

Online alternatives to assessment tasks

While some assessment tasks (e.g. essays and other text-based assignments) can be uploaded to Blackboard as usual, others require some additional thought and may need to be adapted in the move to blended (including at-distance) learning. You should ensure you follow the relevant quality assurance approval process (including moderation by the External Examiner¹ where appropriate) for any amendments to assessments.

It is important to keep the assessments as familiar as possible for students. There will be time to innovate in the future but, in the current context, the less complex and more familiar the assessment is, the better able students will be to adjust and succeed. Module convenors are encouraged to consider designing in additional formative opportunities for student-student or student-tutor interactivity in the context of the assessment regime. This is especially important if the assessment tasks have been adapted.

This resource provides some indication of the kind of adaptations that could be made for some of the more common assessment methods. It is not an exhaustive list, but we hope it may be helpful in considering some of the available options.

This guidance is adapted from the following resources:

- [Covid-19 Assessment Collection](#) devised by Sally Brown and Kay Sambell (2020).
- [Selecting Online Alternatives to Common Assessment Methods](#), devised by the [National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education](#) in collaboration with Geraldine O'Neill, University College Dublin (2020).
- [Covid-19: Thematic Guidance Practice and Lab-based Assessment](#) QAA (2020).

¹ Schools and External Examiners should jointly determine whether it is useful for the External Examiners to be consulted on questions and tasks set for Coursework assessments, projects, dissertations and in-class tests in advance of the work being set rather than providing a purely retrospective comment on past practice. For more information see https://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/exams/CPEE_2020.pdf

If you currently use...	You could instead consider using ...	To assure standards you need to consider...
<p>Timed, supervised in-class tests</p>	<p>An open book/take home test* where students receive the test paper online, work on the tasks/questions set unsupervised off campus and submit their answers electronically within a defined time period (as per the Summer term 2020 take home exams).</p> <p>This gives students the opportunity to complete the test in their own time and allow for constraints such as caring responsibilities, different time zones or difficulties with internet access.</p> <p>If your test assesses students' understanding and how well they can make an argument or apply their learning then it will be relatively straightforward to convert this into a take-home exam.</p> <p>Multiple Choice and short answer questions can be converted to Blackboard Tests.</p> <p><u>Guidance on creating Blackboard Tests</u></p>	<p>Given students will have access to materials in a take-home test, the design of questions may need to be reframed. However you should ensure that the revised format is aligned to the module learning outcomes. It may also be necessary to consider the weighting of assessment criteria while again ensuring these continue to be appropriately linked to the learning outcomes.</p> <p>To promote academic integrity written test papers can be submitted via Turnitin.</p> <p>For Blackboard Tests you could randomise questions, create question pools, and/or use short-answer questions to request a rationale for the selection of the multiple-choice responses. In free-text answers you could try to make the question context-rich, scenario-specific or current/topical.</p>

	<p>Take-home assessment (guidance from London School of Economics and Political Science on take home assessment).</p> <p>If your test requires students to draw diagrams, charts or to respond in other visual ways or use mathematical and scientific notations, students will need to scan/photograph their work and upload it to Blackboard.</p> <p>Blackboard help for Students on How to Scan and Upload Handwritten Exams</p>	<p>Please note that if students are uploading non-textual material (or multiple files) students should submit through Blackboard Assignments rather than Turnitin. If using Turnitin, consider setting the assignment to accept Any File Type to avoid student submission issues.</p>
<p>In-class presentations</p>	<p>Ask students to submit a podcast/screencast which can then be tutor-marked and peer-reviewed asynchronously. This gives students the opportunity to complete the task in their own time and allow for constraints such as caring responsibilities, different time zones or difficulties with internet access.</p> <p>PowerPoint is familiar to most students and offers a free option for recording slides with audio narration.</p> <p>Blackboard Help for Students on Video Presentation: Recording Yourself and Your Screen</p> <p>You could run an accompanying interactive Q & A session through Microsoft Teams or Blackboard Collaborate.</p>	<p>If you opt for a podcast/screencast presentation format students’ have multiple opportunities to prepare the item they are submitting, rather than having to cope with the one-off nature of a live presentation. Existing assessment criteria may need to be adapted to reflect this.</p> <p>There can be substantial problems concerning ‘digital equity’ in that some students will have significantly better access to hardware/software than others. It is therefore important that assessment criteria are based on students’ capability, expertise and knowledge rather than technical specifications.</p> <p>Uploading large files to Blackboard can be problematic. Currently students cannot upload to</p>

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		<p>Stream. You may want to consider asking students to use their university OneDrive and share a link for submission. Please check https://sites.reading.ac.uk/tel-support/ or log a support ticket for guidance on suitable tools and settings.</p>
<p>Paper-based reflection/journal/portfolio</p>	<p>A standard text-based reflective journal, or similar document, can be uploaded through Blackboard.</p> <p>A blog journal or blog might be a suitable way for students to record and share their reflections online over time. This format also provides opportunities for asynchronous interaction and activity (staff-student; student-student).</p> <p>Guidance on Blackboard Portfolios</p> <p>Guidance on Blackboard Blogs and Journals</p> <p>If artefacts/evidence are required as part of a reflective assessment, students can be asked to upload relevant submissions in the form of text-based documents/visuals/video/audio/multimedia representations.</p>	<p>If students are submitting video or other multimedia this may involve uploading large files to Blackboard which can be problematic. Currently students cannot upload to Stream. You may want to consider asking students to use their university OneDrive and share a link for submission. Please check https://sites.reading.ac.uk/tel-support/ or log a support ticket for guidance on suitable tools and settings.</p>

