

Case Study 3: Migration to Online Exam Boards



Introduction and Context:

As the COVID-19 outbreak disrupted life in Ireland in 2020, NCI, like all education institutions, had to move its teaching, assessment and administration practices online within a short timeline. The NCI IT Department quickly identified Microsoft Teams as the most suitable platform for this transition. While teaching and assessments quickly got underway online, NCI's Examination Office had to identify what other procedures would need to move online, including the hosting and support of examination boards.

Summary of the Initiatives Undertaken:

In NCI, examination boards take place over the course of a week three times a year. Over 100 courses are presented at three separate boards throughout this week. Moving this process online meant the Examinations Office faced the following challenges and secured the following solutions:

Broadsheets:	<p><u>Challenge:</u> How to ensure broadsheets are accessible. The broadsheets that had been in use for examination boards prior to COVID-19 were not easily readable on a screen.</p> <p><u>Solution:</u> The Examinations Office worked with the IT Department to design a new report that would display accurate information in an easily readable format on screen.</p>
Security:	<p><u>Challenge:</u> How to send broadsheets to Programme Directors securely.</p> <p><u>Solution:</u> The Examinations Office decided the best way would be to export the reports into a password protected PDF and send to appropriate Programme Directors for review.</p>
Presentation at exam boards:	<p><u>Challenge:</u> How to ensure that everyone could closely follow each broadsheet and facilitate a discussion.</p> <p><u>Solution:</u> It was decided that the Examinations Office would use a SharePoint site in conjunction with MS Teams to host the examination board. All broadsheets and relevant statistical reports were loaded onto a secure SharePoint site that each member of the board was then given access to. Once the meeting started a member of the examinations Team would share their screen and present each broadsheet as the Programme Director was discussing their programme.</p>

Conclusion:

While it was challenging to adapt to the online environment for examination boards, the COVID Crisis gave the Examinations Office the opportunity to launch an online approach they had wanted to trial for several years to increase efficiency and effectiveness. In previous years, each member of the examination board would receive a hard copy pack containing each broadsheet to be discussed along with any other relevant material. This method was labour intensive and time consuming as there was a high volume of printing conducted by the Examinations Office prior to each examination board along with an equally high volume of shredding happening after each board. With the introduction of online examination boards triggered by the crisis, it demonstrated that there was no longer a requirement for printing and packing broadsheets, and this has allowed for additional time for the Examinations Office and faculty to quality check examination results prior to each board. By hosting the examination boards online, this has increased the engagement and discussions of all members during the examination board and allowed each broadsheet to be displayed clearly and accurately. While triggered by the crisis, this experience and the opportunities provided to explore a paper-less approach has proven to be beneficial to all stakeholders and will be used as the model for future NCI examination boards in the post-COVID environment.