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HEC POLICY GUIDANCE SERIES ON COVID-19

These guidelines have been drawn from the HEC document “HEC policy guidance series on covid-19 no. 6.” It consists of Principles of Assessment Policies, Approaches to Assessment, Discouraged Methods (Close-book exam and MCQs), Special Concerns and Situations and Thesis Defense. These guidelines duly approved by worthy VC will be implemented by all the Deans and HoDs forthwith.

1. Principles of Assessment Policies

- a. No promotion without assessment
- b. Semesters not to be wasted
- c. Consideration of Pass/Fail option
- d. Prevention of cheating, unpermitted collaboration, and plagiarism
- e. Use the same method of assessment for students in a course
- f. Grievances mechanism

2. Approaches to Assessment:

a. Close-book exam

Close-book exam is a conventional method and is discouraged, should be adopted and adapted based upon capabilities of the universities. Universities may use any combination of the viable options such as open book exams, end of semester written work, and oral exams and presentations.

b. Open-book exam

Open-book exam is very different from the close-book exam. It requires application of knowledge instead of recalling memorized information. (for more details see Appendix A). It needs time and training to implement. However, to incorporate this idea all the Deans and HoDs will include why, how and comparisons questions in the final assessments and examinations.

c. End of semester written work

End of semester written work includes research paper, annotated anthology, literature review, reports, article and reflection paper.

d. Oral exams and presentations

Suggested tasks using videoconferencing include, Class Presentations (10 minutes), One to one oral exam (15-20 minutes) and audiovisual presentations (recorded audio/video) followed by a question and answer session to defend the work.

3. Discouraged Methods (Not Generally Viable Under Present Conditions)

a. Close-Book Exam

HEC opines that in close-book exam, questions can be easily answered by consulting course materials or peers, thus, it is hard to detect if the student has answered himself or cheated.

LGU FMs to be vigilant as, first, the answers (copied or drawn from Google) can be easily identified. Secondly, calculated time limit deters them to cheat. Thirdly, the students are required to write in their own words. Fourthly, contents drawn are not to the point. Fifthly, close session exam interface cannot be navigated. Sixthly, is to have conceptual questions like ‘how and why’ and finally, stringent cheating SOPs. It has been observed students are highly preoccupied and this hinders them from cheating. All the above bring this examination close to open-book.

b. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

MCQs administered in traditional manner without sophisticated LMS platforms. LGU has a sophisticated LMS along with Moodle that can shuffle the questions to avoid cheating. The FMs are supposed to enhance their question bank periodically. It provides highly timed exam and students do not get time to collaborate. Moreover, MCQs should not exceed weightage of 40-45%.

c. Final Examination

Following HEC Policy Guidelines for weightage and HEC Policy Guidelines for Presentations (10 marks) and Oral Exam (5 marks) (COVID-19 No. 6 (21.5.20) provided above, the guidelines below in the form of tables are presented for BS level programme and MS/Mphil/PhD respectively to be implemented by all the Deans and HoDs.

(i) Final Exam pattern for BS Level Program

Type	Frequency	Marks	Time
Objective Type	10 Questions	10 Marks	
Short Question	05 Questions	10 Marks	
Long Question	01 Question	05 Marks	50 minutes
Oral Exam		05 Marks	Not on Moodle
Student Presentation	10 Minutes each	10 Marks	Not on Moodle
Total		40 Marks	

Table 1: Final Exam pattern for BS Level Program

(ii) Proposed Final Exam pattern for MS/M.phil/PhD

Type	Frequency	Marks	Time
Objective Type	10 Questions	10 Marks	
Short Question	05 Questions	10 Marks	
Long Question	01 Question	05 Marks	50 minutes
Oral Exam		05 Marks	Not on Moodle
Presentation on Research Paper/Reports/ Articles/		10 Marks	Not on Moodle
Total		40 Marks	

Table 2: Final Exam pattern for MS/M.phil/PhD

e. Proposed Semester work

Proposed Semester work	
Type	Frequency
Mid Term Exam	25%
Final Term Exam	40 %
Quiz	10%
Assignment/Presentation	20%
Sessional	05%
Total	100

Table 3: Proposed Semester work

4. Special Concerns and Situations

a. Final Year Students: The universities must ensure final year students are able to graduate without losing significant time.

b. Special challenges with respect to assessment for STEM subjects (with lab):

(i) Lab requirements can be fulfilled:

For introductory-level courses, it may be possible to assign written work in lieu of the lab requirement.

