

Fall 2020 Exams Instructor Survey

Summary Report

15 January 2021

Introduction

From 22 December 2020 to 5 January 2021 a Qualtrics survey was distributed to instructors to obtain feedback on the fall 2020 exam period (10-23 December). This report offers a summary of the 88 responses received including general sentiments, issues experienced and possible solutions.

For context, the fall 2020 exam period contained 370 scheduled exams/assessments (for 535 course sections). This translated to 55,338 individual sittings – a 15% reduction compared to December 2019. There were 3,896 individual accommodated exams – 23% fewer than December 2019.

The Survey

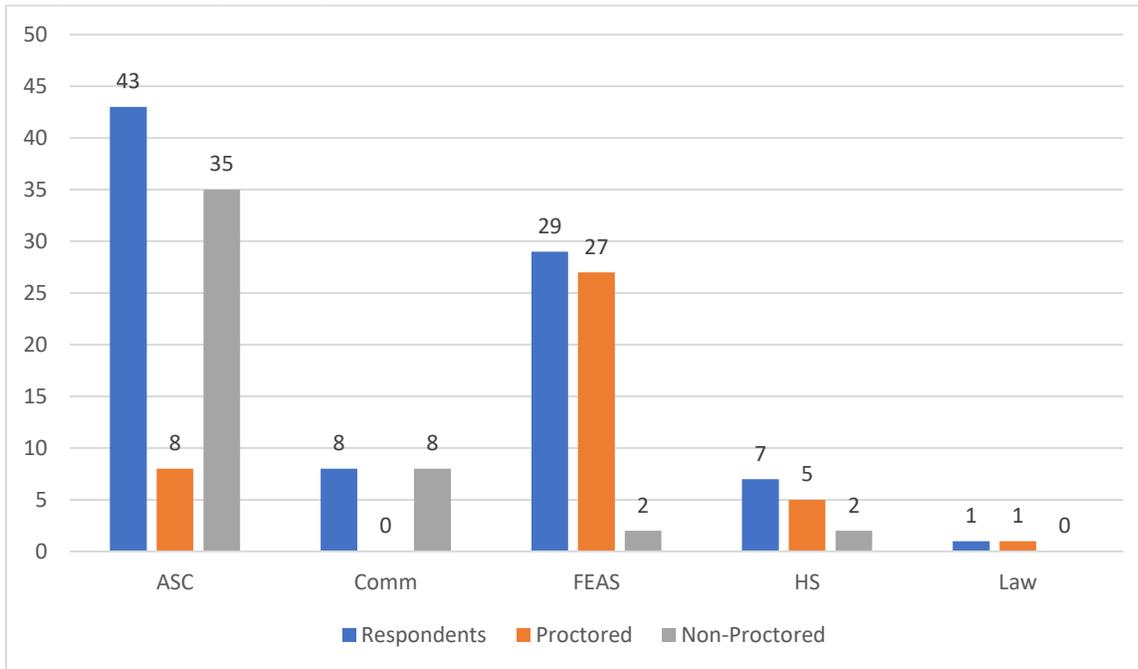
The survey contained eight questions:

1. Course Code (Department and Number, e.g. PSYC 100)
2. What type of exam did you have? (Proctored or Non-proctored)
3. Which remote proctoring solution did you use? (Proctortrack or Examity)
4. Please describe the timing and availability window of your exam, e.g. 3hr duration available within a 12hr window.
5. Please describe the steps taken to promote academic integrity, e.g. randomized answers, tight window, forward-only, Turnitin, etc.
6. Please describe any issues or problems encountered.
7. Please describe any lessons learned.
8. Please share possible solutions for us to consider going forward.

