

Alternative Assessment Processes and Communication

Based on Prof. Geraldine O'Neill's (UCD) document prepared for the [National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning](#), we propose the following 10 points to consider when choosing an alternative assessment method for the online environment:

1. The starting point for alternative assessment is not only that all are moved online but that the alternative assessment should align with the module learning outcomes.
2. Ensure students have sufficient digital skills to demonstrate their learning. They should have an opportunity, where possible, to trial any unfamiliar digital method, before submission.
3. Students should be informed of all changes to assessment methods and clearly informed by their lecturer(s) that while there is a specific recommended submission deadline for each module, students will be facilitated to submit their assignment up to and including May 15th, without penalty. Students should be encouraged to submit when assessments are due to avoid undue stress on themselves and on institutional systems e.g. Moodle/Turnitin.
4. Students should be given clear, comprehensive instructions on all aspects of the operation and completion of the online assessment submission, including such information on the required file formats for that assessment component.
5. The alternative assessment should require an equivalent effort on the part of the student, estimated, for example, by student effort hours on the assessment task, length of time or word count, while remaining mindful of assessment overload.
6. Be aware that some students for a variety of reasons may have challenges engaging with online assessment. These students should be encouraged to self-identify in advance so that individual arrangements can be made.
7. Students' work will need to be judged having regard to the unfamiliar teaching and learning context that students will have experienced.
8. Existing assessment criteria/rubrics may need to be adapted to align with the alternative assessment. It is important that these revisions are shared with the students and are used to support inter-rated reliability of multiple graders. Bear in mind that other graders may require some guidance and upskilling.
9. Ensure secure recording and storage of online assessments in line with GDPR.
10. To minimise concerns about academic integrity, consideration should be given to the design and implementation of the alternative assessment:
 - Customising the assessment by asking students to relate the topic/data to their experience or a specific context where possible;
 - Randomise MCQ/short answer questions;
 - Use of text-matching software (*Turnitin*).

Should you wish to discuss your proposed alternative assessment method with a member of the LEAD team, please don't hesitate to get in touch by email to LEAD@mic.ul.ie. We would be happy to advise in relation to assessment design, rubrics and technological solutions. It is also important to bear in mind issues related to accessibility and inclusion and to consider the varying diverse learning needs of our students; please see [these tips](#) developed by [AHEAD](#) in conjunction with the [National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning](#).

LEAD has compiled suggested alternatives to common assessment methods; this material can be accessed through the [MIC Staff Moodle Support Page](#) or in the Continuity Teaching, Learning and Assessment section of the [MIC COVID-19 FAQ](#). Further guidance on selecting alternative assessments has been developed by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and this resource can be accessed [here](#).

As we are aware, students are likely to face many challenges with these revised alternative assessment formats, including digital literacy skills and access to broadband, along with additional caring responsibilities and dealing with difficulties posed by unemployment (either personally or within their family). Therefore, we can adopt some simple strategies to allow maximum flexibility and understanding in these unusual circumstances; this includes:

- Releasing the assessment details and submission link by 6 April 2020 to allow a long window for students to work on their assessment task;
- Informing students that while there is a specific recommended submission deadline for their submission, they will be facilitated to submit their assignment up to and including May 15th, without penalty. However, students should also be encouraged to submit when assessments are due to avoid undue stress on themselves and on institutional systems e.g. Moodle/Turnitin.
- Considering how the process of remote assessment, grading, feedback, and grade submissions via SI will be managed, whether you are grading individually or within a shared module with other lecturers;
- Ensuring that a colleague nominated as your alternate/substitute is familiar with your assessment and any adjustments should you need assistance prior to and during the grading period
- Making yourself available to students to answer queries via Moodle forums, Moodle chat, email or MS TEAMS;
- Identifying at an early stage if a student is likely to have difficulty completing the task and making alternative arrangements, where appropriate;
- Adjusting previously designed grading rubrics and criteria as appropriate, to take account of the unusual circumstances in which we all find ourselves.

On behalf of LEAD,

Dr Gwen Moore, Director of Teaching and Learning