

Conducting Online Assessments 2021-22

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This procedure sets out the arrangements for the conduct of online assessments either on College premises or remotely. Practical and technical procedures will vary depending on the context and circumstances. It is essential that Departments ensure in advance that the proposed arrangements will be technically feasible and appropriately supported on the day, and will comply with academic regulations. Online assessments are subject to the same College policy and procedures as other types of assessment, which can be found on the College's [Academic Policy webpage](#).
- 1.2 It should be noted this is an evolving document and guidance will continue to be updated along with best practice established across the sector. The College has committed to running Open Book Timed Remote Assessments for the December 2021-January 2022 examination period, with some TRAs held in March 2022. Subject to future Government advice, this may extend into the Summer 2022 examination period, where this procedure will be updated accordingly.

2. Procedure

Approval process and alternative assessment

- 2.1 The College's Quality Assurance processes for the approval of new programmes and the modification of existing programmes and modules apply for the inclusion of online assessments into modules. In 2021-22 examinations may be conducted as Open Book Timed Remote Assessments and there is no requirement for additional modifications to be made to assessment where the assessment type is listed as an examination.
- 2.2 Online assessments should be aligned with the curricula and allow students to demonstrate achievement of the module and/or programme learning outcomes. The College's Educational Development Unit have developed [resources to support the development of online teaching and assessment](#).
- 2.3 The arrangements for the conduct of online assessments, including any specific technical or software requirements should be clearly specified and communicated to students at the start of their programme. Where there is any additional cost to the student, this must be highlighted as part of the additional costs of the programme and clearly set out in the programme specification.
- 2.4 Alternative assessments should be developed to accommodate students with reasonable adjustments who cannot be assessed through online assessment. The alternative assessment should be included in the module specification.
- 2.5 Consideration should be given to students granted [additional examination arrangements](#) when designing and delivering online assessments, including the provision of software and hardware which meet accessibility requirements.

Assessment timetabling

- 2.6 Online assessments scheduled during the Main College Examination Periods are subject to the same requirements set out in the College's [Examination Timetabling policy](#).

- 2.7 Start times for online assessments should ensure all students (wherever located globally) sit the assessment during a reasonable local time window defined as between 08:00 to 22:00 (local time). Multiple start times for the same online assessment should be avoided unless any student advises the scheduled assessment falls outside their reasonable local time window and an additional sitting is required at the next local time zone opportunity.

For further information, see Annex 1 - TRAs Operational Guidance (Time zones).

- 2.8 Online assessments timings should comprise of the following: assessment **access** time (prior to start time), assessment **completion** time and assessment **submission** time, which should include up to 1 hour for students to submit/upload the required script where the assessment has been handwritten and needs to be scanned and submitted (following the assessment end time).
- 2.9 The timings for each Timed Remote Assessment must be communicated according to the UK clock. Every student must take responsibility for being available at the correct UK time, wherever they are.
- 2.10 In 2021-22, Timed Remote Assessments will be scheduled in line with the published examination schedule. Departments are able to vary the timing of the assessment by up to 5 hours, taking into account the students taking the assessment, and in order to better accommodate students in different time zones. Departments must record scheduled examinations accurately in Celcat, so ICT can draw on this information in order to ensure that staff can provide effective support. Staff in CTSO (Central Timetabling Support Office) can assist with this – contact timetabling@imperial.ac.uk. Departments are also required to keep a record of the reason for the change in assessment time. Where possible, Departments are advised to consult with their Departmental student representatives over any amendments to the examination schedule.

Assessment

- 2.11 The type of online assessment (whether administrated on College premises or remotely) must be made clear to students prior to assessment. Suitable types of assessment are:
- Open book examination - Students may only use resources identified by the examiner to complete the assessment and included in the instructions for the examination. These may include a student's own revision notes or information in offline or online resources
 - Multiple choice questions (MCQ) - A set of questions with pre-defined answers to select from. For further information, see the College's [Guidance on Using Multiple Choice Questions in Assessment](#).

For further information, see the College's [Guidance on Timed Remote Assessments \(TRAs\)](#).