The Data

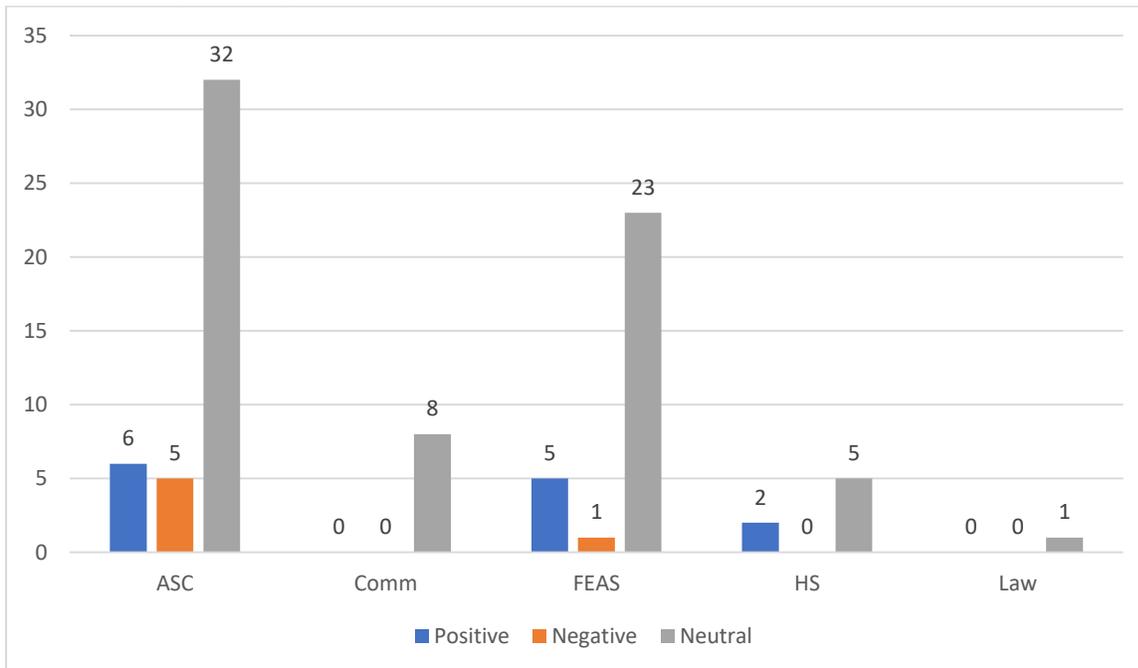
The first four questions of the survey can be readily summarized in charts, while the latter four were reviewed to identify recurrent themes, general sentiments and important lessons learned.

Respondents by Faculty



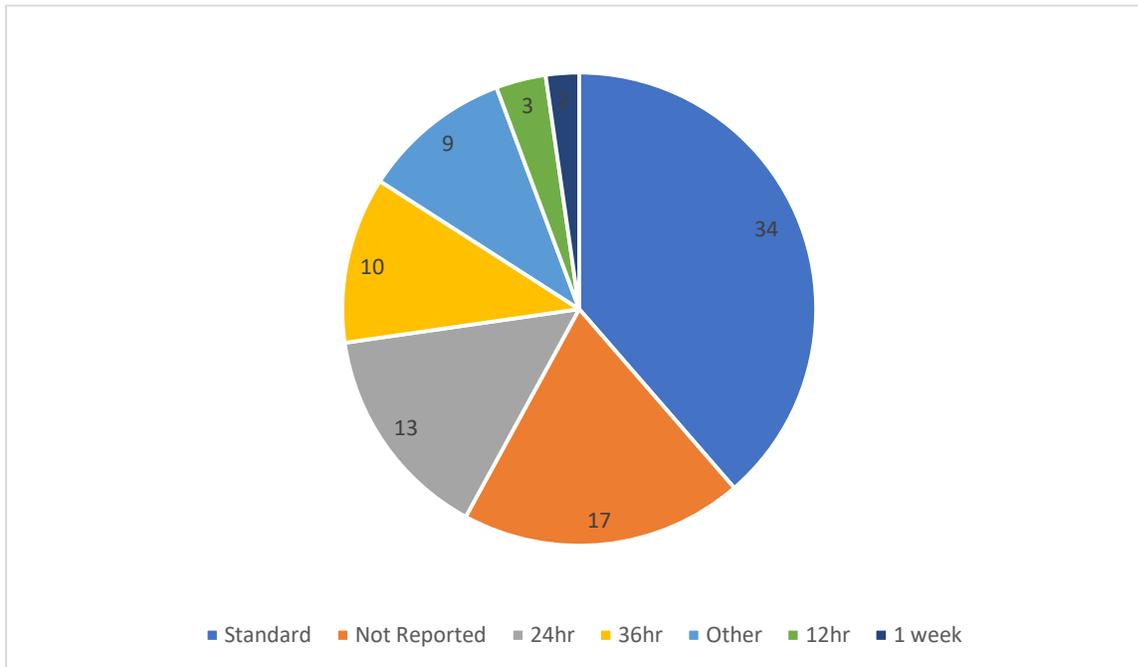
Of 88 respondents in total, 41 (46.5%) used a remote proctoring solution and 47 (53.5%) did not.

