Case study: CQ University - Information Technology multisite (2017)
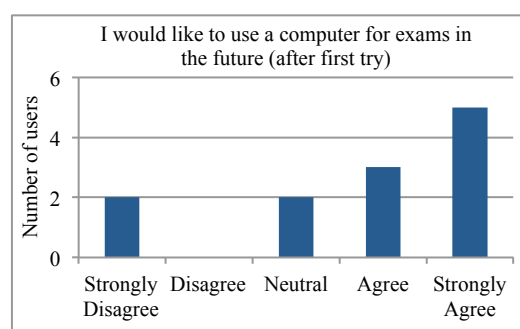
Summary

Central Queensland University (CQU) conducted its first full-scale, multi-campus, centrally administered e-Exam trial in Term 1 2017. This followed several successful small in-class technical trials (see insert photo). This larger trial was planned as the first compulsory e-exam for CQU. The exam was conducted in a single unit across four campuses, plus distance students, making a total of eight exam sites.

Preparation involved running face-to-face practice sessions to test student's laptops, however not all students completed the testing. The logistics of running the e-exam across eight exam sites presented a challenge, as did getting students to complete the pre and post surveys at a distance. However, usable data was obtained from the pre-exam survey. Having just tried the e-Exam system the majority of respondents said they would like to use a computer for future exams (see chart).

Discipline	Information Technology
School	Engineering and Technology
Institution	Central Queensland University
Level	Undergraduate, Second year
Class size	88 students enrolled, 30 typed.
Mode	Once a week, face-to-face mode across four CQU campuses.
e-Exam	Administered by CQU exams office at multiple sites. Typists were placed in a separate room. BYO laptops. Initially to be compulsory typing but typing was made optional on the day. Word document format.
Assessment	A three hour final exam worth 50% of the unit grade. Short answer questions.

The critical importance of clear and frequent communication between CQU project members, unit academics and the central exams office when introducing a new process in a distributed, high-stakes context was highlighted. The production of e-Exam USBs was smooth (insert photo). Training
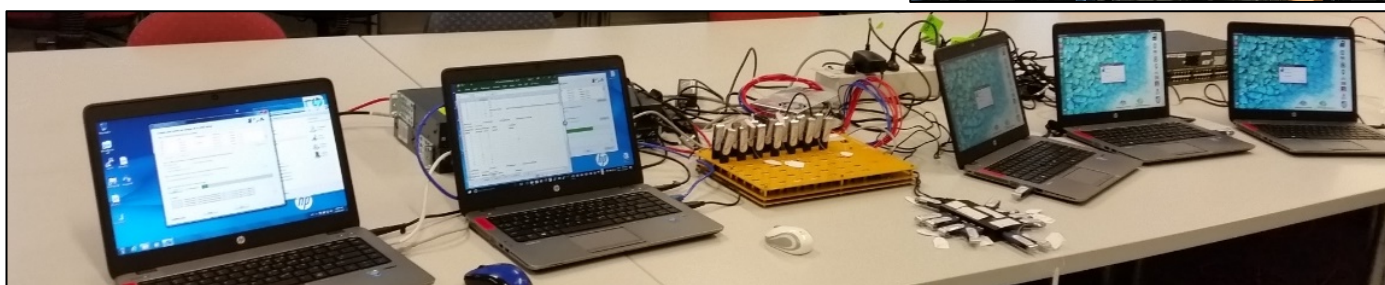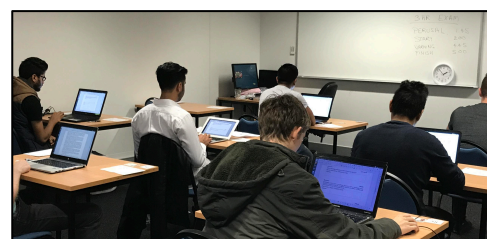

I would like to use a computer for exams in the future (after first try)

of invigilators and distance students was provided via written instructions and email communication. Exam venues used rows of single desks but no additional power cords or spare laptops were provided. Invigilators were present and technical help was provided via phone but no technical staff were onsite. A last-minute change from a compulsory e-exam to an optional e-exam made by onsite staff. A key lesson learnt was that in scaling up across multiple campuses any future e-exams need focused and closer collaboration with the exams office in adjustment to procedures and enhanced training of staff. Having students complete paper copies survey forms in the room may help

boost response rates, rather than using post-event online forms. New software features such as full auto-save in the e-Exam office suite and planned improvements to the USB Admin tool will further assist future implementation of e-exams.

Exam results showed no statistically significant difference between the performance of hand-writers and typists although hand-writers did slightly better by 0.7/50 on average.

Key features of this case study include:

- Multi campus, centrally administered e-exam with complexity of providing hardware and technical backup.
- Highlights importance of collaboration and communication between academics, exams office and technical staff.

Acknowledgements