

2.4.3 ONLINE EDUCATION AND ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

1. Purpose

ADA University aims to ensure excellence in online education and assessment. The online format poses specific challenges due to the lack of physical proximity between teachers and students. It requires not only a certain technological infrastructure, but also adjustments of didactic practices and of assessment methods. The purpose of this document is to outline specific regulations for the design and conduct of online education and assessment. It is intended to supplement ADA University's *Statement on Teaching and Learning* and its *Student Assessment Regulations*.

2. Scope and Recommendations

This regulation applies to (1) all undergraduate and graduate programs and courses that are delivered in an online format and to (2) all online components of undergraduate and graduate programs and courses that are delivered in a blended format.

It also applies to all face-to-face programs and courses that are only temporarily delivered in an online or blended format. This may occur in the context of (international or national) collaborations. It may also occur in situations of force majeure, during a pandemic situation, or in the case of any other event that is beyond the control of the University.

This regulation furthermore applies to all remote exams at ADA University that are (1) synchronous and proctored and (2) either computer-based, paper-based or conducted orally.

Rules and proceedings for asynchronous take-home exams are delineated in ADA University's *Student Assessment Regulations*.

Students and teachers engaged in online education and assessment are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the regulations set forth in this document. They are strongly recommended to read this document in conjunction with ADA University's *Student Assessment Regulations*. Teachers are furthermore expected to consult the University's *Statement on Teaching and Learning*.

3. Definitions

Entire degree programs or individual courses offered in the *Online (Distance)* format are based exclusively on remote forms of teaching and learning.

Entire degree programs or individual courses offered in the *Blended (Hybrid)* format combine classroom-based and online teaching and learning activities.

Entire degree programs or individual courses offered *Face-to-Face* are classroom-based. They make use of the online mode only for additional student support and to share teaching and learning materials.

Synchronous Teaching and Learning describes constellations in which teachers and students engage with specific course content at the same time. It usually refers to scheduled class time during which activities are guided by the teacher. If conducted online, synchronous teaching and learning requires the use of appropriate communication and/or teaching and learning software.

Asynchronous Teaching and Learning describes constellations in which students engage with specific course content according to their own schedule. This includes recorded lessons during which students are instructed and guided by the teacher, but also various forms of projects and independent or collaborative learning activities during which students engage with a specific topic with little or no support from their teacher. If conducted online, asynchronous teaching and learning requires the use of appropriate communication and/or teaching and learning software.

Online Exams are assignments that are conducted using the internet. They can be (1) conducted in class or remotely, (2) synchronous or asynchronous, (3) proctored or non-proctored, (4) written (computer-based or paper-based) or oral.

A *Remote Exam* is an assignment that a student completes while being in a location other than the physical classroom and for which the student needs to use the internet.

A *Synchronous Exam* is an assignment that all students of a course need to complete at the same time and during a designated and limited period of time.

An *Asynchronous Exam* is an assignment that students do not need to complete at the same time and for whose submission students are usually allowed a longer period of time.

A *Proctored Exam* is an assignment that students complete while being supervised by one or several teachers and/or proctors.

A *Non-Proctored Exam* is an assignment that students complete without being supervised by a teacher or proctor.

A *Computer-Based Exam* is a written assignment that students complete using a technical device.

A *Paper-Based Exam* is an assignment that students complete using pen and paper. Paper-based exams can also be conducted remotely.

4. Online Education Regulations

4.1 General Provisions

- a. Programs and courses at ADA University are predominantly delivered face-to-face. Any program and/or course that is delivered (temporarily or permanently) in a blended or online mode must correspond to the regulations outlined below.
- b. The requirements for the design of curricula and courses delineated in ADA University's *Curriculum and Course Development Policy* also apply to programs and courses delivered in the blended or online format.
- c. The requirements for the specification of learning outcomes delineated in ADA University's *Core Competence and Learning Outcome Specification Policy* also apply to programs and courses delivered in the blended or online format.

- d. The requirements for the delivery of courses are outlined in chapter 5.1 of ADA University's *Curriculum and Course Development Policy*.

