eExams for curriculum transformation

Andrew Fluck
School of Education
University of Tasmania

Mathew Hillier
Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation
University of Queensland

Abstract (#133; Session: Round table 2)

eExams are being trialled and progressively rolled out in Australia and through Finland's 'Digabi' Project. The essential idea is that candidates undertake conventional examinations using a computer instead of a pen. Some aspects of pen-on-paper exams are preserved, such as similar contexts for every candidate, identity assured progress on the same stimuli within the same timeframe, and no opportunity to confer/consult. Other aspects become radically changed when using the computer – multimedia stimuli can be incorporated; and more importantly, candidates can utilize professional software tools as they devise solutions. Progress has been made at UTAS, UQ and USQ on incorporating eExams into mainstream universities. In Tasmania, the Year 11/12 qualifications authority has used eExams in an evolutionary way to progress to open internet accessible exams.

The topic to be addressed will be whether eExams can influence curricula; will changing the nature of the assessment subsequently alter what is taught?

Debates about innovation introduction revolve around the capacity of eExams to work alongside or within current paper-based examinations procedures. For instance, what do you do if there are more candidates than eExam USBs?

We will demonstrate the current eExam technology, and discuss questions such as:

1. How reliable are eExam technologies in general?
2. How reliable are USB eExam Systems in comparison with paper-based systems?
3. Are the benefits of transitioning to post-paper eExams worthwhile?
4. What are the implications for professional development of academics in terms of adapting to, and taking advantage of, the new ways of assessing in the exam room?

Conference Theme

This Roundtable contributes to the sub-theme of Assessing, evidencing and evaluating graduate capabilities.

It asks about a fundamental change to how we undertake assessment. Modern students frequently lack the muscle tone to write for three hours on end, and are unlikely to do this in their chosen profession. Also, we seek ways in which artefacts other than Word documents might be produced under examination conditions to evidence learning.

However, the contrast with current examination assessments is stark. The roundtable will provide an opportunity to discuss whether a transition to a digital environment is feasible or desirable.

The presenters will show examples of the use of eExams from Australia and overseas to stimulate discussion. Attendees are invited to bring an older laptop to try the system out.

References

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