



Isfahan University of Medical Sciences  
International

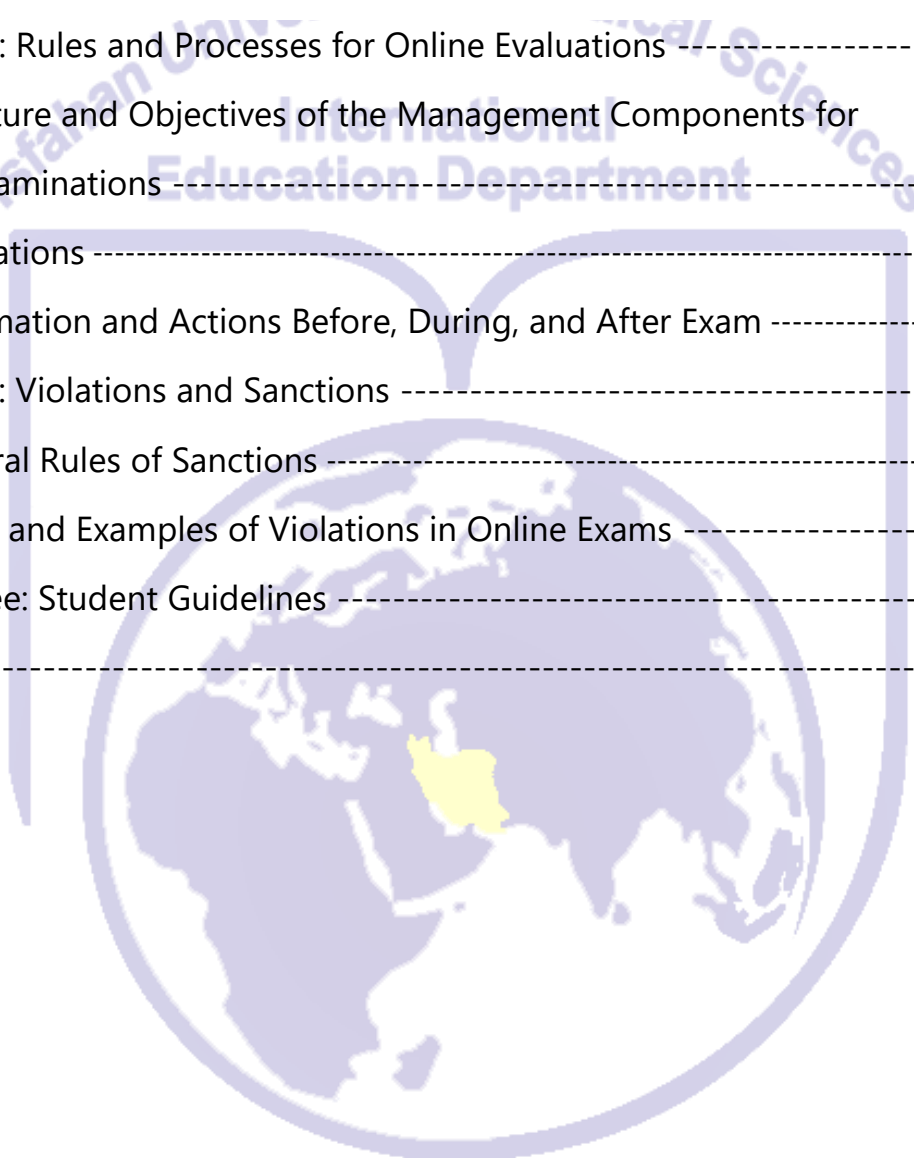
**Guidelines to Online Examinations  
for Students of  
Isfahan University of Medical Sciences**



# Guidelines to Online Examinations

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## Introduction

For nearly two decades, online examinations have been conducted internationally, with the academic community moving towards allowing candidates to take these exams wherever they choose, while ensuring the integrity and security of the assessments. Although this shift has been advancing with the necessary technology over time, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a rapid implementation of these examinations, even in less developed countries.

What is certain is that the end of the pandemic is uncertain, and despite all existing doubts, the continuation of these examinations is inevitable. If we take a closer look at the issue, it is clear that these examinations will continue in the post-COVID era due to their ease of execution, substantial cost reduction, and technological advancements.