For higher-level courses, the university should explore options such as:

completion of lab requirements after easing of lock-down and to be fulfilled under conditions of social distancing, or shifting the lab requirement, if possible, to the next semester, or other options depending on type of course.

(ii) The exam should be designed so that it can be answered using a computer. If this is not possible, then either;

(iii) the student can send a snap shot of their answer sheet using their smart phones to the LMS or Moodle.

(iv) Create open-book tests for STEM subjects

Can ask more conceptual questions (with word problems rather than simple computations), asking students to identify errors in a computation (this can't be done over google) etc.

c. Students with Limited or No Connectivity:

The policy should accommodate such students with no internet connectivity, oral exams may be taken over the phone (if available). Examine the student using method more suitable to his/her situation.

d. Students Facing Medical Difficulties:

This policy also accommodates such students who face medical difficulties or other problems. Any exemptions granted here should be limited, and approval must be obtained by senior university management.

6. Thesis Defense: The HEC has issued a separate policy notification regarding thesis / dissertation defense as follows:

a. HEC Guidelines for online examination of MPhil/MS/PhD Students

HEC guidelines for online examination of MPhil/MS/PhD Students during COVID-19 situation:

Sequence of Actions of PhD Dissertation	Sequence of Actions of MPhil/MS Thesis
1. Comprehensive Exam	1. Research Proposal Presentation
2. Research Proposal Presentation	2. Student Supervisor Meetings
3. Student Supervisor Meetings	3. Thesis Submission
4. Thesis Submission	4. Internal and External Evaluation
5. Foreign Evaluation	5. Defense
6. Local Evaluation	6. Award
7. Public Defense	
8. Award	

b. Process of Electronic Exam of MPhil/MS/PhD

1. Until 30 August 2020 or, in case the Covid-19 restrictions are further extended, until two months after the removal of such restrictions, LGU will conduct MPhil/MS/PhD defense through videoconferencing or electronic meetings.
2. Where the university rules currently do not allow electronic defense or electronic juries, the Vice Chancellor may authorize it upon request from the Coordinator BASR/Director of Academics/ Dean through the Controller of Examination or other relevant authority, subject to subsequent ratification by the appropriate university statutory body, at the earliest possible opportunity.
3. In LGU, Coordinator BASR/COE is the authorized person to receive dissertations, theses, or project reports from students, evaluation reports from internal or external evaluators, or any other documents required with regard to the guidelines and her/his full contact information, especially email address, will be publicized widely and through all appropriate means.

4. Submission of PhD dissertations, MPhil/ MS theses, or final project reports may be made electronically to the Coordinator BASR/COE. All other prescribed requirements for the submission, including format, deadlines, and content, will remain unchanged.
5. The submitted documents (i.e., PhD dissertations, MPhil/ MS theses, or final project reports) will be circulated electronically to both internal and external evaluators for review and comments. The Evaluation Reports will be submitted electronically to the designated authority.
6. LGU will adopt appropriate security measures to safeguard against possible misuse, breach of privacy, or unauthorized leakage of evaluation reports or other documents.
7. In order to ensure the open public defense of dissertations, theses, and projects, Dean/HoD will manage the arrangements of the participation of all interested persons, including faculty, students, and staff of the university as well as members of the public. These arrangements will include an open call for registration on the university's as well as HEC's websites of the online links needed for participation, in accordance with the code to be prescribed by the university.
8. LGU shall ensure the presence of all members of the Defense Committee at the electronic defense. In case of any reason including technical issues, if one or more required examiners are not able to take part fully in the session, the defense would need be rescheduled until all issues are resolved.
9. LGU will use "Zoom" for online defense.
10. LGU will be responsible to ensure that all the members of the Supervisory Defense Committee and the candidate have the appropriate ICT to participate in the defense. Moreover, the technology is tested prior to the defense and remote participation is uninterrupted and, if interrupted, the defense will pause until the connectivity issues are fully resolved.
11. The proceedings of the online defense will be recorded with prior information to all the Supervisory Defense Committee and the candidate, and maintained as confidential record with LGU, for possible evaluation by the LGU or the HEC.
12. The digital signatures of the Supervisory Defense Committee will be sufficient to certify the results of the defense as well as on thesis.
13. Controller of Examination with approval of Vice Chancellor will announce result after receiving it from the evaluation committee.

