

# OLAF Service Description and Targets

OLAF (Online Assessment and Feedback) is a University supported service to allow schools to set online examinations for students to sit under invigilated examination conditions.

This document outlines:

- The OLAF system for delivering secure online examinations (see section 1. Service Description and section 3. Service Provision)
- The responsibilities for staff as customers using the service (see section 2. User's role in running an exam in OLAF) and the targets for delivering the service (see section 4. Service Targets)

This service is available to all academic units. The service is for examinations where the mark counts towards a module or course final grade. If you want to set up tests in Blackboard where the grade does not count, please contact [olafops@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:olafops@ncl.ac.uk) for advice.

## 1. Service Description

The Online Assessment and Feedback Service consists of a number of related components:

- QuILT support staff in the use of the Blackboard and facilitate the conversion of appropriately formatted examinations (in text or word format) to on-line delivery
- The Student Progress Service (examinations) and QuILT collaborate in ensuring all the settings in Blackboard are correct for the exam to run according to plan
- ISS 'lock down' the computers in the Computer Cluster with a 'Secure Browser'. Students can access the examinations but nothing else from the computer
- The Student Progress Service (examinations) provide trained invigilators and computing officers who ensure procedures are followed and that the students are correctly instructed
- Post-exam reporting tools provide bespoke student feedback and help staff monitor the efficacy of their tests

Staff may use the secure browser for examinations in LESSON. Please get in touch with [olafops@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:olafops@ncl.ac.uk) if you wish to use the secure browser with services other than Blackboard or LESSON.

## 1.1 Service Hours

No service hours as examinations are scheduled through the Student Progress Office. Consultation, advice and guidance: 09:00-17:00, Monday to Friday, excluding University closure periods.

## 2. User's role in running an exam in OLAF:

OLAF is a complex service dealing with a growing number of high stakes assessments. The Service providers (Student Progress, ISS and QuILT) want all the assessments to run successfully and to the benefit of staff and students. By following the advice below, you can help us to ensure that your exam is available in time to be checked sufficiently to make certain that the exam runs smoothly and that the service is sustainable. If you take the actions below and meet the deadlines specified, we will make the checks specified in Section 3: Service Provision and the targets in Section 4.

**We reserve the right to withdraw the service from programmes or Schools if they are repeatedly unable to meet deadlines.**

### 2.1 Getting started and exam creation choices and responsibilities.

The first step is to inform the exams office. If the exam is to be held within the Semester One or Semester Two exam periods or the summer resit period, please inform Student Progress **at least** 10 weeks in advance of the exam period, at the pre-scheduling stage. If the exam is outside the exam period please inform Student Progress by 4 weeks in advance of the exam. Schools wishing to use the OLAF online examinations service will be asked to complete the online form for the Student Progress (examinations) Office <http://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=1603> . Staff can create their tests directly in Blackboard, or send an appropriately formatted Word or text document to QuILT (through [olafops@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:olafops@ncl.ac.uk)) for conversion. The requirements for each group are outlined below.

#### 2.1. Staff creating assessments directly in Blackboard, please:

- Ensure the name of the assessment includes the date of the exam. This will help us ensure that we link to the correct assessment on the day. e.g. Econ1001 25th January 2012
- Ensure you only used supported question types (not essay questions).
- Please embed images and information in the questions rather than link to files that open separately. If in doubt, please ask QuILT for advice. The examinations should be set to

display questions 'one at a time' rather than 'all at once'. Video and audio are not currently supported

- You will need to have completed the writing of the exam paper at least **two working weeks** before the exam is due to take place. This is to ensure we can make the appropriate checks to ensure the exam runs smoothly
- Please inform us when submitting questions if you wish to take advantage of the quintile and student feedback reports described in Section 3: Service Provision

