ONLINE OPEN-BOOK ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS

Educational Development, University of Plymouth, 2020-21

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1. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE THE ONLINE ASSESSMENT

A timed online open-book assessment is an assessment that is set under timed conditions and allows you access to notes and resources. This is an alternative assessment to a face-to-face invigilated assessment. In all cases online open-book assessments align with programme learning outcomes and are modelled on existing exam questions.

This guidance offers strategies to help you prepare for and take your online assessment and should be used in conjunction with local instructions from your School.

1.1. TIME ALLOWANCE AND SUBMISSION OF ONLINE OPEN-BOOK ASSESSMENT

You will normally be given 48 hours to complete an open-book assessment. There are some assessments that will be alternative lengths of time due to specific regulatory body requirements. Your module lead will provide you with more information about these assessments.

It should take you less time than this to complete as all assessments have been designed to be completed within one working day or less. Where you have 48 hours to complete you should endeavour to complete the assessment on the first day, and the second day should not be needed unless you have encountered any problems on the first. You are encouraged to complete your assessment at the beginning of the 48-hour period, and once you feel it is ready, you should submit it.

You do not normally need to be logged on throughout the time that the assessment is 'live'. For example, during a 48-hour online open-book assessment, you can work on or off-line to prepare the answers providing the assessment is completed and submitted by the end of the 48-hour window.

1.2. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS, ASSESSMENT MODIFICATIONS AND EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

- Please note that 48-hour open-book assessments are intended as an 'inclusive' alternative approach to traditional invigilated examinations that supports all students fairly and mitigates against disadvantaging anyone. These are not coursework and so do not qualify for 1-2-1 support (e.g. non-medical helper support).

- There will be no additional time allowance or supervised time breaks allocated to online open-book assessments. This is because the duration of the assessment is intended as an inclusive measure for students with disabilities and to account for difficulties in taking an assessment at home.

- If you experience technical difficulties connecting to access the questions and to submit your answers, then formally submitted Extenuating Circumstances may be considered.

- Should you have any concerns about other existing individual adjustments (except additional time and supervised timed breaks) that require consideration, you should contact Disability Services, through the Student Hub (studentservices@plymouth.ac.uk +44(0)1752 587676).

1.3. WHAT KIND OF MATERIALS CAN I USE DURING THE OPEN-BOOK ASSESSMENT?

Materials you can use during these open-book assessments are usually unrestricted (unless stated otherwise by your module/programme lead, please check).

Materials and resources that you might draw on can include:

- Your own notes from lectures/seminars, online learning resources

- Readings, reference to materials or textbooks

- Equipment such as calculators, drafting tools, etc.

The main restriction for an open-book assessment is that the work, like any other assessment at University, must be your work to avoid plagiarism and collusion. See guidance on plagiarism for further information.

1.4. REVISION AND ORGANISATION

Preparing for an online assessment is, in many ways, like preparing for a traditional exam; revision and organisation are key to success. But with an online assessment it is also important to make sure you are comfortable with the digital platforms and software that are used to support the submission.

Revise as you would normally and do not forget the University's guidance on revision to help you structure this.

Some useful revision activities are to-

- **Locate any key information**: Download key literature/resources beforehand. This will enable you to organise resources relevant for your assessment and means you have access to these during the period of the open-book assessment, mitigating against internet disruption.

- **Generate your own notes or commentary.** Annotate module resources, literature, or other relevant resources using highlighters, post-it notes, margin notes, etc., as this will mean you have information at hand when developing your assessment. Organise these using a system of, for example, enumerating or colour coding to organise your notes for easier use during the open-book assessment.

- **Team up with your peers to revise.** This will allow you to discuss key concepts or frameworks, explore the application of these and support you in developing your communication and critical thinking skills prior to the open-book assessment. However, do not collude with peers or anyone else on the assessment task itself.

- **Hone your study skills**. Depending on your subject context your online assessment may involve report or essay writing and/or building an argument or evidencing critical thinking. It is likely that during the assessment you will need to read some texts effectively. The University's Student Learning unit provides guidance on all of these skills and more, so take a look at their resources as part of your preparation.

1.5. GET FAMILIAR WITH THE ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Your lecturers will provide you with clear advice on the expectations and practicalities of the open-book assessment ahead of time. Make sure you read these instructions carefully. Check, check and check again the assessment information and be sure that you know what is expected of you in terms of the questions and of additional requirements such as word count, citing resources, key resources to draw on, submission process, etc. If in any doubt seek clarification from the module lead.