Appendix A

Approach How it Works Specific Considerations

A. OPEN BOOK EXAMS The design of such exams is very different from the design of closed book tests. The underlying principle is that answering questions requires application of knowledge rather than recalling memorized information. While the test will be designed so that the student may

access course materials (or possibly the web), special precautions will be needed to guard against (a) plagiarism and (b) unpermitted collaboration. Students must be warned against this.

A1 Open Book Exam

All students get the take-home openbook exam at the same time, and must submit it back within the normal time required to complete the exam (e.g. 2 hours). A suitable option, especially if delivered through an LMS (but can be sent/received over email). Technical issues can be a problem, if students don't submit within the time period (no way of knowing whether a student took extra time or wasn't able to submit within time). To guard against misuse, late exams should not generally be accepted after a certain time period has elapsed.

A2 Open Book Exam (Slot Within Timed Window)

Students get the take-home open-book exam for a time window (e.g. 24 hours) and can take the test for the specified duration (e.g. 2 hours) at any time. Once the student starts the test, they must submit within the stipulated time period. Cannot be done without an LMS, which tracks when the student started the test. If a single test is made for all student, this is not encouraged since the test will likely get 'leaked.' Can guard against this risk by creating multiple question papers that are randomly sent to students.

A3 Open Book Exam (Timed Window)

All students get the take-home open-book exam at the same time, and must submit it back within a stipulated time period (e.g. 24 hours). In contrast to option A1 above, this requires writing essays, reflections in response to specific prompts in a slightly longer time period etc. A viable option, can be delivered through LMS or email. Test questions for this option will test higher order skills, and application of knowledge (in essay-type format). The risk of plagiarism or unpermitted collaboration is higher compared to option A1.

END OF SEMESTER WRITTEN WORK For certain disciplines, this may be preferable than exams. End-of-term papers are routinely the standard method of assessment for courses in certain disciplines in top universities of the world. This method may be optimal given current circumstances, where invigilated or proctored exams are not possible at this time. The greatest challenges with this model are (a) plagiarism, (b) unpermitted help or collaboration, such as asking others to write the assignments, and (c) weak research and writing skills. However, these risks are present even during normal times, and should not materially increase because of the student being at home.

B1 Research Paper

Students are asked to write research papers on specific areas covered in the course, normally involving original research using materials other than prescribed in the course. A viable method of assessment in the current context, especially for social sciences, humanities, law, business studies, etc. (but also potentially for a many science courses). Challenge is access to research materials (from library or online access to databases), but scope could be limited to open access materials.

B2 Annotated Anthology, Bibliography, or Literature Review

Instead of writing a research paper, students are asked to prepare a annotated bibliography or literature review on an assigned or approved problem or topic. They will be required to read the works, evaluate them and their usefulness to the topic, and provide an explanatory / evaluative paragraph for each work in their own words and a comparison of the viewpoints. Can be a more objective exercise, and more suited for students who have not written research papers before. Can be a guard against

unpermitted collaboration, since if students choose a similar topic and cite the same sources, this will be detected. · Focus here is less on narrative or writing style, and more on analysis (hence may be suitable for science subjects as well).