## 2.2 Staff writing the exam in Word or as a text file:

- Please get the file to QuiLT (contact us through [olafops@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:olafops@ncl.ac.uk)) at least **four working weeks** before the exam.
- The exam should be in the format outlined in the linked document and saved as a Word (.doc or .docx), Text (.txt) or rich text (.rtf) file. Please ask for advice if this is not clear. You may wish to use our templates. The software we use for converting the exam supports multiple choice, multiple answer, matching, fill in the blank and multiple fill in the blank questions
- If you need more help and advice in converting more complex examinations, please **get in touch with** [olafops@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:olafops@ncl.ac.uk) at least **8 weeks** before the exam. QuiLT will advise on the logistics of converting the exam to the appropriate format
- Once we have converted the exam, we will ask you to check that the questions and specified answers are correct in Blackboard. The conversion process is by no means perfect, and these checks are essential in order to ensure the success of the examination
- Please inform us in advance (when you submit your questions) if you wish to take advantage of the quintile and student feedback reports described in Section 3: Service Provision

## 2.3 Pre-exam advice

You should inform students about the online exam format in advance, tell them that they need to ensure that they know their username and password as well as bring their student card (NU Smartcard) or other form of photo id to the exam. Ensure you give them a few sample questions to practice in advance of the exam. The linked video may also help students to prepare for the exam. <https://lectopia.ncl.ac.uk/lectopia/lectopia.lasso?ut=15873&id=11193>

These steps will mean that you test the student knowledge of the subject rather than their IT skills.

## 2.4 Post exam checking

Where possible, check the **Attempt Statistics** report immediately after the exam. See the [guide](#) provided. At present this facility is not available if you are using random blocks of questions. This attempt statistics report may highlight any questions that were ambiguous or where the answer key was incorrect.

### 3. Service provision

- **Pre-exam technical check.** Providing you meet the timescales outlined in section 2, QuILT will check your online exam to ensure all questions are of the type and format that will work through the secure browser
- **Trained invigilation and technical support on the day of the exam.** Student Progress (examinations) Office provide experienced invigilators and technical officers who help ensure all the students can log in and receive any required support during the exam
- **Contingency planning.** The Student Progress (examinations) Office provide some paper based examinations in the exam room for any students who cannot log in. Print Services are on standby in case we need to print and deliver paper copies to all students
- **Reports.** In addition to the built in report functionality within Blackboard, ISS can (on request in advance of the exam) produce:
  - **Quintile reports** - useful for checking question difficulty, exam validity, and how well individual questions discriminate between the best performing students and those that perform less well on the exam. Please inform of us when submitting your questions if you would like us to produce this report for your exam
  - **Student feedback reports** - give students individualised feedback against predefined topic or categories, eg how they performed in the section on Marx and the section on Engels relative to the cohort. This approach avoids giving away the specific questions and answers. If you wish to make use of this service, you need to make QuILT aware of the topics and associated questions when the paper is submitted
- **Review.** Each semester, the operations team review the meeting of targets and issues that arise during the exam period. Where individual exams encounter problems, we will review the processes and reasons for the problems.

### 4. Service targets

#### Pre exam targets

Providing schools meet the targets set out in section 2:

- examinations will be online and will be tested by QuILT and ISS 2 weeks before the exam using a checklist
- 95% of examinations will be available for staff to check the questions and answers at least 1.5 weeks before the exam

#### Exam targets

- 95% of exam go ahead on time
- 98% will take place within 2 hours of the scheduled time

- 100% will take place online or using the paper backup as a last resort unless paper alternatives are not feasible (e.g. very large examinations with lots of images) or other software is involved
- 99% will be in 'lock down' conditions providing the test and questions are written in the compatible format and provided that there is no requirement to use additional software

## **Reporting Targets**

- Quintile reports - target 2 working weeks post exam with a 95% completion where requested by the school in advance
- Student Feedback reports- target 3 working weeks 95% completion where required and question categories provided by the school in advance

## **Duration**

This document is valid until the start of the academic year 2012/2013

## **Customer representative (schools and student users)**

The e-Assessment and Feedback Steering group which is made up of academic and student representatives, as well as those from Student Progress (examinations), QuILT and ISS, acts as the customer representative for this service. Please make representations to this group about the service ([olafops@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:olafops@ncl.ac.uk)). Any changes to the service will be discussed by this group and put to the eLearning Steering Group or the Faculty Learning and Teaching and Student Experience committees.

The e-Assessment and Feedback Steering Group report to the eLearning Steering Group. OLAF Ops (made up of members of QuILT, ISS and Student Progress) represent the service.