

Preparing for your online exam: Frequently Asked Questions

1. When will the online exam be?

The online exam will be on the previously-scheduled date for this exam. It will begin at 10am but will last longer than the original scheduled duration. Typically, this will be twice as long; see below for more details.

2. What is an online exam?

An online exam is a timed piece of assessment that you will do remotely. You will download the exam questions via Moodle at the scheduled start. You will then write down your solutions and upload your script electronically on Moodle by the prescribed deadline.

3. What will I need to attempt the online exam?

To do the online exam effectively, you will need

- an internet connection to download the exam and upload your script
- paper and pen to write your solutions
- a mobile phone or some other device to scan your script
- access to your Moodle account to upload your scan to the online submission portal Turnitin
- a quiet place that is free from distraction for writing your exam
- your candidate number from the Examination Entry Form on MyBirkbeck (please note that this distinct from your student ID number)

4. What if I don't have some of these resources?

Be creative. The pandemic requires all of us to think of new ways of doing things. And if all fails, you will have a second chance to sit this exam in the August/September reassessment period.

5. How will I get the exam questions?

The examination will go live on the Moodle page for this course at the scheduled time. You can read the questions on the screen. You will also be able to download the exam, which is advisable so that you are not reliant on constant internet access, and you may print it if you have the facility to do so.

6. How much time will I have to attempt the examination?

We have a range of exam lengths in mathematics and statistics. Most undergraduate and some MSc exams are 3 hours. For these exams, you will be given 6 hours to complete and submit. For 1hr 55 min exams you will be given 4 hours. For 3hr 15min exams you will be given 6.5 hours. For 3.5-hour exams you will be given 7 hours. If you are in any doubt, the exact time allowed for your exam will be clearly stated on the Moodle page for the module. The total time includes

- time for downloading and reading the exam;
- writing out your solutions (the usual time allowed for doing the exam may be fine);

- time for digitising your script -- using a scanner to convert your handwritten script to a single pdf file, and checking its quality;
- time for uploading your digitised script via Moodle.

The total allocation has a margin in case of interruptions. We strongly advise allowing at least one hour for scanning and uploading your digitised script.

7. I have a Special Study Plan agreed with the Disability Office. Will I get extra time?

We are waiting for clarity on this issue from the Disability Office. But, hopefully, yes.

8. How do I digitise my script for submission?

The objective here is to convert your multiple pages of handwritten script into a single pdf file. You may already know how to do this, but we will provide suggestions on how you can do this using a mobile phone and one of many freely available apps.

Detailed instructions are provided separately. We ask that you try out these instructions in advance.

9. How do I know I will be able to digitise my script on the day? What if the technology lets me down?

We will invite you to test the technology by doing a trial – scan about 10 pages, convert them into a pdf file, and submit them online. We urge you to practice this more than once, and time yourself so that you know how much time to set aside for this task.

10. How do I submit my digitised script?

The Moodle page for each module will have links for submitting your script, with instructions. We expect to use the Turnitin software, which is accessed by clicking a link from the Moodle page.

Detailed instructions are provided separately.

Once again, we invite you to try out the submission process. We will create a trial link on the Moodle page about a week in advance, inviting you to test your submission. If you want us to confirm that your digitised script came through fine, we will do so.

11. How do I know my script has been submitted? Why can't I just email my script?

You can see your script (and can even download it yourself to check that the upload was all fine). Turnitin also produces a digital receipt.

In our internal testing of this, we found that the conversion of 10 to 15 pages of scans into a single pdf generates a file of 8 to 10 megabytes. The transmission of files of this size via email is not reliable.

Detailed instructions (and some tips) for producing a digitised script

Writing your exam

- Put your examination entry number (not your student ID number) on the top of every sheet of paper – you can do this in advance.
- Write clearly and neatly so that scans are legible.
- Use a pen with relatively dark ink to maximise contrast when scanning.
- On any page, avoid writing things close to the margin: these are in danger of getting cropped when taking images, and you don't want to lose valuable information
- Remember to number the pages. After you finish, go back and make sure that the numbering is consistent, and remember to scan them in the right order.

Digitising your script

You can use one of many available apps that allow you to convert your multiple pages of script into a *single* PDF file for submission using a mobile phone. You may already have a preferred app for doing this. But if you have never done this before we offer some suggestions that we have tested ourselves.

It is important that you test these in advance to figure out what works on your device. Most of the apps listed below work on Android or Apple IOS devices.

Microsoft Lens

- Android: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbobZ43II38>
- iPhone: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzZ3WVhgi5w>

Genius Scan for Android and for IOS

Google Drive

- <https://www.howtogeek.com/166610/who-needs-a-scanner-scan-a-document-to-pdf-with-your-android-phone/>

Some tips when scanning

- good lighting helps, but many of the apps offer enhancement
- think about cropped edges: consider matching the part of the A4 page you will write on to the 'aspect ratio' of the camera
- whichever app you use, get familiar with its features: usually there are controls to crop images, choose colour vs black & white, correct randomly rotated pages, and so on

A crucial requirement

All these apps offer the opportunity to save multiple scans as a *single PDF* file. This is important as you will not be able to upload multiple files to make up your script.

Reviewing your pdf before you upload it

Did your hand shake when taking the picture? Can you read all the pages? Are they in the right order? Review the file to make sure you are happy with it. There will be enough time to do this a second time if you are not happy with the first attempt.

Emailing a copy of your scripts to yourself

Some apps store the PDF on the device, while others store it in the cloud (on Google Drive, Onedrive, Dropbox, etc). Regardless of where it ends up, we advise you to consider emailing a copy to yourself before proceeding to the next step. This will generate a time-stamped record of your completion in case you encounter hurdles in the final step.

Uploading your file on Moodle

We expect to have two electronic bins for submission.

- A Turnitin link: When required to assign a name to your submission, you should enter your examination candidate number (remember this is not your student ID). You do not need to install any software to use Turnitin: it is simply a link to click from the Moodle page.
- A standard Moodle link: as a standard precaution against Turnitin failures, we are asking everyone to upload their script a second time as a Moodle assignment. It is not essential to do this within the six hour limit as long as the uploaded files are identical.