University of Manchester

eAssessment: Guidance and Procedures

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1. Overview

eAssessment is assessment that takes place using IT for its delivery. eAssessment may be used for formative or summative eAssessment purposes. In addition, it can be used for summative eExaminations, managed through the examinations office.

Examples of eAssessment include:

a) Assessments that use computers for only partial delivery or input of assessment information.

b) Assessments with low, medium or high stakes outcomes for summative purposes.

c) Assessments for formative purposes only.

The use of eAssessment offers potential efficiency gains, particularly for large classes. It also offers pedagogical advantages in terms of the flexibility of question design, the ability for students to practice, the provision of detailed and immediate feedback and the ability to quantitatively analyse the discriminatory value of questions. It supports the alignment of assessment with unit learning outcomes and promotes explicit marking criteria.

The eAssessment guidance and procedures outline the minimum requirements that the University expects should be met when assessing by eExamination. The requirements of this document are in addition to the university policies and regulations relating to assessment.

All assessments occurring within the University that use IT for delivery are also covered by the University's [Assessment Framework](). The Framework applies in full and requires that appropriate consideration is given to the setting, approving and External Examining of eAssessment in Schools. The Framework has been updated to include specific reference to eAssessment. However, further guidance can be sought from School and Faculty Teaching and Learning staff.

http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/assessmentframework/

Definitions for what constitutes low, medium and high stakes examinations are included in Appendix 1. A formative piece of assessment will provide no direct contribution to the final mark of the unit, while summative assessment does contribute to the final mark, either through in course work, in class examinations or final examinations.

The guidance and procedure contained within this document are based on the principles that all eAssessment offered at the University of Manchester will be reliable, fair, confidential, accurate, secure and run according to legislation and good practice in the areas of health and safety, copyright law and the provision of support for disabled students.

2. Delivery of eAssessment

eAssessment provides opportunities for developing innovative and varied assessment practices. Each Faculty has an eLearning team, who can provide advice to staff in developing their online formative and summative assessment practices. This service can be utilised to open up a wealth of University eLearning resources, not only in terms of varying assessment practice but also in reducing plagiarism.

In addition to the eLearning teams, staff considering offering eAssessments should also speak to their School Examination Officer.

3. Designing eAssessment

Experience has shown that the use of eAssessment tends to shift the academic work from post assignment (marking) to pre-assignment (design and alignment).

Your Faculty eLearning teams are available to offer advice on the development of eAssessment. Your Faculty eLearning Managers are as follows:

- Cath Dyson, Faculty of Humanities
- Alison Hamilton, Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences
- Ian Miller, Faculty of Life Sciences
- Diane Bennett, Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences

You can contact your Faculty eLearning manager at elearning@manchester.ac.uk

4. Security and Reliability of eAssessment

For medium and high stakes eAssessment, steps should be taken to confirm the identity of the person taking the assessment. This applies equally to eExaminations taken within the University and externally, via distance learning.

For medium and high stakes assessment the assessment and results must be maintained in a secure environment. This will normally include the use of Usernames and Passwords for all administrators with access to the server.

eAssessment software should restrict or monitor access to the internet at all times during the assessment.

No system is 100% reliable, however, for medium and high stakes eAssessment the highest achievable standards are required. In the event of technical problems or system failure at network level, examiners may be forced to reschedule examinations or extend submission deadlines. See sections 8 and 11-14 for further information on contingency planning.

5. Exam Irregularities, Complaints and Appeals procedures

In the event of any examination irregularity or grievance relating to eAssessment, the standard University processes apply.

http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/studentsupportdevelopment/communication/studentcomplaintsandappeals/

6. Guidance to Students

There will be an examination announcement at the start of each eExamination. Specific eAssessment announcements will be made in addition to standard university examination announcements. Candidates should be advised to take 'micro breaks', which should include stretching and looking up towards the ceiling. Examinations will be scheduled to commence from 09.45 and 14.00, during the Examinations period.

Unit Leaders should ensure that students are familiar with medium and high stakes eAssessment before it takes place. This can best be achieved by running a formative assessment in a similar format, prior to the actual examination taking place.

The following items should be made clear to students before an assessment takes place. This can be included in a variety of sources, for example, examination rubric or in a handbook or on Blackboard, prior to the assessment taking place:

    a) The number and type of questions to be used.
    b) The scoring rules for each item and overall.
    c) The contribution of this assessment to the overall unit mark.
    d) Time limitations.

e) Constraints on navigation between questions.
f) Permitted and excluded resources.
g) How feedback will be provided.
h) Details of the appeals procedure.
i) How individuals will be identified for the assessment.
j) The contingency plan due to technical failure.
k) The location in which the assessment should take place - e.g. if the student is required to sit the eAssessment at a particular on-campus computer cluster facility, this should be made clear prior to the assessment taking place.