4.2 Directives for Online Education

- a. *Equivalence*: Similar courses offered in different formats (online, blended, or face-to-face) vary in their mode of delivery and assessment, and they may require adjustments of various components (such as learning outcomes, instructional methods and learning activities, course content, teaching and learning materials, or assessment methods). This notwithstanding, they must ensure equivalence in terms of course level and quality and in terms of the level of student performance.
- b. *Attainability*: Intended learning outcomes must be appropriate for the online or blended format and must thus be attainable by students.
- c. *Alignment*: Instructional methods and learning activities must be aligned with learning outcomes and assessment methods and selected so that students can achieve the previously defined learning outcomes.
- d. *Variety*: Courses must provide opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous learning and thus engage students in various forms of activities intended to achieve different learning outcomes.
- e. *Innovation*: Teachers must include new and innovative methods of online teaching and learning in their courses.
- f. *Participation*: The selection of instructional methods and learning activities must ensure a high level of student engagement and collaboration.
- g. *Relevance*: The content of courses must be meaningful and should, whenever possible, reflect real-life contexts and scenarios as well as the conditions and requirements of professional environments.
- h. *Comprehensiveness*: Teachers must use the University's LMS platform (*Blackboard Learn*) extensively and creatively during the process of teaching and learning.
- i. *Information*: Teachers must ensure that all information relevant to a course is made available to students prior to the beginning of the course. This must include technical issues related to *Blackboard Learn* and its use in the respective course.
- j. *Feedback*: Teachers must provide students (individually and/or as a group) with regular information on their performance and progress and potentially with advice on how they may improve.
- k. *Support*: ADA University's *Blackboard* Administrator must provide students and teachers with technical support and thus facilitate the online teaching and learning process.

4.3 Course Enrollment

- a. The maximum number of participants for online or blended courses corresponds to the number of students that can be enrolled in face-to-face courses. This number takes into account the number of students that are required to take a course in the respective semester.
- b. Schools and the Office of Admissions and Student Records must ensure that students are able to attend all of the courses required by their respective degree programs without compromising the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.
- c. Students enroll in courses via *Banner*.

4.4 Contact Hours and Additional Requirements

- a. ADA University's *Credit Regulations* also apply to all programs and courses offered in an online or blended format.

- b. The duration of lessons delivered in the online or blended mode corresponds to the duration of face-to-face lessons. Based on the University's *Credit Regulations*, 1 contact hour consists of 37.5 minutes.
- c. Teachers are expected to provide students with opportunities for asynchronous learning by regularly recording and/or pre-recording lessons. Each recording is supposed to be 30-40 minutes in length and to be uploaded on *Blackboard Learn*.
- d. Teachers are expected to supplement regular online lessons with weekly question and answer sessions and/or office hours of at least 60 minutes per course.

4.5 Training for Teachers and Students

- a. The University regularly offers trainings that serve to equip teachers and students with the knowledge and skills required in an online teaching and learning environment. The organization and delivery of these trainings is the responsibility of the Office of Faculty Affairs and Academic Administration and of the University's Information Technology Services.
- b. Mandatory trainings for teachers consist of a two-day *Blackboard* Orientation Workshop, a subsequent Peer Support Program, and an ensuing and extended E-Teacher Program. These trainings serve to progressively familiarize teachers with the usage of *Blackboard Learn* and with the innovative use of teaching and learning technology. Teachers may also and additionally request individual advisory sessions, and they are strongly recommended to share new and innovative practices with their peers.
- c. Students are required to attend an Orientation Session in which they are introduced to the usage of *Blackboard Learn*. This session aims to ensure that students are proficient in the use and navigation of the LMS platform and are thus able to successfully attend classes delivered in the online or blended format without being impeded by a lack of technical knowledge and skills.

5. Remote Exam Regulations

5.1 General Provisions

- a. The following rules and proceedings serve as a supplement to ADA University's *Student Assessment Regulations*. They are intended to ensure that remote exams are conducted smoothly and that the risk of cheating in exams is minimized.
- b. Before choosing the option of a remote exam, teachers are requested to consider alternative assessment formats. Remote exams are not recommended for high-stake assessments.
- c. Students are expected to act with integrity during remote exams and to comply with the following regulations. Failure to comply with any or several of these regulations will be treated as a violation of the University's *Honor Code*.
- d. The teacher of a course may define examination rules and proceedings in addition to those delineated below. In case these additional rules and proceedings contradict ADA University's official examination rules and proceedings, the latter will always prevail.
- e. Rules for the excused or unexcused absence from an exam are delineated in ADA University's *Student Assessment Regulations*.

