site students are able to bring in for the open book format of examination. For summative assessment, the test should be released within a limited time window and be time limited once started. Tests should be divided into 'chunks' with breaks in between where necessary. Possible to release general feedback (shortly after the examination) and individualised feedback (after completion of marking and release of marks) to all students. For problem-solving questions of a more discursive nature it might be considered more appropriate to deliver these as in section 2.3, below.

**2.3 Long answer / Essay / Clinical & Professional Reasoning Question (CPRQ)****Traditional format:**

Invigilated exam hall delivery. Question paper provided as hard copy. Paper-based answer booklet completed by student. Scripts need to be distributed to markers (often more than one per question). Manual annotation of scripts for feedback/justification of mark. Sample marking of hard copy. Review of scripts/markings by external examiners. Scripts made available to students for feedback (particularly failing students).

**Digital format:**

Online delivery via Learn/Online Coursework Management (OCM) system as an 'open book' or 'restricted resource' assignment. After initial ID Verification using Proctorio (may not be necessary), students can access the document/task from Learn, must complete this within the designated time period and upload responses via OCM. Consideration should be given to the length of time students are expected to work on the assignment; this should be long enough to allow completion of the task, but not so long that they spend an extended period of time working on it. An advisory word count may be suggested to encourage students to provide responses that are precise and succinct. Turnitin must be reviewed for any evidence of plagiarism.

**2.4 Written research project****Traditional format:**

Students complete their research project. One draft version submitted for feedback. Final document submitted electronically via OCM. Turnitin review for plagiarism. Either single marked and sampled or double marked online via OCM. Facilitation sometimes required for discrepant marks. Written feedback provided. External examiners can review remotely via OCM.

**Digital format:**

Unchanged.

## **2.5 Viva voce examination**

### **Traditional format:**

Student undertakes a viva voce examination in the presence of two (or more) examiners.

### **Digital format:**

Student undertakes a viva voce examination in an online environment (e.g. MS Teams, Zoom) with two (or more) examiners present. Although this format gives flexibility in terms of the location of students and examiners, the default should be face-to-face examination. A compromise model, whereby only one participant is online needs careful consideration of appropriateness and should only be undertaken if justified under exceptional circumstances.

## **2.6 Assessed presentation**

### **Traditional format:**

Student (or student group) present their work using a visual aid (PowerPoint slides or poster) in the presence of two (or more) examiners. Marking rubric typically used for marking/feedback.

### **Digital format:**

Student (or student group) presents their work by sharing a visual aid (such as PowerPoint slides or poster) in an online environment (e.g. MS Teams, Zoom) with one (or more) examiners present, or students submit their work as a pre-recorded file, such as a narrated PowerPoint presentation, video recording or similar type of AV file, for subsequent marking by examiners. Marking rubric typically used for marking/feedback. The course management team should decide whether this is a suitable alternative format for assessment, based on constructive alignment with the stated learning outcomes. Alternatively, this format may be considered as a 'reasonable adjustment' if recommended by the Advice Centre for those students with Special Exam Arrangements.

## **2.7 ISF oral**

### **Traditional format:**

Students participate in a multi-mini interview style oral examination in the Dissection Room, where they are questioned around various 'props' in terms of their ability to integrate structure



## **2.8 OSCE**

### **Traditional format:**

Students must negotiate a number of OSCE stations to demonstrate a variety of clinical skills, while being observed and graded by examiners.

### **Digital format:**

Not applicable.