It is evident that in all processes aimed at enhancing quality, reform must begin at the initial bottleneck. Preparation and training for candidates start with university assessments. Thus, not only will learners gradually become familiar with a different type of evaluation, identifying problems, obstacles, and infrastructural limitations in this area, but it will also initiate the empowerment of learners and foster a culture of scientific ethics, which has been discussed in academic circles, including in our country.

Accordingly, as a first step, and regarding the general principles, with the goal of creating coherence and providing a reasoned response to complaints and ambiguities raised by students—some of which are referred to the educational department of the Ministry—this protocol has been prepared and drafted with the collective insight of experts from the Ministry and all medical universities.

## **Section One: Rules and Processes for Online Evaluations**

### **1.1. Structure and Objectives of the Management Components for Online Examinations**

In order to create a cohesive management structure, address the sensitivity of the topic, and manage the unpredictable conditions of online examinations, the management components for these examinations are as follows:

**A) Strategic Committee for Online and Computer-Based Examinations at the University**

**B) Evaluation and Improvement Committee for Online and Computer-Based Examinations at the University**

**C) Executive Committee for Online and Computer-Based Examinations at the University**

The members of the Executive Committee are as follows:

1. The Supervisor of University Examinations as the Committee Chair
2. Director of Educational Affairs and Graduate Studies
3. Representative of the University Studies and Educational Development Management
4. Academic Deans
5. Head of the University Virtual Education Center
6. System Expert and Coordinator for Examination Informatics
7. Representative of University Security
8. Secretary of the Student Disciplinary Committee

**D) Executive Committee for Online and Computer-Based Examinations at the Faculty**

- Vice Dean for Educational Affairs
- Examination Officer
- Development Office Officer
- Virtual Education Liaison
- Educational Affairs Officer
- Computer Unit Officer

### **1.2. Evaluations**

**A) Formative Evaluations**

1. The university must take measures to ensure that, with the input of esteemed faculty members and considering the nature of the course and the students' field of study, continuous evaluations of students are conducted, and the scores from these evaluations are included in the final assessment, thereby reducing the weight of the final exam.

2. Formative evaluations include assessments of students' active participation in the teaching-learning process, completion of assignments, providing feedback to peers, or other types of evaluations as determined by the esteemed faculty members and in accordance with the established curriculum.
3. **Budgeting Method for Different Assessment Components**  
The share of various evaluations will be determined based on the nature of the course by the relevant instructor while minimizing the weight of the final exam. The budgeting is as follows:
  - **10% to 30%:** Assignment and project assessments
  - **20% to 40%:** Midterm and oral evaluations
  - **40% to 60%:** Final examination
4. Faculty members may, at their discretion, allocate a portion of the final exam score to an oral exam utilizing approved platforms according to the policies of the university or independent faculty's educational department.

## **B) Final Evaluations**

1. Given the nature of online examinations, the questions may be primarily in the form of short answers, multiple-choice (MCQ), matching, or extended matching (EM), depending on the needs of the course.
2. For cumulative (final) evaluations, it is preferable that the questions are analytical and at higher levels of learning domains and higher taxonomy so that answering them requires reasoning and deep thinking on the part of the examinee. In this case, the exam can be conducted in an open-book format.
3. The time allocated for answering each question in designing the questions will depend on the relevant instructor's assessment and the approval of the faculty's executive committee, considering the difficulty and taxonomy of the questions; however, the default time for each question is 50 seconds.

## **1.3. Information and Actions Before, During, and After Exam**

### **A. Before Exam**

1. Students are required to ensure their access to the necessary software and hardware as specified by the university (internet, personal computer, mobile phone, tablet, etc.) before the examination period.
2. Students must check their panel one week prior to the exam period to ensure all their courses are defined. The responsibility for any lack of information lies with the student, and if a course has not been defined, they must follow up through the faculty's educational department.
3. If a student does not have access to the internet or other requirements for the online exam, it is essential to coordinate with the faculty's educational department one week before the exam.
4. Students should report any issues they encounter before or during the exam to the educational officer of the faculty they are receiving services from or to the exam center staff and technical experts, using the contact numbers provided. (Necessary phone numbers will be available on the university's educational deputy website, the faculty website, and the exam portal.)
5. 24 hours before the exam, a text message will be sent to students reminding them to review the exam protocol, the date and time of the exam, and to log into the site to check access to the exam and ensure that there are no issues in this regard.