5.2 Technological Requirements

- a. Students must comply with the following hardware and internet requirements:
 - (1) They must ensure that the required technological equipment (such as computer, camera, microphone, internet connection) is available and working. This rule is based on the principle that while in-class exams presuppose the physical presence of students, remote exams require a certain technological infrastructure.

- (2) They are strongly recommended to have a reliable backup internet connection (such as a mobile hotspot).
- (3) They must have two external webcams and a desk webcam stand available.
- b. Students must comply with the following software requirements:
 - (1) They must ensure that the following software required for remote exams as well as updates are properly installed on the computer or device used for an exam.
 - (2) Software that has been approved by ADA University for remote exams and proctoring are *Respondus LockDown Browser* and *Respondus Monitor*, both of which are compatible with the LMS platform (*Blackboard Learn*) used by the University as well as with *Microsoft Teams* and *Zoom Video Conferencing*. While *Respondus LockDown Browser* prevents students from using additional applications and functions on their computers, *Respondus Monitor* uses their cameras and microphones to record each candidate and his/her environment and to flag any potentially suspicious behavior. An introduction to *Respondus LockDown Browser* can be found at web.respondus.com/lockdownbrowser-student-video/.
 - (3) Remote exams are usually conducted using *Blackboard Learn*. At the teacher's discretion, *Microsoft Teams* or *Zoom Video Conferencing* may be used for oral exams.
- c. Teachers and proctors must ensure that all the relevant software as well as updates are installed and working on their computers or devices. They are strongly recommended to have a reliable backup internet connection (such as a mobile hotspot).

5.3 Information Requirements and Technical Support

- a. Teachers are expected to provide students with all the information relevant to a specific remote exam. This requirement also covers technical issues related to the software applications mentioned in 5.2 and the pre-exam checklist delineated in 5.4.
- b. Students are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the technology and software required for an exam and with all the relevant examination procedures. In case of technical problems, they are strongly recommended to contact the teacher of the respective course and/or the University's *Blackboard* Administrator well ahead of examination dates. Students may also use the Help Center of *Respondus LockDown Browser* to try and troubleshoot technical issues with their computer and to check their webcams and microphone prior to an exam.
- c. Teachers are expected to contact the University's *Blackboard* Administrator in case they need support with any technical problem they or any of their students may face.
- d. Teachers are recommended to conduct a test-run prior to the first remote exam of a course. This test-run should be designed so that it utilizes all the technology and software required for exams. By doing so, potential technical problems can be identified and solved prior to the first exam.

5.4 Pre-Exam Checklist

- a. Students must have their *ADA Student ID Card* at hand and be able to present it to the camera before, during or after an exam.
- b. Students must ensure that no other person can use their credentials to access any of the software applications used for remote exams.
- c. Students must ensure that they will not be interrupted by any other person during an exam. Contact with other persons during the exam will be considered as cheating.
- d. Students should take remote exams in a well-lit room, but they must ensure that the camera (when properly positioned) does not face an unshaded window or any other main source of light.
- e. Students are not to wear any kind of headdress that shades or covers their faces.
- f. Students must clear the desk or table used for an exam of all materials (such as books and papers) not permitted for the exam.

- g. Students must ensure that all devices other than the computer or device used for an exam are switched off and placed well out of their reach. This includes (but is not limited to) mobile phones, smart devices and watches as well as additional computers. They must be put face/screen down, or their screens must be turned away from the student.
- h. Students must ensure that the computer or device used for an exam is placed on a firm surface (such as a desk or table). It must not be kept on the lap, and it must not be moved during an exam.
- i. The camera used for an exam must be mounted on a desk webcam stand. It must be placed sideways at a 90-degree angle from the student so that it shows a student's head and part of the face, the torso (whilst seated in front of the computer or device), the desk or table surface, as well as the keyboard and mouse (if one is being used). It must also provide a sideways view of the screen. Any materials permitted for an exam must be placed on the desk or table and be within the camera view throughout the entire exam. After having positioned the camera accordingly, students may only adjust the camera position and angle during an exam if asked to do so by the teacher or the proctor of the exam. An instructional video on the adequate placement of the camera can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoeXRLfpYv4. If students wish to use their mobile phone as an external webcam, they must ensure that it is put to silent mode (with vibration deactivated) and that all other applications are inactive during an exam. An instructional video on how to use a mobile phone as webcam can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7iXt9fLI2U.
- j. If students intend to use any technological equipment for an exam that is different from the one used during a test-run or previous exam, they must ensure that it is properly and reliably working prior to the exam.

