

Guidelines for conducting Real Time Online Exams

Version 1.1

Please check [here](#) for the most up-to-date version of this document

This guidance is for undergraduate exams.

Assessments through Blackboard

Academic Registry has scheduled all assessments (i.e., real time online exams, take home offline exams <24 hrs and >24 hrs, and assignments). These exams have no invigilation service.

While the School is responsible for the conduct of their assessments, the Academic Registry is developing a plan to provide each School with optional support during each real time exam session through its invigilator network. Further details to follow.

Real Time Online Exams through Blackboard

Students will have an extra ten minutes of time per hour for these exams; i.e. students will now have 3hrs and 30 minutes to complete a 3-hour paper.

All exams have been scheduled to commence at 12:30, with students invited to set themselves up for the exam from 12:00. The exam paper is to be made available in Blackboard Learn and students will either directly enter or upload their answers into Blackboard.

There are additional tasks and processes that the School must undertake before, during and after a real-time online exam which will require careful planning, resourcing and allocation of responsibilities.

What you need to do for the successful conduct on the Real Time Online Exam

Schools are advised that there are logistical and technical activities and challenges to running real-time online exams. Schools need to have prepared and have the School admin / support staff available to:

- **In the week before**
 - Create or add the Online Exam in Blackboard Learn but ensure that it's hidden from students.
 - Note it is possible to password protect the test in Blackboard so students cannot see the test. This can be useful to allow academics to view and trial the test in advance of the scheduled exam. If using this feature, students need to be given the password at the start of the scheduled exam or it can be removed;
 - Add a link to the academic honour code text to the Blackboard Test / Assignment instructions stating that students have read and agree to the conditions before they connect to the test – IT Services will advise how to do this. Please see: <https://www.tcd.ie/itservices/working-remotely/online-assessment/staff>;
 - Set the related Module Content to be unavailable from 30 minutes before the start of the assessment
 - Ensure that everyone in the School involved in supporting the Online Exam has an account set up in Blackboard and can access it.

- Setup the procedure so School staff supporting the exam can communicate with each other before, during and after the exam;
 - Guidance on how to do this will be available on the 'Online Assessment Summer 2020 Staff Guide' webpage (<https://www.tcd.ie/itservices/working-remotely/online-assessment/staff/>).
 - Complete a dry run mandatory practice exam with the students, support staff and module instructor(s) if possible. This dry run will help flag issues to address before the actual exam to avoid delays on the exam day and permit remediation actions to be taken.
 - Do not use the actual exam submission links for this test run!
 - Students can familiarise themselves with the setup, check Blackboard access, test exam settings, practice file uploads, practice using any accessibility tools;
 - IT Services will be providing mock exams so that students can familiarise themselves with the different assessment methods in Blackboard.
 - Check that the exam is not visible, but the module content remains available;
 - Schools should consider how they will communicate with students on the day of and during the exam and advise students of the procedure to make enquiries during the exam or to report any technical issues that may arise;
 - Communicate all exam specific information with the students as per the guideline below.
- **30 Minutes Before**
 - If students are not allowed access course materials during the exam, you can make some folders unavailable but make sure that students can still access the folder containing the required assessment files and links
 - Ensure that the exam is still hidden in Blackboard. It is possible to password protect the exam (see above);
 - Check in with support staff and module instructors to ensure everyone is ready for the exam;
 - Use Blackboard Module messages to communicate with students;
 - School support / admin staff or a module instructor will need to be on standby to publish the exam at the designated start time.
 - **Exam Start time**
 - Release the exam to students at the designated exam start time;
 - For modules with hundreds of students taking the exam, make the exam available several minutes before the exam start time to avoid sudden increase of network traffic in Blackboard at the beginning of the exam.
 - **During the Exam**
 - Monitor the progress of student submissions within Blackboard;
 - Monitor, record and manage any technical issues as they arise during the exam;
 - Module lecturers need to be on standby for the duration of the assessment who can be contacted and available to provide an immediate answer to all students in the event that any student has questions about the exam itself;

- Direct any questions about the exam paper to the module lecturers for immediate feedback for the students.
- **After the Exam**
 - Close the exam in Blackboard at the allotted time;
 - Monitor the upload of answer submissions;
 - Manage accommodations for students with disabilities.
 - Shortly after the exam is over, the School admin / support staff should check the Gradebook in Blackboard against the attendee list to ensure that all attending students submitted their exams.