### **B. Close to Exam Time**

1. Students are required to log into the exam system half an hour before the exam starts. If there is any issue with accessing the system, they must immediately inform the educational officer of their faculty or the systems expert.
2. Any delays in starting the exam are the responsibility of the student.
3. Students must consciously complete the ethics compliance form before the exam and activate the corresponding checkbox in the exam system. (A sample commitment letter is attached.)

### **C. During Exam**

1. Students are allowed to join the exam up to 5 minutes after it has started. It is understood that the end of the exam for these candidates is the same as for others, and no additional time will be given. In other words, if a candidate wants to reach the last questions, they will need to answer the initial questions more quickly than the time allocated for each question.

2. If a student experiences internet disconnection at the beginning or middle of the exam due to software or hardware issues (such as power outages, internet disconnection, etc.), they must promptly contact the exam center's experts to coordinate re-entry into the system and report the situation.

**Note 1:** The maximum allowed time for the student to inform the exam specialist about an internet disconnection is 5 minutes. Failure to contact the exam center's experts will be considered as non-participation in the exam.

**Note 2:** Due to issues caused by slow internet, the maximum time spent on each question will be set at 120 seconds.

**Note 3:** In addition to the overall exam time based on 50 seconds per question, 3 minutes of extra time will be allocated for potential short delays in connection to the exam system.

**Note 4:** All conversations and requests made by students in this context will be documented. (Any future complaints will be examined based on these records.)

3. Students must note that each question will be displayed on a single page.
4. The option to return to previous questions and edit answered questions will be available for up to 10% of the questions as chosen by the student.
5. In exams where the instructor deems it necessary for some questions to be descriptive or problem-solving, requiring more time for responses, the 120-second limit will be removed. In this case, instructors must upload the questions in two separate sections (the first section for short multiple-choice questions and the second section for descriptive/problem-solving questions) in the exam system.
6. Note: If the exam is divided into multiple-choice and descriptive sections, the student will answer the questions in the second section without exiting the system after completing the first section (multiple-choice questions). In this scenario, there will be no option to return to the questions in the first section.
7. The presence of an educational expert from the faculty will be required during the exam (during both official and non-official hours and on holidays) to provide support at the exam center. In cases where experts cannot be present at the exam center, a dedicated landline number for each faculty will be provided to address potential issues during the exam.

#### **D. After Exam**

1. If a student cannot participate in the online exam within the specified time frame, decisions regarding their situation will be made by the Executive Committee of the faculty after the submission of relevant documentation.
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**Note 4:** Students mentioned must submit their request for a retake exam, along with the reason for not attending the exam, in writing and with supporting documents to the educational administration of their faculty within 24 hours after the exam. This is to allow for decision-making regarding their future status; in this case, the educational administration of the faculty, after verifying the claim made by the student, will schedule a retake exam in person or orally if the statements are confirmed, or will announce an incomplete score for the course, conducting the exam at the earliest opportunity before the next academic semester.

**Note 5:** The method of conducting the retake exam will be based on the instructor's opinion and under the supervision of the university's educational administration.

2. In the case of unexcused absences, the student will receive a score of zero in the exam, according to the regulations.
3. If there are objections regarding the conduct of the exam or the evaluation results in various courses, the student or a representative of the class is required to submit their objection in writing to the educational deputy of the faculty.
4. After the completion of each exam, the questions along with their answer keys must be posted by the exam unit of the faculty on the educational deputy's website for the students' information.

## **Section Two: Violations and Sanctions**

- According to Circular No. 511/143 dated 26/03/1999 from the Vice-Chancellery of the respective ministry, and in order to review the integrity and validity of the conducted online exams, a number of results will be randomly selected and compared with the previous scores of the student (from previous semesters or other student scores). In case of significant discrepancies and proven cases of misconduct, actions will be taken against the student in accordance with the regulations.
- If the student's cheating is not evident and there is merely significant discrepancy between scores, an oral exam will be conducted for them, and decisions will be made based on the results and the instructor's final opinion regarding the student.

### **2.1. General Rules of Sanctions**

Given that the online exam environment may have a lower safety factor compared to in-person exams, in order to inform students about the consequences and types of punitive actions considered for violations in these exams, the relevant provisions in the executive procedure of the student disciplinary regulations (approved in the 358th meeting of the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council) are as follows.

