Contents

01 / Preface

02 / Executive summary

03 / The impact of COVID-19 disruption on examinations

- Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on the continuity of examinations
- The existing method of conducting examinations among educational institutions
- The current landscape of entrance and semester examinations

04 / The current level of preparedness among universities and colleges and challenges in employing online solutions

- The strategy for dealing with the disruption and implementing quick solutions
- Assessing the current level of preparedness to implement alternative means successfully
- Challenges in implementing alternative means

05 / Exploring online examination platforms and tools to shift to the online ecosystem

- Evaluating an anti-cheating platform: essential must-haves in an anti-cheating solution
- Analyzing important features in evaluating online tools for semester exams
- Analyzing important features in evaluating online tools for entrance exams

06 / The road ahead: evaluating the pros and cons in making the transition

- Arguments against shifting the exams online
- Arguments favoring the shift to online exams
- Assessing the education sector's transition to the online mode: how likely is it to sustain?

07 / How Mercer | Mettl can Help

08 / Respondent Summary
COVID-19 has disrupted the education sector in unprecedented ways, and its impact has been genuinely global. Students have been in a precarious situation after colleges and centers of higher education canceled scheduled entrance and semester exams. The decision to cancel exams followed after governments, globally, mandated lockdown to minimize the loss of lives.

UNESCO reports that the educational continuity of over one billion learners has been impacted globally by the COVID-19 crisis and the ensuing lockdown in 123 countries, which is a whopping 62.3 percent of all enrolled learners.

These numbers could change drastically, for good or worse, depending on how swiftly governments and civil societies respond to challenges and address them efficiently. However, the pandemic has created genuine concerns about the continuity of academic pursuits, and the outlook on reverting to the normal remains shrouded in uncertainty.

Amid the education sector’s skepticism on the immediate and longer-term viability of conducting examinations, ‘State of Online Examinations’ was set out to analyze the impact of COVID-19 on its stakeholders.

We reached out to over 500 senior industry decision-makers, including deans, HODs, and other important constituents, from across 17 countries, to understand their current levels of preparedness to tide over the disruption. We also gauged the challenges in adopting new-age mediums for conducting examinations.

The report was set out to analyze the attributes that could expedite the transition to the online ecosystem and probed facets that shape the choices in zeroing in on online platforms.
Executive summary

COVID-19’s total impact on the continuity of examinations has been the most notable finding. An overwhelming 88% of survey respondents have been affected by the ongoing disruption.

The lack of preparedness to manage the disruption because of over-dependence on traditional means of conducting examinations, i.e., center-based tests, has emerged as another important finding.

However, educational institutions have exhibited tremendous resolve to continue with their established academic and examination schedule. Most respondents suggest they have already shifted their assessment processes to the online ecosystem. The rest are firmly on course to make the transition in the coming months.

Despite their willingness to make course corrections, the survey has revealed that most institutions have been caught off-guard, primarily because of negligible prior experience in conducting online assessments.

Respondents have listed maintaining the credibility of the examination process as their most significant concern in exploring an online solution. The online platform’s ability to provide robust anti-cheating mechanisms to uphold the examination’s integrity has emerged as the most pressing concern.

Survey results highlight the importance of ease in conducting online exams among students and educators. Respondents have flagged internet accessibility and broadband connectivity and the platform’s ability to host diverse question types, such as multiple-choice questions, bar and graphs, and descriptive type questions, among others, as critical apprehensions in choosing an online examination platform for semester exams.
While evaluating the long-term viability of shifting exams online, respondents have underlined the perceived ability of traditional means to preserve academic integrity and prevent cheating during the examination as primary arguments against making the transition. The lack of ubiquitous internet and broadband connectivity have also been highlighted for maintaining the status quo.

The education sector has indicated its preference to measure the prowess of anti-cheating solutions by their ability to provide a robust candidate authentication system to negate impersonation. The platform must provide mechanisms to lock down candidates’ browsers to deny them access to external websites or applications.

Data safety, too, is being factored in, while choosing an anti-cheating platform, with growing data breach and privacy concerns.
The online platform’s prowess to remain immune from the physical world’s disruptions

Conversely, respondents have listed the online platform’s prowess to remain immune from the physical world’s disruptions as the most crucial factor, favoring its steady adoption for examinations. The ease of giving and taking exams is also placing a premium on new-age means over traditional methods.

