

FAQs about online assessment for academics

1. Academic integrity

How can I minimise the potential for academic integrity issues with take-home exams?

- » Keep the open-exam window short – 24 or 48 hours – to minimise the time for potential collusion and/or contract cheating.
- » Use Turnitin for all submissions.
- » Use multiple case studies, scenarios or question banks and randomly assign these to students.

Should all text based responses be typed so they can be run through Turnitin, i.e. rather than hand-written and scanned?

- » Yes – Using Turnitin for extended written responses is recommended to mitigate academic integrity concerns. Additionally, if possible, avoid requiring your students to hand write answers as they may have difficulty scanning and submitting these.

2. Closed-book exams online

How do I stop students from accessing reference material (such as their text book) while completing an online examination?

- » It is not possible for you to completely prevent students from accessing reference material while completing an online quiz. All exams completed online through Moodle or a take-home exam format are essentially open-book. To mitigate this, you might like to consider testing application of knowledge, rather than recall. An open-book take-home exam is one way to do that, but you could also use an open-book examination. The other means is by restricting the total length of time for the examination. In this case, it is important to clearly indicate, in the instructions, that students will need to respond quickly, and will not have time to reference materials, if they plan to complete the full examination and thus optimise their marks.

3. Connectivity

If a student has connectivity issues while completing an online exam (e.g. they are completely unable to connect, or their connection drops out midway), what arrangements should be in place?

- » It is possible to allow students who drop out of the exam, due to connectivity issues, a second attempt to allow them back in to the examination. StudyDesk must be set to allow this, in advance. If students are unable to connect, it may be necessary to offer a deferred exam. This may need to be managed on a case-by-case basis. One way to avoid this issue is to have the exam open for a 24 hour window, so that students can still complete the exam if they are unable to connect on the first attempt.

4. Exam types

I would like to convert my exam into another form of assessment but I am not sure what the options are. Can you make suggestions?

- » Four examination types are: (1) online multiple-choice and short-answer examinations; (2) open-book examinations; (3) take-home examinations; and, (4) viva voce or oral examinations. It is important to match the examination type to your discipline and the course and program learning outcomes.

5. Invigilation online

Professional requirements mean that online examinations need to be invigilated. How can I do this at USQ?

- » Invigilated exams will be approved by the Executive Dean on the recommendation of the relevant Head of School, if that form of assessment is a clear requirement for commencing, or of maintaining, professional accreditation of the Program. Staff will develop an agreed invigilation protocol and train online invigilators accordingly. Online invigilators will serve a similar function to standard invigilators, except via Zoom instead of in booked physical venues. Invigilators will be available across the full time that exams are open to students. Invigilators will look at student identification and watch and report any suspicious student activity. The session will be real-time and not recorded. Just like with standard invigilation, the students will be fully informed. USQ continues to trial the vendor system, ProctorU www.proctoru.com but testing is incomplete at this stage and would pose a risk to use for online examinations this Semester.

Academics do not have the capacity and are not trained to do online invigilation. How will USQ make this work?

- » Online invigilators will be identified among staff, and trained, including through running practice, mock exams.

What about students who have technology barriers, such as not owning webcams?

- » Equipment loans can be facilitated through the usual processes (e.g. Library Loans). If Wifi drops-out, or other problems occur, during the exam, the student can apply for a deferred/supplemental exam, using the usual processes.

Will online exams increase student cheating behaviours, despite online invigilation?

- » No system is going to catch each type of cheating behaviour. For example, there is documented sector evidence of students hiding exam answers in toilet cisterns, and accessing them during on-campus exams. If students provide a video-loop of themselves, a means of identification would be to periodically ask them to reply with a thumbs-up or a wave during the exam period.

6. Moodle quizzes

Given that we were running serious examinations and many of our examinations are now being moved online as Moodle quizzes, are we compromising rigour and discipline-based quality assurances?

- » While the Moodle tool is called Quizzes, this is no reflection on the quality or rigour. The outcome is still an examination with the same rigour dedicated to the questions, grading and outcomes. In order to reflect this rigour, USQ staff are asked to continue to use the word "examinations" rather than "quizzes."