- 2.12 The marking criteria for the assessment should be clearly outlined to students.
- 2.13 Departments should determine a local deadline by which Internal Examiners must submit assessment content to the relevant support staff in the Department to allow sufficient time for conversion of content to the examination platform/software intended for use. Appropriate Faculty IT support or a Learning Technologist should be involved in all stages of

development testing and delivery of online assessment. Examiners must thoroughly check content prior to submission to avoid errors during the assessment process.

- 2.14 Students must be provided with clear instructions on how to access, complete and submit online assessments. This includes how to use any examination platform/software required and communication channel established for assessment errors or technical issues.
- 2.15 Students must be provided with a practice opportunity (not for assessment) in the lead up to the assessment period to try out the submission system and ensure students have access to the internet, the applications and packages needed, and are familiar with the system and the process. This will also provide useful feedback to staff.
- 2.16 A dedicated student communication channel must be in place for any online assessment to ensure assessment errors or technical issues can be communicated immediately. This may be via the examination platform/software or a dedicated email/phone contact managed by Department examination staff.
- 2.17 Online assessments conducted remotely require students to create their own examination conditions which should include a space which is quiet and free from interruptions, with:
- A desk
 - A comfortable chair
 - Adequate lighting
 - An internet connected computer with appropriate software, plus any additional equipment previously advised to the student such as a camera or scanner
 - A way to monitor time.
- 2.18 Should a student feel they cannot guarantee appropriate remote online assessment conditions, they must raise this with their Department in advance of the assessment. Alternative options may be available such as sitting the assessment on College premises or an alternative assessment. In the event that the student's examination conditions are disrupted during the period of the online assessment, they should submit a Mitigating Circumstances claim.
- 2.19 Where a student is unable to access the Timed Remote Assessment at the agreed start time as a result of technical or other difficulties, they should either complete the assessment within the reduced timeframe and/or submit a Mitigating Circumstances claim.
- 2.20 ICT will ensure that all College owned devices, including loan laptops, used to deliver online assessments will have up to date versions of the required software and are capable of operating in accordance with this procedure. ICT should be notified of any changes to the required software version at least 10 working days before the date of the examination. If procurement of a new version is required, then a longer period may be required with the 10 days starting once EUC receive the software.
- 2.21 A named person within each Faculty (e.g. Faculty IT manager) should take responsibility for ensuring that any contingency plans, in the event of any technical malfunction or failure, are appropriate and robust.

Submission of Assessment

- 2.22 It is advised that all submissions are made via Blackboard. This Virtual Learning Environment is supported by the College's ICT infrastructure, available globally, and is known to work in VPN restricted countries. However, in some parts of the College, other supported technology solutions may be used. Departments should ensure that there is a fall-back position, in case there is a technology failure. It is recommended that Departments put in place a pre-defined email address for students to send their submission as an attachment. The email account should be set up to send students automated delivery receipts.
- 2.23 Students should submit the final version of their script following the end time of the assessment and within the published timeframe (e.g. within 30 mins of the specified end time for the assessment). Late submissions will be treated in accordance with the College's Late Submission of Assessment policy.
- 2.24 Should duplicate scripts be submitted during the submission window, the latest script version will be considered the final script submitted for marking.
- 2.25 Students who experience any technical difficulties during the assessment which affect completion or lead to submitting later than the published submission deadline, should consider following the College's Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure.
- 2.26 Should a script be deemed illegible due to blurred scans, Department examination staff must check any resubmitted scripts made by the student at the time of the examination or request a new scan be made of the original script and re-submitted. The newly scanned script should be cross-referenced with the original script to ensure no additional content has been added before re-scanning.

