Submitting handwritten assessments online

This guide describes how assignments and exams which require handwritten answers (e.g. that involve math solutions, chemical equations and drawn diagrams) can be submitted online. In summary:

1. Log on to Blackboard, access the correct module and download and view the file containing the assignment/exam questions AND the answer template file.

2. Write your answers on paper (plain, lined or squared), clearly identifying the start of each question. Also write your candidate number and the page number at the top of each sheet.

3. When you have finished, take a photo of each page.

4. Download those photos to your PC.

5. Open the answer template in Word and add your candidate number to the first page. Insert the photos into the template (one per page) in the correct order. Save your answer file and then Save as a PDF.

6. Check the PDF and if it all looks OK submit that using the assignment/exam link on Blackboard.

7. Make sure you check the Preview and click OK to complete the submission process.

This guidance assumes that you are using a Windows 10 PC or Apple Mac to complete the task. An appendix offers advice about using a mobile device instead.

> **We strongly recommend that you practice steps 2-6 in advance of the assessment.**
> Take photos of any three pages of existing handwritten notes, download and insert them into a blank Word document and save that as a PDF. You need to be confident that you know how to do this!
>
> **You may want to buy lined or squared paper in advance of the assessment.**
> Also make sure you have two or three suitable pens (e.g. black ink) in case one runs out during the assessment/exam.

Step 1 & 2: Answering the assignment/exam questions

Your tutor will provide you with clear instructions about accessing the assignment/exam. Blackboard will be used to provide timed access and you will not be able to see the link to the document before it is released.

- You will need to refresh your browser to re-load the page and see the link if you accessed it just before the document was released.

- You should download both the assignment/exam and the answer template file.

- If you have access to a printer, you may wish to print the assignment/exam questions.

- You must write your answers in black ink, unless your tutor or the assignment/exam instructions tell you otherwise.

- Write your candidate number and a page number at the top of each answer sheet.

- Clearly identify the start of each question.

Step 3: Taking a photo of each page

This guide assumes you are using a phone to take the photos. If you use a digital camera instead we assume you already know how to transfer those photos to your PC.

- Place the first answer sheet flat on the floor or table. Alternatively, blu-tac the sheet to a wall.

- The lighting should be good but we recommend you avoid bright direct sunlight. Try to avoid shadows falling on the answer sheet when taking the photo; the lighting should be even.

- Use your phone to take a photo of the answer sheet, making sure that it nearly fills the screen.

- Check the photo – is the lighting and focus OK? Can you read your handwriting if you zoom in?

- Repeat for all answer sheets.

Step 4: Download the photo to your PC

The easiest way to download photos taken with Android and Apple phones is to email them to yourself. Then log in to your email on your PC and download the photos to your desktop.

- **Make sure you send full-size images**; don't choose 'Reduce image size' etc.

- Alternatively, if you already use an online file-store service like Google Drive, Apple Files, Microsoft OneDrive or Dropbox you can simply save the photos directly from your phone and then access them on your PC.

This is probably the key step that you need to be confident about in advance, so please practice it!

Step 5: Inserting the photos into Word

1. Open the answer template file and add your candidate number to the cover sheet.

2. Position the cursor at the top of the second (blank) page.

3. Choose **Pictures > Picture from File** from the **Insert** menu.

4. Locate the photo of your first answer sheet and **Insert** it. It should nearly fill the page.

5. Add a new blank line after that photo and repeat steps 3 and 4. The photo will be added to the next page. Repeat until all your photos have been added.

6. **Save the file using your candidate number and the module code as the filename.**
   e.g. 123456-LS1023.docx

7. Select **Save As** from the **File** menu and choose **PDF** as the Export Format. Save the file.
   e.g. 123456-LS1023.pdf

Step 6 & 7: Submit using Blackboard Assignment or Turnitin

Follow the online guidance for Blackboard Assignment or Turnitin.

> **Make sure you check the preview and confirm that your PDF has uploaded correctly.**
> **You MUST complete this final step to finish submitting your assignment.**
>
> **Avoid submitting your assignment in the last few minutes before the submission deadline.**
> This will minimise the risk of technical problems, slow internet or dropped wi-fi connections getting you a late penalty or even preventing submission.

Appendix: using only a mobile device

If you don't have access to a Windows 10 PC or Apple Mac, it is possible to complete this task using a tablet or phone. Aston is unable to provide individual technical support for this – sorry.

It is essential that you practice this well before the assignment/exam.

- Download and install the free Word app on your device from Google Play or Apple's App Store.

- Note that you can also install Office 365 on your Windows 10 PC or Apple Mac.

- You'll probably need to review the online help to learn how to edit documents in the Word app.

- You can download the assessment/exam and answer template to your device or to connected cloud storage such as OneDrive, Google Drive or Apple Files. You can also save your PDF there ready to submit using Blackboard Assignments or Turnitin.