Online Open Book Exam Guide

Online open book assessment has met with a sudden and rapid increase in popularity, for obvious reasons, but it also provides the opportunity to the lecturer to devise questions that reward critical and analytical thinking over rote learning. This guide is intended to help provide some advice and ideas to help make your next open book exam the best experience it can be for both student and lecturer.

For a more detailed explanation and personal experience, refer to the Designing and delivering online open book exams and alternative assessments workshop recording. For more resources, contact the Student Feedback and Digital Assessment Community of Practice (CoP) by clicking here.

Design

- Online examination format options

Online Exam Style	Existing Question bank	Time zone fairness	Cheating
Closed book - 2hr timed assessment window	Can use but question confidentiality lost	No	Safe Exam Browser Webcam invigilation
Closed book - 24 hr period, 2hr timed assessment windows	Can use but confidentiality lost	Yes	
Open book - 24 hr assessment window	Requires new questions	Yes	
Open book - 24 hr period, 2hr timed assessment windows	Requires new questions	Yes	Students could inform later groups
Open book - 2 hr timed assessment window	Requires new questions	No	

- Duration window of the exam
  - A 24hr window prevents students in different time zones being disadvantaged
    - Set the start and finish time when you will be awake to make it easier to deal with any issues
  - If all students are in the same time zone a set exam window (3hrs, everyone starts at 9am) works too, but is more susceptible to technical issues
- Differences in duration between open and closed book exams
  - It is hard to estimate question difficulty based on previous closed book exams. Double check question difficulty with colleagues to help set a reasonable duration
  - Sample questions for students can help manage both student and lecturer expectations

- Questions
  - Don't set general knowledge, recalling contents type of questions, as they will not test understanding or even recall in an open book exam
  - Consider case studies and questions that require applying knowledge and theory instead
  - Reference previous assignments (reduce contract cheating). Don't reference group projects (discourage collaboration)
  - Multiple choice, short / long word and numerical questions can work provided they require applying knowledge
  - Set a maximum word limit for responses - easier to mark and communicates the expected level of detail
  - Giving students the option to answer 4 out of 5 questions helps reduce students answering the same questions

Before the exam:

The online open book exam is still a new form of assessment for many students. Clear communication is vital to setting expectations

- Practise questions in class and provide feedback
  - Define keywords e.g.: "How would you..." is asking for *what, why, when etc.,* use examples
- Prepare clear instructions and a walkthrough of the process from preparation to submission
  - Video and document (one document, a single source of truth)
  - Ask the student to keep the document with them and to read again before submitting their exam
  - Consider including suggestions such as: ensure updates are installed the night before, plugged in to power, don't rely on your internet connection - copy all exam files to an exam folder on your computer, make a dedicated work space, eat before starting but don't eat or drink at your desk (to avoid spills), put the exam start and finish times in your calendar, who to contact if you are having issues and how, submit when you finish - don't wait or tinker until closing time

During the exam:

- Be available, especially at the start and finish times.
- You can publish the times you are available for fielding questions
- Have a pre-set location (e.g.: FAQ on Moodle) for putting questions raised during the exam. Consider the requirements and if your method meets those e.g.: reliability / delays to update posts,
- Have student accept a declaration before accessing the exam to not cheat

After the exam:

- Set clear expectations for submission: file name formats, location (e.g.: Moodle, not email), deadline, who to contact with issues and what to say (issue, platform, screenshot if relevant, photo with timestamp if relevant etc)
- Turnitin is not always a good indication with respect to cheating, don't rely on it exclusively
- You can check for the same IP address for exam downloads / submissions to help identify suspect submissions

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