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<p>Interviews (e.g. PhD Viva) /oral assessment (e.g. in language learning).</p>	<p>‘Live’ online interviews/oral assessments* through Microsoft Teams or Blackboard Collaborate.</p> <p>Audio recordings could also be used to replace oral assessments, such as an in-class language test, or to allow students the opportunity to talk through their response to a stated problem/scenario.</p>	<p>In using video conferencing for assessment, it will be important to ensure a recording is kept of the assessment in case it is needed for external examiners. Students will also need to be made aware that the interview/exam is being recorded.</p>
<p>Practice-based assessments in laboratory and simulated clinical environments</p>	<p>While in some instances there may not be a viable online alternative for practical/lab-based assessments due to the necessity to access specialised equipment, in some cases alternatives may be possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online simulations may be used to allow students to learn and be assessed on practical knowledge, for example with students given access to datasets that they are asked to interpret. Simulations can also be used remotely so students can ‘see’ data produced elsewhere and be asked to comment/interpret. • It may also be possible for students to upload video recordings of themselves performing a practical task, if such a task can be safely and appropriately replicated in their home setting. <p><u>QAA Covid-19: Thematic Guidance Practice and Lab-based Assessment</u></p>	<p>To promote academic integrity students can be provided with <i>different</i> data sets for personal interpretation.</p> <p>Uploading video recordings to Blackboard can be problematic. Currently students cannot upload to Stream. You may want to consider asking students to use their university OneDrive and share a link for submission. Please check <u>https://sites.reading.ac.uk/tel-support/</u> or log a support ticket for guidance on suitable tools and settings.</p>

<p>Practice-based assessment in the creative arts, music and performance</p>	<p>Ask students to upload video recordings/audio files of live performances or other forms of assessment such as online portfolios and written assessments such as essays, reflective blogs and production folders.</p> <p>Consideration will also need to be given to how practice-based work which was group or cohort-focused could be assessed in alternative forms, for example, live streamed performances* in Microsoft Teams or Blackboard Collaborate. Live ensemble pieces may be difficult to manage but monologues and dialogues can be effective online.</p> <p><u>QAA Covid-19: Thematic Guidance Practice and Lab-based Assessment</u></p>	<p>There can be substantial problems concerning ‘digital equity’ in that some students will have significantly better access to hardware/software than others. It is therefore important that assessment criteria are based on students’ capability, expertise and knowledge rather than technical specifications.</p> <p>Uploading large files to Blackboard is problematic. Currently students cannot upload to Stream. You may want to consider asking students to use their university OneDrive and share a link for submission.</p> <p>In using video conferencing for assessment, it will be important to ensure a recording is kept of the assessment in case it is needed for external examiners. Students will also need to be made aware that the interview/exam is being recorded.</p>
<p>Assessed classroom participation</p>	<p>While participation in seminars and group discussions can be undertaken ‘live’ through Microsoft Teams or Blackboard Collaborate, some students may find it difficult to participate for a variety of reasons e.g. different time zones, difficulties with internet access, shyness, classroom dynamics, cultural norms or language issues.</p> <p>Use of an asynchronous discussion board in Blackboard may overcome some of these challenges.</p>	<p>Marks for participation should only be awarded where this is already specified in the module description. Students should be reminded of this at the beginning of the module for the purposes of transparency.</p> <p>Good practice includes the provision of clear assessment criteria to assess students’ qualitative participation and asking students to self-assess their contributions.</p>

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	<u>Blackboard: Creating Discussion Forums</u>	<u>Grading Class Participation</u> (guidance from University New South Wales Sydney which has exemplar rubrics)
Posters	<p>Ask students to upload a digital info-graphic, mind map or other visuals.</p> <p>You could run an accompanying interactive Q & A session through Microsoft Teams or Blackboard Collaborate.</p>	Please note that if students are uploading non-textual material (or multiple files) students should submit through Blackboard Assignments rather than Turnitin. If using Turnitin, consider setting the assignment to accept Any File Type to avoid student submission issues.
Peer assessment	<p>Peers can email each other drafts for comments, share documents using their university OneDrive or use a shared virtual space within Blackboard. For example, use of Peermark tool within Turnitin, or allocating students to a Blackboard Group to upload draft assignments to a discussion board for feedback.</p> <p><u>Blackboard: Groups – Getting Started</u></p> <p><u>Turnitin: Creating A Peermark Assessment</u></p>	
Group work	<p>Blackboard has a range of tools that can be used for group work e.g. <u>Blackboard: Groups – Getting Started</u></p> <p>Depending on the nature of the learning outcomes to be achieved, a number of online group work assessment options may be suitable:</p>	As you plan online group discussions, it will be important to be clear with students what is being assessed and how. Any group discussion/contribution that is being assessed will also need to be recorded and students will need to be made aware of this.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A group report or similar group assignment may be submitted online in the standard way.• Students could be asked to create a group presentation, for example, using a shared PowerPoint presentation with audio/notes or a digital poster with associated audio/notes.• Wikis, if available and familiar, are a popular way to facilitate online group work due to the ability to both see the level of individual contributions and to encourage collaboration. It is also possible for feedback to be posted on the wiki as it progresses. <p><u>Blackboard Wikis</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Live discussions can take place through Microsoft Teams or Blackboard Collaborate.• An online discussion forum could be used to allow for discussion/debate on a given topic. <p><u>Blackboard: Creating Discussion Forums</u></p>	
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* In the case of open-book/take-home tests, online quizzes, online interviews/oral assessments and live performances which are completed within a short/defined timeframe, it will be necessary to take a programme level approach to timetabling to avoid clashes.

Please also see the University of Reading's [A-Z of assessment methods](#) for ideas.