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COVID-19 course rep briefing on assessment

As the end of semester one gets nearer, students will have more questions about assessments, including exams. As a course rep, you could think about some of the things students are talking about and begin to discuss these with your class and teaching staff.

It's important to remember that, for some, assessments may be the same as before COVID-19, but for others, there might be big changes that might cause some problems or issues for students. There might also be extra complications with courses that have professional bodies involved in supporting and accrediting the assessments.

There is likely to be a range of changes that have happened across your institution with regards to assessment, from the range of assessment types offered, a move away from formative assessment towards summative assessment, and perhaps even the removal of exams entirely. Clear communication and guidance from staff will be vital here to ensure students are able to effectively engage in their assessments.

This briefing aims to give course reps some guidance on the types of questions they should be asking staff and students about assessments:

Questions course reps should be asking students:

- Are you aware of the type of assessment you will be doing? (e.g. online exams, essay submission, in-person exams, practical submissions)
- What guidance has been provided to you in relation to changes in assessment because of COVID-19?
- Have you been provided with clear assessment criteria?
- Have you had an opportunity to familiarise yourself with any new online assessment technology?
- Have you received support to engage in alternative assessment formats?
- For online assessments, are you aware of what support is in place for you if you do not have the correct technology available at home?
- Have you received assessment deadlines/exam dates with enough notice to prepare adequately?



Things students may be asking course reps about:

- Why do some courses have exams and others do not?
- What happens if there are any technology problems during the exam?
- Timing of online assessment, and not having a quiet space at home to complete the assessment.
- Concerns about the safety of in-person exams during COVID-19.
- 'No detriment' policies.
- What is happening with practical assessments that may have been moved to semester two, hoping that teaching and assessment would be back to normal by then?
- What impact do professional accreditation and professional body regulations have on assessments?

This is not a complete list of questions, as each institution will have specific assessment policies and practices, rather, it is a resource for you as a course rep to use to begin the conversations. These questions can provide useful prompts when having discussions, both during formal student-staff committee meetings and informal chats with students. By considering these questions now, it will hopefully help in improving communication between staff and students about the upcoming assessments.

Remember that there will be some issues that arise that are not the responsibility of a course rep to solve, and you should refer students with specific technology or access requirements to the staff who are best placed to resolve these issues.

Further information

You can find more guidance on assessment in sparqs' [Suggested questions for course reps COVID-19 edition](#).

