Title: Teagasc Security and Integrity of Assessment Procedures for Further Education

Purpose

The following outlines key practices and procedures in relation to assessment security and integrity but is not intended as an exhaustive list. Local managers should ensure that agreed protocols are in place and clearly communicated to staff. Staff must adhere to best practices indicated. As outlined in the Teagasc Assessment policy the aim is that Teagasc learners are assessed to a standard, applied consistently and fairly.

Scope

This document is intended for use by all tutors, assessors, and program coordinators involved in the design, development, and delivery of assessments across Teagasc FET programs, including agriculture, horticulture, forestry, equine, food and other related disciplines.

Key elements of security and integrity of assessment are that each assessor and centre carrying out assessment is required to create assessment conditions which are fair and consistent, preventing learners from gaining unfair advantage.

This document covers the following key aspect. Click on the link below to bring you to that section:

Creation of exams and assessments
Exams and assessments must be created with regard to module specifications

- Exam papers should be created on PCs/laptops that are password protected. (Teagasc laptops are also encrypted)
- Staff must never share their IT password with any other person
- IT equipment used to develop assessments must be properly maintained and secure at all times
- Staff must lock their personal computer when unattended.

- Operate a need to see approach. Exam questions/papers must only be seen by staff that have an absolute requirement to view them, e.g. co-examiners/relevant peer verifier(s) and course internal verifier. This applies both to hardcopy and digital versions of exams.

Distribution and storage of digital copies of exam questions
- A secure local procedure should be in place in regard to the storage of digital exam papers on staff computers/network drives until they are printed. Exam questions should be stored on a secure system such as the Teagasc DMS (i.e. not on Cloud such as "Google docs", dropbox etc.). Access to 'exam folders' must be restricted to a needs must basis. Staff access to digital exam folders must be reviewed throughout the   academic year to cater for staff movements.
- Exam questions/papers must not be stored on computer locations (e.g. shared drives) where others including learners might potentially access them (as stated questions/papers should only be seen by those who have an absolute requirement to do so)
- Exam questions/papers must not be stored on memory sticks. Where it is necessary to use a memory stick for the purposes of transferring exam material only encrypted memory sticks may be used, and the exam material must be deleted once transferred.
- Exam questions/papers must not be emailed except when essential and only to those who have an absolute need to see them.
- If emailing a softcopy of exam papers to computers external to Teagasc,   the file should be password protected. (Word files must be password protected. (When saving a   Word file   to PDF the PDF version must be also protected when saving).
- Emailing should be through organisational (i.e. Teagasc, private college, contractor) email accounts rather than personal email accounts.

Handling and storage of hard copies of exams
- Exam paper hardcopies must be printed/ copied in a secure fashion with all copies accounted for. Copies for printing should only be sent to photocopiers that require unique staff password identification to print documents. In the absence of password protected printers,   a test print should take place first to ensure that exams are being printed at the location intended.
- Exam paper hardcopies must not be left unattended even for a short time or in an insecure manner where others can see or pick up or copy.
- A local procedure should in place in regard to the storage of hardcopy exam papers from printing to distribution at exam time. Designated storage locations, access permission to stored papers and risk control measures should be defined.

Vigilance and care regarding learner revision classes and working examples
- Exam question must not be communicated verbally to learners or to others in advance of assessment.
- Any 'class examples' used for teaching purposes or revision tutorials must not be exactly replicated in exam questions. The parameters and variables of any class examples must be altered.

Assessment invigilation
- Assessments invigilation resources must be sufficient to ensure that an invigilator(s) is present in the exam hall/assessment area at all times
- New invigilators must be properly briefed as to ensuring best practice at invigilation.
- Learners must not be allowed to bring unauthorised materials or equipment into the assessment location. Mobile phones must be left in the exam hall if a learner is going to the toilet
- Learners must not be allowed to communicate with each other during assessment (unless learner interaction is a feature of the assessment)
- Learners must be adequately distanced from each other in the exam location
- Learners must be monitored/escorted if they leave but intend returning to the exam location (e.g. toilet break). Adequate invigilation cover should be in place to allow this
- Learners not known to the invigilator must present identification on request.

