

Facing the Screen: an investigation of electronic assessment practice

Dr Mary Richardson and Dr Jo Pearce



Excellence in assessment: it's a goal at UCL

How can we characterise excellence? What form does that take in assessment?

Just what is our problem?

UCL

Electronic assessment

What we know:

- 1. It's still in the early days of development
- 2. The system is imperfect (as is all assessment)
- 3. It has been introduced at all HEIs in the UK and usually it's done via *Moodle* (or a similar VLE) using *Turnitin* software

What we don't know:

- 1. How markers work in these environments
- 2. How electronic environments affect markers
- 3. Whether paper and computer assessment is comparable

L

Why does this matter to students?

UCL IOE is world leading in education and we want to ensure that all our working practice reflects that title.

We really don't know if assessing on screen is comparable to assessing on paper – there may be discrepancies.

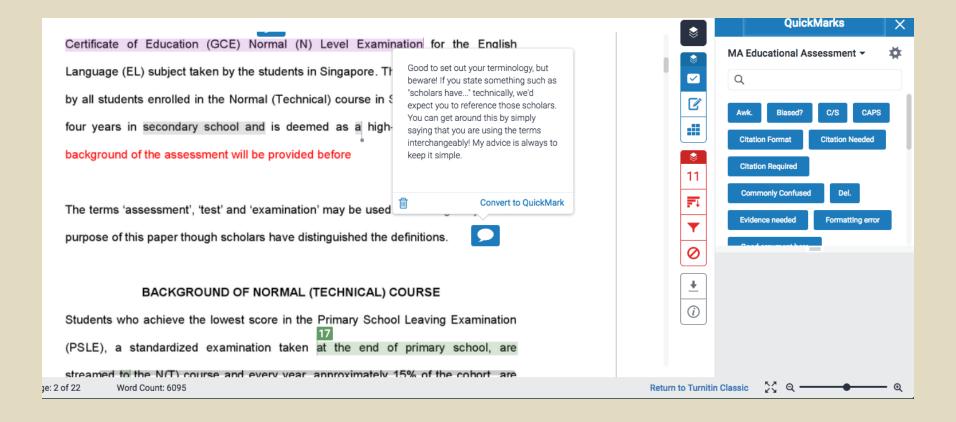
We don't know if staff are working with adequate equipment, knowledge of the software, H&S knowledge and so on.

If there are broad issues with attitude (negative) and lack of training, this WILL impact the validity of the assessment process.

Institute of Education

Assignment marked in GradeMark

UCL



Institute of Education

Assignment marked in Word

integrate theory and practice through their understanding of critical concepts and

the discriminating use of specialist terminology

(AQA 2014, p29)

As one can see, all four aims of this course are very much open-ended and do not have any

obvious 'academic' slant and instead seem to primarily focus on fostering creativity and

theatrical skills, all of which normally full under the category of vocational skills. Thus, when

comparing the aims of the course to what AQA themselves say about the course, it is quite

intriguing to note that whilst the units of the course are weighted 60% towards the written

examination, the aims seem more suited to the practical units of the assessment that only

account for 40% of the assessment.

Due to this paradox of having the aims seemingly not correlate with the content of

lary 3/6/2015 10:10

Comment [2]: This seems like a strongly academic focus? It depends on how these descriptors are interpreted? Maybe that is at the heart of the issue?

X

Mary 3/6/2015 10:11

Comment [3]: I think it would help you to define what you mean by academic

UCL

The problem?

- We know that students like the convenience of posting work online and receiving online feedback
- We know that administratively, it's more convenient
- But neither of these things relate to effective practice – they are confined to preference and financial decisions

UCL

The study

- (a) There is research into student perceptions of online assessment, but nothing on academic's perceptions and nothing on their practice.
- (b) Our study focuses on the academic's experience.
- (c) It is beginning now and comprises a survey of staff (within UCL IOE) and will be followed up with a focus group intervention and then creation of guidance for assessing electronic environments.

Key findings (in progress!)

When asked about just how they assess online, academics revealed that they commonly download work, then mark it up either on screen, *or on paper* before uploading it again.

Potential outcomes

- Demonstrates the challenge of changing established practice (remember we've been marking on paper for hundreds of years!)
- Workload implication some of the ways academics work is increasing their workload

L

Key findings (in progress!)

When asked about just how long it takes them to mark an average essay (4000-5000 words)

Range was 45 minutes to 3 hours

Potential outcomes

- Workload implication some of the ways academics work is increasing their workload
- This may reduce over time, but the practice of working on screen is very different

Key findings (in progress!)

Attitudes to assessment in electronic environments

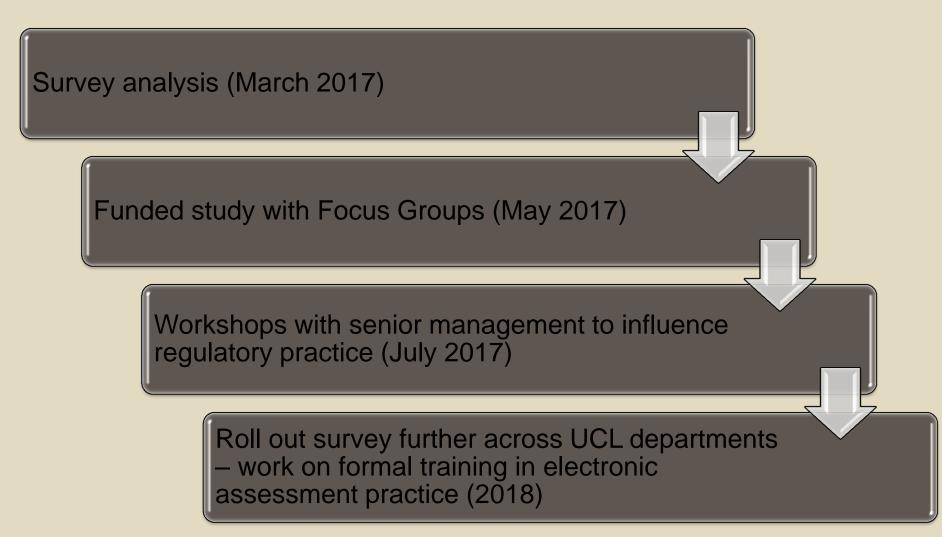
- Some respondents were openly hostile whilst others saw this as a new way of working and were more open to change
- The practice has been implemented with no proper consultation with staff

Potential outcomes

- Managing change needs to be acknowledged so that staff are feeling supported in times of change
- There are potential Health and Safety issues screen time, anxiety, stress etc. all of which are known to relate to lots of time spent working on screens.

L

Going forward: steps 1-3 are in IOE



Institute of Education





"It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable".

Moliere (1622-1673)