



# Conducting Remote Oral Assessments

## Remote oral assessments

In a remote oral assessment (ROA), students should be able to demonstrate how they have achieved the learning outcomes of a module or programme by articulating their knowledge and its application. ROAs also enable assessors to 'delve deeper' into student understanding and values. ROA implementation implies the use of technological tools such as Skype/Zoom and/or virtual learning environments (VLEs), but this is not prescriptive. It is imperative to note that any oral assessment should require a comparable effort for a typical student as that of a more traditional assessment.

[https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/resources/resources\\_a\\_z/assessment\\_workload/](https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/resources/resources_a_z/assessment_workload/)

This document sets out considerations for academics to bear in mind when conducting remote oral assessments as an alternative to in-person written or practical examinations. This includes consideration of whether and how existing assessment practices be adapted or re-purposed for ROA use in a way that is academically and pedagogically sound. There are oral assessment techniques already in use in Trinity, which can readily adapted for remote use:

1. **Presentations on a prepared topic:** individually or as a group project (can be recorded as a video clip/podcast/vodcast, submitted digitally).
2. **Interviews to confirm mastery of a subject area,** e.g. to confirm authorship of a written paper/project, a short interview (viva) is often used.
3. **Practical Applications:** such as the 'OSCE' (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) in Nursing or Medicine where the student moves from one simulated patient to another and is questioned about diagnoses and recommended action.

## Consider the following when preparing and conducting ROAs:

1. **Challenges for Students:** When transitioning to ROAs, consider that students may:
  - a. be unfamiliar with the format (find it more stressful than a written exam).
  - b. find it challenging to express themselves verbally, especially those who do not have English as their first language.
  - c. be concerned by the lack of anonymity (e.g. risk of assessor bias).
2. **Learning outcomes (LOs):** Have students been able to demonstrate the achievement of LOs elsewhere in the module or programme? If so, does an additional assessment need to take place?
3. **Repurposing written exam questions:** Can existing assessment questions already preapproved by external examiners be transposed to a ROA model?  
[https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/resources/resources\\_a\\_z/assessment/](https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/resources/resources_a_z/assessment/)
4. **Resources:** What supporting resources, if any, should be produced by staff/students to facilitate an oral assessment; e.g. images/graphs/screenshots to support/stimulate discussion?
5. **Rubrics:** Can existing rubrics/assessment criteria be used/adapted for the transition to oral assessment?



6. **Access and Technology:** Identify any potential technical issues in advance to support the ROA, including access to preferred VLE platforms and Skype/Zoom etc.
7. **Communication:** Ensure all changes to assessment procedures have been clearly communicated to staff and students with clear instructions (for a shared understanding), including:
  - a. *The content to be covered:* the LOs to be addressed and the related course material.
  - b. *The process/procedures:* provide clear guidelines on how the ROA will be conducted; i.e. the nature of the task.
8. **Choice:** If using ROA, consider providing a choice of topics/questions for students to select at the outset.
9. **Provide Structure:** Structure the questions appropriately using a combination of general, probing, prompting and challenging questions:
  - a. *General questions such as:* How do you think you did?
  - b. *Probing questions such as:* How did you know that? What method did you use to arrive at that conclusion?
  - c. *Prompting questions such as:* Remember the experiment on xx? What do you think this relates to?
  - d. *Challenging questions such as:* Can you justify your approach?
10. **Data Storage:** Consider whether the ROA is to be pre-recorded or 'live'. Ensure compliance with relevant GDPR issues around data storage and to reduce email/data burden on individual academics/School.

### Remote Assessment Checklist:

- Does the ROA enable students to demonstrate achievement of the required LOs?
- Has the re-design of existing assessment for an ROA been sized appropriately to module ECTS weighting? e.g. a 10 minute oral exam may be considered to be the equivalent of a 2000 word essay.
- Have existing assessment criteria (e.g. rubrics) been adapted to the ROA?
- Have students been informed of any/all changes in assessment practice?
- Is there a clear and comprehensive set of instructions available to all students and staff about what is expected in the ROA format?
- Has an opportunity been provided for students to disclose where they have difficulty/ies engaging with the ROA (e.g. around technological access?)
- Has due care been taken around the secure recording and storage of an ROA? - Have any concerns around academic integrity been addressed?

This resource has been developed in light of the materials contributing to the design of the Trinity Assessment Framework:

[https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/resources/resources\\_a\\_z/Trinity\\_education\\_project/](https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/resources/resources_a_z/Trinity_education_project/)





For further reading on how to conduct oral assessments see  
[https://ar.cetl.hku.hk/am\\_orals.htm#1](https://ar.cetl.hku.hk/am_orals.htm#1)

This document is not a statement of formal university policy, but a teaching and learning resource written from a pedagogical perspective. It is not intended to be prescriptive.

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