10 Points to Consider in Choosing Alternative Assessment Methods for the Online Environment

Developed to support the Irish higher education community in the initial weeks of the move to online/remote teaching and learning in March 2020

Students can learn through many different but equitable assessment methods. An alternative online assessment is not a lesser form of assessment, but a different assessment to achieve the same aim. Some of the following ideas are worth considering in the design of alternative assessment methods for the online environment to ensure the quality and equity of the assessment:

1   Your starting point is the learning outcomes for the modules, the alternative assessment should align with these outcomes.

2   Ensure students have sufficient skills to demonstrate their learning. They should have an opportunity, where possible, to trial any unfamiliar method, without grading.

3   Students should be given clear comprehensive instructions on all aspects of the operation and completion of the online assessment, including such information on the required file formats and the number of attempts allowed for that assessment component.

4   Students should be informed of all changes to assessment methods.

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.

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-rater 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.

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
   - Use of timed or time-constrained exam
   - Randomise MCQ/short answer questions
   - Use of plagiarism software

This resource was compiled by Prof Geraldine O'Neill, UCD, who led the National Forum Enhancement Theme 2016-18, focused on Assessment Of/For/As Learning. The resource is adapted from **UCD's Guidance for Designing Alternative Assessment Methods.**