

BUAs information bulletin about digital testing and proctoring 20 May 2020

Introduction

Since the beginning of the corona crisis Breda University of Applied Sciences rapidly switched to online education and testing. Lectures, meetings, coaching, and all other educational activities are conducted via MS Teams, the LMS and other online tools. All tests, assessments, assignments and exams within the programmes of BUAs are also offered online whenever possible.

This rapid switch to online testing and proctoring raised some urgent questions from lecturers, students, boards of examiners, and management. In this document most of these questions are answered.

Why online proctoring? What is the importance to students and BUAs?

The traditional operation of examination enables students to fully concentrate on their exams, and with invigilators in the same room to make sure no disturbances occur and that students live up to logical rules to rule out fraud. Both are important to safeguard the reliability and the value of the exams, which is crucial to both student and BUAs.

In this coronavirus impacted situation, the current measures, issued by the Dutch government, make it impossible to take enough exams at the BUAs campus. Online proctoring is, in our opinion, a good (temporary) alternative way to still perform examinations, and prevent study delays as much as possible. The online proctoring system BUAs applies, ProctorExam, will take over the invigilation tasks for us. The system enables using webcam images and sound, analysed remotely by an invigilator of ProctorExam. Below, it will be explained exactly how ProctorExam works and how it is used by BUAs.

Online proctoring due to national limitations and important priorities

BUAs will prolong online education and examination – instead of on-campus education – until at least the end of this academic year. The latest measures of the Dutch government, the 1.5 metre guideline and the ‘safety region organisation’ (Veiligheidsregio) guidelines give little room for manoeuvre for physical on-campus presence for the rest of this academic year.

BUAs can only use 20 to 25% of the total campus building capacity. The limited room which we are allowed, will be used for graduation sessions (defence presentations), for practical examinations (for our Hotel Management and Media domains) and for a strictly limited number of students who are allowed at the campus because of urgent and significant personal circumstances.

Because of the limited campus capacity, and the travelling restrictions for students, and the aforementioned priorities, we can only organise this based on strict time slots and a flexible mindset of students and staff. For students, the public travel restrictions involve strict travelling times: no travelling before 11.00 hrs and not between 15.00 and 20.00 hrs on weekdays.

BUAs wants to prevent study delays for students and to offer both international students (abroad) and national students the opportunity to perform their exams, at the same time. BUAs is confident that we can almost entirely manage the original examinations schedule, which is important for both students and BUAs.

What are the BUAs guiding principles for examinations and online proctoring?

For written exams, BUAs has been exploring the option of online proctoring. The following principles have been considered:

- BUAs wants to do its utmost to support students, and prevent delays in study progress, and to enable students to complete their degree programmes within the standard duration of studies. Students are thus rewarded for having studied at home, having followed many classes and projects online.
- Many exams must be performed in the upcoming weeks. If these cannot be held, many students will have major problems during their next academic year. This applies to fourth-year students who want to graduate, and to first-, second- and third-year students who otherwise would have to take extra exams next year, resulting in a higher study workload.
- BUAs is required to safeguard the reliability and validity of exams. Offering exams in the original way as much as possible, is the way to guarantee validity. Ruling out fraud is necessary to safeguard the reliability and value of exams. To ensure that these requirements are met, the BUAs boards of examiners have been closely monitoring the Teaching and Examinations Regulations.
- BUAs wants to offer exams in their original form as much as possible, because these are part of a well-designed testing programme, covering the required learning goals and competencies.
- For written exams that can be performed digitally, BUAs applies Surpass, LMS and/or TestVision testing software. Surpass, for example, is a testing system in which all questions are kept in a database and in which tests are being constructed. Students can take the exams on their laptops.
- The proctoring platform should of course guarantee the privacy of students.

How is the privacy of students guaranteed?

The proctoring platform which BUAs selected after this careful consideration, ProctorExam, supports all our requirements:

- It enables online invigilation, in a respectful and data-safe way. During the corona crisis, when you choose to take a digital exam, we base the processing of your data on the legitimate interests of BUAs to offer the possibility to take exams in an alternative way. The purpose of processing your personal data is to help you take exams in an alternative way, and to help you stay on track with as little delay as possible. BUAs wants to prevent study delay for its students as much as possible.
- The system will be recording students during the exam, using the webcam and the microphone. A student's behaviour will be processed, as well as the use of websites other than those allowed during the exam, to see if these have been used illegitimately.
- To establish the student's identity in advance, he/she will have to identify him/herself by showing the ID card, take a picture of him/herself and submit these. When showing the ID, the invigilator only needs to see the full name and photo and he/she must be able to establish whether it is a legal document. Students are therefore strongly advised to cover their social security number, place of issue, nationality and document number. They will also be requested to show the materials they are allowed to use during the exam.
- A 'room scan', and the use of a second camera, e.g. of a smartphone, are not applicable. A student will not have to show the room. He/she is advised to provide a neutral environment and put special or personal items out of sight.