Protocols for handling and storage of learners' hard copy assessment scripts
- Mislaying or losing learner scripts can have substantial implications for the learner and for Teagasc
- Learners should receive clear instruction re identification (e.g. name/ learners unique Quercus ID number) details to be provided on their scripts including on any additional notepaper provided.
- All scripts (exams/assignments/projects etc.) templates must provide for clear learner identification details.
- The onus is on the learner to submit their exam script and complete the identification details. Invigilators should check that learners leave their full script with their identification details completed before the learner leaves the exam location.
- Learners must sign formally 'sign in' to confirm that they sat the examination. At the beginning of the assessment the invigilators must record the number of exam scripts distributed.
- At the end of assessment, invigilators must count the number of learners' scripts submitted. The total should be formally recorded by the invigilators on the learner attendance 'sign in' record. The scripts and attendance records must d be transferred securely to a designated person or storage area.
- Local protocols should be in place re secure storage and filing of learners' scripts for internal verification and external verification purposes in line with Teagasc QA guidelines.
- Scripts must be maintained and disposed of as per the relevant GDPR retention guideline for Teagasc education programmes.
- Where scripts are required to be transported to a partner institution, agreed protocols and records must be in place for same.

Handling and storage of learner digital assessments

- Learner assessment material must be stored securely with sufficient identification to find each candidates material for internal and external authentication.
- Access must be for staff only.
- Assessment material must be maintained and disposed of as per the relevant GDPR retention guideline for Teagasc education programmes.

Recording of learners results
- Staff, college and centre management have a duty to ensure that learner results are collated and entered on Quercus accurately.
- As results are entered on Quercus, they should be saved and calculated on an on-going basis.
- Course co-ordinators, internal and external verifiers may occasionally run a Quercus report log to establish when and who amended module results on Quercus. All results must be internally verified and formally approved at local level.
- Learners results must be 'locked' on Quercus following local results approval
- Teagasc nationally have a responsibility to ensure local results are externally verified and nationally approved and accurately submitted to QQI for Certification.
- Learner results should not be circulated /transferred digitally. Where there is an absolute requirement to do so (e.g. to a partner institution, results must be password protected or encrypted). If results have to be transferred by hard copy, secure transfer procedures must be put in place.

Protocols in place where Teagasc conduct assessments on behalf of Partner Institutions
- In the case of partner Institutes of Technology/Universities exams, partners must be consulted with and their assessment security and integrity policies and practice fully complied.
- Colleges should have a nominated member of staff to liaise with education partners and college staff in regard to best practice re protocol and transfer requirements for exam questions and scripts.
- Agreed protocols must be in place by partner institutions regarding exam question setting, storage and transfer of exam questions, learner scripts and learner results between Teagasc and the partner institution with recording logs if necessary for key aspects of such transfer.

Protocols in place where contractors conduct assessments on behalf of Teagasc
- Agreed protocols must be in place re exam question setting, storage and transfer of exam questions, learner scripts and learner results between contractors and Teagasc.
- It is the responsibility of colleges and centres to communicate required local protocols to contractors.
- It is the responsibility of the contractor to ensure that their personnel adhere to Teagasc requirements.

Repeat exam papers
- In Teagasc education programmes questions on a repeat paper must be at a minimum 50% different to the original paper.

Controls in place for online assessment

Summative online exams should be conducted though Moodle or a Teagasc recognised equivalent. Formative assessment may be conducted on other platforms, provided they are secure and where the formative assessment is used summatively, learners are readily identifiable. Procedures indicated below must be implemented to ensure questions are secure from learners and others.

- Exam questions uploaded to Moodle or a Teagasc recognised equivalent must be password protected and not accessible (hidden from students) until the appointed exam time.
- Learners should not have access to the Moodle or a Teagasc recognised equivalent exam questions bank for the purpose or revision or preparation for an exam
- Online exams must be held at a fixed time and for a fixed and limited duration
- For multiple choice exams:
  - The number of questions created by the tutor(s) must exceed the number of questions to be attempted by the learner so that all learners do not receive the same questions
  - Questions and suggested answers must be randomised so that learners do not receive questions/answers in the same sequence
- Learners must not be able to log out and re-login once they submitted their online exam without college/centre approval which may be given in certain *force majeure* circumstances.
- Online Assessments must be supervised in the centre and carried out on College or Centre equipment. Use of mobile phones is not permitted.

