Transforming exams across Australia
Processes and platform for e-exams in high stakes, supervised environments
A national project completed in 2019

Examinations have been an essential component of assessment for many years. Paper-based exams, however, are in stark contrast with modern learning methods and far from the modern professional world of work.

This project has enabled a significant shift in higher education assessment practices. Assessment can now include modern e-tools of the trade and digitally connected approaches. e-Exams support relevant, authentic student learning so universities can securely accredit graduates as ready for the work and social world of the 21st century.

This project responded to the need for a transformation of examinations by identifying the underlying conditions and contextual factors for successful authentic e-assessment practice. We then implemented and verified, across 35 trials in diverse institutional contexts, a viable technological and procedural approach to scale authentic e-assessment in medium and higher-stakes settings.

A robust technology platform for e-Exams was created that is pedagogically and technologically flexible. The e-Exams platform allows students to use their own computers for examinations in a manner that is secure and auditable for online and offline contexts. This allows the accrediting institution to completely control the computer for the duration of the assessment while the computer itself is left completely unaffected after the exam in what is an ethical approach to securing student owned devices for exams.

The e-Exam platform consists of a student client, a server and administration components. Utilising and tapping into common software tools and educational technologies it enables pedagogical alignment at all stages of learning, from the classroom into the exam room. The e-Exam assessment platform connects to the institutional eLearning system, but also provides access to sophisticated software applications such as computer-aided design, mathematical modelling, software development toolkits, multi-language translation tools, multimedia players, diagramming applications and a full office suite. This enables assessment designers to create rich, engaging tasks, while students can demonstrate the best of their 21st-century capabilities to produce complex, constructed responses related to professional work activities.

An e-workflow for digital assessment is enabled, even where network connectivity may be absent, allowing reliable use in remote areas, classrooms or exam halls. This means students can focus on completing their exam while minimising disruption to exam timetables.

The project generated findings on e-Exam system design and use, exam management and logistics, students' perspectives on e-Exams and on their response strategies. These findings will guide teachers, assessment developers, technology support, examinations managers and institutional leadership in matters of policy, practical implementation and transformational pedagogic design to enable institutions to deliver rich, relevant assessment.

Transform exams at your institution by immersing yourself now in the world of authentic e-assessment using the resources and our final report at http://transformingexams.com.