

Experience from a pilot in online, oral exams in teacher education

Keynotes: online exam, oral exam, assessment, teacher education

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For Norwegian institutions of higher education, there is a high degree of freedom in how to execute assessments (Universitets- og høyskoleloven, 2005, ss. § 1-5). In teacher education, oral exams have been an important part of student assessment, due to a long tradition, as well as oral skills' position as one of five basic skills that are emphasized in all school subjects (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2013). The online oral examination however, has a short history. The introduction of digital exams has been driven by demand from students (Larsen, 2016) and from teachers who have seen the opportunities given. Digital or online assessments can provide flexibility in time and place and a cut of staff costs (Deutsch, Herrmann, Frese, & Sandholzer, 2012, s. 1058)

Western Norway University of Applied Science (HVL) has for several years delivered part-time teacher education using a blended learning¹ approach to teaching, and for the last three years has also provided online Further Training courses for teachers in the strategic program Kompetanse for kvalitet (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2015). Oral exams are part of the final exams in these courses. Because the students come from all over the country, there was a demand for an alternative way to perform the exams.

Since the Web Conferencing system Adobe Connect was used for the online, synchronous lessons, we decided to conduct a pilot using the same program for the oral exams as well. In the following, we present the result from the online oral exam evaluation from students and teachers in four courses; two group exams in mathematics and two courses with individual exams in Norwegian. The informants gave their feedback in an electronic questionnaire with both valuing statements and open-ended questions.

We used SPSS to make descriptive analyses of the two main questions:

Statements (Six point Likert scale: 1 Fully disagree – 6 Fully agree)	Students N=66 (Resp. rate 72%)	Teachers N=7 (Resp. rate 100%)
1. I am quite content with carrying out oral exam online	Mean 5,11 (Std.D. 1,139)	Mean 4,71 (Std.D. 0,951)
2. I would rather have taken the exam face to face	Mean 1,71 (Std.D. 1,225)	Mean 2,43 (Std.D. 1,718)

The majority of the students are satisfied with this type of oral exam. The teachers were a little less content, one explanation could be that some of them had little experience using Adobe Connect. When the students explained why they were satisfied, 58% pointed out time and travel cost savings and emphasized the flexibility of taking the exam at home. 36 % said that it was more relaxing and comfortable than ordinary oral exams. One student even wrote, "Thank you for the best oral exam I have ever had". 29 % were content with the technical issues.

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¹ Combination of face-to-face and synchronous online lessons

The students also gave input on how to improve the exam. They had some wishes regarding organizational issues; mostly the need for more preparation time. In all we had 38 useful suggestions on how to improve the exam.

The teachers' feedback showed that some were worried about technical errors. Student recruitment, organizational benefits and saved costs for the institution were mentioned as positive aspects.

Our conclusion is that we will continue with online oral exams in our online courses, using the feedback to make adjustments. The teachers involved will get necessary training and support to make them more secure. Another challenge we are facing, is the increasing number of students in our online courses. Oral exams are time consuming, even when performed online, thus using more group exams could be one possible implication.

In our presentation, we will use the free game-based Norwegian learning platform Kahoot!² for formative and summative assessment on the audience.

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² <https://kahoot.com/>