

GUIDELINES FOR USING TEST CENTRE IN STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Updated October 2011

These guidelines have been reviewed by the (former) CSU Learning & Teaching Committee and ILSCOSC and are part of a **risk management strategy** to ensure that staff are able to comply with their responsibilities around assessment in enhancing the student learning experience. It is important that the available online assessment technology is used responsibly for the assessment purposes for which it was designed. Staff using online tools for assessment purposes should be familiar with the CSU **Assessment policy**. CSU's **Generic Guidelines for online assessment at CSU** that have been developed towards encouraging effective online assessment practice.

Introduction to the tool

Test Centre is an online assessment tool available as an elective tool in *CSU Interact*. Test Centre is designed to be used for the creation and administration of a range of typical assessment tasks and surveys. It supports objective questions (multiple choice, true/false etc.) with automatic marking as well as text input questions that can be marked online. Although the software itself is reliable, the nature of online systems in general, associated security limitations and broader support networks mean that there are certain recommended uses for Test Centre and certain design features in the software of which users need to be aware. A Risk Management Guide (see Table 1 below) has been developed to assist staff to make choices about how to design and administer student assessment tasks through Test Centre.

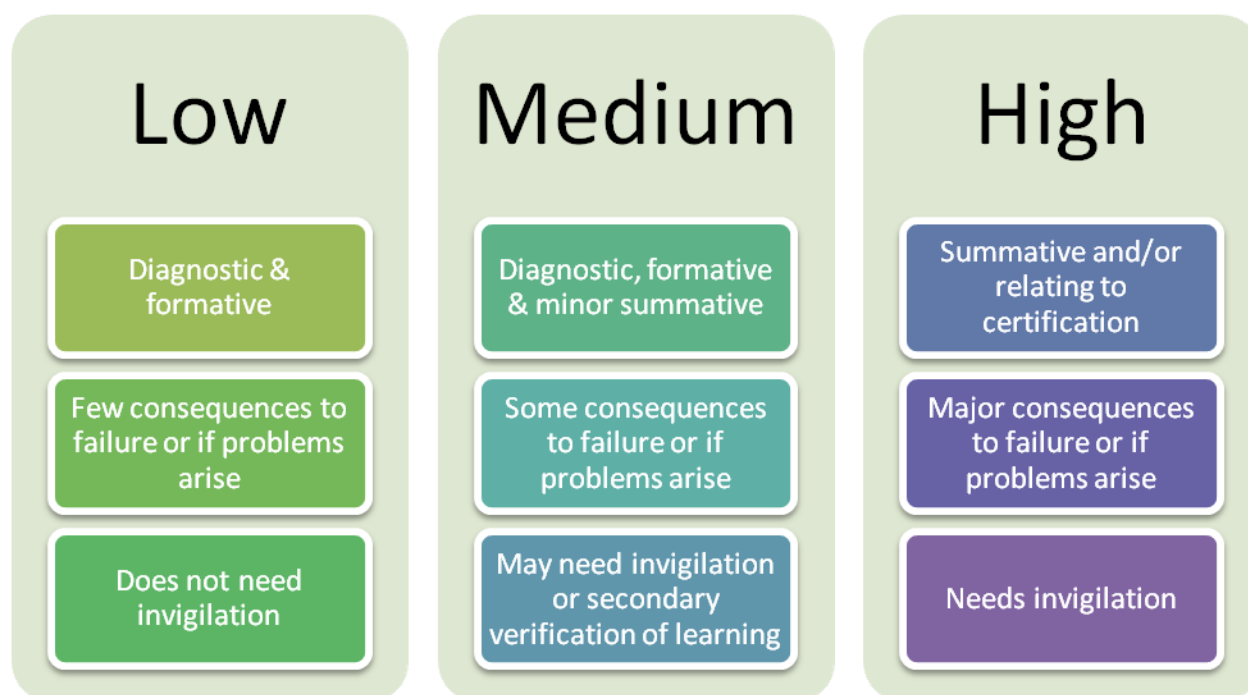
Effective use of Test Centre

In October 2009 Test Centre was approved by the OLE Programme Steering Committee and University L&T committee for use in both **summative** and predominantly **formative assessment** within these agreed guidelines.