For the purpose of eAssessment staff may feel it is necessary to use multimedia, image or text material that has the potential to cause offence to users. Examples of such material include medical images and videos including particularly graphic detail, images of human remains, graphic text describing offensive behaviour from a legal or social work perspective. While students studying the discipline may be familiar with the material, lecturers have a responsibility to:

a) Ensure students and any non subject staff (i.e. technical staff) are aware of the nature of the material.
b) Ensure students are aware that others who casually view the material may be offended by it.
c) Minimise the chances of offence by suggesting the material is viewed in specialist or private IT suites.
d) Provide guidance to students and any non subject staff (i.e. technical staff) in the form suggested below:

'This material has been prepared as an interactive teaching resource that is relevant to the academic course material. Be aware that its content is both graphic and sensitive. You must not copy or distribute the material in any way.

Please do not display it in public areas or discuss it in a way which may appear to others to be disrespectful. In university or public IT suites you should be aware that the material may be visible to other PC users and may cause offence. You should ensure that this does not occur. Sensible precautions may involve using PC suites that are dedicated to medical use, or alternatively using PCs with screens that are not overlooked.'

7. Disability and Accessibility Support

The University has a legal duty under The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to anticipate the needs of disabled students. The University's responsibility to anticipate disability and access issues applies equally to eAssessment as to any other form of assessment. The University's policy for supporting students with disabilities during the assessment process applies in full. Alternative assessment should be offered whenever it is appropriate.

http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/section b-thepracticeofassessment/studentswithdisabilities/

The Disability Support Office is available to offer advice in the assessment of students with disabilities.

8. Online submission of Coursework

The online submission of coursework should be acknowledged immediately.

The unit leader should make all reasonable attempts to ensure that anonymity is maintained throughout the submission and marking process.

The university has a range of software for online submission of eAssessment and it is recommended that advice is sought from the Faculty eLearning teams on the use of such software for eAssessment purposes and the support and training which is available.

When planning online submission, staff should consider contingencies and it would be advisable to consider the following issues:

- Is there some flexibility around the date of assignment/online submission, in the event of any technical (or other) issue which meant that the specified date could not be adhered to.
- Announcements can be placed on the MLE and via email, informing students/staff of any changes to assignment submission dates.
- You should consider an alternative local solution to online submission of coursework in the event of an unexpected issue. This could mean having an administrator to manage the assessment by email or getting students to hand in paper copies.
- For large scale summative assessment, staff are advised to discuss contingency plans with their eLearning team.
- Students should be informed of the contingency plans, prior to assessment taking place.
- For additional advice about bespoke solutions around online submission, staff should speak to their eLearning team.

9. Plagiarism

It is the responsibility of the School and Unit Leader to determine how the issue of plagiarism will be most effectively addressed where eAssessment is used. For example, whether random sampling will be employed, or whether detection software will be used. For information on the use of detection software and designing plagiarism out of eAssessment, contact your eLearning team.

Staff must understand their obligations once plagiarism has been detected and the process by which this is then dealt with. Staff can refer to the Teaching and Learning Support Office (TLSO) plagiarism website which offers guidance on the prevention and

detection of plagiarism. It also includes university guidance on how to deal with proven cases of plagiarism once they have been detected.

http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/teachinglearningassessment/assessment/section-d-theprocessofassessment/academicmalpracticeincludingplagiarism/

10. Copyright Guidance

10.1 Relevant Legislation

Section 32 of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 provides by subsection (3) that:

"Copyright is not infringed by anything done for the purposes of an examination by way of setting the questions, communicating the questions to the candidates or answering the questions.

However, this is qualified by subsection (4) thus:

"Subsection (3) does not extend to the making of a reprographic copy of a musical work for use by an examination candidate in performing the work."

References

UK Intellectual Property Office
http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/copy.htm

University of Birmingham
http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/copyright/exams.shtml

Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga_19880048_en_1.htm

10.2 Summative Assessment

Our present University interpretation is that copyright would not be infringed if a photocopy or digitised copy were used within an examination. The material could form part of the paper itself, or be issued to students as a separate item. The exception does not apply to musical works.

It should be noted that even when this exception applies, use of the work must be accompanied by a full citation of title and author except where this is impractical or otherwise impossible.

10.3 Formative Assessment

The use of copyright material in formative assessments is subject to the same guidance as for learning resources i.e. only copyright-cleared material (whether licensed or where clearance is obtained directly from the copyright holder) may be directly used. This applies to text, images and moving images. Links to publicly available materials on the

web may be provided within formative assessments, but these must always be properly credited.

10.4 Summary

The use of copyright material in summative assessment is permissible. The use of copyright material in formative assessment may be permissible. Musical works are excluded in both cases. Any other or subsequent use is excluded, including the reproduction of copyright material as part of a past paper.

11. Scheduling of eAssessment and eExaminations

eExaminations should be scheduled to start no earlier than 9.45am, to ensure sufficient time for rooms to be set up.

It is the School's responsibility to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to prevent collusion between cohorts when multiple sittings of an exam are run and that students are aware of these arrangements.

Where a programme offers different modes of study and assessment (Distance Learning and standard attendance), any eAssessment should take place at the same time or a different eAssessment should be used with the same learning outcomes. Steps should be taken to guarantee the security of the eAssessment and the identity of the student taking the eAssessment off campus.

12. Invigilation and IT Support

eExaminations must be invigilated in accordance with University and Examinations Office regulations.

