

Online Test Guidelines

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) This guideline replaces Appendix 1.40(b) of the Academic Policy (December 2010).

Section 2 - Definitions

(2) For the purpose of this Guideline, refer to the Academic Board's Definitions Policy.

Section 3 - Guidelines

(3) These guidelines are designed to assist Unit Assessors who use online tests that are administered via [MySCU](#) and linked to the MySCU Gradebook. Where online tests are used in a unit, this should be clearly stated in the unit statement or unit information guide.

(4) Designing online tests is complex and time-consuming especially when the Unit Assessor needs to prepare a comprehensive item bank to allow randomised selection of questions and include automatic marking and feedback. Resources in the ' Computer Aided Assessment ' website can help.

(5) There should be co-operation and information exchange between TS and staff in good time prior to using an online test. It is acknowledged that overuse of online summative testing (particularly multiple choice, short answer quizzes etc.) can lead to surface learning. However, [MySCU](#) tests are particularly useful for formative assessment when sufficient useful feedback is provided to students.

Part A - Manually- and Automatically-Graded Online Tests

(6) Answers in online tests can be manually or automatically graded, and a single test may combine these two options:

a. Manually-Graded Online Tests

- i. A manually-graded online test is a test that presents to the student a series of questions to be answered online but that is graded manually by teaching staff and feedback provided online to the student. Marks or grades for the test are then automatically added to the MySCU Gradebook.

b. Automatically-Graded Online Tests

- i. An automatically-graded online test is a test that presents to the student a series of questions to be answered online and that is graded online by the software. This requires the provision of correct answers. Usually, feedback for correct answers and feedback for incorrect answers is also provided. The questions are answered by the student and graded automatically by comparing students' answers with those that have been nominated as correct. Marks or grades for the test are automatically added to the MySCU Gradebook.

Part B - Designing and Administering Online Tests

(7) Unit Assessors need to consider the weighting of online tests in the light of the following issues:

- a. validating the authorship of completed summative tests. Opportunities for cheating (collusion) in online tests may be greater than for tests conducted in the classroom
- b. the assumption that tests will be 'open book', with no limit to accessible resources (including Google)
- c. reliable access to computers and the Internet
- d. students' computing skills
- e. equity issues including disability, NESB, time zones, and incarcerated students.

(8) A large test bank allows random selection of questions within each test for different cohorts or different individuals to minimise collusion. It may also be desirable to present questions in random order and to randomly sequence answers within questions.

(9) Questions in the test bank can take a variety of formats (e.g. fill-in-the-blank, ordering, matching, fill-in-multiple-blanks, multiple-choice, true/false, multiple-answer, short written answer). Where written answers are required in an automatically-graded test, the correct answers provided should allow for common misspellings, incorrect punctuation and a variety of formats for numeric answers (e.g. 4000, 4,000, 4,000.00, 4E03).

(10) For formative tests, comprehensive feedback should be provided on both correct and incorrect answers to enhance learning. Such feedback may also be desirable for summative tests and, to maintain integrity, solutions and feedback should not be made available while the test is still accessible by students.

(11) All instructions should be clear and concise, keeping in mind students' varying language skills and computing skills.

- a. Instructions for taking the test should be provided prior to students' commencing the test so as not to be part of any time limit.
- b. Sometimes additional instructions will be needed within the test to explain particular types of questions, such as multiple-answer or fill-in-the-blank. Such instructions should be kept to a minimum.
- c. Clear instructions should be provided about the effects of clicking on 'Save' instead of 'Submit', for example, and how to avoid inadvertent submission of an unfinished test.
- d. Students should be advised what to do in the event of a technology failure while taking the test.
- e. Students should be advised what to do if they have exceeded the time limit for a summative test resulting in no mark being recorded.

(12) Students should be provided with sample instructions and a variety of question and answer formats in a practice test before they are required to complete a summative online test.

(13) The period during which a test is available should be realistic to allow for student access and technology issues (e.g. a test could be available for a two-week period even though it has a 30-minute time limit once accessed).

(14) Downloading of tests can be problematic for students, depending on hardware and telecommunications. The more complex the layout of the test, the longer it will take to download. The effect of slow download times can be minimised by a single download for a complete test rather than revealing questions one by one.

(15) Allowing a student the opportunity to attempt a formative test more than once to reach the required standard may assist in the achievement of learning objectives.

(16) Staff develop a contingency plan against technical failure and other unforeseen circumstances.

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