The survey indicates the education sector’s willingness to utilize new-age methods to conduct examinations. The findings suggest a broad-based consensus on an expeditious shift to online platforms after experiencing the COVID-19-induced disruption.

While the disruption has derailed examinations and academic pursuits, it has fastened the pace of technology adoption. Survey findings indicate that the shift to an online platform is not a perfunctory measure but a more permanent transition that is likely to sustain in times to come.
88% of survey respondents have reported a disruption in entrance and semester exams.

58% of respondents are still conducting center-based entrance exams.

84% of respondents would continue with their semester and entrance exams.

82% of respondents have either shifted or are planning to shift to online modes of exams in the immediate future.

77% of respondents have never conducted online entrance examinations.

70% of respondents have reported cheating prevention as their most pressing concern in exploring an online exam solution.

51% of respondents list a robust candidate authentication system as the foremost priority when evaluating an anti-cheating solution for semester exams.

58% of respondents believe the COVID-led disruption would expedite a longer-term and sustained shift to online platforms.
The impact of COVID-19 disruption on examinations
Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on examination continuity

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the continuity of the education sector as governments have restricted movement, concerned over the health and safety of their citizens, forcing a vast majority of the population to remain indoors. The nature and the extent of the health crisis have led to a complete lockdown, disrupting established academic calendars and examination schedules. Semester and entrance exams, both, have been its evident casualties. Spring and fall are the most crucial seasons for enrollments in colleges, and a vast majority of entrance exams are scheduled in these seasons. The onset of the pandemic and its likely continuity have significantly impacted the sector.

There has been a widespread impact of the disruption, visible in the survey findings, with 9 out of 10 respondents reporting a disruption in their exam schedule.

How would you describe the impact of COVID-led disruption on your institution’s examination schedule?

- Both entrance and semester examinations were disrupted: 88%
- Only semester examinations were disrupted: 23%
- No disruption faced yet as my institution had already conducted the exams before lockdown: 10%
- Only entrance examinations were disrupted: 7%

Over 54% of respondents have reported a disruption in both semester and entrance exams. Furthermore, one-third (33%) of respondents have reported an impact on the schedule of their semester exams.
It is important to understand why such a visible effect of the disruption on the education sector can be traced to the prevalent means of conducting examinations. The technology could have been one of the critical enablers in the sector’s continuity. However, the education sector has often been described as one of the late entrants. While the industry has witnessed a steady adoption of technology, it is yet to assume mainstream status. Technology is perceived as an add-on and not the central tenet for driving sectoral initiatives. This delayed response to technological advancements and its placid assimilation into processes have exacerbated the challenges faced by institutions amid the ongoing disruption.

The results of the survey attest to the dependence on traditional means of conducting semester and entrance examinations. Let us analyze the trend among institutions in conducting semester examinations:

**How would you describe the existing mode of conducting all major semester examinations at your institution?**

- Exams are computer-based and administered at an invigilated examination hall
- Exams are paper/OMR-based and administered at an invigilated center/examination hall
- Exams are administered online and can be attempted by students online remotely, with remote invigilation or proctoring
- Exams are administered online and can be attempted by students online remotely, without any remote invigilation or proctoring

38% of respondents are still conducting center-based semester exams.
Traditional methods also remain the primary means of conducting entrance exams. These exams are conducted on a grander scale compared to semester exams and are logistically-heavy. Institutions have not been agile enough to adopt technology-enabled new-age methods to conduct entrance exams.

**The trend among institutions in conducting entrance examinations**

58% of respondents are still conducting center-based entrance exams.

**How would you describe the existing mode of conducting entrance examinations at your institution?**

- Exams are paper/OMR-based and administered at an invigilated center/examination hall
- Exams are computer-based and administered at an invigilated examination hall
- Exams are administered online and can be attempted by students remotely, without any remote invigilation or proctoring
- Exams are administered online and can be attempted by students remotely, with remote invigilation or proctoring

These are significant numbers when factoring in the scale of entrance exams. These findings highlight the prevalence of traditional means for undertaking both semester and entrance examinations.
The current level of preparedness among universities and colleges and challenges faced in employing online solutions
Despite the initial setback in established processes and schedules, universities and educational institutions have exhibited commendable resolve to continue with their examinations. They seem prepared not to get bogged by the situation and continue with their examinations. The educational sector is willing to make an expeditious shift toward the online ecosystem. Although delayed, there is a concerted effort to scout for alternative means to maintain continuity in the established academic calendars. Centers of higher education are responsible for safeguarding the future of students who are at grave risk of losing precious months or, worse, a year. Industry stakeholders seem to understand that the disruption is not transient and may continue to fester for a longer duration than previously assumed. Therefore, keeping up with academic schedules appears to be a necessity and not a choice.