The sanctions described in Article 12 of the aforementioned regulation are as follows:



1. Oral warning without recording in the student's disciplinary file.
2. Written warning without recording in the student's disciplinary file.
3. Written notice without recording in the student's disciplinary file.
4. Written notice with recording in the student's disciplinary file.
5. Written reprimand with recording in the student's disciplinary file.
6. Issuing a score of 0.25 in the course, exam, or assignments related to the violation.
7. Deprivation of university welfare facilities or altering them, such as loans, accommodation, etc., for a period of one month up to the remaining duration of studies.
8. Compensation from the student in cases where the violation has caused damage or loss.
9. Temporary suspension from studies for one semester or from 1 to 6 months without counting the time toward the degree.
10. Temporary suspension from studies for one semester or from 1 to 6 months counting toward the degree.
11. Temporary suspension from studies for two semesters or from 6 to 12 months without counting the time toward the degree.
12. Temporary suspension from studies for two semesters or from 6 to 12 months counting toward the degree.
13. Temporary suspension from studies for three semesters or from 13 to 18 months without counting the time toward the degree.
14. Temporary suspension from studies for three semesters or from 13 to 18 months counting toward the degree.
15. Temporary suspension from studies for four semesters or from 18 to 24 months counting toward the degree.
16. Temporary suspension from studies for four semesters or from 18 to 24 months without counting the time toward the degree.
17. Changing the student's place of study.
18. Changing the student's academic program from public to fee-paying.
19. Expulsion from the university, while retaining the right to reapply for the entrance exam.
20. Expulsion from the university with a prohibition from studying at all universities for up to 5 years.

## **2.2. Cases and Examples of Violations in Online Exams**

According to Article 33 of the Students' Disciplinary Regulations, cheating is defined as the proven use by a student of information, equipment, or resources in a manner that is not permitted, with the premeditated intent to present the outcome of an educational activity.

The violator will be subjected to the sanction described in paragraph 6 (in the respective course or exam), and depending on the type of cheating, will face one of the sanctions listed in paragraphs 1 to 5. In case of repetition, they will be subject to one of the sanctions listed in paragraphs 9 to 12. Furthermore, according to Article 35 of the Disciplinary Regulations, the likelihood of contract cheating (someone else taking the exam on behalf of the actual candidate) is higher in online exams compared to other types of exams.

1. If a student allows someone else to take the exam in their place, they will face the penalty in paragraph 6 of the respective exam or one of the sanctions from paragraphs 9 to 12. In case of repetition, the penalty will escalate to paragraph 14.
2. Regarding the sharing of questions or answers in online space, according to Article 36 of the Disciplinary Regulations, the violator will not only be sanctioned in accordance with paragraph 6 but will also face one of the penalties from paragraphs 9 to 12. In case of repetition, the penalty will escalate to paragraph 14.
3. Students must take necessary measures to prevent shared use of Personal Identifiers (PIs). Therefore, every student is required to connect to the exam system through a separate PI. In case of proven violations in this regard and discrepancies in the student's academic record in the current semester compared to previous semesters, the matter will be appropriately followed up by the faculty, and decisions regarding the retake or supplementary exam will be made.

**Some general indicators of violations are as follows:**

1. Registering for the exam with a false identity or attending the exam in place of the actual candidate.
2. Assisting other candidates outside the exam regulations to answer questions.
3. Collusion with students or individuals outside the institution.
4. Sharing questions or answers with other candidates in networks or online spaces.
5. Using books, notes, handouts, or anything that the university has prohibited during the exam.
6. Significant similarities in the descriptive answers submitted by candidates (as determined by the course instructor).
7. Similarities in images, file contents, or multimedia content submitted by candidates.

Any violation in the field of information technology, as determined and confirmed by technical representatives from the university or college's IT department during the exam, will be addressed.

