

Interactive Oral Assessments (IOA)

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Implementing IOA into your course: Advice and considerations

This guideline has been produced for University of South Australia Academics for the purpose of supporting the development and implementation of IOA into their course assessment plan. We acknowledge that other institutes may have variation to procedure, policy, curriculum management and learning management software.

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1. Timeline of preparation

At least **six weeks** before the assessment:

- Plan the assessment: to be incorporated into the course outline
 - Assessment weighting
 - Assessment style
 - Objectives to be assessed
 - Timing of assessment
- Seek appropriate approvals for assessment type change

Before the course begins:

- Rubric development
- Question pool development
- Develop formative activities to familiarise students

During the course (before assessment)

- Assessor training
- Student familiarisation

- Scheduling system for IOA appointments

Interactive oral assessment time:

- Recording IOAs
- Systems to deal with deferral requests
- Marking
- Moderation

2. Marking Rubric

The marking rubric is essential for reducing bias across assessors, and enabling students to ascertain the requirements to complete the assessment successfully. Each grade descriptor needs to have a clear distinction between the levels of performance that is easily interpreted by both assessor and student. Consider the used language as it should be clear and positive.

The marking rubric should be made available to students in advance of the assessment, to aid their preparation and revision. The rubric also provides the opportunity for feedback for students after moderation and grade entry.

Questions for consideration:

- What is the purpose of the assessment?
- What knowledge or skills is the assessment being designed to test?
- What is the minimum threshold level of performance to pass the assessment?
- What is the distinction between the levels of performance?

3. Developing your question pool

For the benefit of both the academic and the students, a well-established and designed question pool is essential for a successful IOA. The question pool allows for randomised selection of questions and improve academic integrity. Depending on your assessment design, students may or may not be provided with a pool of questions in advance. Regardless, to ensure academic integrity a deep pool of questions is required. Additionally model answers can be provided to assessors which can establish expectation and reduce student bias.

Questions for consideration:

- How many questions do you require to ensure randomness?
 - Consider the size of your course and probability of two students receiving the same set of questions
- How will assessors select questions for each individual?
- Are all questions of similar fairness?

- Do you need to rank questions by difficulty and establish a protocol of how many "hard", "moderate" and "easy" questions each student will be assessed on?
- How will you determine the perceived difficulty of each question?
- Is the same content assessed elsewhere in the course?
 - This can be reason to include content to help reinforce key concepts, or exclude to make space for other content not assessed elsewhere.

4. Generating example videos

Videos should be developed as they provided the students with examples of how to complete an IOA. Furthermore, we provide students with a guideline to the level of performance in each example. This can be an excellent tool to prepare students to help address assessment unfamiliarity and anxiety. Furthermore, it can be used when training assessors.

Questions for consideration:

- Choose an environment that simulates accurately where the IOA is likely to take place
- Provide real feedback to establish expectations
- Include a completed rubric or indication of level of performance within the example

5. How to schedule students for IOA

The Moodle LMS "Scheduler" tool can be easily used to manage student appointments for IOA. It is best to begin to organise appointments about two weeks before the assessments begin. Assessors and rooms can be assigned to individual appointments and students select an appointment time of their choice. Students can be automatically reminded to book appointments through the scheduler tool. Changes in appointment times can be problematic and it is advisable to enable a guard time to prevent late changes in bookings.

Questions for consideration:

- How long do the appointments need to be?
 - Provide at least 10 minutes between appointments for assessors to make notes, finish rubrics, and reduce time delays.
- How many assessors will be sharing the load? It can be helpful to establish a schedule of assessors before using the scheduling tool.
- How many students need to be assessed? Be sure to schedule enough appointments.
- Will the assessments be conducted face-to-face or online? If online, consider how academic integrity will be maintained. Are students allowed notes? If not, how will you monitor use of non-approved materials.

6. Training and Preparation

Adequate support and preparation of staff and students is important for successful integration of IOA as a course assessment. Establishing the expectations of both the assessor and the student

Staff training includes familiarity with the assessment format, marking rubric and expectations of the course coordinator.

Student training and practice opportunities improves familiarity with this form of assessment. It can include synchronous or asynchronous activities that will prepare students and help to address anxiety associated with oral assessments. Adequately prepared students display increased confidence and being prepared starts with sufficient academic support from the course design.

Staff training:

- It is essential to adequately train the assessors with the running and format of the IOA, expectations of them and of the students to ensure fair and equitable assessments. You will need to discuss the marking rubric, discuss model answers to help distinguish through the grade levels and consider practice sessions.

Key information includes how long the IOA will run, how many questions to be asked, where and when the assessment will take place.

You'll also need to prepare your assessors for trouble shooting in the event of challenging events. For example, what is to be done if a student does not arrive on time for their appointment, what if they cannot answer the questions? Also establish who will be responsible for access plans to be incorporated.

Suggestions to train and support your assessors:

1. Run training sessions or meeting to establish key information about the assessment
2. Provide and discuss marking rubrics
3. Provide model answers
4. Provide practice marking activities with previously recorded vivas
5. After completion, consider a feedback session for reflection and improvements

Student training:

When incorporating IOA into a course, there needs to be adequate scaffolding of activities to prepare students. They may have little previous experience with oral assessments, and therefore require support for skill development. Establish the purpose of this assessment and support available so students can identify how to succeed. It is important to highlight to students the importance of practice delivering answers orally, because whilst that may seem obvious, when unfamiliar it is easy to default to written responses. Students who tend to perform poorly, report that they did not engage in active practice to develop their oral skills.

Synchronous activity ideas:

- Continuous formative tutorial/workshop in-class practice opportunities
- Run mock viva sessions - this should mirror the summative IOA format
- Encourage student-to-student collaborative practice

Asynchronous activity ideas:

- Provide example viva videos
- Provide question pool
- Provide marking rubric
- Practice by recording oneself with randomly selected questions - could be submitted for feedback

7. Grading and Moderation process

A desirable benefit of IOA is the burden of marking assessments is lessened by the in-situ grading scheme. Assessors mark individuals within minutes of completion and can provide immediate feedback if desired. By completing a robust marking rubric, the expectation of the grading levels will be well established, and assessors should be confident to complete grading succinctly.

Once grading is completed there also needs to be decisions about the moderation process with respect to reviewing grades. Moderation is important because it ensures consistency between assessors, or even across sessions with the same assessor. It is easy for accidental bias to occur, and IOA are a subjective form of assessment with respect to grading. Furthermore, moderation maintains academic practice to ensure fairness and equality. Therefore, there needs to be consideration as to how to moderate the grades when integrating IOA into a course.

Questions for consideration:

- How will you identify if assessor bias has occurred?
- How will you identify if a grade is likely an outlier?
- How will you ensure fairness during the IOA?
- What will you do in the event of students requesting a re-mark?
- Will you have a record of a student's performance beyond assessor feedback?
 - Is it appropriate to record the IOA enabling the ability for performance to be reviewed or re-marked if deemed necessary?

Some of these questions will hopefully be controlled through adequate preparation and assessment design. For example, the marking rubric will establish the expectation to achieve within the grading levels. Adequate training of assessors will aim to reduce subjectivity.