5.5 Proctoring and Duration of Exams

- a. All synchronous exams at ADA University that are conducted remotely are proctored.
- b. The duration of synchronous exams that are conducted remotely should not exceed two hours.

5.6 Conduct of Examinations

- a. Right before the beginning of an exam, students must start the *Respondus LockDown Browser*. While *Respondus LockDown Browser* launches from any standard browser, students cannot access remote exams with their preferred browser without having launched *Respondus LockDown Browser*. When using *Respondus LockDown Browser*, students will be unable to exit an exam until all questions have been completed and/or submitted.
- b. Both the camera and the microphone must be switched on during the entire duration of an exam or until a student has completed and submitted the exam.
- c. Students must remain in front of their computers or devices for the entire duration of an exam or until they have completed and submitted the exam.
- d. Students are expected to be prepared for and promptly comply with any requests made by the teacher or by the proctor of an exam. They may (for example) be requested to activate a second camera; provide a 360-degree view of their surroundings before, during or after an exam; or submit screenshots of the computer or device used for the exam.
- e. Written remote exams must be conducted as *Blackboard Tests*. In order to ensure the integrity and high quality of exams, teachers must use the following options on *Blackboard Learn*:
 - (1) *Test Description*: This option allows teachers to provide students with all the information relevant to an exam (including purpose, duration, or question types).
 - (2) *Display After*: This option allows teachers to select the date and time at which the exam will begin and thus be available to students.

- (3) *Displaying Until*: This option allows teachers to select the date and time at which an exam will end and close on *Blackboard Learn*. The time allowed should be appropriate for the exam and thus prevent students from consulting unauthorized materials and from communicating with others.
 - (4) *Randomize Questions*: This option ensures that different questions are selected in a different order each time an exam is taken. It thus also aims to ensure that different students will not get the same questions in the same order.
 - (5) *One at a Time*: This option allows students to see no more than one question at a time. It may or may not be combined with the option *Prohibit Backtracking* (see below in 5.6.f).
 - (6) *Show Test Results and Feedback to Students*: In this menu, teachers must choose either the option *After Due Date* or the option *After Availability End Date*. This will ensure that correct and incorrect answers are only displayed to students after the end of an exam. Students will thus be prevented from cheating by exchanging relevant information gathered from the exam while it is still in progress.
- f. Teachers may additionally choose some of the following options on *Blackboard Learn* when conducting written remote exams:
- (1) *Password*: This option allows teachers to set a password for the exam. Students will need this password in order to access the exam.
 - (2) *Prohibit Backtracking*: This option prevents students from returning to questions they have already completed. Teachers should inform students beforehand if this option is enabled.
 - (3) *Multiple Attempts*: This option allows students to take an exam several times. Teachers must select which attempt is to be counted from the *Score Attempts Using* menu. To avoid that students are able to repeatedly complete the same or a similar set of questions, the *Multiple Attempts* option should only be chosen if there is a large pool of questions and if questions are selected randomly. When choosing this option, teachers must ensure that students will not make use of the additional time required to complete an exam several times to cheat by consulting unauthorized materials or by communicating with others. This option is not compatible with the *Force Completion* option.
 - (4) *Force Completion*: This option allows students to take an exam only once, and they are required to complete it in one sitting. They may not exit and re-enter the exam. This option is not compatible with the *Multiple Attempts* option.
 - (5) *Set Timer*: This option forces students to complete an exam within a specific period of time. *Set Timer* is redundant in synchronous remote exams in which *Display After* and *Display Until* must be selected (see above in 5.6.e). Yet, if the timer is set to *Auto-Submit*, it ensures that the exam of each student is automatically submitted once the timer has run out.
- g. Some assessment tasks present students with technical difficulties when conducted virtually since they may (for example) require them to solve equations or to develop charts and illustrations. In such cases, teachers may opt for a pen and paper exam. Such paper-based remote exams will be conducted in *Blackboard Learn* according to the following rules and proceedings:
- (1) Prior to the beginning of an exam, students must prepare blank sheets of white paper (A4 format) with their name on each page.
 - (2) At the beginning of the exam, students will open the assignment on *Blackboard Learn* and see the tasks and/or questions on their screen.
 - (3) Students will complete the exam using pen and paper.
 - (4) After having completed the exam, students must show all pages to the camera for confirmation purposes. Pages that are not thus displayed will not count towards the exam grade.