What is your broad strategy for dealing with COVID-led disruption in the examination

- Scout for online/internet-based solutions to conduct examinations: 84%
- Wait for the guidelines from the UGC (University Grants Commission) or other such relevant authority to decide on next steps: 16%
- Postpone examinations until lockdown opens: 2%
- Cancel examinations and promote the students based on the previous exam's performance: 0%

84% of respondents would continue with their exam schedule.
Our survey findings also indicate that educational institutions are firm on continuing with established schedules. They intend to maintain continuity by actively scouting for available options. Tech-based solutions are apt mediums to circumvent bottlenecks. Therefore, institutions are rightly exploring alternate means, in online or internet-based solutions, to conduct their semester and entrance examinations.

Our survey results indicate that a vast majority of participants, over two-thirds (67%), seek an internet-based solution to continue with their schedules.

18% only close to 18 percent of participants prefer to wait for a new set of guidelines before making an informed decision.
The stakeholders are not only seeking internet-based solutions to make the desired transition but are already geared up to undertake the change. A significant percentage of respondents have reported that they have already shifted to the online mode to give examinations. Any delay or postponement in the examination schedule is bound to have long-term consequences for students.

Therefore, stakeholders seem to understand the need to make the transition quickly and efficiently.

82% of respondents have either shifted or are planning to shift to online modes of exams in the immediate future.

When are you planning to implement online examinations in your institute?

- Already implemented: 50%
- Not planned yet: 20%
- In the second half of 2020: 10%
- In the next 1-2 months: 10%
- In the next academic year: 10%

There is a palpable urgency among survey respondents who have overwhelmingly indicated their willingness to implement online exams at their centers immediately. Almost half (48.81%) of them have already incorporated online solutions at their institutes.
“Even though we were forced to adopt the online examination mode due to COVID-19, we are considering shifting our mid-term and entrance exams completely to the online mode.”

Associate Director, The Assessment Center
Miami Dade College (Florida, The USA).

However, despite the sector’s willingness to shift to online exams, stakeholders do not have considerable prior experience of new-age mediums. As mentioned above, institutions have typically preferred traditional means and have, over the years, not experimented with established processes for varying reasons. Their lack of experience in conducting online examinations is evident in the survey findings.

77% of respondents have never conducted online entrance examinations.
Has your organization ever conducted an online examination for the following?

- None
- Semester examination
- Distance learning course
- Entrance examination
- Certificate program

Only 34 percent of respondents have reported using online means for semester examinations. The percentage declines further when concerning entrance exams (23%). These numbers stress the dependence on traditional mediums and highlight the existing lacuna in the education sector. The findings indicate that the broader education ecosystem is yet to fully integrate its processes online.
An important determinant in measuring the efficiency of an online examination solution is its ability to simulate the real-world, traditional, examination experience for students and faculty. The online solution must equally uphold the integrity of the examination by ensuring no unfair means are employed in giving and taking exams, using technology and AI. The solution must provide a seamless test-taking experience by replicating a traditional examination setup. This would ensure students are not unduly stressed in shifting from traditional means to the online platform, which may be a challenging proposition for those uninitiated in technology and computers.

When assessing specific concerns, maintaining the test-taking process’s credibility has rightfully emerged as the most pressing issue among respondents in exploring an online solution. The integrity of the exams is intrinsically linked to the quality and prestige of the institution. Semester and entrance exams are a measure of students’ learning and aptitude, the ability to understand concepts and facts and interpret information, among others. Both these exams are critical in their ways as entrance exams ensure quality admissions into institutions and semesters evaluate students’ progress that eventually accords them with degree certificates.

The online solution must provide a seamless interface, requiring minimal training and familiarization. It would enable all students to partake in the process, with similar comfort levels.

These solutions must function on minimum possible internet bandwidth to ensure connectivity and access in remotest of locations. Such measures would provide equal opportunities to all students, irrespective of their location, familiarization to technology, and access to high-speed internet and advanced computers, among other such factors.