Sentiment by Faculty



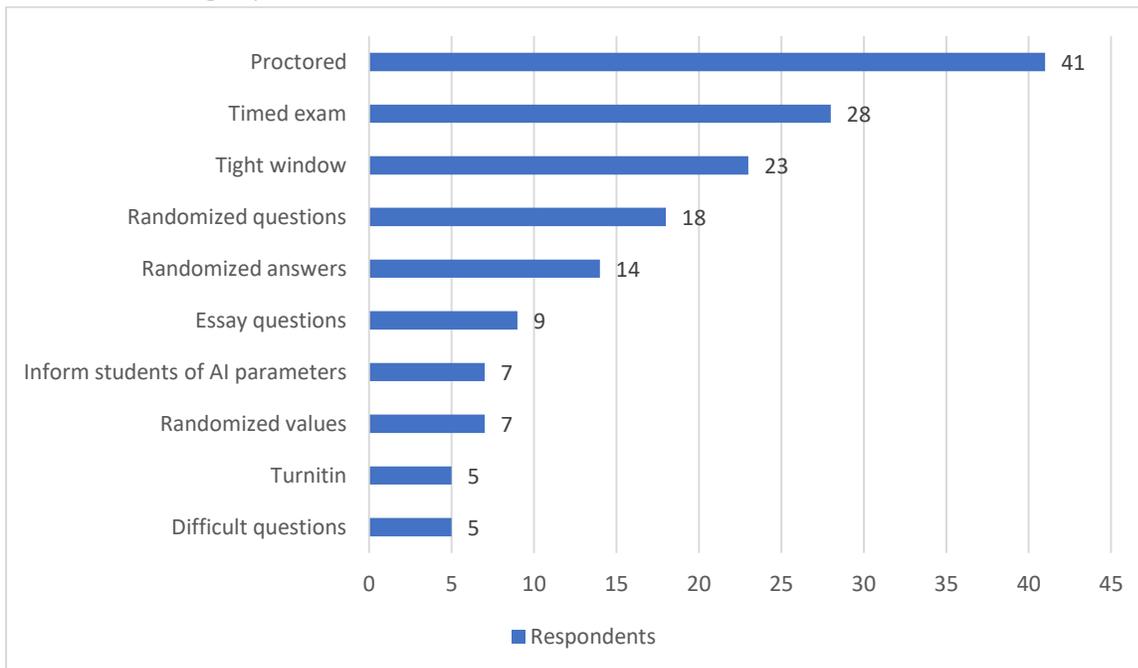
Sentiment has been determined by reviewing submissions for actively negative or positive comments. Some submissions did report issues but did not characterise these as particularly detrimental, so they have been classified as neutral. No feedback is also considered neutral.

Exam Windows



The Exam Windows pie chart summarizes the most common choices of exam window. 'Standard' represents a timed exam with no additional window. The 'Other' options above represent individual respondents who reported windows ranging from 3 hours (for a 2-hour exam) to 9 days.

Academic Integrity



The above chart lists the top 10 most frequently reported Academic Integrity measures. Many instructors adopted multiple measures to mitigate against departures from academic integrity. Additional measures reported include:

- Compare answers
- Forward only in LMS
- Write at same time
- Optional questions
- Ask questions about previous answers
- Upload written solutions to MCQs
- Reduced weight
- Evaluative questions
- Qualitative and quantitative components
- Limit question visibility
- Oral component
- Individual and collective components
- Recorded video presentations
- Different version for time zones
- Review Chegg

Issue or Problems

There were some 37 individual types of issue or problem reported – see Appendix A for a complete list. The most common issues could be broadly grouped into two categories: Technical and Communication.

Technical Issues

Many instructors reported a small number of students within their exam experiencing connection issues. Other technical issues relate more to shortcomings of the Learning Management System and Remote Proctoring software interfaces, e.g. for instructors: inability to message all students during the exam, inability to monitor student progress during the exam, and for students: accidental submission (proximity of next and submit buttons) and inability to check accommodations ahead of exam.

Communication Issues

Instructors cited confusion for some students owing to the many different exam modalities (and instructions) presented to them. Other instructors felt there are too many points of support for students – remote proctoring software provider, IT Support, Instructor, Faculty Support – and these should be streamlined. It was also acknowledged that not all students followed the guidance given to them.

Lessons Learned

Instructors outlined 33 separate types of lesson learned, the full list of which can be found in Appendix B. Some of these can be contradictory, e.g. ‘use/do not use remote proctoring’, but some of the more recurrent themes include choosing more qualitative questions, restricting the exam duration/availability window, introducing randomization and having a stronger Academic Integrity statement. Having a midterm and/or practice exam ahead of the final, being available for support during the exam and having a good back-up solution for students experiencing technical issues were also recommended.

Possible Solutions

Some of the suggested solutions reflect the lessons learned, e.g. of the 34 types of suggestion reported (refer to Appendix C for complete list) instructors listed stronger academic integrity statements, use of randomization, practice exams before finals and the provision of more centralized support.

Beyond that, as is to be expected, the solutions fall largely into the two categories that accounted for most of the reported issues – technical and communication. Instructors suggested modifications to the interfaces of the LMS and remote proctoring software to prevent missteps during the exams, to reduce anxiety by allowing accommodations to be viewed prior to the exam date and to allow better monitoring of and communication with students during exams. They also recommended clearer guidance for students regarding support protocols and further guidance for instructors on timelines and quiz set-up in onQ.