Provide Student Assessment Specific information and General Guidelines at least a week before the scheduled exam

Students should receive a reminder email from their School one week before their scheduled exam to remind them of exam logistics, exam details, and general exam rules. The email should include details of the following:

- Exam logistics:
 - The date, start time and end time of their exam;
 - The means of accessing the exam – the folder location in Blackboard and the method of navigating to it;
 - Remind students outside Ireland to be aware of the time zone difference with Irish time;
 - Accommodations for students with disabilities.
- Exam details:
 - Topics that will be covered in the exam;
 - Question types (I.e. MCQ, Essay, Calculations, etc.);
 - Any special Blackboard settings they should know about;
 - The number of sections in the exam, the grade distribution and the time limit for each part;
 - Any breaks in the exam;
 - The procedure to sign the College Regulations for Exams and any other procedures for Accredited bodies.
- Students should also be sent a copy of the Real Time Online Exam Guide (which will be made available to Schools and students) will explain :
 - The minimum device requirements for the exam;
 - The requirement to have email to submit the Assessment Honesty Declaration and any other approved means to contact the University / School during the Assessment period;
 - Software that should be installed on their devices and how to download/install;
 - That:
 - A reliable Internet connection is a necessity. Students should ensure that they have a location with a minimum consistent connection speed of 3Mbps – upload and download speeds; The guide will explain ways to check broadband performance.
 - The student’s physical location should have minimal distractions for the duration of the exam;

- The student's physical location (desk) should be tidy and clear of all notes and other material except for items allowed for the purpose of taking the exam, e.g. a calculator;
 - Other items required or allowed in the exam (e.g., calculator and/or rough papers for calculations, rulers, pencil/pen and answer papers for hand-written exams, student ID for identity checking, etc.);
 - A reminder that communication is not allowed with anyone during the exam;
 - Plagiarism checking will be performed for all long essay answers – i.e. essays uploaded using Blackboard Assignment Tool or Turnitin (from within Blackboard);
- Other reminders
 - There is no capacity for students having a delayed start because of the need for security measures. Students who cannot connect must immediately email the School support staff to receive help/ organise alternate arrangements;
 - To only upload in the agreed and supported file formats:
 - ➔ For long essay computer based exams, where students are typing their answers, that students are typing these answers directly into an MS Word pro-forma answer booklet provided with the exam. (Students should not be asked to type long essay answers directly into Blackboard.) The student will upload the pro-forma answer booklet with their essays at the end of the exam;
 - ➔ For handwritten exams, where students are handwriting answers, drawing diagrams, writing formula and equations, how students need to take photographs of this material, copy it into an answer booklet and upload it to Blackboard. (Schools should provide students with an MS Word pro-forma answer booklet for this purpose. The answer booklet should clearly highlight the place where students need to paste their uploaded photos for each question.) As this may take additional time, identify particular exams or students where this may be an issue and adjust submission times accordingly.
 - ➔ For students writing and submitting computer code, zip the files before upload, see supported file types:
 - https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Assignments/Supported_File_Types
 - Policy of late exam submissions (if any);
 - Make sure the assignment is submitted, drafted assignments will not be graded.
- Key reminders when using Blackboard Quizzes:
 - Avoid taking the quiz with multiple browsers;
 - The timer will not pause if students exit the test;
 - Instructors need to decide if they want the quiz to auto submit once time is up or provide students with extra time to manually submit;
 - If students are taking quizzes without auto-submit they need to make sure they submit their answers by clicking the "Submit" button before the time is up. When time is up, all selected answers will be automatically saved and submitted;
 - Add instructions into the Blackboard Assignments/Quizzes to remind students of the requirements before the exam starts.

1.1 Tasks during the scheduled online exam

The following tasks should be performed by School admin / support staff during the scheduled exam:

- Follow the procedure for dealing with student queries and ensure that this is actively monitored during the exam;
- If a student has a question about their examination paper, the examiner should be contacted immediately. It is advisable for Schools to have a contingency plan in place in the event that an examiner is not contactable. School support / admin staff should not advise on the meaning or interpretation of a question.

1.2 Tasks to assist students in submitting the online exam

The following tasks should be performed at the end of the scheduled exam to assist students in submitting their online exam:

- For exams in **Blackboard Assignments OR Turnitin in Blackboard**
 - Give students extra time to upload their MS Word attachments to Blackboard Assignments, or to submit hand-written exams to Blackboard Assignments;
 - Be prepared to give an assessment an exception of extra time to students that are having connectivity issues or if there is a system performance problem.
 - Remember: for handwritten exams, students will most likely need to use their phone to take pictures of their handwritten work, copy these photos to the provided pro-forma answer booklet and upload the booklet. Students should be advised to ensure that all photos are in focus, taken in good light, and fully capture all their work;
 - Remind students to submit their answers to Blackboard Assignments properly. Students should receive an email to indicate that their exam has been successfully uploaded; A trial of uploading files can be made during the test exam in the days preceding the exam. Students submitting the Academic Honesty Declaration may be used to trial uploads at this time.
 - A module instructor or School support staff should check that the submissions are in Blackboard.
- For MCQ / SQA exams in **Blackboard Test Tool Quizzes**
 - Remind students to submit their Blackboard Quiz properly.
 - Check the submissions in Blackboard Gradebook:
 - This task should be carried out by Module Owners or local School admin / support staff.
- **Alternatives:** Schools need a procedure to accept assignment submissions via email as proof of submission as a fall-back if there is an issue uploading or accessing Blackboard during the exam.