WARNING: Recommended use in formative and summative assessment

Test Centre is NOT recommended as a tool for delivering high stakes, end-of-session exams and large-scale summative assessment tasks*. **It is not supported by the university for use at this level.** If unsure about appropriate use of the tool please contact your educational designer in the first instance. Although Test Centre functionality supports the attachment of files and enables the creation of tasks called 'assignments', it is not recommended for use as a large scale assignment submission system. CSU's EASTS is the preferred assignment submission system.

How high are the stakes?



Test Centre can be used for a variety of **assessment** activities ranging from self-assessment revision exercises to open book tests, surveys and tasks. Classifying the assessment task as low, medium or high stakes assessment will help with the planning and attention to the risk factors.

The following are some assessment scenarios that Test Centre can support when due planning is done:

- **revision exercises** – objective questions (MCQ, true/false, matching etc.) including text input questions
- **self-assessment exercises** – e.g. familiarisation with terminology, identification of parts of plant or animal anatomy from images
- **open book tests** – e.g. a mid-term open-book test/exam available for completion over a period of a week
- **surveys** – providing feedback on learning and teaching related issues etc.
- **setting a reminder of assessment Tasks** - A Task in Test Centre is a notification of something students need to complete that is not necessarily online e.g. attend a laboratory session, do a forum posting or oral presentation.

Test Centre supports the following objective question types: Multiple Choice, True/False, Fill In The Blank, Matching. It also supports text input type questions such as short answer/essay, Surveys and Tasks. A Task is a notification of something students need to complete that is not necessarily online e.g. attend a laboratory session, do a forum posting or oral presentation. Test Centre can be used to develop interactive learning activities whereby students can teach themselves e.g. by linking to an online simulation program or by accessing banks of images and terminology.

Risk management strategies

Know the capabilities of Test Centre
Know the limitations of online systems
(i.e. what the system CAN do , and what it CAN'T do)
Know your students
Manage the risks

The risks here have been identified as those which might prevent students from successfully completing a given assessment task in Test Centre.

Understanding the capabilities of online systems

Users of online systems need an understanding of the capabilities of online systems when planning online assessment. This should inform appropriate risk management strategies.

- **Security** – for off-campus use of Test Centre, the only security around completion of the test and compliance with plagiarism and student conduct is the student log-in and student honesty (there is no guarantee that the person logged in is the student themselves).
- **Possible server down-time** - outages to CSU servers are kept to a minimum but these may impact on users trying to access *CSU Interact* and other applications. There are regular scheduled maintenance outages to some CSU systems and other outages which are notified through What's New and on the log-in page to my.csu. Staff and students need to be aware of and plan for possible outages to personal ISP providers for off-campus access.
- **Server delays** – time delays may occur between submission by the user and the receipt of the submission by the remote server. This may affect submissions on time limited tests.
- **Time zone differences** – the CSU server is set to NSW time so staff need to be aware of the differences in time zones and to inform students appropriately.
- **Correct settings for tests** - There are numerous different settings available for publication of tests in Test Centre and users should familiarise themselves with these to ensure that the right settings are used for the task at hand.

All assessment tasks (formative and summative) should be an integral part of the subject design and learning experience. Careful design and setting up of online assessment activities will ensure students can access the task/activity when required. It is emphasised that CSU online systems have a high degree of reliability. However, in dealing with off-campus personal computers, a dispersed campus environment and in catering for a variety of time zones for users one needs to manage for the risk of server down time and individual variation in access to the internet and *Interact* for online assessment tasks.

Risk factor guide to designing effective assessment tasks with Test Centre

(this is a guide only and assumes that the test has been set up correctly and that the technical conditions for testing are adequate)

Risk factor	Low risk	Moderate risk	High risk
Single submission tasks*		X	
Multiple submission tasks*	X		
Open ended assessment tasks+	X		
Open ended timed assessment tasks++		X	
Fixed time assessment **		X	
Small cohort	X		
Large cohort (over 100)		X	
Large cohort open ended timed assessment		X	
Large cohort fixed time single submission task			X
Text input task (short answers etc.)		X	
Low stakes assessment	X		
Medium stakes assessment		X	
High stakes assessment			X

**Single submission tests are those set up for a user to have only one attempt to access and submit the test.*

Multiple submissions refers to a test where a user can have multiple attempts.

