ONLINE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Contents

1.   Introduction

1.1   The policy and procedures set out in this document apply to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes of the University.

1.2   A consequence of the increased use of online systems for learning and teaching is the wish to undertake formative and summative assessments. It is imperative that policies and procedures for the use of online systems are robust and secure.

1.3   Compliance with BS ISO/IEC23988:2007 ensures that assured standards across both systems and practice are met. This paper aims to provide the means of applying the relevant sections of the standard. In addition, electronically delivered assessments must be compliant with appropriate legislative requirements.

1.4   These procedures primarily concern online summative assessments, where the mark or grade contributes to a module mark.

1.5   Formative assessments, which may not be time-restricted or invigilated, should follow the procedures where reasonably practicable. However, given the nature of the assessment, there is no requirement to follow the procedures in full.

2.   Exclusions

2.1   Electronic submission of examination materials, the assessment of discussion, and electronic portfolios are not covered by the document. These procedures cover only those assessments designed and set by the University, and not those set by commercially available testing software.

3.   Software

3.1   Examiners setting online assessments must be familiar with the software used to deliver the assessment, together with its advantages, limitations and relevant features.

3.2   Systems which do not provide for the reliable delivery of assessment should only be used for formative assessment.

3.3   Summative assessments should only be delivered by means of online systems that are subject to quality assurance. All systems will need to be approved in advance by the Director of Learning and Teaching.

4.   Procedures for on-line summative assessments

4.1   The Programme Director is responsible for the undertaking the following:

(i)   Notifying Planning & Academic Administration and relevant Schools at the beginning of the academic year in which the assessment is to take place.

(ii)   Completing peer and any external examiner review before forwarding the entire assessment to the relevant School at least 4 weeks before the examination date.

(iii)   Where arranging the assessment rooms:

- booking rooms. For invigilated examinations: rooms need to be booked in the February of the preceding academic year;

- checking with IT to ensure the computers are capable of delivering the assessment software;

- ensuring there are 15% more computers installed in the booked room than the expected student numbers taking the assessment to allow for last-minute machine problems;

- with IT, undertaking final hardware and room checks.

(iv)   Ensuring additional invigilation procedures relevant to online examinations are in place and that the possibility of collusion due to overlapping exam times or locations is avoided.

(v)   Testing assessments using the format to be used for the examination a minimum of three days before the examination date and informing the relevant School of any amendments necessary.

(vi)   Ensuring provision is made for any special equipment needed, e.g. accessibility aids, and informing the relevant School and the User Technology Team of the arrangements.

4.2   The responsibilities of the School are as follows:

(i)   To maintain a schedule of assessment for all stakeholders to use to ensure that:

- it takes all reasonable steps to ensure no server work is done during the time of the summative assessment.

- to enable the User Technology Team to ensure that computers in each room are checked immediately prior to examination so that any computer that is not functioning is clearly marked.

5.   Content and delivery interface between assessment content and IT delivery

5.1   The parameters of assessments to be delivered securely, (e.g. number of questions, time) must be clearly communicated to the relevant School on the pro forma included below.

6.   Candidates with disabilities

6.1   The University has a duty to anticipate disability and access issues for disabled students. The CAA systems are compliant with assistive technology (e.g. screen readers), but the needs of individual students must be considered when planning an assessment.

6.2   Examiners should consider any issues relating to candidates with disabilities. Candidates with disabilities will require reasonable adjustments to complete the assessment. These

candidates should be identified to the relevant School. Schools are to ensure provision is made for any special equipment needed, e.g. accessibility aids, and informing the relevant School and IT of the arrangements.

6.3   Where appropriate, an assessment in an alternative format is to be made available to a disabled candidate.

7.   Guidance to students

7.1   Students must be aware of the system requirements of the software where assessments are to be delivered remotely (e.g. IE6, broadband).

7.2   Programme Directors must ensure that students are familiar with the online assessment system to be used before undertaking summative assessment. This can be achieved by running a formative assessment of similar format prior to a summative assessment.

7.3   Where a student is absent from such a formative assessment, the Programme Director should ensure they receive adequate training in relevant procedures.

