# **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY (BNM817J)**

# **CLIENT CONSULTING ASSIGNMENT:**

# **ONLINE EXAMS OR IN-PERSON EXAMS AT THE UNIVERSITY**

# **CANDIDATE NUMBER: 838651**

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**Background and Context Based on Research**

The study will focus on Universities or higher educational institutes, mainly on diverse geographical locations worldwide and demographics of students, faculty, and staff

The problem concerns the choice between conducting exams online or in-person, particularly in the context of higher education institutions. This situation has become more well-known with the usage of online learning platforms and the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted the widespread adoption of remote teaching and assessment methods. The decision about exam format affects students, faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders involved in the educational process. It raises questions about equity, academic standards, accessibility, technological infrastructure, effectiveness, and logistical considerations.

**CLIENTS FOR ANALYSIS:**

The clients for this study will be: The administration of a school or University is responsible for making decisions about the type of exam and the students.

**DESCRIBING DIFFICULTIES AND COMPLEXITY OF THE SITUATION**

* This problem situation is ambiguous because the choice between online and in-person exams involves trade-offs between various competing priorities, such as convenience versus academic rigor, flexibility versus security, and inclusivity versus fairness.
* There may be uncertainty about the impact of different exam formats on student learning outcomes, engagement levels, and overall educational experiences.
* Additionally, the rapid evolution of technology and changes in educational practices further complicate decision-making processes and necessitate ongoing evaluation and adaptation of assessment strategies to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders in higher education.

**LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS, ROLES, AND RELATIONSHIPS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name Relationships** | | **What’s on their Mind** |
| **Students** | Ones who are affected | We seek convenience, flexibility, and accessibility without disturbance due to a lack of network or infrastructure in both cases and with a clear understandable format. |
| **University administrators vs. Students and student representatives** | Conflict | We do not want to delay exams in unfavorable conditions, but we address the lack of infrastructure also support. |
| **Family and Relatives** | Direct support | We need to make sure that our child is having any discomfort based on exam formats.  We need to actively create a better study atmosphere irrespective of our needs. |
| **University administrators vs. Academic staff** | Conflicting | We consider having a logistics feasibility by conducting exams online, but we stress the advantages and assessment integrity of in-campus exams. |
| **Government** | Moderate Support | I support the accessibility benefits of online exams, but I emphasize the importance of maintaining academic standards and security in in-campus exams. |
| **Employment circles** | Observer | I'm not sure if the results of the students are genuine or just for the namesake |
| **Students and student representatives vs. Academic staff** | Conflict | We advocate the flexibility of online exams, but we want to stress the integrity and effectiveness of in-campus exams. |
| **Infrastructure Team** | Moderate Support | We're willing to work with the students to address issues, but we also want to make sure that the university is willing to take responsibility. |
| **Media** | Observer | We want to see more people taking proactive steps to address the student and university taking steps to solve the problems. |
| **IT Support** | Alliance | We're committed to supporting students in any way they need our support and addressing the technical disparity.  We want to work with the University to identify and remove barriers that cause this gap. |
| **Higher Studies** | Direct Support | We believe that education and training can be a powerful tool for upskilling students. So, we accept their results. |
| **Friends** | Moderate | We also are facing similar situations so being optimistic and having more skills is good enough. |
| **Society** | Observer | It claims that students who passed by taking online exams are unworthy. They link the lack of creativity to the exam pattern. |

**RICH PICTURE**

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The above rich picture explains the different perspectives/thoughts/needs of the primary as well as secondary stakeholders and highlights the conflicting requirements/relationships among the stakeholders.

Power Interest of Stakeholders – Matrix

POWER

INTEREST (Impacted)

High

Low

Low

High

* IT SUPPORT
* INFRASTRUCTURE TEAM
* HIGHER STUDIES
* UNIVERSITY ADMINISTARTION
* ACADEMIC STAFF
* FAMILY AND RELATIVES
* FRIENDS
* STUDENTS
* EMPLOYMENT CIRCLES
* STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES
* MEDIA
* SOCIETY
* GOVERNMENT

**Conflicting Pairs are taken into Consideration.**

**Students and student representatives vs. Academic staff:**

Students and their representatives advocate for the convenience and accessibility of online exams, citing the flexibility they offer for diverse learning styles. In contrast, academic staff emphasizes the pedagogical benefits and assessment integrity of in-campus exams, viewing them as essential for evaluating students' understanding and critical thinking skills accurately. This divergence in perspectives sparks a conflict, with students pushing for modernization and flexibility, while academic staff defend the traditional approach to maintain academic standards and ensure fair evaluation.