For remote assignments learners should be given clear instruction as to the required submission mode for the assignment (e.g. by hardcopy, by email- to whom, by uploading via a specific digital platform). The assignment template must provide the learner's identification details (Name, unique Quercus ID number) and a self-declaration that the assignment is the learner's own work.

Measures for oral and video assessments?

Oral assessments may occur:

- As a specified assessment format within the programme module requirements. In such cases clear marking templates must be in place and all learners must be treated in a consistent manner. A note taking template and procedures should be in place to record key points made by the learner.
- In situations where Teagasc deem assessment by video submissions to be acceptable, learners should be provided with a guidance notes as to what is required and the health and safety protocols to be implemented.

Learner support (scribes and readers)

- By way of reasonable accommodation to learners having a specific physical or learning difficulty, a scribe / reader may be provided for a written assessment or the assessment. A consistent protocol must be followed to ensure learners being accommodated are treated equitably. Scribe and readers must be given clear instruction on how to conduct the assessment
- Learner support must not confer any advantage or disadvantage
- Scribe or oral examiners must not answer the question on the learners' behalf

Learner Personation

- Personation presents a greater risk where a large numbers of learners are enrolled on an individual course and staff have less familiarity with individual learners. The nature of Teagasc courses generally means staff are familiar with their learners. Nevertheless personation could potentially arise at two levels:
  - o Assessment - a person other than the registered learner undertakes an assessment
  - o Course - personation- a person other than the registered learner undertakes the course.

- The scale of personation risk for Teagasc is likely to be lowest for full-time and part-time students and potentially increasing for distance education students. College and centres should be vigilant at all times. At application a learner must provide:
  - o A copy of his /her birth certificate
  - o Evidence/Proof of PPSN (Personal Public Service Number) e.g. copy of Public Services Card (front and back), copy of Drugs Payment Scheme Card etc.
  - o A copy of driver's licence (front & back) if applicable
  - o Photos must be obtained for each learner and it is recommended that a course ID (photos/names) list should be available for each course.
- It is recommended that staff are familiar with the course ID list.
- A learner attendance record must be in place for all assessments
- Learners should in as far as possible be assigned a given desk at written exams
- At least one of the exam location invigilators must be familiar with the learner cohort being assessed.
- Where assessment invigilators do not recognise a learner present in the exam location they may request evidence of learner identity.

Vigilance in relation to the risk of Plagiarism in respect assessment work submitted by learners

- Assessors need to be vigilant to the risk of plagiarism in assessment which may include but is not limited to:
  - o Representing work completed by and/or authored by another person (including other learners, family, work colleagues and friends) as their own.
  - o Procuring work from a company or external source including the internet such as an "essay mill"
  - o Copying work from any source or medium without reference (i.e. website, book, journal article).
  - o Taking a passage of text, or an idea, and summarising it without acknowledging the original source.
  - o Passing off collaborative work as one's own.
  - o Piecing together sections of others' work into a new whole.
  - o Submitting another learner's work with or without their knowledge.

- All learner assignments and project work must include a declaration template that must be signed by the learner declaring that assignment/project work to be their own original work.
- Plagiarism detection software should be utilised as necessary. [Many Teagasc Level 5 and 6 agricultural assignments are for a given farm situation however but use of detection software may be a requirement for higher education assignments or advised for some Teagasc further education assignments].

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Assessment

AI has the potential to enhance teaching and assessment. However there may be a risk that it might be misused. Teagasc assessment policy aims to be fair and consistent. For this reason it is important to operate assessments which do not give unfair advantage to candidates.

- Permission for learners to use AI as part of completing an assessment has to be given by the assessor and taken account of in terms of marking.
- Clear communication needs to be given to candidates on an assessment by assessment basis in terms of use of AI if there is any reason to believe AI would give unfair advantage.
- If an assessor has reason to believe that a candidate used AI without permission or reference then marks for that part of the assessment should reflect this.
- Assessors reserve the right to question candidates should there be a suspicion that the misuse of AI is taking place.
- Learner assignments and project work must include a declaration that must be signed by the learner declaring that assignment/project work to be their own original work or if and where AI was used.

Review and Update:

- This guidance document will be reviewed as required to ensure it remains aligned with QQI guidelines and best practices.