- The scope of computer and telecommunications violations in exams is specified in Article 33 of the Disciplinary Regulations, as follows:

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## Some violations in the online space include:

- Hacking, viral attacks, computer sabotage (altering, erasing, stopping, etc.),
- Destroying computers (software or hardware) through system infiltration, spying, and unauthorized access to information,
- Recording audio or video without permission or disseminating them, selling, disclosing, or publishing documents, information, or data related to the university,
- Intruding into the privacy of individuals online or exploiting or abusing information, images, or audio-visual products from the personal pages of individuals or legal entities (including extortion, disclosure, publication, etc., or threatening to act in these matters or similar cases),
- Illegal eavesdropping, creating immoral and national security-threatening websites and blogs, threatening and disrespecting individuals, insulting religious sanctities, infiltrating government websites, sending malicious emails,
- Creating unauthorized access or disrupting individuals' access levels, uploading, downloading, or disseminating immoral content and all general crimes in the online space; violators will be subject to one of the penalties listed in paragraphs 4 to 10, based on the nature of the violation.

**Note 6:** If the violation is repeated or has extensive dimensions, the penalty may escalate up to paragraph 20 according to the level of impact of the violation.

## Section Three: Student Guidelines

The following points must be adhered to by students participating in online exams:

1. Students are required to follow the examination conduct guidelines similar to those that apply in in-person exams. These guidelines include adhering to dress code regulations, refraining from eating or drinking during the exam, and avoiding unjustified departure from the exam location, etc.
2. It is advisable for students to have at least one additional computer or smartphone available to ensure they can enter the exam system with a secondary device in case of any issues with the primary computer, after coordinating with the exam center specialists.
3. Students must participate in a mock exam announced by the university before the examination schedule begins to familiarize themselves with the software environment, the exam process, and to resolve any potential issues. The responsibility for not participating in the mock exam will lie with the student.

4. Students must complete and submit the exam participation commitment form within the specified deadline before the exam period. Failure to complete the commitment form will result in the denial of permission to participate in the exam.
5. Students must receive their username and password before the start of the exam period.
6. The student must change their password during the first login to the exam system and must store the new password in a secure place.
7. The student is required to check the quality of their internet connection before the exam period begins. If they do not have access to suitable internet, they must arrange for quality internet access during the remaining time. If the student lacks appropriate hardware, software, or internet access, they must inform the faculty's educational office one week prior to the start of the exam period to participate in a physical exam.
8. The student must ensure access to the necessary tools and resources as specified by the university (internet, personal computer, mobile phone, tablet, etc.) before the exam period.
9. The student is required to log into their panel one week prior to the exam period to confirm that all their courses are defined for the exam. The responsibility for failing to inform rests with the student, and if no exam has been defined for a course, they must follow up through the educational office of the faculty.
10. It is recommended that the student has an alternative internet connection available from another internet provider in case of disruption to the primary internet connection.
11. It is advised that during the exam, the schedule should be arranged so that only the exam taker uses the internet, while other users (such as family members) should refrain from using the same internet connection until the end of the exam.
12. It is possible to participate in the exam via mobile phone, but a computer is more suitable for exam taking. It will be announced if future versions of the exam software require the use of a computer for enhanced exam security.
13. If using a laptop or smartphone, ensure that the battery is sufficiently charged before participating in the exam and have a charger readily available.
14. Be sure to connect to the internet and the exam system half an hour before the exam starts and ensure that all necessary hardware and software tools for participating in the exam are ready.

15. To stay informed about any potential changes regarding the guidelines for participating in online exams, students should continuously check the faculty's website, university website, or other announced information systems before and during the exam period.
16. The time limit for appealing grades is a maximum of 3 days after the temporary grades are registered in the university's educational system.
17. Students must immediately report any objections to questions as well as any technical issues that arise during the exam via the class representative or through previously announced mechanisms to the relevant officials in the faculty.
18. The exam schedule is coordinated by the faculty's educational office and is arranged to prevent congestion at certain times, from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM.



**Attachment:**

**Commitment Letter**

I, ..... with national ID number ..... and student registration number ....., fully aware of the potential problems that may arise during online exams, such as power outages and internet network disruptions, voluntarily and consciously apply to participate in the online exam for the course ..... in the academic semester ..... on the date .....

I commit to adhering to the rules and regulations for conducting the exam regarding the prohibition of using books, notes, and electronic smart devices (such as phones, smartwatches), sharing questions and their answers, receiving assistance from others to answer questions, sharing my username and password with others, attempting to answer questions through means that violate the declared regulations governing the exam, and any other methods that infringe upon these rules. If any of the aforementioned actions are found to have been committed at any stage, the university is authorized to take action against me in accordance with the regulations.