70% of respondents have reported preventing cheating as the most pressing concern in exploring an online exam solution.
What are your significant challenges in exploring an online examination solution?

- Preventing students from cheating
- Accessibility and connectivity, even in remote areas
- Assuring seamless user experience for both examiners and students
- Enabling multiple question types and formats online
- Legal implications and data protection
- Openness/capabilities of students and faculty
- Missing the ‘human factor’
- Creating and scheduling exams

Education is all-pervasive, and students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds are part of mainstream education. Students from remote locations routinely take exams and compete to receive higher education. Intermittent internet connectivity and accessibility to online platforms are obvious hindrances for institutions to give such tests - a concern that has reflected in the survey results. Over 63 percent of respondents have listed accessibility and connectivity in remote areas as their second most important challenge in digitizing exams.

“Indonesia is a large country. We have many students from various islands. Therefore, it is quite challenging to find a platform that can address integrity and security issues.”

Ike Marieta
Director, Pusat Inovasi Psikologi
Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia.
Exploring examination platforms and tools to shift to the online ecosystem
The education sector has exhibited the desire to seamlessly transition to the online ecosystem. However, the transition must offer demonstrated integrity and the ease of giving and taking exams for examinees and examiners.

Online platforms must be able to offer multiple question types for semester examinations, which is critical for institutions to offer tests on various subjects and academic streams. These question types may include mathematical and chemistry formulas, graphs, and descriptive questions.

Conversely, the platform’s ability to manage scale is the leading requirement to conduct entrance examinations. As mentioned, these examinations typically involve a disproportionate number of candidates vying for admissions in colleges with limited intake capacities.

Amid these peculiar challenges, a credible anti-cheating solution is a common necessity and concern for the sector for both semester and entrance exams as maintaining the integrity of the examination process takes precedence over all else.

**We wanted to investigate critical features sought by the education sector in an anti-cheating platform.**
Respondents seek an anti-cheating platform that offers a robust candidate authentication system to ascertain the candidate’s identity. They also expect lockdown mechanisms on test browsers to negate any possibilities of candidates accessing external websites and apps on computers while taking exams. The ability to view and record the test-taker’s screen is equally important while evaluating an online platform’s anti-cheating prowess.

A strong candidate authentication system and lockdown features are foremost priorities when evaluating an anti-cheating solution

Choose the most important feature when evaluating the anti-cheating solution for online exams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lockdown the candidate’s exam browser and access to any external websites or apps on the computer</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/broadband connectivity</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to view and record the candidate’s screen</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The availability of AI-based proctoring to remotely invigilate candidates using AI</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility to laptops/computers</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to manually proctor the candidate remotely</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in adapting to the online mode, particularly for ones that need elaborate and technical answers</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing the challenge faced by students in taking an online exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong candidate authentication system to avoid impersonation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ability to lock down exam browsers and access to any external websites or apps on computers have been selected by over 46% of respondents.

Data safety has also steadily emerged as an important concern in choosing an anti-cheating solution, with growing concerns on data privacy issues. Several legislations on data security and protection, globally, coupled with legal and financial implications of such a breach, have increased its importance when assessing an anti-cheating solution. The data safety concern has also been highlighted by a sizable constituent of the survey respondents.

“One of the major concerns in Germany and the entire European Union is data protection. Therefore, we were looking for a GDPR-compliant system. We had to ensure we had complete control over the available data.”

Raphael Beuthner
CIO, EBZ Business School, Germany
Analyzing important features in evaluating an online examination platform for semester exams

Semester exams are crucial in determining whether students possess the requisite skills to be promoted to a higher level of education. Any shortcomings in assessing their abilities can have long-term consequences. Also, educational institutions offer numerous academic courses, and their semester examinations consist of varied question types, ranging from multiple-choice questions, bar and graphs, essay-type questions, diagrams, and others. Institutions believe that these diverse requirements for conducting tests are better addressed with traditional means. They also perceive that conventional ways offer students with greater ease in attempting varied question formats. Therefore, they seem apprehensive of the online platform’s ability to support diverse question types.