**University administrators vs. Academic Staff:**

The university administration seeks to modernize assessment methods by promoting online exams, aiming for increased accessibility and efficiency in the evaluation process. However, academic staff express concerns regarding the integrity and effectiveness of online exams in accurately assessing students' comprehension and critical thinking abilities. They argue that in-campus exams provide a controlled environment conducive to fair evaluation and academic rigor. This clash of priorities leads to a conflict between the university's push for technological advancement and the academic staff's insistence on upholding traditional assessment practices to maintain educational standards and integrity.

**SSM ANALYSIS**

SSM (Soft Systems Methodology) is a problem-solving approach that involves identifying and addressing different perspectives and worldviews of stakeholders involved in a complex situation. Here is an SSM analysis of the effect of the Online vs in-person exams at the University, focusing on the four stakeholders:

**PQR – Purpose Statement (PAIR ONE)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stakeholder | P (What) | Q (How) | R (Why) |
| Student and Student Representatives | A system to:  Obtain modernization and diverse learning styles. | By:  Advocating the flexibility and convenience of online exams. | Order to:  To access and have the infrastructure to get online availability of course manual and exam. |
| Academic Staff | To defend the traditional approach to maintaining academic standards and ensure a fair evaluation. | Emphasizing the pedagogical benefits and assessment integrity of in-campus exams | To evaluate students' understanding and critical thinking skills accurately |

**1(I). Root Definition: STUDENT AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

A system to obtain modernization and diverse learning styles by advocating the flexibility and convenience of online exams in order to access and have the infrastructure to get online availability of course manuals and exams.

**II. CATWOE ANALYSIS:**

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**III. CONCEPTUAL MODEL:**

The conceptual model for students and their representatives for their betterment.

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**3 E’s:**

**IV. RECOMMENDED/POSSIBLE CHANGES:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **IDEAL ACTIVITY** | **REAL WORLD** | **PROPOSED CHANGES** |
| Enhanced flexibility to continue the hybrid model | Mostly successful in creating the option | **No Change** |
| Integrating proctoring software and in-campus components helps deter cheating and academic dishonesty, maintaining the integrity of the assessment process | The integrity of the software systems has ideally not met the standards to conduct fully home-based exams. | 1. Randomized question orders, question banks, and stringent monitoring protocols minimize the risk of unauthorized assistance or misconduct |
| By combining elements of both online and on-campus exams, the hybrid model offers a balanced approach to assessment | Online components provide convenience and flexibility, while in-campus sessions ensure standardized conditions and oversight | **No Change** |
| Proper communication between the students and the university | Limited interaction due to the lack of connection or the lack of infrastructure | 2. Establishing regular communication channels between student representatives and university administration to discuss exam policies, procedures, and potential changes |
| Understanding students’ points of view on the examination model | Trying to create more forums and surveys. | 3. Hosting town hall meetings or online forums where students can voice their opinions, concerns, and suggestions regarding online and in-campus exams |
| Implementing transparent processes for sharing information and updates on exam-related decisions, allowing students to stay informed and engaged in the decision-making process. | It is already been implemented to maintain an effective balance between the two examination models | **No Change** |
| Enhance the learning experience and promote fairness and accessibility for all students. | IT support and Staff working together to bring the new approach | 4. Encouraging student representatives to advocate for the implementation of innovative exam formats or technologies |
| Seek parental support in academics | Busy in their workforce | 5. Spending more time with their children to understand them better. |

**EASE BENEFIT MATRIX:**

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**(I). Root definition: ACADEMIC STAFF**

A system to defend the traditional approach to maintaining academic standards and ensure a fair evaluation by emphasizing the pedagogical benefits and assessment integrity of in-campus exams in order to evaluate students' understanding and critical thinking skills accurately.