Academic Integrity

- 2.27 Identification or proctoring technology will not normally be used in Open Book Timed Remote Assessments.
- 2.28 The College will issue a statement on each question paper which clearly reminds students that in completing the assessment, academic integrity must be maintained.
- 2.29 When a student completes and submits for an open book online assessment they will be asked to agree to the following pledge:
- I hereby confirm that the submitted work is entirely my own and I have not (i) used the services of any agency or person(s) providing specimen, model or ghostwritten work in the preparation of the work I have submitted for this assessment, (ii) given assistance in accessing this paper or in providing specimen, model or ghostwritten answers to other candidates submitting work for this assessment.
- 2.30 The College views cheating, acting dishonestly and/or collusion in any assessment as serious disciplinary offences that may result in disciplinary actions. Students who are suspected of academic misconduct will be referred to the College's Academic Misconduct Procedures.
- 2.31 Students are expected to act as responsible members of the College's community. In the context of open book assessment, this means students are:

(a) Permitted to:

- Refer to their own module and revision notes
- Look up information in offline or online resources (e.g. textbooks or online journals), provided these resources have not been restricted in the context of the examination, as set out by the examiners.

(b) Expected to:

- Submit work which has not previously been submitted as part of an assessment on the module or programme of study of the College (except where the assessment guidance for the subject permits this), or for a qualification at any other institution
- Indicate clearly the presence of all material they have quoted from other sources, including any diagrams, charts, tables or graphs, as they would in a typical invigilated examination.

(c) Required to confirm as part of each submission:

- That the work they are submitting for the openbook assessment is entirely their own work, except where otherwise indicated
- That they have not copied from the work of any other candidate, nor consulted or colluded with any other candidate during the examination.

2.32 The following statement should be included on the front of each question paper to clarify that online assessments are being run as open book and acknowledge that the appropriate academic integrity must be maintained.

“This time-limited remote assessment has been designed to be open book. You may use resources which have been identified by the examiner to complete the assessment and are included in the instructions for the examination. You must not use any additional resources when completing this assessment.”

The use of the work of another student, past or present, constitutes plagiarism. Giving your work to another student to use constitutes an offence. Collusion is a form of plagiarism and will be treated in a similar manner. This is an individual assessment and thus should be completed solely by you. The College will investigate all instances where an examination or assessment offence is reported or suspected, using plagiarism software, vivas and other tools, and apply appropriate penalties to students. In all examinations we will analyse exam performance against previous performance and against data from previous years and use an evidence-based approach to maintain a fair and robust examination. As with all exams, the best strategy is to read the question carefully and answer as fully as possible, taking account of the time and number of marks available.

Annex 1

TRAs Operational Guidance (Time zones)

This document intends to provide guidance on managing TRAs for students sitting in international time zones, reasonable local time windows expected to sit TRAs and arranging additional sittings for those falling outside the agreed window.

Time Zones

The reasonable local time window agreed at ESOG (Education), sets the expectation that all students will sit TRAs between 08:00 to 22:00 (local time) wherever located globally. It is also permissible for TRAs to be taken 07:00 to 23:00 (local time) if necessary. Both end times include any upload/submission time permitted for TRAs.

Current exam scheduling should enable the majority of students to sit within the reasonable local time window for each TRA. Within Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) this would fall between UTC and UTC +8/9 (see [Time Zone \(UTC Chart\)](#) for further guidance). This is based on an assumption of where the majority of our students are located, rather than census data.

Please see Scheduling Examples (page 3) for further guidance.

For departments already aware of significant student numbers required to sit any TRAs(s) outside the reasonable local time window (based on the current exam timetable), staff may wish to revise U.K. TRA(s) timings within the next 1-2 weeks.

Students are expected to inform the department if the current published exam timetable requires they sit their TRA(s) outside of the reasonable local time window (outlined above) so that alternative arrangements can be made. Departments may wish to produce local time zone versions of the current exam timetable for students in any known overseas locations.

Responses should be received by a set deadline (or alternative date agreed locally), triggered by an initial department communication requesting such info.

Resources

[Time Zone Map \(UTC\)](#)

[Time Zone Converter \(UTC\)](#)

Additional Sittings

For any students advising their department that their TRA(s) fall outside the reasonable local time window, arrangements should be made for the student to sit the TRA(s) at the next local time zone opportunity within the student's local time window (see resources above).

Where possible, any additional sitting should not be scheduled to end before the U.K. exam start time, to maintain integrity of the TRA(s) for the majority of students sitting at the U.K. exam start

time. This should also help reassure students on any perceived unfairness in arranging additional sittings.

