

DBS

Dublin
Business
School



QUALITY ASSURANCE HANDBOOK

2019 Edition – Part B

Section 5: Assessment Regulations (EXTRACT)

2019

5.10 Online Exams Policy

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5.10.1 Policy Overview

This policy lays out DBS principles and approaches for conducting examinations in an online environment.

5.10.2 Policy Context

In March 2020 DBS put all assessment, including terminal examinations, online, as a direct response to COVID-19 and the resulting closure of the campus to students in line with Irish Government requirements and health and safety advice nationally and internationally. Temporary policies for this were approved through Academic Board as a contingency and close monitoring was carried out over the course of the academic year. The continued uncertain environment, as well as the success of online exams from a student outcomes perspective, has made it desirable for DBS to continue with online exams and further formalise the process. This policy lays out the associated considerations to ensure the integrity of examinations and assessments, student experience and supports.

5.10.3 Policy Scope

Online exams are defined as exams that take place remotely with learners logging into a platform (VLE or proctoring platform) to access and sit their exam and upload their completed answers.

This policy relates to all formal examinations which would normally be conducted under the remit of the DBS Exams Office, for QQI awards, Kaplan Professional Awards and DBS Diplomas. It does not apply to in-class tests or other continuous assessments which are usually managed by the individual lecturer. This policy may, however, *inform* approaches to online in-class tests and CAs.

5.10.4 Overarching Considerations

In carrying out examinations in the online environment, the following core principles apply:

1. Assessments should be compliant with the assessment strategy as detailed in approved programme and module documentation.
2. The integrity of assessment and, accordingly, learning outcomes, must be preserved.
3. Students should not be materially advantaged or disadvantaged by the online environment.

5.10.5 Policy Statement

Assessment Format

Exams deployed in the online environment will be consistent with the assessment strategy as laid out in the approved programme documentation. Where an assessment is considered to be difficult to deploy in the online environment, i.e. the lecturer considers it is not possible to design a suitable online exam that adequately demonstrates the achievement of learning outcomes, the matter will be referred to the Registrar's Office for review of acceptable alternatives under the scope of the validated programme/module. Such alternatives should be proposed by the lecturer.

Otherwise, exam papers for online exams should be developed in the same format as 'traditional' papers; i.e. the level, scope and structure (number of questions, time allowed and compulsory and choice questions) should be consistent with past papers or sample papers provided to students for standard exam-hall exams.

Exams Process

The DBS processes for authoring exams, moderation and QA processes will be adhered to, with all papers moderated and submitted via the DBS Exams Office. Some additional oversight by the Registrar's Office may be required if assessments need to be adapted (as above).

Following the sitting of online exams, exam scripts will be made available to lecturers/faculty and the normal processes for marking and moderation will apply.

Online Exam Platform(s): Moodle and Proctoring Software

Students will access online exams in the first instance via Moodle, DBS's Virtual Learning Environment.

The Moodle platform may be used to further link through to a secure online proctoring environment whereby students' activities can be monitored during the exam via a live stream.

Exam Deployment

Instructions for sitting online exams will be made available to students via the module Moodle page in advance of the exam (a minimum of 2 weeks), along with any templates and practice areas for uploading submissions.

Online exams will be timed exams deployed from Moodle whereby a link to the exam and any other associated materials is made live for a discrete window of time as per the exam timetable.

Online exams are treated as formal exams and students are required to present for their sitting otherwise repeat/fail considerations as per standard exams policies apply.

Exam Time

Online exams are scheduled, timed exams. An exam timetable will be published in advance for all exams and it is a student's responsibility to check this timetable and attend the exam in a timely manner.

Standard DBS policy for the duration of 2 and 3-hour exams based on ECTS weighting will apply.

Where students are required to upload files or otherwise 'complex' renderings for an exam (such as photographing handwritten content), reasonable extra 'administration time' will be allowed on top of the core exam time. It is to be emphasised that this is extra time for collation and submission of files, and students who use this for working on answers will not be afforded further time if they fail to upload/complete by the final close of the exam.

Generally, the extra administrative time allowed will be 30 minutes, but this is dependent on the exam type and advance agreement with the Exams Office and lecturer. It will be clearly stated in the exams instructions and published on the exams timetable.

Exam Integrity

As above, a core requirement is to preserve the integrity of examinations which are held online.

There are obviously greater risks associated with security where exams are held remotely. These risks relate to firstly verifying the identity of the candidate taking the exam, and secondly mitigating for academic impropriety during the exam, such as cheating and collusion. There are a number of strategies to address these concerns, which can be used individually or in combination depending on the nature of the exam. In particular, DBS considers 'high stakes' exams to be exams at 'award stage'

or which contribute to the award stage of a qualification, and which therefore warrant additional security.

Verification of Identity

In many cases, lecturers know their students' individual 'voices' and abilities through working with them in the classroom and marking continuous assessments. It is reasonable for lecturers to raise concerns about a piece of assessment on the basis that it is inconsistent with other work by a candidate.

Students submitting online exams via Moodle are required to complete a statement within the exams answer document to confirm that the exam is all their own work. They are further required to confirm the work is their own when uploading it into the system.

Students sitting exams on the online proctoring platform will be required to provide student ID on commencement of the exams. This is captured on camera and included in the proctoring report.

Question Design

Questions which require simple definition-style or theoretical answers may lend themselves more to rote learning and, in turn, cheating. In writing questions, assessors should consider the demonstration of higher-ordered critical engagement and skills and competencies. This will obviously be impacted by the level of the exam/award of the NFQ (EFQ or Ofqual equivalent) but should be a consideration in writing and moderating exam papers.