Where possible make yourself familiar with the submission platform. For Moodle or PebblePad assessments no additional software needs to be installed; assessment can be accessed via the

recommended browser(s) from the University's My DLE (Moodle) or My ePortfolio (PebblePad). If your Programme or School uses alternative software then you will be provided with specific information.

If you are expected to submit notes or diagrams as part of your online assessment, ensure you know which format these should be submitted in and how they will be submitted. If possible, practise doing this.

If you are expected to use additional/specialist software as part of the assessment, then where possible, practise using this in advance.

Remember that the University's student support services, including the English Language Centre, SUM:UP and Student Learning, all provide useful resources which can help you prepare for online assessment. However, these services will not be available to you during the exam period.

1.6. CREATE YOUR OWN EXAM CONDITIONS

In addition to creating a quiet space at the right temperature, ensure you have all the equipment you need: a comfortable chair, desk, good lighting, internet connection, all your resources and notes, a way to monitor your time as well as drinks and snacks to keep you going. GOV.UK provide useful guidance on setting up optimal workspaces. You are advised to use a PC/Mac or a laptop. Use the biggest screen you can to avoid eye strain. If possible connect a second monitor to ease reading and searching resources online. Avoid taking online assessment on your mobile device.

If you are experiencing mental health issues in preparing for online assessment then access support from the University's mental health resources.

2. WHAT TO DO DURING THE ONLINE ASSESSMENT

During the online assessment it is important to structure your time efficiently to identify, structure, and synthesise information to inform your assessment. The following tips are useful to help you perform.

- Do not get 'lost'. Make sure you have all the relevant instructions to undertake the assessment to hand during the process.

- Structure your work into sections. Follow the local assessment guidance to estimate how long it will take you to complete each task. Assign time to each so you can focus on the distinct parts of the assessment.

- Block any distractions: this might include closing a door/window, minimising background noise, closing tabs on your computer or turning off notifications on your phone. This will help you stay focused for periods of time throughout the assessment.

- Make sure you to back up your work at regular intervals on your own computer and on your OneDrive.

- Take regular breaks: by breaking the assessment down into small sections you will be able to plan in regular breaks. When on your break, do something completely different like exercise, housework or making something to eat.

- If you are unable to type your answer (e.g. to write out complex formulae, draw a diagram by hand, or if typing is difficult for you), you will need to scan what you want to include in your submission, and then compile as a pdf for submission. Always check local protocol for handwritten responses with the module lead.

- Do not wait until the very end of your online assessment time to submit as you may run out of time. Open-book assessment answers can be submitted at any time during the set duration. Submitting outside of the set time will constitute a fail.

- During the assessment you must not be helped by any other person to answer any questions. Collusion will be treated as an academic offence. It will also be considered an academic offence if you use any of the questions from an assessment for any purpose other than to take the assessment yourself. Academic offences will be dealt with according to University regulations.

- Retain any evidence that you have submitted your assignment.

2.1. GETTING SUPPORT

Although online assessments may look a bit different from your normal exams, you must treat them in the same way as you would an examination. There will be staff support available for technical issues with delivery, as there would normally be when you are sitting in an examination hall. However, staff will not be available to answer any assessment content-specific questions. Where specialist technical guidance is needed for some subject areas, then your School will provide you with additional local technical support information during the assessment. For general University IT support the phone number is +44 (0)1752 588588 option 3 for students. Please be aware that there may be a delay in resolving your issue and that issues can only be resolved within the normal working hours of Monday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00 BST. It is therefore recommended that you endeavour to submit your answers during this time to ensure support is available should you need it.

For more information on support please review the Moodle Online Submission help site, which has a number of help videos and technical guidance on how to submit to Moodle online assessments. Please contact IT support if you are unable to resolve the issue yourself quickly.

Remember that during the University's examination period the Student services continue to be available to you including Student Learning. However, it is not appropriate to contact Student Learning during the assessment to ask assessment related questions.

If you are struggling with mental health issues during the assessment then visit the University's Mental Health Support resources.

3. WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE ONLINE ASSESSMENT

- You can expect feedback consistent with that returned following an invigilated examination, unless informed otherwise by your School.

4. REFERENCES / ADAPTED FROM / ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*This document was modelled on the University of Bristol's 'Online Assessment-Essential Guidance' by kind permission of Digital Education, University of Bristol

Links provided in document above and other sources that were consulted to inform this guidance document are as follows:

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