+Open ended – test is open for a long period of time i.e. measured in days/weeks not hours.

++ Open ended timed – e.g. test is open for a week and when accessed the test has a duration of one hour

***Fixed time - e.g 10am – 11am on a specific date*

The risk factors have been determined from consideration of multiple factors that will contribute towards ensuring that on a given day at a given time a student will be able to complete the assessment task. These factors include:

- Subject coordinator ensuring that the test is accessible and available for the particular student cohort
- Subject coordinator has the settings for the test correct for the particular task (the test is published, access times correct, type of navigation & return of grades selections made correctly etc.)
- Students ensuring they have adequate online access (at home, work, or on-campus)

- Students are adequately prepared for the online assessment task (familiar with technology, have completed practice tests etc.)
- Dependency of the Test Centre task on a fixed time period access by users
- Numbers of users submitting an individual test simultaneously
- Possible outages on CSU servers
- Internet access problems on the client side (private ISP issues etc.).

Accessibility

Students with disabilities

In the sharing of learning resources and design of assessment, staff need to be aware of those students with disabilities and those who have identified specific needs in accessibility issues related to the use of technology.

- Test Centre is not easy to use for students using certain assistive technologies so alternative tasks or formats will need to be considered where students have identified their position.
- Contact Student Central, and Disability Services for assistance in planning for students who have identified an accessibility issue in accessing online activities.

Support

Support available to staff using online assessment technology

- **Self-help resources and guidelines** are available online in *Interact* Help (Test Centre).
 - Help guides
 - Video tutorials
 - Stories of how others are using Test Centre
- **Professional development** - Learning and Teaching Services (LTS) offers support via the educational designers (EDs) around the design of assessment tasks and professional development in learning how to use Test Centre. A Common Teaching Standards Workshop on Good Practice in Online Assessment is available on request (see your educational designer).
- **IT Service Desk support** - Division of Information Technology provides IT Service Desk support around technical difficulties associated with the technology (logging on, access etc.). Most issues to do with specific test access by an individual student should be directed to the subject coordinator in the first instance as these are most likely test settings related issues.

Support available to students using online assessment technology

Self-Help resources - Online Help resources will be made available by Student Services and DIT via the *Interact* Help. The Student Central Knowledge base will support student queries.

Learning to use Test Centre - subject coordinators are responsible for providing some support for students in the use of Test Centre, most users seem to find the system easy to use. Where possible and staff can access PD whereby they can assist their students.

Technical assistance - For technical issues (logging on, access to sites , submitting a task etc.) students should contact the IT Service Desk.

Additional information

Test Centre as an assignment tool – the tool uses the terminology ‘Assignment’ as one type of assessment task. This is just a classification and the purpose could be varied. **Test Centre does not replace EASTS** as the preferred assignment submission system. However, for the purposes of automatic marking of all/part of an assessment task and the interactivity the online tool provides Test Centre can be used for some types of assignments. Test Centre supports the attachment of files by staff and students. However, for large scale submission and marking of files e.g. a series of PowerPoint presentations by students, it is recommended that staff use EASTS as this provides more functionality and central tracking of assignments.

Correct settings - You can apply a range of settings, including allowing more than one attempt, setting a time limit, allowing/disallowing questions to be returned to later, giving feedback and/or hints, showing correct answers for feedback, selecting a number of questions at random from a pool of questions (so that each student or each attempt is likely to be different). Subject coordinators should take time to familiarise themselves with the options before making their final selection and publishing tests.

Links

(The CSU Assessment Policy is being reviewed in 2011. These links will change and users are advised to search the CSU Academic manual for relevant policy sections.)

Academic manual – Assessment coursework subjects http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/academic-manual/gcontm.htm

Academic Manual – Principles of assessment http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/academic-manual/docs/g1-2.rtf

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