Semester exams involve a batch of students, with numbers typically ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand, depending on the education center’s intake, scale, and footprint. Therefore, institutions also require a platform that enables them to give exams on a considerable scale.
What are the important factors in deciding on evaluating an online exam solution for a semester examination? Rank in the order of importance:

- The ability to provide strong anti-cheating technology and ensuring students don’t cheat in the online exam
- The ability to support multiple question types and formats for various courses
- The ease of use for the test-taker in attempting the test
- The platform’s ability to work in remotest of areas on minimum internet bandwidth
- The availability of strong operational support/demos and troubleshooting for students
- Ease of use in creating question papers on the platform and the availability of autograding feature
- The ability to support exams on mobile/hand-held devices

Anticipating cheating and the platform’s ability to function in remote locations on minimum internet bandwidth and its prowess to support multiple question types have emerged as important concerns with 26% and 19% votes, respectively.

“We needed to see the students, just as we would have been able to see them in an on-site scenario - where students are taking their exam, and one or more proctors walk through the room to ensure everything is going according to the plan.”

Raphael Beuthner
CIO, EBZ Business School, Germany
Entrance exams involve a significantly larger number of students. Often, a disproportionately large number of students vie for a handful of seats in prestigious universities, and exams are conducted at a large-scale. These tests are attempted by students from across cities and towns, sometimes by students from foreign shores. Therefore, they need to be accessible to all examinees, a major concern in giving entrance exams.

Additionally, the prestige of the institution is at stake. Institutions must ensure the credibility of the exam-giving process, a concern highlighted by a significant percentage of respondents who have listed robust anti-cheating technology as the first criteria in evaluating an online platform. It is followed by the platform’s ability to manage scale.

**Analyzing important features in evaluating an online platform for entrance exams**

Strong anti-cheating technology and robust platform to manage scale are concerns in evaluating an online solution for entrance exams.

**What are the important factors in deciding on evaluating an online exam solution for an entrance examination? Rank in the order of importance:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ability to provide strong anti-cheating technology and ensuring students don’t cheat in the online exam</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robust technology infrastructure to manage large-scale exams seamlessly without interruptions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The platform’s ability to work in remotest of areas with minimum internet bandwidth</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use for the test-taker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong operational support/demos and troubleshooting for students</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong data protection</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to support exams on mobile/hand-held devices</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online solution providers continue to offer various products to address the existing bottlenecks faced by educational institutions. There has been a visible flurry of new offerings since the advent of COVID-19-induced disruption. The ITES industry has employed innovation and technology to harness the potential of online platforms to offer a seamless experience and the ability to scale and conduct exams at par with physical examination centers.

As we have established the education sector’s critical requirements, the onus is now on industry vendors to develop products that assuage these concerns mentioned above.

Vendors must design comprehensive anti-cheating platforms that feature robust browser control, a seamless ability to view and record candidates’ screens and comply with the highest standards of data security and protection. How effectively these concerns are addressed would greatly influence the sector’s pace of transition to the online mode.
The road ahead: evaluating the pros and cons in making the transition
We have firmly established that COVID-19 has led to an unprecedented shift toward the online ecosystem. Technology-enabled platforms have emerged as a solution to the disruption, enabling the education sector to continue with their examination schedule.

The accelerated shift toward ‘online’ has been truly profound and has established the criticality of technology in circumventing unforeseen challenges. The shift assumes greater importance as, over the years, the sector has preferred to rely on traditional means for examinations and assessments. However, whether the preference for online platforms is a stop-gap arrangement for industry constituents or a more sure-footed, permanent transition, is the question. We wanted to examine the scope and extent of the transition and whether it would be a more long-term and permanent shift. Let us evaluate the arguments put forth by industry stakeholders in favor and against making the transition to the online ecosystem for giving assessments.
Institutions pride themselves on excellence and standards, which emanate from following stringent processes and upholding the highest standards while conducting exams. After all, the quality of students is directly linked to that of the institutions. The quality of student intake is critical for institutions to retain their standing. Therefore, they rightly remain concerned about ensuring the efficacy of the admission process, which, in turn, upholds the sanctity of the examination exercise.

Traditional means of examinations have been favored because they are perceived to offer direct quality control over the examination process, allowing educational centers to monitor the examination process in real-time. Therefore, it enables them to preserve the integrity of the exam-giving process. Also, despite the ubiquity of the internet, the academic community and students have continued to prefer traditional means as they are perceived to offer enhanced ease in giving and taking exams.