7. Open examination periods

Can an examination through StudyDesk be made available for an extended period (e.g. 24 hours) for completion in any two hour window of the students' choice? I am concerned about regional, rural and remote students, whose internet might drop-out, or who are working in essential services and only have certain windows of time to spend on their degrees.

- » Keeping your exam open for a longer period is a good way to give students flexibility to manage other demands on their time and accommodate their access to technology. You might consider opening up an online quiz for 24 hours on the day your exam is timetabled, and allowing students to complete it in any two hour block on that day. You could also set-up the exam to allow for two attempts, in case the exam drops out due to technical issues.

8. Plan B

Given that examinations are now online, do we need a plan B for every exam?

- » It is a good idea to have alternative submission methods in mind so that you can take action if one of your students has any difficulty completing an online or take-home exam.

9. Practice exams

Do we have to provide students with an example/practice exam? When should we provide the example/practice exam?

- » Given that online exams are new to some students, it is a good idea to provide an example or practice quiz or take-home exam. It does not have to be a complete exam. Even two or three example questions (using question types which mirror those of the actual exam) in a quiz would give students an indication of what to expect. A single question on a template that will be used for the real exam would support students with preparing for a take-home exam. Provide the example far enough in advance that students will have time to look for solutions to any issues they encounter.

10. Question types

Should we take advantage of other exam question-type options in StudyDesk (e.g. drag and drop) or stick with multiple choice questions only (if that is the only option in the previous paper exam)?

- » One of the benefits of online examinations is that multiple question types can be selected, and these can be matched to suit the content and context. The only question type with automated marking are multiple choice questions.

11. Rubrics

Do I need a rubric for a take-home exam?

- » It is a good idea to use a rubric for any assessment where there is an element of academic judgement in the marking. This is often the case for extended response exams or take-home exams. Reach out for assistance to co-create rubrics and/or to see good examples, on which to base your own.

12. Splitting exams

If the Course Specifications indicated that there was to be an examination worth 40%, but that my experience leads me to believe that this will not work online, can I split the 40% into two 20% assessment items? For example, can one be an online examination and another be a project?

- » The number of assessment items and the percentage allocation must be consistent with the approved course specifications because, (a) students have already been informed of those assessment details, and (b) the number of assessment items and weighting was approved as appropriate within the course and discipline. Instead of splitting exams into multiple assessment items, the single examination might be separated into two or more parts. For example, one part might be comprised of multiple choice questions and another part of short-answer responses. Students will write the examination (both parts) in the same online sitting.

13. Student strain

I am concerned that students who are used to writing examinations in a physical venue, might be disadvantaged by the move to online. What are some of the strategies I can use to mitigate online exam stress?

- » You might consider:
 - » Using two or more types of questions, such as multiple choice and short/long answer questions.
 - » Allowing some extra time (more time than you would in a offline exam) to account for technical issues and unfamiliarity with online exams.
 - » Avoiding the requirement for students to have a printer or scanner. Students may not have access to a printer or scanner. If they need to write or draw to complete the exam, consider how you might facilitate getting that material submitted.
 - » Providing a practice exam; Moodle can be used to give students instant, automated feedback on whether their responses were correct or not, and why.

14. Student training

What training will students receive to be able to navigate the systems used for online assessments?

- » It is recommended that you identify the simplest possible solutions for online assessments to minimise the need for training. If the examined learning outcomes are content-based, then we need to avoid potential student overload, by requiring them to also focus on how they complete complex assessment systems/technologies. Providing a practice / example quiz or take home exam should also support students to complete the exam.

15. Textbook question banks

To save time can I use the textbook's question bank in the online examination?

- » This is not recommended, because textbook question banks are accessible from multiple sources and could contribute to cheating and copyright infringement.

16. Timetabling

Examinations were previously centrally time-tabled to minimise scheduling conflicts and reduce examination fatigue for students and staff. Is this still occurring?

- » Yes, examination timetabling will continue. The difference is that the examinations were in physical venues and are now online. To help students with planning for their assessment and managing the assessment load, take home exams and online exams should be due on, or take place on, the day the original exam is timetabled to occur.

USQ is working to ensure consistent University-wide responses to your important questions about online learning and online assessment. If there is unintentional conflicting information between what you hear here and through other sources, please follow the advice of your Head of School.