



IMPLEMENTING DEPARTMENT-WIDE E-ASSESSMENT IN REAL ESTATE AND PLANNING

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OVERVIEW

In September 2015 Dr Angelique Chettiparamb launched a pilot online assessment project within the Department of Real Estate and Planning. The Department was able to extensively survey both students and staff to explore impact and avenues for improvement.

OBJECTIVES

In 2015, the Department for Real Estate and Planning (REP) made the decision to transition to Department-wide online assessment. The Department adopted e-assessment to support originality checking, submission, marking, moderation, feedback and validation of assessment of coursework submitted through external examining. In doing so, REP wanted to improve the ease of submission and marking for staff and students, increase the speed of marking and decrease administrative workload in terms of handling assignments. It was looking to improve security, increase the quality of feedback, increase ease of access for external examiners and improve student satisfaction.

CONTEXT

Real Estate and Planning (REP) is one of six departments within the Henley Business School. Around 650 students are enrolled each year of which around 330 are undergraduates, taught by around 35 staff. When the University launched the Project of E-Assessment at Reading (PEAR) in 2014, to support the transition to online submission and start to trial online marking and feedback, REP made the decision to adopt end to end online assessment and become a trial case for the PEAR project. REP decided against dual submission and therefore all coursework was submitted electronically. Due to coursework requiring multiple files of different formats, and the presence of group submissions, REP decided to adopt the Blackboard marking tool as Turnitin does not support multiple file submissions or group submissions.

IMPLEMENTATION

As a pilot for the PEAR project, REP explored potential opportunities and issues surrounding University policies including anonymity,

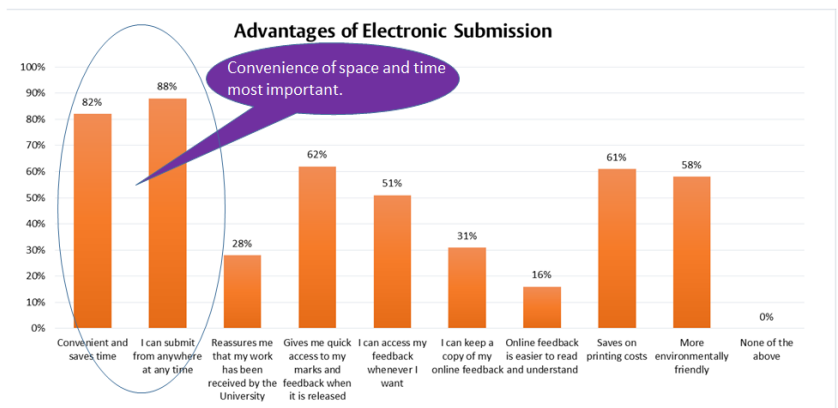
moderation, quality of feedback, plagiarism, and turnaround times. Work flows and protocols for setting up submission links and rubrics, dealing with late submissions and non submitters, handling group work and delegated marking, processes of publishing marks and feedback and handling the external examination process were also explored. Early decisions were made surrounding the choice of marking tools, submission times, the use of rubrics, provision of draft areas for plagiarism checks and policies on staff wanting to print coursework copies. REP then ensured sufficient training was available for all staff and students and that communication with all stakeholders was on-going throughout the change process.

IMPACT

Online assessment, using either Blackboard or Turnitin Grademark marking tools, was firmly embedded within the Department. Student feedback however was mixed. This was evidenced in an online survey held in 2016 and completed by 85 students. The main issue with the Blackboard marking tool for students was the lack of email receipt (this has since been addressed by Blackboard). The main issue with the Turnitin tool was with regard to its placement alongside the originality checking link for draft submissions (this has since been addressed by REP by designating a different area for draft submissions). Students also wanted immediate guidance on what to do if something goes wrong. This has since been addressed through detailed online guidance from the TEL team now available through the 'support for students' tab on Blackboard. A broad range of advantages were identified as shown in the chart below. Most clearly these surrounded convenience, the time savings and flexibility of submission, in that student can submit anytime and from anywhere.

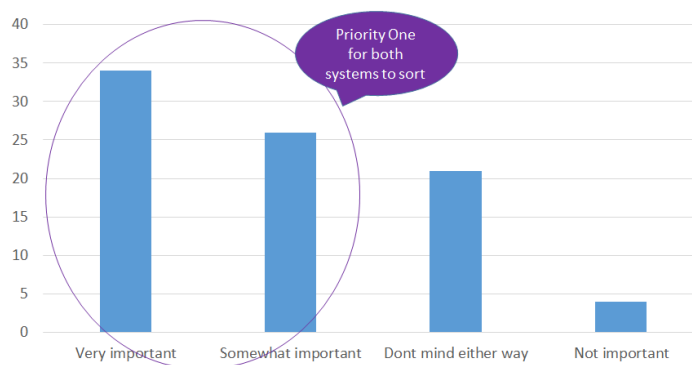


Student feedback



The majority of students found accessing marks and feedback easy, appreciated the use of rubrics to add clarity to marking criteria and stressed the importance of anonymity throughout the process.

How important is it to you that your work is marked anonymously?



Colleagues reported a number of issues, the most significant being ease of system manipulation in Blackboard, difficulties surrounding anonymity in both systems and the need for standardising the various options for feedback. REP colleagues also reported a broad range of positive feedback too. These involved ease of access, flexibility in marking from home or when travelling; system security; ease of processing coursework by admin and potentially improved feedback as comments are easier to provide in multiple ways.

REFLECTIONS

REP has followed an approach that systematised all components of e-assessment. Overall this was a largely positive experience for students and staff but not without some difficulties. Clearly, receipting submission is important and is now possible and provided within both Blackboard and Turnitin systems. The staff experience would be improved if the Blackboard marking tool was easier to manipulate, in that the quick mark facility was available, or the Turnitin marking tool was suitable to handle multiple files and group work. Consistency would be improved if REP standardised the various locations for feedback. Much of the difficulties faced in 2015-16 have now been addressed by the providers and by REP and the TEL team. Both Blackboard and Turnitin, for instance, have improved our ability to e-mail non-submitters or identify a corrupt file. For coursework with multiple files, Blackboard marking tool is the only option and at the moment, anonymity is only possible through a work around. Overall it is important to note that technology on its own is not enough to achieve good feedback practices. The approach in REP built on a foundation informed by quality assurance (university policies, anonymity, etc.), on which pedagogic considerations were mobilised (feedback quality). Specific decisions on system choice, rubrics, etc. were kept flexible to be decided at individual coursework level. Online assessment is an enabling factor but there must be sufficient staff capacity to invest in good feedback practice to achieve the strongest results.

LINKS

To read more about Dr Chettiparamb's presentation on the implementation of e-assessment in REP at the Blackboard Conference, Milan, March 2017, please click [here](#).