- (5) After having thus confirmed their exam sheets, students are strictly forbidden to make any changes to their exams. They must scan all the exam sheets and create or combine them into one PDF file, using the application specified by the course's teacher. Students will then upload the PDF file via a separate *Blackboard Learn* assignment that will close 15 minutes after the end of an exam. Failure to upload the PDF file during this period may result in an Academic Fail (F or FZ) grade for the exam.
- h. Teachers may also opt for a combined examination format in which a paper-based element supplements the computer-based component. In this case, the regulations delineated in 5.6.e to 5.6.g will apply as appropriate.
- i. Teachers may consider allowing some additional time for a remote exam in order to compensate for potential connectivity issues. Since this can create additional opportunities for cheating (as indicated above in 5.6.e), they must ensure that it does not compromise the integrity of the exam.

5.7 Verification Exams and Deferred Exams

- a. Teachers have the right to take further steps to evaluate a student's performance. This includes (but is not limited to) additional oral exams that serve to verify the results of previously completed (written) assignments. Such verification exams will be conducted online by the teacher of the respective course, and they will be recorded. They may be conducted regardless of a student's previous performance. Teachers must ensure that the content and level of verification exams correspond to the content and level of the previous assignment for which the result is to be verified.
- b. If students are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time due to medical, technical or other compelling reasons, they may be eligible for a deferred exam. At the respective teacher's discretion, the deferred exam will be conducted either remotely or on campus. Deferred exams must differ from the original exam, but they must be on the same level of assessment.

6. Contingency Regulations

6.1 Contingency Situations

- a. The University must ensure that it promptly and comprehensively implements all regulations issued by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan in exceptional and unforeseen situations (such as force majeure or a pandemic). Such regulations may (for example) require a temporary suspension of educational activities or a complete or partial shift to online education.
- b. In case of any contingency that requires that some or all programs and courses be temporarily delivered in the online or blended mode, teachers and Schools must ensure that the regulations outlined in this document are promptly and comprehensively implemented for all programs and courses affected.
- c. The prompt and comprehensive implementation of the regulations mentioned in 6.1.a and 6.1.b will be supervised by the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs. It is the Vice Rector's responsibility to take appropriate steps in case of delayed or incomplete implementation.
- d. Access to the campus and the usage of the University's physical facilities may be entirely or partially restricted during contingency situations.

6.2 Contingency Measures

- a. Any situation in which the regular teaching and learning process is severely disrupted (as indicated in 6.1.a and 6.1.b) may require measures to mitigate its impact on students. Such

measures may temporarily adjust regulations pertaining to (for example) class attendance or student assessment.

- b. Contingency measures should be intended to facilitate the fulfillment of program requirements without compromising the integrity of the University's degrees.
- c. Contingency measures can be proposed by any group of faculty members or by members of the senior management of ADA University.
- d. Proposals shall be submitted to the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs, and they need to be evaluated positively by the Vice Rector and two other members of the senior management. The members of the senior management involved may reject the proposal or request adjustments before submitting it to the University's bodies mentioned in 6.2.e. These steps become redundant if the Vice Rector and/or any other member or members of the senior management initiated the proposal.
- e. Each proposal needs the approval (1) of the Committee of Faculty Affairs and the Deans' Council (who will convene together) and (2) of the University Senate. The Vice Rector of Academic Affairs must ensure that these bodies will convene without delay and at the earliest possible date. The decision of the Senate becomes redundant if a proposal is rejected by the combined majority of the Committee and Council members.
- f. Unless otherwise decided by the University Senate, approved contingency measures shall become effective on the day of their approval by the Senate. The Vice Rector of Academic Affairs must ensure that they are immediately made available to all members of ADA University and that they are posted on the University's homepage.
- g. Contingency measures must be implemented promptly and comprehensively by the actors specified in the respective document. It is the Vice Rector's responsibility to take appropriate steps in case of delayed or incomplete implementation.