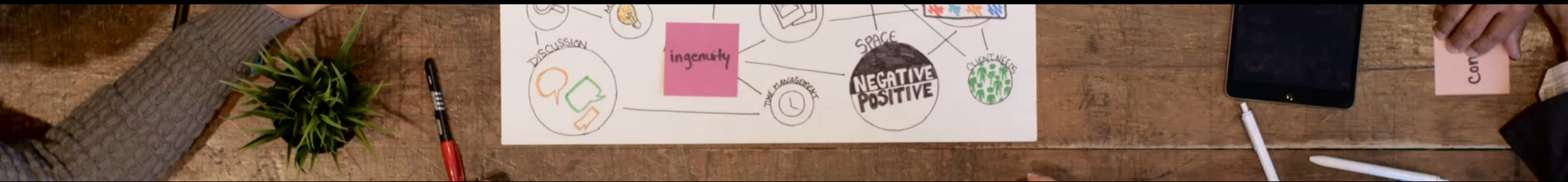# Challenges for Students Engaging in Assessment

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Topics of Discussion

Some of the main challenges we see for students facing in-person assessment.

- Travelling
- Work
- International students need to learn Irish system
- Unforeseen Circumstances
- External hall exams make it more difficult for students with working schedules

Alternatives to in-person exams/assessment being used as only form of marking students

- CA exams/assessments in "bitesize" credits that contribute to the final grade
- Online final exams

Travelling/Commuter students

- With numbers of commuter students rising per institute each year amidst our housing crisis, we so often see students having to commute over 4 hours roundtrip for a 2-hour exam.
- Students spend so much of their time commuting nowadays they have so little free time left. It's one thing to expect them to commute if it's worth their time, but is it really fair to expect them to commute twice as long as they're expected to stay for?

Working students

- So many of our students work part-time or even full-time jobs to support themselves and fund their education. Those who do work part-time usually pick up more hours once lectures quieten down towards the holidays to work up some extra cash while they have the opportunity.

- Attending in-person exams that carry such a high weight of their grade not only puts pressure on the student to take time off work to attend, but also requires them to lessen their workload due to study hours.

- In-person assignments are putting our students who depend on their employment to cover their costs at a disadvantage and adds an unnecessary pressure to that which they already face.

International students need to learn the Irish system

- International students come to our country to study, build friendships, and explore our culture, however they have their own set of challenges.

- Our international students face an entirely different set of stressors to our domestic students such as loneliness, and loneliness. These are all made much worse by the added stress of trying to figure out our assessment system while also navigating how we undertake our in-person assessments at the same time.

Unforeseen Circumstances

- We often see students dealing with unforeseen circumstances that arise in their personal life. An example of this would be certain family issues or a bereavement. If limited to in-person exams as a final (or any major) assessment, they are more likely to miss out on the credit due to unavoidable absence. It's a lot easier to request an extension for a CA* project than go through the process of an IEC** form when certain unforeseen circumstances arise.

* Continuous Assessment
** Individual Extenuating Circumstances

In hall exams are hard for students with working schedules

- As mentioned previously, students already struggle to take time off work and attend in person exams. Often enough, if the exam is held in an external venue or exam hall, students require extra time off to navigate the area and find the hall to ensure they arrive on time. This eats even more time out of their working day, as a result costing them even more time and more money than originally expected.

Potential Ideas

Different Forms of Assessment

- Courses will have Continuous Assessments (CAs) that will contribute to the final grade of a module.
    - However, this varies per module and per course on how much a CA can be worth, ranging from 30% - 50% (discounting 100% CA modules)
- Some examples:
    - Multiple Choice Questions
    - Presentations
    - Reports
    - Practical's

Different Forms of Assessment

- Courses have online exams.
  - Often these are open book, and the goal is to look at how the student applies the knowledge learned over the course of the module, rather than how much can be memorised
- These often show how well the student understands the material given during the lectures.

Use of AI with Assessments

- Since the Pandemic, we've seen more cases of students using AI software to aid in their assessments.

- While there is concern about student's using this to write all their assessments, it is a tool that could be used to aid in their studies.

- The likes of ChatGPT, if used correctly, can aid students in researching topics, but it needs to be investigated more.

End of Term Exams

- We've seen from before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic that students have struggled with in-hall exams.

- The Pandemic changed how exams functioned, looking at more open-book styled exams which were beneficial for majority of students.

- Since lockdown has ended, most third level institutions have gone back to in-hall exams, which has affected the number of students that sit repeat exams.

- Rather than using the module materials provided, open-book exams could encourage students to use other resources provided by lecturers.