

E-Assessment

Introduction

The term e-assessment covers the variety of ways in which computers can be used to assist the assessment process. This might include using a computer to administer an assessment or for diagnostic, formative or summative assessment.

Advantages

The advantages of e-assessment include

- identifying at risk students earlier
- opportunities for self and peer assessment
- increased opportunity for timely and detailed formative feedback
- increased flexibility
- increased monitoring of progress for both student and tutor
- helps develop information literacy and IT skills
- increases diversity of assessment methods
- increases range of skills assessed
- aids revision
- allows the tutor to adapt teaching responsively
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Popular uses

E-assessment is used in a number of ways, some of the more popular uses are:

1. online tests and quizzes
2. checking for plagiarism
3. online discussion and reflective writing
4. collaborative work
5. marking assessments

1 Online tests and quizzes

This typically involves using the computer to deliver multiple choice (and other) questions to students over the web. Tutors design questions and feedback on their own machines and make them available for web delivery. Students take the assessments online using a web browser. The system provides feedback to students and reports on students' progress to the tutor.

2 Checking for plagiarism

Although not capable of identifying plagiarism themselves, computers can be used to assist in the detection of plagiarism by identifying chunks of text that are not original - i.e. they exist in another source. Typically, plagiarism checking software will check a student's assignment against the work of other students and any web based resource. The tutor will be provided with a report which highlights the text in the student's work that is not original and the source(s) that contain the same text. The tutor then uses this information to decide if the student has plagiarised.

3 Online discussion and reflective writing

Online discussion rooms and blogs offer spaces for students to post their own thoughts and interact with the ideas of their peers. The use of an online medium has the advantage of allowing students time to reflect and compose their responses to questions posed by their tutor and peers. Tutors can provide detailed feedback to individuals or whole groups as appropriate.

4 Collaborative work

There are a variety of online tools that can be used to facilitate group work. Working collaboratively online, students are able to work remotely, gain from peer input and keep a record of their individual contributions to group projects. Tutors can set up groups so that access to their work is restricted to group members. Examples of collaborative tools are discussion rooms, wikis and online whiteboards.

5 Marking assessments

The functionality of marking software can vary. Simple tools allow you to assign a mark to students and provide feedback online. More advanced tools allow you to store a bank of reusable comments that can be used to provide detailed feedback with links to useful web resources. Some tools allow you to view and annotate the actual assignment on line. These tools usually allow you to view reports for a student group and time release results to students.

Hints and tips

Before implementing a new assessment method you may find it useful to consider the following:

- what tools and support are available at your institution ? Most of the tools mentioned above will be provided by your institutional VLE
- how will you ensure that your students have the necessary IT skills and knowledge ?
- how does this assessment method align with your learning outcomes and activities ?
- if your students are participating in an ongoing online activity what will your role be in supporting them ?
- how will you mark the assessment ? This can prove quite challenging when marking contributions to online activities.
- what opportunities do you have for formative feedback ? What type of feedback will you be giving ?
- are there any institutional or School policies or procedures you need to consider ? E.g. anonymous marking policies or procedures for making amendments to a module assessment.

Further information

Bull, J. and McKenna C., 2001. *Blueprint for Computer-assisted Assessment* Routledge Education

JISC Internet Plagiarism Advice Service

<http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/>

JISC 2007, Effective Practices with E-Assessment

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/pub_eassesspracticeguide.aspx

JISC/QCA 2006 e-Assessment Glossary <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/assessment.html>