7.4   The following information must be given to students before an assessment takes place:

(i)   the scoring rules for individual items and the overall assessment

(ii)   the type of question items to be used

(iii)   the contribution this assessment makes to an overall module

(iv)   how the question items are selected for each assessment (all or random selection)

(v)   any time limit and whether this will appear on screen or be timed by invigilator

(vi)   any restraints on navigation between question items, or blocks of questions.

7.5   This information should normally appear within the Programme Handbook, in addition to standard assessment information.

8.   Examination or assessment papers

8.1   A small number of paper copies of an equivalent examination will be available in case of individual machine failure.

9.   Support during the examination

9.1   All invigilators should be familiar with the system, what it is delivering and be confident to handle any problems which might arise through this delivery method, for instance the correct procedures in the event of machine failure.

9.2   Invigilator Training can be carried out on request by Learning and Teaching Enhancement.

10.   Delivery of summative assessments

10.1   Summative assessments will normally be delivered by means of a secure browser that ensures candidates are cut off from other online applications, where this is appropriate to the software used. Where this is not possible, invigilation must ensure that candidates are not using applications or content that has not been approved for the examination.

10.2 Where more than one session is required, for instance where sufficient rooms are not available, assessments may deliver questions in a random order.

10.3 An identical assessment may be run in sequence to make best use of facilities and staff availability. In this instance, candidates in the first session are not permitted to leave the examination room until everyone has finished and the next group is moved into the room while the initial group leaves. This may be achieved through different entrances.

10.4 Late arrivals should be dealt with according to the Planning & Academic Administration examination procedures.

11. Responsibilities of IT

11.1 The responsibilities of IT are as follows:

(i) With Programme Director (or nominee), undertaking final hardware and room checks.

(ii) Ensuring provision is made for any special equipment needed, e.g. accessibility aids.

(iii) Providing details of a technical administrator of the examination system, or member of staff responsible for the system where using subject-specific software, as a contact during the examination. The administrator may attend for the first and last 15 minutes of any summative examination or assessment to ensure correct operation of the online assessment systems.

(iv) Taking all reasonable steps to ensure no server work is done during the time of the summative assessment.

12. Responsibility of the relevant School

12.1 Maintaining a schedule of assessment for all stakeholders to use to ensure that machines in each room are checked immediately prior to examination so that any machine not functioning is clearly marked.

12.2 Creating an extra 10% of spare accounts for invigilators where appropriate in case of difficulties logging in. Candidates using such additional accounts should sign the account form to verify that they were the user of this username and password on this occasion. Planning and Academic Administration examination procedures allow candidates to take an examination even if not on the register.

12.3 Copying immediately after the examination the results to the Programme Director, or nominee, on paper or electronic storage medium. The Programme Director is responsible for advising relevant School as to the information required before the removal of data.

12.4 Protecting assessments by a password issued to invigilators immediately before the examination and communicated to students at the start of the examination.

12.5 The Programme Director must check to ensure the data is complete before it is removed from the server. The results are normally removed from the server within 24 hours.

13. General guidelines of good practice for Online Examinations in a timetabled session

13.1 Students should enter the examination room 15 minutes before the commencement of the examination. Students should not commence the examination at exactly the same time, as this places a high load on the server. Rather, students should begin the test when they are ready within a period of 2 to 5 minutes. The testing software will ensure that, no matter when they begin the examination, all will have the same time exposure to the assessment. On early completion of an assessment, students should remain in place until all students have completed the assessment.

13.2 Where appropriate, the relevant School will provide the Programme Director with a complete printed list of expected participants and their login details (usernames and passwords).

13.3 The time limit allowed for the examination may need to be flexible to compensate for any delays (technical, emergency, etc). Additional time may be permitted for students requiring special arrangements.

13.4 IT suites should be booked for 30 minutes before the start of an assessment and after the last assessment is scheduled to be finished.

13.5 The Programme Director may wish to provide a briefing to students on the form of the assessment.

13.6 Candidates in an assessment should receive guidance when they are required to submit their final answers. This may take the form of an additional on-screen message. A timer will normally be shown on-screen to candidates.

