Advice for Centres in Using Technology to Invigilate Assessments Remotely — June 2020

> Definition of **remote invigilation** used for this guidance:
>
> Permitting candidates to undertake assessments in a place that is physically remote from the invigilator and where standard invigilation procedures cannot apply. There will normally be a live video and audio link with the invigilator, although 'record and review' options are possible.

1   Introduction

Invigilation ensures the confidentiality of assessments. It also has a role in authenticating a candidate's work as their own. Generally used for exam-type assessments, it helps to satisfy the broader requirement within SQA's quality assurance principles, namely:

'Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions'[1].

Traditionally, it has taken the form of an invigilator who is physically present in a room or hall, overseeing the conduct of an examination for one or more candidates.

Remote invigilation is where the invigilator and candidate are not in the same physical location. The approach isn't new, but it hasn't played a significant role in the assessment of candidates for certification. This is partly because of the difficulty of designing models that will fit with the SQA quality assurance requirement described above.

The emergence of so-called online proctoring and similar software has changed this position to some extent, allowing for real-time monitoring of a candidate and their environment in a way which would not have been possible previously. And now, with Covid-19, we have a situation where the traditional set-up for invigilation may be very difficult or practically impossible to arrange.

The first thing to make clear is that there is **no blanket prohibition on the use of remote invigilation** in SQA's policy statements or guidance on the delivery of assessment. There may be assessments and qualifications for which this method of delivery is judged not to be appropriate, and we will aim to state this explicitly in these cases. However, in general terms, the position is the same as it is for other aspects of the way in which centres work with SQA. If a procedure is set up and documented in a manner that complies with SQA's quality assurance requirements — and can provide evidence that clearly demonstrates ongoing compliance — then it will be acceptable.

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[1] Systems and Qualification Approval Guide, Revised May 2018, Criterion 4.4

That said, it is our view that remote invigilation is still something centres need to think about carefully before proceeding, as remote invigilation imposes additional challenges from a quality assurance perspective. Not least because the assessment is taking place in the candidate's chosen environment and not one provided by the centre. With a necessarily constrained view of what is happening in that chosen environment, any proposed model will have to work harder to provide re-assurance that the integrity of the assessment is not being undermined. Centres will need to carefully balance the advantages they anticipate arising from the introduction of remote invigilation with the likelihood of additional resources being required to make it work satisfactorily.

We cannot offer an off-the-shelf model for remote invigilation. This guidance only highlights those areas of the quality assurance criteria which we think need to be addressed when developing your own model. How this is reflected in local procedures and documentation will inevitably vary from centre to centre. But it may help to have a statement of your approach, together with additional guidance for invigilators and candidates. This will also help SQA's quality assurance team to understand the model you are using.

2   Points to consider

♦   Technology and equipment
♦   Data
♦   Assessment content
♦   Assessment environment
♦   Invigilators
♦   Documentation and records
♦   Review

Technology and equipment

It is important that the technology supporting any model of remote invigilation is effective and — for the most part — unobtrusive. It must enable the centre to fulfil its obligation to uphold the integrity of the assessment process. It must not become a burden or distraction to the candidate.

Whatever combination of technology and equipment is used, you must thoroughly test it before attempting live delivery. There must also be clear lines of support for all those involved, in the event of a technical failure.

Data

You will also need to consider the implications for the personal data you collect, use and retain as a result of introducing a remote invigilation model. You may even want to consider undertaking a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to identify and minimise any data protection risks that may be created by the use of remote invigilation.

Assessment content

Where assessment content has to remain secure, the model you use must enable this and you should instruct candidates and invigilators not to take copies. Desktop lockdown should be enabled wherever possible, but invigilators will also need to ensure that no photographs are taken. This is especially important where fixed assessment versions are used, although you should also take care with itembank-generated objective tests. You should not send secure assessment content as email attachments.

You must also take steps to minimise any data loss from a candidate's response during the assessment. This can be achieved by regular updates to a central server and/or to a local encrypted file.

Assessment environment

As would be standard practice, you should discuss any accessibility issues with the candidate and any additional measures which may need to be put in place. If you are not offering an alternative to remote invigilation, then this will need to have been made clear at candidate induction. You should also make clear who is responsible for providing any additional equipment or accessibility software.

And while we will not consider these as formal alternative assessment sites, we do recommend that you issue a formal checklist for candidates to complete prior to undertaking a remotely invigilated assessment. This will ask for basic details such as the availability of a quiet space which can be cleared of prohibited items, and access to equipment and internet connectivity. The checklist should also explain the protocol surrounding the conduct of a remotely invigilated assessment, such as the initial environmental sweep and how to minimise behaviour which could arouse suspicion. You should also consider whether to include a trial run prior to the assessment or at least build in additional time on the day to allow for technical checks.

The role of the remote invigilator

Remote invigilators need to be trained in the use of the technical set-up and be given a clear description of the role which they are being asked to perform. This will help to settle the candidate and allow them to focus solely on the assessment itself.