**II. CATWOE ANALYSIS:**

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**III. CONCEPTUAL MODEL:**

The conceptual model for Academic Staff for the clarity in their point.

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**3 E’s:**

**IV. RECOMMENDED/POSSIBLE CHANGES:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **IDEAL SITUATION** | **REAL WORLD** | **PROPOSED CHANGES** |
| Academic staff have access to well-equipped facilities, including examination halls or classrooms, with adequate space and amenities to conduct exams comfortably and efficiently | Academic staff may face technical challenges or limitations in implementing online exams, such as concerns about the reliability and security of online proctoring tools, insufficient training or support in using online exam platforms, or inadequate access to technology for both staff and students | 1. Offer professional development opportunities for academic staff to enhance their skills in designing and administering in-campus exams effectively. This could include workshops on exam construction, proctoring techniques, and fair grading practices. |
| The university provides reliable technology infrastructure and administrative support to facilitate the logistics of in-campus exams, such as scheduling, seating arrangements, and exam distribution. | Academic staff may encounter logistical challenges in organizing and administering online exams, such as difficulties in coordinating exam schedules across different time zones, ensuring reliable internet connectivity for all students, or managing large cohorts of students in virtual exam settings. | 2. Integrate technology into in-campus exams to streamline processes and enhance efficiency. For example, digital exam administration platforms can simplify the management of exam logistics, such as scheduling, seating arrangements, and exam distribution. |
| In-campus exams align closely with the course objectives and learning outcomes, allowing academic staff to design assessments that effectively evaluate students' understanding and critical thinking skills. | Academic staff may prioritize maintaining academic integrity and preventing cheating, viewing in-campus exams as a more secure and controlled environment for assessment compared to online exams, which may be more susceptible to cheating and academic misconduct. | 3. Implement strategies to engage students in the in-campus exam experience, such as interactive review sessions, exam preparation workshops, and collaborative learning activities leading up to the exam. |
| In-campus exams offer opportunities for direct interaction between academic staff and students, fostering a supportive learning environment where students can receive immediate feedback and clarification of doubts. | Academic staff may encounter logistical challenges in organizing and administering online exams, such as difficulties in coordinating exam schedules across different time zones. | 4. Improve communication channels between academic staff and students to provide clear instructions, address concerns, and offer support throughout the exam process. |
| Academic staff have confidence in the integrity and security of in-campus exams, as measures are in place to prevent cheating and ensure fair evaluation of students' work. | Academic staff may value the opportunity for direct interaction with students during in-campus exams, seeing it as a chance to provide immediate feedback, address student questions or concerns, and promote student engagement and active learning. | 5. Recognize the diverse needs of students and offer flexibility and accommodations as needed during in-campus exams. This could include providing alternative exam formats for students with any problems. |
| In-campus exams accommodate the diverse needs of students, providing flexibility and accommodations as needed, such as alternative exam formats, extra time, or special arrangements for students with disabilities or other circumstances. | Academic staff may be guided by university policies or institutional norms that prioritize in-campus exams as the preferred mode of assessment, reflecting a broader institutional culture or tradition that values face-to-face interactions and traditional academic practices. | 6. Encourage academic staff to explore innovative assessment methods within the in-campus exam format, such as incorporating real-world case studies, group projects, or practical demonstrations to assess students' skills and competencies effectively. |
| Academic staff are committed to continuous improvement in exam administration and assessment practices, actively seeking feedback from students and colleagues to refine and enhance the in-campus exam experience over time. | Academic staff may face resource constraints, such as limited funding or staffing resources, which may make it more challenging to implement online exams effectively or invest in the necessary technology and infrastructure to support remote assessment. | 7. Establish mechanisms for gathering feedback from both academic staff and students to continuously improve the in-campus exam experience. |