- The recording of the exam will be analysed by an external proctor of ProctorExam. The use of an algorithm or 'machine learning' is not applicable. Only 'real people' carry out the proctoring and they have been trained to analyse the recordings at a speed of 6 times the normal play mode. Within 48 hours after students have ended their exams, the recording will be proctored and sent to BUAs. A report will be sent to BUAs with a colour code. 'Green' means: no irregularities; 'orange' means: there are some irregularities that possibly need closer examination; 'red' means: the invigilator has seen behaviour that needs to be reviewed. Recordings with code 'green' are deleted from the server (based in Europe) immediately. Code 'orange' recordings will be reviewed by BUAs as soon as possible, to decide if the deviant behaviour gives reason for further investigation. Code 'red' recordings will also be reviewed in order to make sure if code red was indeed applicable. 'Orange' and 'red' recordings will be deleted if BUAs decides that there has been no fraud. Recordings where no fraud has been established are deleted within a maximum of 2 business days after they are received and analysed. The photo a student made to identify him/herself at the beginning of the exam will be deleted simultaneously with the recording of the exam.
- If fraud has been committed, those recordings will be saved by BUAs, only for as long as necessary, e.g. to serve as evidence in the case of an appeal.
- BUAs has made privacy agreements with ProctorExam in a processing agreement that is based on the GDPR. Therefore, ProctorExam is only allowed to process the data based on that agreement. The recordings and other personal data are processed confidentially. Sharing these recordings or any other personal data with third parties without the written consent of BUAs is strictly prohibited. The same strict privacy and confidentiality rules apply to all ProctorExam employees and sub-processors. The external proctors can be compared to the normal on-campus proctors (invigilators) during an on-campus exam. Both BUAs and Proctor Exam (and its sub-processors) have implemented technical and organisational data security in their systems to ensure that the processing of your data is being carried out safely.
- Only BUAs can decide if fraud has been committed and these decisions are always made by the board of examiners, not by a computer system or ProctorExam. So, no automated decision making is applicable. The TER is, as always, applicable.
- After submitting the test, and having performed the required ProctorExam actions, the student can shut down the web browser. After that moment nothing will be registered anymore.
- Student data, recorded by ProctorExam, will be exclusively available to the appointed ProctorExam and BUAs invigilators, and will be saved according to the period mentioned above, by ProctorExam and BUAs.
- The BUAs legal officer has assessed the privacy perspective of applying ProctorExam, and concluded that the use of ProctorExam is the best possible and acceptable way to perform online proctoring, taking applicable privacy regulations (GDPR/AVG) into account.
- The general privacy regulations of BUAs are, as always, applicable. In this document more in-depth information can be found on the rights regarding privacy matters, and how to file a complaint if needed.

How is the proctoring being done?

The reviewing of the exam as explained above, and all additional actions, will mainly be done after the exam. ProctorExam generates a report for each candidate, which enables BUAs to investigate whether fraud was committed during the exam. The invigilator could, for instance, have noticed that a student left the place during the exam, or that he/she was doing a lot of talking, possibly indicating that somebody else was sitting next to the student. Recordings may show that web pages have been visited that were not allowed. If the BUAs examination staff, based on the report and considering the ProctorExam recordings, suspect that fraud was committed, the usual procedure via the board of examiners will apply. The board of examiners may also review these recordings, if applicable.

What if a student does not want to take the exam online?

Due to the current corona crisis and based on the government guidelines and measures, BUAs cannot organise exams in a normal way. BUAs has found an alternative for the on-campus exams, by organising digital exams and using online proctoring, which processing is based on the GDPR. However, students are not obligated to take the exams online if they do not want to. They can, as always, opt to perform exams next academic year, most probably leading to study delays. BUAs will do its utmost to prevent study delays as much as possible, but given the coronavirus circumstances, no other options will be available in the near future other than those offered now, using online proctoring.

Where can I find more information?

More information and specific FAQs about online proctoring and digital testing will be offered via the BUAs student portal, referring to the [Digital Assessment website](#). This website will be updated regularly. More specific information about the upcoming exams will be provided by the academies.