

# REMOTE PROCTORED EXAMS: MINIMIZING THE HARMS AND MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS

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Remote proctored exams are a type of assessment where students sit an examination on a computer while they are monitored through a range of technologies such as their webcam and microphone (Dawson, 2021). During the pandemic, use of remote proctoring has soared, as educators have sought to replicate the security of in-person exams in an online environment (Clausen, 2020). Opinions about remote proctoring tend to be highly polarized. On the one hand, some educators, academic integrity experts, civil liberties advocates, and anti-surveillance scholars view remote proctoring as harmful for students and learning, and an intrusion into students' lives (Feathers, 2021). On the other hand, some educators, accrediting bodies, and the vendors of these products, view remote proctoring as a necessary step to address cheating in online assessment (Butler-Henderson and Crawford, 2020; Dawson, 2021). This presentation does not seek to address the debate about if remote proctoring is appropriate or acceptable; there are other resources available that address that question (e.g. Bearman, Dawson, O'Donnell, Tai, and Jorre de St Jorre, 2020). Instead, it recognizes that remote proctoring is currently happening in many institutions, and seeks to explore how to minimize the harms of remote proctoring while maximizing the potential benefits.

In late 2020 I was contracted by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA, Australia's higher education regulator) to produce a set of suggestions for institutions seeking to use remote proctored exams. I consulted to varying degrees with more than 20 scholars from four continents. Over three iterations I gradually refined the following ten suggestions which form the basis of this presentation. These are available online in greater detail in a free resource I will provide at the presentation (Dawson, 2020). In brief, the consultation process and the literature suggested that

to minimize the potential harms and maximise the potential benefits of remote proctored exams, the following conditions should be met:

1. Remote proctored exams are used as a last resort: They should not be considered a default assessment type, rather, they should be one that is used only after other avenues have been explored.
2. Exam designs are sound assessments of learning: The only type of assessment that remote proctoring is suited to is assessment of learning, not assessment for learning. The exam designs used need to meet the standards of assessment for learning, such as reliability and validity.
3. Only the minimal restrictions required are used: Each additional restriction, such as a prohibition on the use of notes or particular software, needs to be enforced, which makes the task of proctoring that much harder. Less restrictive designs such as open book exams are easier to enforce than more restrictive designs.
4. Students are offered an alternative: For a variety of legitimate reasons, some students may be unable to take a remote proctored exam, or they may choose not to. Many of the potential harms of remote proctored exams can be addressed by simply allowing students an alternative, such as a pen-and-paper examination.
5. Equity, diversity, adversity and accessibility are catered for: Students come from a broad cross-section of society, and any technology or assessment design needs to be considered in terms of how it may advantage or disadvantage particular groups.
6. Providers pilot remote proctored exams adequately before using them in assessment: As with other innovations in high-stakes contexts, a hasty switchover to remote proctoring can be

- disastrous. Careful piloting involves more than just a phased implementation of the technology; it includes work on policy, pedagogy, logistics, and work with students.
7. A whole-of-institution approach is taken: There are many groups within an institution that need to be consulted and involved in implementing remote proctored exams, including groups such as the exams unit, the IT department, the learning and teaching office, legal, governance teams, and most importantly, everyday educators and students.
  8. Regulatory requirements and standards around privacy and data security are met: Different jurisdictions have a range of legislation and expectations around the use of student personal information. There are also a range of interpretations of those requirements, such as the varying views on the acceptability of proctoring under the GDPR (Clausen, 2020).
  9. Effective governance, monitoring, QA, evaluation and complaints procedures are in place: Remote proctoring is usually implemented in partnership with a third-party vendor, and the entire partnership should be subject to the same institutional procedures that other major initiatives are.
  10. Staff and student capacity building and support are available and ongoing: Everyone involved in remote proctored exams needs to feel they have access to high-quality capacity building and support. This includes support before, during and after exams, as well as clear guidance about how to raise concerns if they think there is a problem.
- Remote proctoring may be contentious, but it is my intention with the above practice suggestions to reach a pragmatic middle ground.

## REFERENCES

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