B3 Reports, Memos, OpEd Style Articles

Involves active thinking, as these are normally written with an intended audience in mind. This method allows an opportunity to synthesize and apply course knowledge and skills. Can be a cumulative exercise, drawing on a large part of material covered in the semester (or a specific area or topic). A more creative exercise, which can be helpful for certain disciplines / courses. Some protection against plagiarism (since expression of views and opinions needed) and unpermitted collaboration (since original thinking is required, students who copy each other's' works will be detected).

B4 Reflection Paper

Students may be asked to write a reflection paper that discusses their perspective and intellectual path during the course. This provides an insight into their understanding and involvement in the course. Can be done as a final assessment (for certain types of courses that are more theoretical in orientation), or an additional exercise along with open-book tests. The chance for plagiarism or unpermitted collaboration with peers is smaller here (since it requires expression of one's own views), but not entirely absent.

C ORAL EXAMS AND PRESENTATIONS

C1. Class Presentations

To be conducted over videoconferencing platforms, students may be asked to give course presentations (e.g. for 10 minutes each, followed by a few questions from faculty and other students). Presentations may be based on displayed (or circulated) slides, but can also be oral presentations without slide decks.

A highly effective method for large number of disciplines / courses, but requires excellent connectivity and access to videoconference platforms for the faculty and at least a majority of the students in the class. The advantage is that this will be interactive and live, so that the student will certainly have to know what he or she is presenting (even if unpermitted help was received in preparation for the session, they will have to actually present and answer questions). Risks of plagiarism minimized.

C2 One-on-One Oral Exams

Can be scheduled over a video-conference platform. A timetable can be announced, where each student logs into the platform with the faculty member for a defined time-slot (e.g. 15-20 minutes).

An effective method provided excellent connectivity and access to video-conference platforms. A problem can arise if faculty give some students unduly difficult questions (or in case of bias, claim that the student failed to answer anything properly). To guard against this, the sessions should ideally be recorded. The same questions should not be asked of each student, since they will likely share their oral exam experience with their peers. In limited circumstances, when no other methods seem feasible, faculty may also conduct the oral exam over the phone or WhatsApp. However, these sessions should

also be recorded to (a) make sure the sessions did take place (b) to have a record in case a student is treated unfairly.

C3 Audiovisual Presentations

The student may be allowed to submit recorded material (audio/video presentation) to be assessed by the faculty member. In case connectivity is not sound for live communication, students may create audio-visual materials and submit to faculty for evaluation. Has the advantage that there will be record of submissions by default. As with live presentations, the student making the material will have to at least know what he or she presented. The downside is that they cannot be asked questions (as in a live session), so the extent of their knowledge of effort cannot be fully ascertained. This can be mitigated by having a follow-up oral exam.

D DISCOURAGED METHODS (NOT GENERALLY VIABLE UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS)

D1 Closed Book Exams

Tests that would normally be administered under proctored conditions (i.e. containing questions that can easily be answered by consulting course materials or peers, and for which there would be no way to ascertain whether the student answered from his or her own mind or by cheating)

Sending students tests designed for a closed-book format is highly discouraged (without a mechanism for invigilation or proctoring). There are now some e-Proctoring tools available online, but these technologies are both expensive and at a nascent stage (advanced universities may consider these for certain high-stakes exams) In cases in which none of the above alternatives are suitable for certain high-stakes exams, it may be better to wait until the lockdown restrictions are eased (but this should not generally apply to the larger proportion of courses).

D2 Multiple Choice Questions

MCQs administered in traditional manner without sophisticated LMS platforms (e.g. by circulating the full set of questions to students by email)

MCQs would be suitable only under limited conditions at this time: If delivered through an LMS that randomly generates question sequence, and shows only one question at a time (without the possibility of going back). If this is a highly timed activity, with all students concurrently answering the MCQs (without giving time to students to collaborate), if this is done in the traditional way (e.g. by handing over the entire question set), students will collaborate and there would be no way of ascertaining whether a student cheated or knew the material.