The Examinations Office has overall all responsibility for the co-ordination of eExaminations. Faculty IT Services are responsible for the maintenance of the PCs, both hardware and software, in clusters which fall within their areas of responsibility for the duration of any eAssessment.

13. Pre Examination and the Assessment of students

Students sitting eAssessment for summative purposes should be given an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the software before formal assessment takes place. This could be through:

i) Access to past online examinations
ii) Creation of module specific formative tests
iii) Creation of generic school based formative tests

The School's external examiner(s) should be given access to summative eAssessment papers. This may either be in hard copy or a suitable alternative.

Owing to the specialist nature of eAssessment the unit leader (or nominated substitute) should be available during the setup and first hour of any centrally scheduled summative eAssessment. Where high-stake summative eAssessment is taking place, extra care must be taken in the set up and operation of the examination to maintain high levels of confidence in the process. The Unit Leader should be contactable for the duration of the eAssessment.

The Unit Leader is responsible for ensuring that students are aware of contingency arrangements to cover technical failure on the day of a scheduled eAssessment examination.

Schools wishing to offer students the opportunity to take high and medium stake summative eAssessment off campus must take steps to ensure the identity of the student. The identity of the person taking the eAssessment should never be questionable and University invigilation procedures should still be applied.

Where eAssessment is used for (low stake) summative assessment it is recommended that a variety of forms of assessment be used in addition to a formally invigilated summative (high stake) assessment. This will perform a 'check' on the more open forms of assessment.

14. eExamination Contingency plans

In the event of a systems failure the IT support in collaboration with Faculty IT teams, eLearning support and Examinations Office will have 1 hour to recover the eExamination, before it is abandoned.

Once an eExamination has been abandoned the Examinations Office contingency plan will be activated.

15. The eAssessment Room and Physical Environment

The physical environment needed for eAssessment must be familiar to the student and spacious. Questions could be presented to students in a random order to prevent copying. Where screens are less than 1.2 metres apart a screen filter should be applied to each monitor.

There should be a PC available for the use of IT support.

Standard University invigilation procedures apply to all (high stake) summative eAssessment.

PCs, chairs and the general assessment environment must conform to Health & safety standards. It is the responsibility of the Faculty or School 'owners' of the clusters to ensure the areas are up to standard.

10% capacity or a minimum of 2 PCs, whichever is more, must be kept aside during each examination to allow for technical failure. This is in addition to the invigilator's PC.

16. Post Examination

The unit leader should ensure that results are exported to an Excel spreadsheet to provide an alternative copy of results in the event of any post-exam technical failure.

Question responses should be analysed for the quality of the question. For example:

      a) How did people who did well in the exam do in this question?
      b) Were the correct answer distracters used appropriately?
      c) Were any correct answers marked incorrectly?
      d) Was the question easy or difficult, beyond what was expected?

Consider the most appropriate methods for feedback, based on the type of assessment that took place. Results for summative assessment should not be released to students until normal School procedures for the receipt, review and validation of marks have been undertaken.

17. Assessment of posting to discussion boards

The ability to assess the contributory role of individual students to asynchronous activity is recognised as a valid mechanism of assessment. Academic staff should ensure they are familiar with the VLE's discussion boards operation. Students must be aware, prior to the eAssessment taking place, what is being assessed. Typically a marking scheme should include an element for content and an element for contribution. The relative weightings of these components must be made clear.

Documents referenced:

1. Computer Aided Assessment Policy and Procedures, University of Dundee, Feb 2005 and September 2009.
2. Effective Practice with e-Assessment, JISC - 2004.
3. e-Assessment – Guide to effective practice, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007.

Other useful documents:

- Effective Assessment in a Digital Age, JISC – http://www.jisc.ac.uk/digiassess
- JISC online resources - http://www.jisc.ac.uk/assessresource
- JISC e-Learning programme - http://www.jisc.ac.uk/elearningprogramme

Appendix 1: Table for identifying low, medium and high stakes eAssessment

Assessment classification	Typical Activity	Level of software and hardware provision	Levels of staff support required
Low stakes	Numerical exercise, free repeats. Good quality feedback given. Progression expected, very important learning tool. In course work. May have open time period for submission. May include formative feedback.	Supported systems only as recommended by the Faculty eLearning Teams.	Single academic author.
Medium stakes	Summative, including in class assessment. Invigilated and likely to run only once. Internal setting and marking. Normally, academic staff member and students involved should have run formative or low stakes exam before this event.	Supported systems only as recommended by the Faculty eLearning Teams.	One academic staff member to be available to support the event, with technical staff support scheduled to be on duty during the assessment.
High stakes	eAssessment (including eExaminations) with significant and direct contribution to degree classification, or similar professional qualifications. Invigilated and likely to run only once. Normally, academic staff member and students involved should have run formative or low stakes exam before this event.	Supported systems only as recommended by the Faculty eLearning Teams.	One academic staff member to be available to support the event, with technical staff support scheduled to be on duty during the assessment.

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Lead contact:	Emma Hilton Wood, Teaching and Learning Manager (Quality)