

Setters & Critics Survey on Exam Setting

DECEMBER 2020

Who we heard from

53

Setters and Critics
of external assessment in 2020

18

minutes
average time to
complete survey



131

Setters and
Critics
employed

40%

participation
in the survey

(held following completion of
marking)

What did you like about the exam setting/critiquing process?



Collegiality



"Working with very competent people. Contributing to ensuring that the exam is of a high standard."

"Working as a team to create an important document. The collaborative and constructive way we worked."

"The instructions were explicit, and the discussion I had with the other critic and the setter went very smoothly. It was a great opportunity to see the processes that go into each exam."

"Working as a team to create an important document. The collaborative and constructive way we worked."

"I appreciate being able to work with setting examiners and other critics with whom I have worked with over a number of years and whom I hold in respect."

Professionalism



"Enjoyable process made easy and pleasurable by a great setting / critic team and a more than competent TASC administrator who made changes as we went through the session. I enjoyed the ability to look at the syllabus from another direction (rather than just as a teacher)."

"The exam setter was open to feedback."

"Cooperation and lack of confrontation."

"The chance to work with my colleagues and critique such a well-written paper."

"The fact that people were open to change things and discuss different ideas and were open to hearing the industry view."

"Open discussion."

"I felt very supported and had great feedback from TASC staff. I was also offered flexible deadlines."

"I thoroughly enjoyed the setting experience, due, in no small measure, to the professionalism and friendliness of TASC staff."

What did you feel was lacking in the exam setting/critiquing process?



Timelines



"Appointment process in 2020 is too late in instances when current setting examiners have indicated a willingness again write the paper at the end of the previous year. TASC can release the time pressures that mount during the year by responding with variable timelines for each subject."

"No-ones fault, but timeframe was constricted by need to rewrite a 'Covid friendly' version of the paper."

"A clear timetable of events."



Quality control

"The process could be improved by streamlining the proofreading stage, both e-copy and hard copy."

"Almost every year I have done this process, there are errors in the second draft sent to us. I would like some feedback as to whether these corrections were satisfactorily resolved before the paper goes to printing, even a second viewing of the "completed" paper."

"I would have like to see a hard copy of the final paper."

Communication



"As a new critic I sometimes was not aware what the next step in the process was."

"Notification that a paper has been sent may be helpful."

"I would have like to check the paper one more time. When we critiqued the paper there were many errors, such as numbering that should have been fixed be before the meeting."

"We strongly recommend an additional mail-out for the final validation by setting examiners."

What did you learn from the exam setting/critiquing process?



Flexibility

"That when needed we can all be flexible and change to meet the particular demands of the changed and changing situation."



High stakes

"It is a tough process, needed a lot of collaboration and negotiation (and time)."

"Wording of questions needs to be reviewed by many. The dangers of assumed knowledge."

"It is a challenge to find the balance between novel questions and predictability of questions, ensuring that dense course content is covered and that candidates are not rote learning."

Expectations

"How hard it is to write an exam. Important to stay current with the evolving courses."

"It helps me to appreciate the expectations that are faced by my students."

"There is a lot of goodwill amongst Tasmanian teachers. We are all working for the best possible outcomes for our students. We aim to produce a fair, balanced paper so students can demonstrate their skills and knowledge."



Resilience

"Teachers at my school commented that the paper was too challenging for a COVID year - and, as a result, I did not mention that I wrote it."

"That you can't keep everyone happy but as long as most people are comfortable with the outcome that is a win. You need to have thick skin to write an exam and put yourself out there."

What did you long for in the exam setting/critiquing process?



Face-to-face



"Hope we can meet in person next year."

"The process is far less challenging, and much easier to dialogue and discuss face-to-face."



Resourcing

"Writing an exam is quite challenging and rewarding. It takes more time than people actually realise and the person writing them should be paid accordingly. The rates do need to increase considering the time and effort involved."

Continuity

"This is the third time I have been an exam critic. Each time, we have worked through the exam with a different person from TASC."

"Early planning is definitely crucial."

"More critics. Possibly a different critic that reviews the paper with fresh eyes after the first critics' updates. This would be good as the critics and exam writers have already seen the paper and can miss things."

Next steps



Research

Gathering feedback on what we need to know from TASC stakeholders



Findings

Analysing survey feedback to pull out the key ideas



Recommendations

Approval and planning for improved processes based on what we heard



Delivery

Communicate with and support stakeholders to be prepared for the adjusted processes