As mentioned earlier, technology and accessibility to internet platforms have not yet achieved the last-mile status. Educational institutes are duty-bound to offer the same opportunities to the students, irrespective of their geographical location or their ability to utilize new-age platforms. Issues such as patchy internet connection, mobile, and broadband network are genuine concerns, especially for students attempting tests from remote locations where these technologies and gadgets have not permeated to levels similar to that of cities and towns. Many students do not even have access to personal computers, which further compounds the problem.
Maintaining academic integrity, preventing cheating, and concerns about internet connectivity are the most pronounced arguments against taking the online mode.

**What is the most significant argument against shifting the exams online?**

- Maintaining academic integrity and preventing cheating
- Internet/broadband connectivity
- The ease of use for students, particularly for complex question types and courses
- Accessibility to laptops/computers

Our survey findings indicate a similar trend. More than half (51%) of respondents have reported concerns about maintaining academic integrity and preventing instances of cheating in making the shift to online platforms.
Disruptions are becoming increasingly routine and manifest in different forms. COVID-19 has accentuated the challenge of maintaining continuity and the education sector’s tumult has underlined technology’s significance and prowess to be an enabler.

Disruptions can manifest in many forms - political unrest, natural calamities, human-made disasters, and several others. COVID-19 pandemic is merely one example of how a disruption can derail established schedules. Technology-enabled platforms can empower institutions to undertake large-scale examinations, without concerns about giving them in a hassle-free manner, insulating them to periodic disruptions.

There are also significant costs associated with the process of conducting semester and entrance exams. The logistical challenge of arranging for invigilators, class-rooms and travel expenses associated with conducting examinations at physical centers incur additional costs. Modern-day organizations, across the spectrum, are increasingly streamlining processes to improve efficiencies.

Arguments favoring the shift to online exams

Therefore, it must also enhance operational and cost-effectiveness and incorporate global best practices. These elements can be addressed adequately by employing online platforms.

Education is a multi-billion dollar sector.

Therefore, it must also enhance operational and cost-effectiveness and incorporate global best practices. These elements can be addressed adequately by employing online platforms.
Survey respondents have favored all these advantages. They have reported online exams as a scalable alternative as the most critical factor for its adoption.

**Almost half of the respondents have favored online exams for their ability to remain immune to disruptions**

**What is the most critical factor favoring the shift to online exams?**

- A scalable alternative that is immune to the disruptions of the physical world
- The ease of administering, scheduling and logistics
- Cost-effectiveness

28.66% of participants have underlined the ease associated with conducting exams as the most important factor in shifting exams to the online platform.
A spirited debate has continued on using technology in the education sector. Traditionalists enumerate the advantages of using conventional means, arguing it offers enhanced quality control and ease for students and teachers. Those championing new-age means favor its reach, ability to reach distant corners, and create an unprecedented parity, making education accessible to all. While both arguments may have some validity, but COVID-19 has explicitly underlined the need for insulating processes from abrupt disruptions.

Our survey indicates a broad-based consensus among respondents, suggesting the disruption would encourage the educational sector to make a more pronounced shift toward online exams.

58% of participants believe the COVID-led disruption would expedite a longer-term and sustained shift toward online platforms.

Describe the impact of COVID-led disruption on the future of assessments in the education sector?

- The disruption is expected to accelerate the push toward online exams that is likely to sustain
- Institutions are expected to adopt online solutions only temporarily and would revert to original modes once the disruption is over

While the sector has faced unprecedented challenges with the onset of COVID-19, the development has expedited the pace of tech adoption. It is a watershed for the industry to make the much-awaited transition. Most respondents believe that the shift would immune the sector from other unforeseen disruptions, safeguarding students’ academic pursuits. It would also enhance sectoral efficiency.

Educational institutes can no longer remain oblivious to the perils of being over-dependent on traditional means. It is most likely that those on the sidelines and uncertain about transitioning to the online ecosystem for conducting exams would now expedite their search for a reliable, scalable, and robust online platform. The post-COVID-19 education sector is likely to witness a greater focus on online examination platforms, which would bode well for its long-term sustainability.
How Mercer | Mettl can Help
Mercer | Mettl offers a comprehensive suite of digital solutions for conducting online assessments. It has acquired a pole-position in the assessment ecosystem, enabling numerous clients across industries and verticals to conduct their examinations and assessments with the highest industry standards. These online examination solutions incorporate AI and technology, coupled with human proctoring, and provide a comprehensively secure and cheating-free environment for giving assessments.