Appendix A

List of Problems and Issues Reported by Instructors

1. Connection issues
2. Chegg
3. Students need to be able to check accommodations before exam
4. Accommodations cut-off deadline
5. Time zone conflicts
6. Accidental submission
7. Inability to message all students in exam
8. Students didn't follow directions
9. Ways to circumvent forward-only
10. Ending exam for student who started late requires manual force-quit
11. Could not set availability window
12. Zero for last question if short on time and not submitted
13. Accommodated student clock time mismatch
14. Student confusion through inconsistent exam parameters
15. Difficulty uploading
16. onQ requiring timed exam questions be loaded singly
17. Alternative exam required for different time zones
18. Confusion between due date/time and end date/time
19. Students couldn't see scheduled exam
20. Students colluding
21. Instructor shouldn't be required to be back-up proctor (Zoom)
22. Student confusion
23. Lack of centralized support
24. Time zone confusion
25. Brightspace: shows default time for Dropbox instead of time zone-specific
26. Brightspace: unhelpful error messages
27. Copy/Paste in Proctortrack did not preserve indentation
28. Difficulty running Jupyter Notebook with Proctortrack
29. No clear view of student workspace
30. Inability to prove cheating
31. Student concerns about privacy
32. Unnecessary flags
33. Proctortrack kept running for days
34. Required software not made accessible through Proctortrack
35. Late exam slot (22 Dec) forced M/C format as marking long answers with TAs would have been impractical
36. Instructor unable to view progress of students
37. Difficult to add all open book course material to Proctortrack

Appendix B

List of Lessons Learned Reported by Instructors

1. Don't give long answer questions with long time to complete
2. TAs grading in Sharepoint was great - superior to onQ rubric
3. 12hr window led to higher marks
4. Restrict exam to 5am-10pm (ITS support hours)
5. Cheating seemed no more prevalent than in-hall exam
6. Randomized questions can reduce cheating
7. Changing exam parameters can lead to conflicts
8. Won't use remote proctoring again
9. Students don't all know their time zone
10. Be available throughout exam for support
11. Students don't all read instructions
12. Think seriously if exam is required for learning outcomes
13. Provide tighter window
14. Include more qualitative questions, explaining work
15. Consider oral component
16. Hold midterm in future
17. Have fixed duration - no window
18. Reduce weighting
19. Use remote proctoring
20. Word submissions works well for students but makes grading harder
21. Don't prototype new method with live students
22. Stronger AI messaging needed
23. Emergency Zoom back-up good idea
24. Introduce forward only
25. Introduce randomization
26. Repeat instructions in days before exam
27. Second experience of remote proctoring has fewer issues
28. Add summative assessment
29. Important to have exam pause if student disconnects
30. Always have back-up proctoring option for students with issues
31. Cross-check exam set-up in onQ
32. Challenging take home exams seem best solution
33. Ensure all assessments are proctored

Appendix C

Possible Solutions Suggested by Instructors

1. Provide students with instructor phone number and require them to call if tech issues prevent submission
2. Have accommodated students start early to enable issues to be identified before main cohort starts
3. Randomized questions
4. Randomized variables
5. Submission folder: add "I submitted my answer" checkbox to prevent students bypassing
6. Make practice exam and video mandatory to access exam
7. Brightspace interface: better separate/distinguish next/submit buttons
8. Clearer guidance on timelines
9. Schedule exams for classes with many international students in the evenings
10. Clarify that submission should be 'within' 12hr window
11. Introduce [Stanford-style honour code](#)
12. Remind instructor of exam parameter choices (e.g. window) 3rd to last week of term
13. Have comprehensive centralized support
14. Have Brightspace log student time zones
15. Assume students will collaborate and design exam with that in mind
16. Source better platform for coding exams
17. Additional exam support resources, e.g. for fall-back Zoom proctoring
18. Require an attestation
19. Set course-specific essays
20. Rethink use of remote proctoring software owing to [inequality and privacy concerns](#)
21. Remove take-home exams from exam schedule
22. Split exams to allow washroom breaks rather than permitting unsupervised visits
23. More instructor guidance on onQ quiz set-up
24. Strong messaging to students and faculty about DFAI
25. Don't schedule big exams in the last 2 days of the exam period
26. Additional step in onQ to allow students to check uploaded files would be welcome
27. Live feedback from remote proctoring software on student status would be helpful
28. Facility for direct chat between students and instructors would be useful
29. Simple flow diagram for students showing process and some examples of what to do in event of... would be helpful
30. Consider whether collective feedback permits types of questions which are more likely to ensure independent answers (i.e. possibly not T/F MCQ)
31. Consider whether a shorter take-home summative assessment can be assigned
32. Implement a pause if the student is disconnected from the proctor
33. Have a back-up ready to proctor with Zoom
34. Ensure students have opportunity to write real test with remote proctoring software before final exam