Equally important, the invigilator must have the skills and confidence to enforce the conditions required to prepare and maintain a remotely invigilated environment. This will include an agreed method for authenticating the identity of the candidate and an initial sweep of the immediate surroundings to ensure that they comply with the guidance which will have been issued previously to the candidate. It will also include issuing directions to the candidate if anything untoward is detected in the course of the assessment itself. There should be an agreed escalation of warnings up to and including abandonment of the assessment session.

Depending on the set-up, invigilators will need to be clear that they have a good enough perspective to fulfil their function. For example, if there is no desktop feed or lockdown, can they be sure that they are able to monitor both the desktop and the candidate? Could the candidate be accessing other applications or messaging services?

Once these details have been agreed, you must review and confirm that your safeguarding policy is adequate to cover this new role.

Documentation and records

As suggested, a single statement of your approach to remote invigilation would be helpful. But it may — and eventually probably will — be incorporated as amendments to existing policies and procedures within your centre.

But we would expect to see at least the following as core documents:

♦ formal guidance and technical help notes on the technology being used to support remote invigilation
♦ a detailed description of the role and responsibilities of the remote invigilator
♦ a concise guide for the candidate — information on how to select and prepare their assessment environment and how to minimise any behaviours which may arouse suspicion during the assessment itself

And as records, we would expect to see the following for all remotely invigilated assessments:

♦ completed and returned candidate checklists
♦ completed invigilator reports

Invigilator reports should have attached follow-up notes if any irregular behaviour has been identified during the assessment session. This should include a review of any evidence, a statement from the candidate, and an audio-video recording (where this exists). Decisions taken on the basis of this review should be made clear.

Records should be retained and disposed of in line with your local retention schedule and SQA's quality assurance requirements.

Review

You should periodically review the operation of your model for remote invigilation, at least in the initial stages. This should certainly involve feedback from the invigilators and candidates. It should also look at the checklist given to candidates to ensure that it is clear and sufficient in what it is asking of them in terms of preparation for, and conduct during, the assessment.

It should also include a review of results, looking for any unusual or unexpected patterns. Are any identifiable individuals or groups of candidates doing better or worse than expected? Does this in any way correlate with the feedback you have received from candidates or invigilators?

This will give you a chance to improve the documentation and support given to invigilators and candidates.

3 Questions and answers

What is the difference between remote invigilation and remote assessment?

The remote invigilator plays no part in the assessment other than ensuring that the process conforms to the required arrangements. The role of the remote assessor is more extensive and will include making assessment judgements. Remote assessment is not covered specifically by this guidance although it will, of course, share some of the same features and solutions.

What is the difference between remote invigilation and online proctoring?

Proctoring is the term used by the companies who provide software solutions which can support the remote delivery of assessment. The term used by SQA is **invigilation**.

You are required to deliver assessments in a way which complies with SQA's quality assurance requirements for invigilation. You may use an online proctoring service to help you achieve this — but it is not a direct replacement for invigilation, nor can you offload this responsibility to a third-party supplier.

Can a candidate refuse to undertake an assessment by remote invigilation?

In normal circumstances, one wouldn't expect this to happen often as the physical learning environment would also be available to host any assessments which are required. Where learning is delivered remotely, then it may be that assessments are online too and therefore remotely invigilated. If that is clear from the outset — and all steps put in place to support this mode of delivery — then it may be unreasonable at this point for a candidate to ask the centre to switch the mode of assessment and assessment location.

During the current COVID-19 lockdown, it is clearly more difficult to manage onsite assessment delivery — especially for large numbers of candidates. If a candidate does not wish to undertake an assessment remotely, then they may have to wait until it is possible again to attend the centre in person.

Can a candidate demand to undertake an assessment by remote invigilation?

No, it is for the centre to determine how an assessment is delivered. And, as noted above, there may be assessments where SQA has stipulated that the assessment must take place and be invigilated in a traditional physical environment.

That said, there will be specific circumstances which make the use of remote invigilation an attractive option — such as illness, immobility or great distance from the centre. In these cases, the advice given above should provide options which the centre and the candidate can agree on.

Can all the assessments for a qualification be delivered entirely by remote invigilation?

You will need to think carefully about this, especially if your programme of learning is also delivered remotely. The risk is that you are entirely dependent on the integrity of the remotely invigilated model, and we know that there is much online discussion on how a candidate can subvert this. That, of course, is true of all invigilation methods and — over time — measures are introduced to limit this as much as possible. But this model is still relatively new and does involve a diminished level of oversight from the centre.

So it may be prudent, for now at least, to run with a mixed model of centrally and remotely invigilated assessments. Confidence in the integrity of the process will also be strengthened by a good understanding of your candidates' progress and when it is appropriate to present them for assessment. Results should be broadly in line with your expectations and any significant discrepancies should merit further investigation.

Will SQA view remote invigilation arrangements developed to deal with the Covid-19 lockdown differently from those which are developed for wider use?

In principle, the answer is 'no'. All models of remote invigilation will need to satisfy the same basic requirements of the SQA quality assurance criteria. However, we do recognise that many centres will be considering this mode of delivery only because of the limited options currently available to them. We are sympathetic to that position and will take a 'best endeavours' approach. For those continuing with this model of delivery, we will — as noted above — be looking for evidence of continuous review and improvement, as well as acknowledgement of any further guidance which may be issued by SQA.