Some important proctoring and examination features and solutions are as follows:

**Mettl Proctoring as a Service (MPaaS)**

MPaaS is a state-of-the-art, cloud-based proctoring service. It enables institutes and universities to conduct exams online in an extremely secure environment with credible anti-cheating features and insightful analysis. AI is the product’s core differentiator. It is a much-needed security layer for exams with a suite of powerful features and lends fairness, ethics and progressiveness to assessments. Students cannot view the examination unless they accept to share their screen, video and audio, and establish proctoring and authentication.

**Mettl Secure Browser (MSB)**

Mettl Secure Browser is a secure browsing feature that allows academicians to host the online entrance exam in a safe environment without worrying about on-screen cheating. From enabling browser lockdown functions, allowing minimum navigation control, to blocking all external ports - MSB restricts access to any and every unauthorized resource possible. This feature prevents candidates from surfing the web for answers.

**AI Proctoring**

Mercer | Mettl’s futuristic AI algorithm is trained with more than 2.8 million proctored assessments. It can detect up to 18 dynamic digressions with over 95% accuracy. The intelligent algorithm is configured to flag various suspicious cases, such as the non-visibility of face/ presence, detection of mobile phones, an additional person’s presence, and a distracted eye movement. AI proctoring eliminates the most glaring vulnerabilities with a dynamic set of anti-cheating features.

**Manual+live invigilation**

Sharing the screen, video, and audio is a prerequisite to taking the exam. With one-to-one and one-to-many proctoring features, live proctoring provides a classroom view to the human invigilator, monitoring remotely, from start to finish. An added feature of pausing /stopping /resuming the test in real-time, with a live chat option, enables the invigilator to interact with students to allay any suspicions. The entire recorded session can be viewed later by using the proctoring software.
3-point candidate authentication

MPaaS’ 3-point candidate authentication ensures the utmost reliability and authenticity of the candidate. Live authentication begins after the candidate clicks on the exam link. The webcam first asks students to click their photo and show their ID proof. They are also needed to send across customizable registration details. Mercer | Mettl's proctors are available around the clock to verify the photo ID against the registration details and attest to the candidate's legitimacy.

Credibility Index

Mercer | Mettl's proprietary algorithm - ‘the Credibility Index’ - is an excellent predictor, providing the most relevant results to administrators. An auto-generated report highlights the applicant's integrity score for a proctored session. With valuations such as high, medium, and low, examiners can swiftly identify and filter out candidates who may have resorted to cheating. Insights from AI flags record the details of the proctoring session, and the test finish status forms the basis of the analysis. This guarantees authenticity, ensuring only the most deserving students are given admission.

Some useful resources on top examination and proctoring providers and details on their technology and features are as follows:

1) Top five proctoring solution providers: https://blog.mettl.com/top-5-proctoring-solution-providers/
2) MPaaS (Mettl Proctoring as a Service) https://blog.mettl.com/online-proctoring-services/
4) Mettl Proctoring Suite: https://blog.mettl.com/online-remote-proctoring/
Respondent Summary

The survey response included over 500 participants from 17 countries, featuring senior decision-makers from the education sector. Respondents included deans, HODs, professors and other important stakeholders.

Respondent Breakup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Controller of examinations</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans/Directors/VCs/Presidents</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of department</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT heads &amp; administration</td>
<td>04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors/faculty members</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Region-wise break up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India &amp; South Asia</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Middle East</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Asia</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rest</td>
<td>02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About Us

At Mercer I Mettl, our mission is to enable organizations to make better people decisions by making credible people decisions across two key areas: Acquisition and Development. Since our inception in 2010, we have partnered with 2900+ corporates, 31 sector skill councils/ government departments, and 15+ educational institutions across 90+ countries.

Contact Us

India Office
+91-9555114444
Plot No. 85, Sector 44, Gurgaon, Haryana, India - 122003

Australia: +613906 99664
Indonesia: +6285574678938
Singapore: +6531386714
South Africa: +27875517192
UAE: +9718000320460

contact@mettl.com
www.mettl.com

Be sure to carefully read and understand all of the disclaimers, limitations and restrictions before using the assessment services, reports, products, psychometric tools or the company systems or website.

Read the complete disclaimer here www.mettl.com/terms-of-services