

Suggestions from the [University of London](#)





internet access reduces or fails. And users make mistakes. This is all more likely to happen when users are under stress, such as at examination time. That is why students should be offered the chance for a dummy or dry-run assessment under the new conditions. Help-desks should be as well staffed as possible at examination time. Overall, more time should be allowed for the online examinations, because

...that students will know ahead of time when the paper will be released and will be able to log on at the appropriate time to receive it.

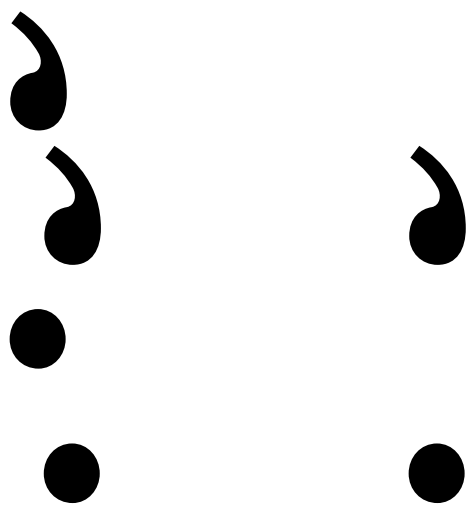
...mail system to use, automatic notification of receipt, and automatic notification that the message has been read or at any rate opened, by the student; would be a sensible proposition for the University to make. These records should of course be retained.

Many UEs allow scheduled release of assignments which could include examination papers. To reduce the extent of emails not being received Universities may want to send a prior email address check message to each candidate. This should minimise the "I didn't receive the email" problem.

Effectively who have not received the assessment paper by the specified time should have a help address to contact. That address should be able to send out another paper immediately.

Nothing can reduce the error rate to zero. If all reasonable efforts are made; and a backup system for delayed examinations is in place, as is normally the case; then the University may feel it has made all reasonable efforts.

Examining online is a business continuity issue, and requires many of the same approaches and techniques, although executed at high speed.



and practices; or might require students to solve particular problems rather than simply report information. (This is a coronavirus-specific implementation of the much wider principle that the way to drive out plagiarism in assessment is to set un-plagiarisable questions and tasks.)

Access to the internet inevitably allows access to other students, other people. It might be wise to require students, within the examination, to declare that answers are their own work, and have not been copied or obtained from other sources or individuals. But we should be realistic. We cannot totally preclude the student

Students should be instructed to prepare their answers on computers with track changes and metadata (Properties) turned on. This will make some forms of academic misbehaviour, most obviously proofreading, more readily apparent.

Using track changes and metadata, and any other such technical requirements, should be included in an assessment checklist. This could be signed/initialled by the student on their receipt of the exam paper, to certify that they have received and understood these requirements, and then again at the end, to say that the student has met them.

Students' signatures to the assessment checklist signify that the student understands that failing to meet track changes, metadata and any other requirements would have the same consequences as other examination malpractice; because failing to meet these requirements could be a cover for serious academic malpractice.

Remote examinations can still be completed by hand. The great majority of students have, or have access to, mobile phones/tablets, which include a camera. There is good free and cheap scanning software. Students could be asked to obtain and install this. They might also be advised to check that they are comfortable with its use, perhaps by scanning a document of a few pages and sending it to a colleague to check.

Universities should already have, or should now obtain, a representative and certified sample of each student's handwriting, as part of the identity check, to ensure that the script was written by the named student. This, like other precautions discussed here, is not 100% effective. Handwriting may change under examination conditions. All we can do is to take steps to discourage malpractice. At the end of the examination, students could be told to photocopy

Whichever means that students use to produce and submit their examination work, it would be reasonable to offer longer than the normal examination time; to allow for the unfamiliarity, the difference, of the task, as well as for scanning, uploading, and meeting any technical challenges. Any figure will be arbitrary, but an extension of the exam time by 50% or 100% over that originally planned would be a good starting point.

Some time limit is probably still appropriate, to maintain some comparability with conventional examinations.

Given the difficulties of taking an examination at home, where students may also have caring responsibilities and other distractions, a much longer time window, perhaps 12 or even 24 hours, may be judged appropriate.

Invigilation, to the standards achieved in a conventional examination-hall setting, is probably impossible.

Approximations are possible. Students could be required to leave their computer, tablet or mobile telephone video and audio channels open to an invigilator at the University. One or more staff will sample during the examination, and flag any concerns. This will discourage, but not entirely prevent, academic malpractice. A clear code would be required relating to the University's use of data obtained in this way.

Some commercial assessment services, referred to in a separate section, offer forms of human and AI invigilation.

It is important that candidates are securely identified. Log-ins alone are insufficient to achieve this – a username and password can be given to another person. Visual identification, as suggested above, could be used. Other remote technical solutions may be possible – your IT or learning technology team may be able to help. Again, commercial services are available, as discussed earlier.

This is not the usual issue of protecting identity online. What we are trying to guard against here is the candidate willingly allowing someone else to impersonate them, for academic gain.

Students have a range of language proficiencies. They may have taken notes in their first language rather than the language of instruction. In whatever medium answers are submitted, students should not be expected to have a higher standard of written English than is required for admission to the course.

We have sought to identify some important issues, and some approaches to resolving them. There will be other issues, and other approaches to dealing with them.



We hope that this guidance will be valuable. These are stressful times. But a scholarly, professional and humane approach to the issues and practices will help, along with a willingness to innovate.

We are well short of trying to achieve perfection here. Good enough is good enough.

We need to feel confident that we have done all that we reasonably can in the circumstances, and be able to defend the decisions we have taken and the methods we have used. And learn from them, when the dust has settled. We may well learn things which have application in calmer times.

We shall value receiving your comments, and hearing about your