**EASE BENEFIT MATRIX:**

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**PQR STATEMENT ( PAIR TWO)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stakeholder | P (What) | Q (How) | R (Why) |
| University Administrators | A system to:  Implement and manage online exams as the preferred mode of assessment within the university. | By:  Developing robust online examination systems, establishing policies and procedures for online assessments, and providing necessary support and resources for their implementation. | Order to:  Enhance flexibility and accessibility in the assessment process, accommodate diverse learning needs of students, ensure continuity of education during unforeseen circumstances such as pandemics or natural disasters, and streamline administrative processes related to examinations. |
| Academic Staff | Maintain the tradition of in-campus exams as the primary mode of assessment for courses within the university. | Designing exam papers suitable for in-campus administration, preparing exam venues, invigilating exams, grading student responses, and providing feedback. | Ensure academic integrity, uphold the quality of assessments, facilitate direct interaction between students and faculty during exams, and preserve the educational environment and culture of the institution. |

**(I). Root definition: UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION**

A system to implement and manage online exams as the preferred mode of assessment within the university by developing robust online examination systems, establishing policies and procedures for online assessments, and providing necessary support and resources for their implementation in order to enhance flexibility and accessibility in the assessment process, accommodate diverse learning needs of students, ensure continuity of education during unforeseen circumstances such as pandemics or natural disasters, and streamline administrative processes related to examinations.

**(II) CATWOE ANALYSIS:**

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**III. CONCEPTUAL MODEL:**

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**3 E’s:**

**IV. RECOMMENDED/POSSIBLE CHANGES:**

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| IDEAL SITUATION | REAL WORLD | PROPOSED CHANGES |
| The university should have a reliable and secure online examination platform that can handle a large number of students simultaneously, ensuring the smooth conduct of exams without technical glitches. | Infrastructure and available licenses from the university provision have to be done more as it is not accessible for most students. | 1. Invest in upgrading technological infrastructure to support online exams, including reliable internet connectivity, robust online exam platforms, and adequate technical support for both staff and students. |
| Providing comprehensive training and support to both academic staff and students on how to use the online examination platform effectively. This includes tutorials, guides, and technical assistance to ensure everyone is comfortable with the technology. | Training and support are available, and proper utilization is maintained. | **No Change** |
| guidelines for exam creation, scheduling, administration, and assessment integrity. Transparency in these policies helps build trust among stakeholders. | Modifications are to be made to the already existing policies and guidelines. | 2. Develop clear policies and guidelines for online exams, covering aspects such as exam security, integrity, accessibility, and accommodation for students with disabilities or special circumstances. |
| Encouraging open communication, and a good critical and supportive atmosphere leads to the maximum utility of online portals for exams. | No proper communication to express the ideas and problems is being done. Administrators are also too stubborn in taking support and forcefully try to make all the stakeholders follow their ways | 3. Communicate effectively with academic staff, students, and relevant stakeholders about the benefits and procedures of online exams. |
| Ensuring that the online exam platform is accessible to all students, including those with disabilities or special accommodations. | Proper allocation and maintenance are to be scrutinized to avoid misconduct | 4. Allocate resources strategically to support the implementation of online exams, including funding for technology upgrades, staff training, and student support services. |
| Implementing robust security measures to prevent cheating and ensure the integrity of online exams. This may include features such as randomized question banks, time limits, proctoring software, and plagiarism detection tools. | These measures already exist but a few tweaks are to be made as there is scope for more betterments. | 5. Establish mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of online exams and gathering feedback from stakeholders. |
| Continuous improvement based on feedback helps address concerns and optimize the online exam process over time. | To continue using this model, more utilities, resources, and support from both stakeholders are a must. | 6. Highlight the flexibility, convenience, and accessibility of online assessment methods, and recognize faculty and departments that excel in implementing innovative online exam practices. |

**EASE BENEFIT MATRIX:**

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**(I) Root Diagram: ACADEMIC STAFF**

A system to maintain the tradition of in-campus exams as the primary mode of assessment for courses within the university by designing exam papers suitable for in-campus administration, preparing exam venues, invigilating exams, grading student responses, and providing feedback in order to ensure academic integrity, uphold the quality of assessments, facilitate direct interaction between students and faculty during exams, and preserve the educational environment and culture of the institution.

