Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences
CASE STUDY 3

Title: Rethinking assessment moving from unseen examinations to open book examinations.

Theme: This Case relates to issues of Ensuring Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement of Online Proctored examinations as a means of assessment and will specifically focus on the experiences of the College in the context of shifting from traditional (sit down) examinations and incorporating learnings from the Covid 19 experience.

Keywords: Terminal Assessment, Unseen Examinations, Open Book Examinations, Remotely Proctored exams.

Context
The ICHAS mission is to facilitate and enable adult learners to achieve qualifications that are accessible, affordable, relevant to the needs of business, industry and the professions, and that are nationally and internationally recognised. This is secured by a learner centred focus, excellence in our programmes, and innovative delivery. Within the context of accessible and innovative delivery, the college has been offering blended learning options to students over the past decade by combining traditional face to face learning with synchronous teaching approaches for didactic lecturers. Though the pandemic brought many challenges, the Colleges experience of blended learning certainly contributed to a rapid response with minimal disruption to student and their education. In that context and for the purpose of this case, the college has always retained on site in person proctored examinations.

Case Description
This case study relates to the period of December 2021 to April 2022 and in particular the end of semester terminal assessment. It is however important to note that the College's overall assessment practice encompasses a small number of sit-down examinations across semesters on the undergraduate programme with between 1 – 2 terminal (in person) examinations per year for the four-year Undergraduate programmes, with one sit down examination in each of the MA programmes.

As semester 1 of the academic year progressed it became apparent relatively early that terminal assessment in the form of sit-down examinations were going to prove problematic given the public health advice. The College was also cognisant of the need to make a decision early to provide certainty for students in terms of assessment. At the first Academic Council meeting of the year (October 2021) the Council made the decision to move unseen sit down examinations to open book examinations, which would be proctored using Zoom.

Some modifications to the original guidelines for proctored examinations were made, approved by Academic Council, and advised to QQI. Key exemplars of these modified guidelines provided to students are outlined below.

- In order to commence examinations in a prompt and timely manner, students are required to be at their PC (in a quiet area) and logged into the Zoom exam room fifteen minutes before an examination begins.
- Students must turn off all mobile phones and ensure that their microphones are muted once the examination commences.
- Students must work in silence with microphones muted and cameras on during the examination and are not permitted to talk to one another or members of their household, use

mobile phones, pass notes, or communicate in any way with anyone other than the invigilator until the examination has ended.
- Students are permitted to bring notes and or reading material into the examination, however students are not permitted to access the internet.
- At the commencement of the examination, questions will be released through the Learning Management system.
- Once students have completed their examination, they will be required to immediately upload their answers to the LMS in Microsoft word.
- All answers uploaded to the LMS will be subject to VeriCite similarity checks and requirements. Please note the activity history of MS Word documents will be surveyed – any activity outside the examination timeframe or any pasting from external sources to the document will nullify the submission and be deemed a breach of examination rules.

The move to "open book" proctored online examinations from an "unseen" proctored online examination was originally intended to mitigate challenges in relation to monitoring the environment in which students were based while taking such examinations from home or outside a more traditionally controlled environment. This process highlighted the need for specific QA Policies and procedures specific to fully online proctoring. It was felt that without comprehensive adjustments of the existing QA the college couldn't best assure the quality of Assessment in this environment.

Case Outcome:
Following the assessment cycle and a review of the processes, the sub-group identified a range of issues for consideration in relation to the Quality Assurance of online proctored examinations and developed a range of procedures associated with online proctored examinations and presented them to the Quality and standard committee which have been approved by Academic council and form part of the submission to the QQI pilot programme to develop QA Guidelines for Online Programmes. The proposed Procedures associated with Remotely Proctored Examinations comprises the following elements:

- System Requirements
- Pre-Examination Process
- Online Examination Procedure
- Procedures associated with Technical Issues
- Grievance and Review
- Breaches of Examination Regulations
- Procedure for dealing with Breaches of Examination Regulations