Text Comparison Software

DBS currently uses Urkund text-matching software and all assessments submitted directly through Moodle are automatically submitted via Urkund and a report generated regarding similarities with other texts. Please note, DBS may change from Urkund to another equivalent software and in that event, this policy will apply in full.

Oversight in Moodle

For any exams deployed directly from the Moodle platform, Moodle reporting will be used to verify student activity, i.e. that exam candidates have recently accessed Moodle and those submitting exams have accessed the exam paper.

Online Proctoring

DBS may deploy live online proctoring for exams. Details are given in Section 5.10.6 below.

Sitting the Exam and Supports

Students are advised to prepare to sit online exams in as close as possible to an exam hall environment. They should find a quiet work place where they will not be interrupted. As above, contact details for supports via live chat functions and phone are available during all exams.

5.10.6 Live Online Proctoring

From January 2021, DBS introduced live proctoring software to increase security for online exams. This is to be introduced on a phased basis and kept under close review.

Proctoring Process

- Exam papers are 'built' and held within the proctoring environment.
- A timed link to the exam paper in the proctoring environment is uploaded to the relevant module Moodle page by the DBS Exams Team. The DBS Exams Team is responsible for checking all settings in the proctoring platform and within Moodle to ensure (a) security is maintained and (b) correct deployment of all elements of the exam (e.g. paper is correct, settings are correct, instructions are clear).
- Students are required to complete a compatibility check for the proctoring platform in advance of their exams. This is to ensure they have a browser installed that works with the software, and a functioning webcam. All instructions are provided in Moodle on the relevant module page.
- The link to the exam is automatically set live in Moodle at the appointed exam time.
- Students have access to a 'live chat' function and a contact phone number in Moodle whereby they can contact the DBS Exams Team and support staff should they require help. The proctoring provider is also available via phone to take queries should DBS staff be unable to resolve any issues locally.
- Upon entering the proctoring platform from the link in Moodle, students are required to present their photo ID to the camera.
- The exam is then launched from the proctoring platform. Options for uploading include typing the answers directly into the platform, or upload of files such as a Word document (depending on the type of exam).
- Student activity during the exam will be captured via their webcam and by recording their computer screen activity. If this is to be used to evidence possible infringements, students will be specifically notified in advance of the exam. Recordings will be deleted after verification of results.

- Video monitoring will be used to support any students who have issues during the exam; for example the team may view the student's computer screen to help identify and resolve technical issues.
- Features of the proctoring platform such as browser/window/software lock down may be used to control the exam environment. As above, students will be specifically notified in advance of the exam if restrictions are to be in place.
- Notwithstanding restrictions enforced through the online proctoring service, students are required at all times to comply with DBS policies with respect to plagiarism and cheating (see DBS QAH Part B Section 3.3, and below).
- An announcement will be made 30 minutes before the close of the exam and again 5 minutes before the close of the exam to warn students to complete uploads.
- If students do not submit their complete answers before the end of the exam time, the exam will auto-submit in the platform.
- Submissions after the close of the exam will not be accepted.
- Notwithstanding the above, for any student experiencing severe technical difficulties, an option to submit via Moodle may be made available during the exam, but acceptance of the submission will be subject to further verification and approval after the exam by the Assessments and Regulations Manager.
- Students must make contact with DBS Exams Team via approved channels during the exam to notify and seek help with any technical issues. Issues not notified during the exam cannot be taken into account retroactively or in support of appeals. Approved channels include: the Live Chat function in Moodle, IT Helpdesk phone number, or messaging in the proctoring platform.
- Students must not contact lecturers directly during exams.

5.10.7 Academic Integrity in Online Exams

Students are expected to proceed with integrity and all work presented for assessments should be their own. The purpose of time-limited exams is to assess learners' ability to concisely demonstrate knowledge and understanding within a specified time frame. The questions themselves are designed such that they can be reasonably answered within the time allowed.

As standard, copy-and-paste of either pre-prepared notes/solutions or third party materials is not acceptable and is considered cheating.

For 'open-book exams' students may refer to notes or materials during the exam. For online exams where specific software or platforms are required, students will be permitted to work in these

platforms and upload files accordingly. In some circumstances, such as programming exams, this will involve writing code in an editor and copying into the exam answer.

A guideline of a maximum of 1,000 words per hour is considered reasonable as an upper limit, depending on the nature of the questions. Quality over quantity remains a fundamental expectation.

Pre-preparing extensive answers to transfer into an answer document during the exam is essentially a form of cheating. If identified and upheld, this will result in a finding that Academic Impropriety has occurred, with associated penalties, which may involve capping of the module or award. As a minimum, pre-prepared answers are unlikely to adequately address the specifics of set questions, and may in fact result in a lower mark.

It should be noted that DBS does not apply automatic penalties for suspected cheating, and all cases are individually assessed. In the early stages the proctoring platform is being used to introduce students to the system and, as with any on-site exam (including lab exams), provide reassurance that students are independently sitting their exam.

Whether proctored or not, all exam work should be students' own, completed during the time of the exam, and therefore it remains the case that reproducing the work of others, including over-reliance on lecturer notes, or using pre-prepared answers, is not acceptable. Nor should students consult any third party during the exam

5.10.8 Additional Documents

Proctored Exam Instructions of the online proctoring service provider