

## Faculty of science

Best practice guidelines for timely return of assessment items and electronic marking

### Purpose

Purpose of this document is to provide suggestions on ways to more efficiently and appropriately manage student assessments. This document will examine ways of reducing turnaround times and enhancing the quality of feedback provided to students. Both issues of concerns mentioned in various evaluation systems including the internal online subject evaluations as well as the externally managed student experience questionnaire (SEQ) and the course experience questionnaire (CEQ). The suggestions expressed in this document will also help staff meet their performance goals specifically those associated teaching timelines and other aspects of the 5 CSU common teaching standards.

Suggestions in relation to the involvement of and training of casual staff will also be made. It is expected that this document will be improved as a result of feedback from staff and students as well as the introduction of new assistive technologies and platforms. The suggestions made in this document are aimed at large to medium-size internal cohorts (more than 20 students) and all distance cohorts.

For the purposes of this document the term “e-assess” will be used to denote any assessment activity that can be returned to students digitally. E-assess includes assessment activities such e-marking and track changes as well as the scanning and uploading of items with handwritten notes and the provision of multimedia-based feedback.

### Timely turnaround

To reduce the communication trails associated with the following up lost assignments it is advised that all assessment items, except those that require the attachments of items that can be digitised, be submitted via EASTS. The use this system will also help subject coordinators track the assessment activities of casual markers. Given the geographical diversity of the students and some casual markers, casual staff should be strongly encouraged to e-assess. Further, if the feedback from one assessment is designed to help students prepare for a second assessment item then mandatory use of an e-assess method should be considered for all staff. As students are likely to use feedback from all assessment items to prepare for their final exam, all assessment items submitted after week eight should be e-assessed.

Guidelines and help documents relating to the use of EASTS including the addition casual markers, uploading and downloading files and returning in batch mode with comments can be found [here](https://online.csu.edu.au/dedocs/Easts_Academic_Help.htm) (https://online.csu.edu.au/dedocs/Easts\_Academic\_Help.htm). Further, members of school teaching and learning committees and resident educational designers can help staff to set up EASTS for online management.

### E-assess Methods

## Basic (standard software)

### 1. Track Changes and Autotext: Microsoft office products

The track change and insert comment functions of Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint are familiar to most people and are thus perhaps an easy option for new markers. Things to consider if taking this option:

- the assessment item will need to be an annotatable format (not PDF). The required format of an assessment item must be specified in the subject outline. Further, EASTS can be set up to decline submission of documents that are in the wrong format.
- once assessed the item should be converted to a PDF before being returned to student.
- using Microsoft's auto text insertion options (refer to in the latest versions as a reusable content building block, see below for instructions) can be used to provide consistent comments across multiple markers and/or enhance provision of high quality detailed constructive feedback to all students (regardless of the items position in the pile).

#### How to Create a reusable comment—from Microsoft word help.

##### Create a reusable content building block

1. Select the text or graphic that you want to store as a reusable building block.  
To store paragraph formatting — including indentation, alignment, line spacing, and pagination — with the entry, include the paragraph mark ( ¶ ) in the selection.  
On the **Insert** tab, in the **Text** group, click **Quick Parts**, and then click **Save Selection to Quick Part Gallery**. Or press ALT+F3.
2. Fill out the information in the **Create New Building Block** dialog box:

##### Find and use a building block

1. Click where you want to insert a building block in the document.
2. On the **Insert** tab, in the **Text** group, click **Quick Parts**, and then click **Building Blocks Organizer**.  
If you know the name of the building block, click **Name** to sort by name.
3. Click **Insert**.

- Hand written comments can also be added via the inking tool in word if you have a digital stylus.
- Audio files can be attached via the insert voice function.

### 2. Audio: eg. System software, Audacity

- Most digital devices have the capacity to record sound. Some people find that they can provide highly personalised and in-depth feedback via audio faster than they can provide written comments. This strategy won't suit all students and should be carefully considered in relation to file size (consult with IT, EDs and others to identify the most suitable program to use as others will no doubt have found a method that minimise file size without needing excessive processing steps). Audio feedback can also be considered for items that could not be submitted digitally eg practicum handbooks and which may take time to return to the student due to the postal service or nature of the item. In such cases where an EASTS file may not have been provided feedback can be done via email (thus ensuring there is a record of the feedback if needed). The instruction for EASTS noted above, include information on audio and other file types.

### 3. Scanned: CSU photocopiers, standalone scanners, digital camera?

- This option is readily available to all on-campus staff. CSU scanners can save documents in formats that can be uploaded (once appropriately labelled) to

EASTS. This option also enables comments to be put on those items for which current digital options are not appropriate, for example some types of images and feedback requiring mathematical or other diagram based notation. If administrative assistance is available then returning scanned assessments could be an option for casual staff as even sending them to CSU to be scanned and uploaded would be faster than the traditional mail-assignment centre-mail system. If casual staff have access to a digital camera this could be used (with some trial and error to identify settings that enable image to be clearly read by students) in place of a scanner. Although for multipage assessment items the time taken to collate the images from each page may negate the time saved in relation to mailing the assignment to CSU to be scanned.

### ***Specialised (non standard software required)***

1. **Narrated Screen Capture:** Captivate, Camtasia, Microsoft movie maker
  - This method combines audio and track changes and can be particularly helpful when giving feedback on lengthy assessment items where you want to clearly demonstrate the area you are commenting on and perhaps connections between different areas. This method can also turn a feedback session into a training tool when new software programs are involved and/or various statistical packages. Not only can you directly show on screen where the students may have gone wrong but you can include options as to how information may have been otherwise presented for example how to make a certain types of chart.
2. **Emarking/egrading programs:**eMarking assistant (eMarking assistant.com (\$20USD); remarkspdf.com (free till 2013)).
  - These programs generally have the same functionality as auto text but are better suited to the development and maintenance of common comment banks as well as inclusion of other styles of feedback including audio and video. eMarking also includes a rubric so that students can see how they have been graded against the assessment criteria; once again this can be a great tool for improving consistency amongst casual markers. The comment banks can be shared across multiple markers so that even the most inexperienced casual is able to give students high-quality constructive feedback prepared by a more experienced assessor.
3. ??

## **Fac. Sci. e-assess strategies: a Snapshot**

### Timely Turnaround

- All digital capable assessment items be submitted by EASTS
- e-assess methods be used by all non-campus-based casual staff for all assessment items
- e-assess methods be by all staff for items submitted after week eight or that are designed to be used in relation to a second assessment item.

### E-assess methods

- Basic:
  - Track changes and insert autotext in Microsoft office products
  - Audio feedback using standard software or free software like Audacity
  - Scanned feedback; especially for comments on images, mathematical proofs and diagram based feedback
- Specialised
  - Screen capture to match audio narration particular for area of concern and provide step-by-step examples within a given platform.
  - Commercial products: [emarkingassistant.com](http://emarkingassistant.com) and [remarkspdf.com](http://remarkspdf.com). Both Australian based both with comment banks and multiple ways of including feedback. EMarking Assistant includes a rubric system.