Additional TRA sittings should not be scheduled on weekends or bank holidays, but moved to the next available opportunity (Monday to Friday) within the student's reasonable local time window.

In arranging any additional TRA sitting, the same exam paper (as taken by the main student cohort) should be made available to the student.

Alternative Exam Arrangements (AEA) – Extra time

Where overseas students have been granted additional time (e.g. extra time or rest breaks), start times may be scheduled earlier than the U.K. start time where the total TRA duration (including additional time) would enable the overseas TRA to overlap with the U.K. TRA duration.

This may result in further alignment of exam scheduling and resources during the running of TRAs. In rescheduling TRAs for overseas AEA students, where possible, the 'new' end time (including additional time) should not occur prior to the start of the UK exam itself.

For students with 50% or more additional time per hour, further scheduling flexibility may be applied.

TRA Clashes

Should TRA clashes occur as a result of rescheduling any overseas student TRA(s), department staff will need to liaise on which clashing TRA should be rescheduled and follow the same guidance above on additional TRA sittings.

Consecutive Exam Sessions (Late Evening to AM)

Where possible, consecutive exam session scheduling should be avoided for overseas students where an exam timetable produces a late evening exam session (local time) followed by an AM exam session (local time).

In such instances, the planned AM exam (local time) should be offered as an additional sitting at the next best opportunity e.g. same day but the following PM exam session (local time).

Staff Resource

Given the potential for additional sittings as a result of this guidance, scenarios may arise where 'traditional' College hours support is unavailable e.g. academic, welfare etc. Local arrangements should be decided upon to manage any academic queries arising during additional sittings.

Where an academic cannot be available, an option to follow the [Mitigating Circumstances Procedure](#) should be offered to these students when encountering an academic problem preventing them from answering a question or completing the TRA.

Additional welfare considerations should be made where traditional College hours support will not be available. This may include identifying out of hours welfare services for students to contact in the UK (TBC) and communicating this to overseas students in advance of the exam period. Further

information can be found via the [Student Support Zone](#) and [Covid-19 Imperial and Assessments page](#).

System Functionality/Automation/Best Practice

It is intended to provide assessment platform guidance in this section, which will follow.

Communication to Students

[Here](#) is the advice that has been provided to students.

Scheduling Examples

During the Summer term the UK is at UTC+1, and we are assuming the majority of our students are located in time zones between UTC+1 and UTC+9 (Japan).

EXAMPLE 1

(x1 TRA scheduled within 1 day)

- A TRA starting at 10:00 U.K. time and lasting 4 hours (TRA time + upload time + allowance for students with extra time) can accommodate these students. [The start and end time would be 18:00 and 22:00 in the UTC+9 time zone].
- Students in the Americas could start the same assessment at 16:00 U.K. time, and the 4 hour window ends at 20:00 U.K. time (this is an 08:00 start, 12:00 end in LA, and 11:00 start and 15:00 end in New York)

EXAMPLE 2

(x2 TRAs scheduled within 1 day)

- The first TRA starting at 10:00 U.K. time and lasting 3 hours (TRA time + upload time + allowance for students with extra time) can accommodate these students. [The start and end time would be 18:00 and 21:00 in the UTC+9 time zone].
- Students in the Americas could start the same assessment at 16:00 U.K. time, and the 3 hour window ends at 19:00 U.K. time (this is an 08:00 start, 11:00 end in LA, and 11:00 start and 14:00 end in New York)
- The second TRA starting at 14:00 U.K. time and lasting 3 hours (TRA time + upload time + allowance for students with extra time) cannot accommodate these students. [The start and end time would be 22:00 and 01:00 in the UTC+9 time zone].
- Additional sittings would be required at the next local time window opportunity e.g. 07:00 U.K. start time (next day), 15:00 start time (next day) in the UTC+9 time zone.
- Students in the Americas would need to start the second assessment the following day (same timings above) having already sat the first assessment at 16:00 U.K. time (08:00 start in LA, 11:00 start in New York)

If the above additional sitting resulted in a next day TRA clash, the same guidance would apply to the clashing TRA.

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