**(II) CATWOE ANALYSIS:**

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**(III) CONCEPTUAL MODEL:**

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**3 E’s:**

**(IV) RECOMMENDED/POSSIBLE CHANGES:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **IDEAL SITUATION** | **REAL WORLD** | **PROPOSED CHANGES** |
| Academic staff have access to well-equipped facilities, including examination halls or classrooms, with adequate space and amenities to conduct exams comfortably and efficiently | Academic staff may face technical challenges or limitations in implementing online exams, such as concerns about the reliability and security of online proctoring tools. | 1. Offer professional development opportunities for academic staff to enhance their skills in designing and administering in-campus exams effectively. |
| The university provides reliable technology infrastructure and administrative support to facilitate the logistics of in-campus exams, such as scheduling, seating arrangements, and exam distribution. | Academic staff may encounter logistical challenges in organizing and administering online exams, such as difficulties in coordinating exam schedules across different time zones. | 2. Integrate technology into in-campus exams to streamline processes and enhance efficiency. |
| In-campus exams align closely with the course objectives and learning outcomes, allowing academic staff to design assessments that effectively evaluate students' understanding and critical thinking skills. | Academic staff may prioritize maintaining academic integrity and preventing cheating, viewing in-campus exams as a more secure and controlled environment for assessment compared to online exams, which may be more susceptible to cheating and academic misconduct. | 3. Implement strategies to engage students in the in-campus exam experience, such as interactive review sessions, exam preparation workshops, and collaborative learning activities leading up to the exam. |
| In-campus exams offer opportunities for direct interaction between academic staff and students, fostering a supportive learning environment where students can receive immediate feedback and clarification of doubts. | Academic staff may encounter logistical challenges in organizing and administering online exams, such as difficulties in coordinating exam schedules across different time zones. | 4. Improve communication channels between academic staff and students to provide clear instructions, address concerns, and offer support throughout the exam process. |
| Academic staff have confidence in the integrity and security of in-campus exams, as measures are in place to prevent cheating and ensure fair evaluation of students' work. | Academic staff may value the opportunity for direct interaction with students during in-campus exams, seeing it as a chance to provide immediate feedback, address student questions or concerns, and promote student engagement and active learning. | 5. Recognize the diverse needs of students and offer flexibility and accommodations as needed during in-campus exams. |
| In-campus exams accommodate the diverse needs of students, providing flexibility and accommodations as needed, such as alternative exam formats, and extra time. | Academic staff may be guided by university policies or institutional norms that prioritize in-campus exams as the preferred mode of assessment. | 6. Encourage academic staff to explore innovative assessment methods within the in-campus exam format, such as incorporating real-world case studies, and group projects. |
| Academic staff are committed to continuous improvement in exam administration and assessment practices, actively seeking feedback from students. | Academic staff may face resource constraints, such as limited funding or staffing resources, which may make it more challenging to implement online exams effectively. | 7. Establish mechanisms for gathering feedback from both academic staff and students to continuously improve the in-campus exam experience. |

**EASE BENEFIT MATRIX:**

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**KEY RECOMMENDATION FOR CLIENTS**

Three key recommendations for clients considering online vs. in-campus exams:

**Accessibility and Convenience:** Online exams offer the flexibility of taking the test from anywhere with an internet connection, which can be convenient for individuals with busy schedules or those who live far from campus. However, clients should ensure that the online platform used for exams is accessible to all students, including those with disabilities, and that technical support is readily available to address any issues that may arise during the exam.

**Evaluate Security Measures:** In-campus exams typically offer more stringent security measures, such as proctored environments and physical monitoring, to prevent cheating and ensure academic integrity. Clients should assess the effectiveness of online proctoring solutions and other security measures implemented for online exams to mitigate the risk of academic dishonesty.

**Account for Technological Challenges:** Online exams may pose technical challenges such as internet connectivity issues, compatibility problems with devices, or software glitches. Clients should provide clear instructions to students on technical requirements for online exams and offer support resources to troubleshoot any technical issues. Additionally, clients should consider backup plans in case of widespread technical difficulties that may disrupt the exam process.

**COMPLEMENTARY SWOT ANALYSIS**

The SSM Analysis we did can be complemented using SWOT Analysis

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