13.7 Technical assistance should be available to candidates to ensure they can login and use any of the equipment correctly. Advice to candidates on how to navigate within the assessment should normally be permitted.

13.8 The network and server systems in use must have been load tested, in liaison with IT, at a level equal to, or greater than that expected during the assessment.

13.9 Invigilators must be briefed on the procedures, particularly in relation to the addressing of technical difficulties.

14. Guidelines for the physical room and computer environment

14.1 University computer suites will normally be used for examinations. Ensuring more computers than candidates allows for spreading out to avoid candidates seeing the neighbouring screen.

14.2 The assessment administrator present will require a computer to access any systems necessary to troubleshoot possible problems.

15. Health and safety considerations

15.1 Computers, chairs and the general assessment environment must conform to standard safe environmental guidelines (clear screen, adjustable screen, adjustable chair, good lighting and ventilation).

15.2 Candidates should be advised to take 'micro-breaks' to relax their muscles and eyes (e.g. stretch, look up at ceiling).

15.3 If the assessment lasts for longer than 90 minutes, then there must be a provision for a break away from the computer. This may require supervision of candidates during the break, although facilities such as the provision of separate tests or blocks of questions may be used.

16. Emergencies

16.1 In an emergency, the first consideration should be personal safety.

16.2 In addition to the procedures set out in *Procedures for Formal Examinations*, the following should observed:

(i) Fire alarms or emergencies requiring evacuation: The Chief Invigilator takes the decision whether to abandon the examination and to report to the Board of Examiners the circumstances or to permit a restarting of the examination. Where an examination is restarted, candidates are to be allowed the full time for the examination.

(ii) Network or power failure: Where a network or power fails within 15 minutes of the start of an examination, it may be restarted, if within a reasonable time limit, or rescheduled for a later date with the assistance of the technical support department, according to the decision of the chief invigilator. Where the network or power fails within 15 minutes of the end of an examination, providing the data has been stored, a pro-rata mark may be given by the Board of Examiners, which should receive a report of the incident from the Programme Director.

(iii) Machine failure: Where an individual machine fails, candidates may have their examination restarted by the invigilator and allowed the full time for this examination. In extreme cases, candidates should be allowed to continue on paper copy. The Board of Examiners should receive a report of the incident from the Programme Director.

17. Post-examination procedures

17.1 As soon as possible after an online examination has finished, a copy of the results must be made and transferred to a second secure location.

17.2 The assessment results must be checked, forwarded to Planning & Academic Administration and should be published to the students as appropriate.

17.3 Where appropriate, question responses should be analysed for the question quality.

(i)   How did people who did well in the exam do within this particular question?

(ii)   Were the correct answer distracters used, appropriate?

(iii)   Were any correct answers marked incorrect?

(iv)   Was the question overly easy or difficult, beyond that expected?

(v)   Mechanisms of feedback to students should be considered.

(vi)   Will they get access to their results online when they can see how they performed on individual questions?

(vii)   Can students be shown the detailed result of the test if they consult a tutor?

18.   Security of the testing interface

18.1   Summative assessments should be delivered by secure means that ensure that content or systems that are unapproved for the examination cannot be accessed. Approved templates exist for this purpose. Where this is not possible, invigilation must ensure that candidates the examination is conducted securely.

19.   Further guidance

19.1   Further guidance is available in the JISC publication, *Implementing online assessment in an emerging MLE: a generic guidance document with practical examples*.

19.2   In circumstances where Learning and Teaching Enhancement organises an invigilated assessment, the following information is required:

1.	Name of assessment and QL programme to which it applies
2.	Name of person responsible for assessment
3.	Number of questions
4.	Types of questions to be used
5.	Where the questions are to be taken from, e.g. existing question bank, electronic document
6.	Construction of the assessment, e.g. whether to be a single block or many
7.	Any time limit
8.	How students are to navigate, e.g. one question at a time, all questions delivered at once
9.	Any permitted additional resources
10.	Scoring of individual items and how final score to be calculated
11.	Whether feedback is to be given
12.	Number of students
13.	Number of assessments
14.	Times of assessments
15.	Additional files such as graphics