Brookes Briefing

Designing academic integrity into assessment

This Brookes Briefing explores how the assurance of academic integrity can be significantly improved by using digitally enabled assessment.

Recognising the positive impact online teaching and assessment has had for students traditionally excluded from HE, and with a desire to future-proof teaching, learning and assessment Brookes has adopted 'digitally-enabled' teaching, learning and assessment. Digitally enabled teaching, learning and assessment is inclusive, engaging and rigorous pedagogic practice facilitated by digital teaching tools. It supports synchronous face to face, remote or hybrid teaching and asynchronous learning and assessment

To ensure students were supported to achieve to the best of their ability during lockdown, HE moved away from time-bound exam based assessment unless stipulated by Professional, Scholarly and Research Bodies (PSRB). Programmes where timed-recall/application of knowledge is a learning outcome or PSRB stipulation were advised to 'consider… completing more coursework or project work up-front and moving the examination elements to later in the academic session, or even into subsequent years' (QAA, 2020, pg 9). Open-book, time-bound online exams are now much more common.

This and the prevalence of digital assessment raises concerns about academic integrity. Essay mills 'seeking to exploit' (QAA, 2020, pg 8) digital assessment use social media to prey on students made vulnerable by the need to continue/complete their studies in difficult circumstances. Further, students may be unfamiliar with the principles of academic integrity and might confuse collaboration with collusion and inadvertently breach academic regulations leading to academic misconduct.

Brookes has retained the usual safeguards, such as unique student ID, the use of Turnitin to check students are following good academic practice and, where appropriate, use of specific exam software such as lockdown browsers. We must also ensure students are aware of both institutional policies & practices and the dangers (QAA 2017) of contract cheating 'including potential exposure to fraud and extortion' (QAA 2020, pg 8). It is therefore important and effective to design assessment FOR (rather than OF) learning thus integrating academic integrity into assessment design. At the same time we must ensure students understand assessment is integral to academic success.

Principles and Practices for designing academic integrity into assessment

The principles and practices suggested integrate academic integrity with digitally enabled assessment, offer assessment *for* learning and have a flavour of authenticity. They are inclusive and can be adopted using Brookes digital teaching tools (although they should be

interpreted through the lens of the discipline to speak to the specific module and cohort size):

1. **Assessment reflects how students can or will use disciplinary knowledge, or 'authentic assessment'**

   - Asynchronous presentations (pre-recorded) and recorded asynchronous discussion hosted through the VLE
   - Recordings (video or photographic) of practical work
   - Group or team-based assessment facilitated, monitored and traceable via learning analytics on the VLE
   - topic and how it relates to the students' specific programme of study/other modules.

For inspiration, look to a compendium of discipline-specific examples of authentic online assessment (Brown and Samball, 2021).

2. **Tasks ask students to 'evaluate', 'create' and 'analyse' the application of a given theory to a module specific, local or personal interest/context/problem**

   - A portfolio of work applying disciplinary knowledge to a given or student-identified task or problem, to include a reflective commentary specific to the students experience with clear evidence of engagement with the assessment task.
   - Novel and creative models of presenting work, for example infographics, videos, websites, wikis or posters

3. **Assessment is personalised and/or contains a reflective component.**

   - A short (say 400 word) learning statement outlining what elements the student found challenging/rewarding in the assignment or how the work might support their graduate ambitions.

   - A recorded, assessed dialogue, similar to a viva-voce, to include reflection on the creation of the work.

Principles and practices for designing academic integrity into digital exams

Programmes where timed-recall/application of knowledge is a learning outcome or PSRB stipulation must consider academic integrity. The following practices are applicable to digitally enabled and open book time-bound online exams, should scramble contract-cheating software/services and safeguard against collaboration or collusion .

1. **Put digital security measures in place**

   - Use Respondus Lockdown Browser and/or prevent students from taking exams outside the University network
   - Ensure students have to authenticate their ID to attempt the exam
   - Communicate to students exams are put through Turnitin to help markers identify areas where academic integrity may have been breached

2. Deploy the full range of Moodle quiz functions

- Enable time-based exams using the Moodle timer function
- Set restrictions on attempts to no more than two or three
- Randomise or shuffle questions
- Create a Formula quiz question
- For credit bearing assessment remember to disable review of quiz responses after attempt.

3. Individualise digital exams

Question banks allow you to control the topics covered, the number of questions, marks for each topic and offer each individual student a unique exam/quiz that consists of different, randomly selected and ordered set of questions in multiple choice, text or essay form.

- Organise questions into types and topic. If essay and multiple-choice questions are mixed in a bank there is a chance that one student will only get essay questions while another student multiple-choice. To avoid this, organise questions into types, eg. ' a multiple choice bank'.
- Break questions into banks by subject area (for example, "Chapter 7 multiple-choice questions" and "Chapter 7 essay questions"), if you need that level of granularity.
- Link Question Banks to a quiz by adding topical Question Groups for each bank. Each Question Group lets you specify how many questions to pull from its linked Question Bank and the point value for those questions, thus ensuring curricula is suitably covered in the exam.
- Use a large pool of questions. Consider sharing the creation of Question Banks with colleagues co-teaching the course. Your department may also already have Question Banks for exams.
- Within Banks and Question Groups ensure questions are of comparable difficulty and complexity.

Concluding thoughts

Designing academic integrity into all assessment is crucial. By using supportive strategies to achieve this, students can be encouraged to engage with and embrace good academic practice. We must ensure students recognise assessment is integral to learning and academic success, not just a measure of it.

Note: This briefing was originally published as a Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) blog 'Designing out plagiarism for online assessment' (Lawrence, 2020). Adopted by the University of Hull and other HEIs, OCAED have further adapted the guidance to our Brookes specific context and digitally enabled teaching tools. Thank you to Harry Kalantzis and Mary Davis for expert steer.

Further Reading

Carroll, J. (2007) A handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education. Oxford: The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development

Hendry, G (online) Practical assessment strategies to prevent students from plagiarising.

QAA (2017) Contracting to Cheat in HE: How to address contract cheating, the use of third party services and essay mills.

QAA (2020) COVID-19: Initial Guidance for Higher Education Providers on Standards and Quality

Sambell, J and Brown, S (2020) Coronavirus contingency suggestions for replacing on site exams.

Guidance for Students

https://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/your-studies/academic-integrity-online-course/

https://sites.google.com/brookes.ac.uk/makingsenseofacademicintegrity/blogs/blog-3-top-ten-tips-for-avoiding-plagiarism