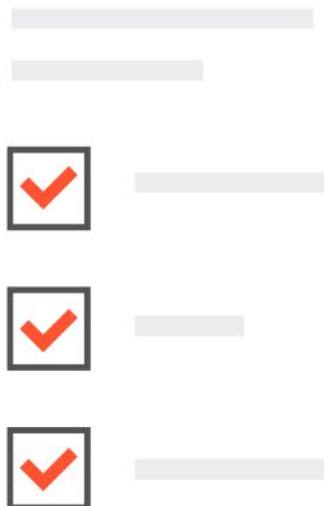


Remote Proctoring

– A saviour for colleges and universities amid pandemic



Remote proctoring seems to be a saviour for a lot of universities and colleges who are looking forward to completing their examinations by September in India. Not only remote proctoring eases the tension of conducting online examinations, but it also enables the examination agency or institutions to administer the exam process seamlessly and effortlessly.

In this time of crisis, University Grant Commission (UGC) has directed the universities and colleges to hold the **examinations by September** end in any mode including online and blended, keeping the safety of the students in mind.

As COVID-19 positive cases rise day-by-day, big and small educational institutions are exploring the possibilities of online examinations. Sources revealed, the demand for remote proctoring solution for most of the assessment organisations is witnessing a 50-60% jump.

The major hesitation for embracing the online examinations from the institutions' side is maintaining a fool proof security system. However, most of them are exploring options of various kinds of advanced remote proctoring solutions.

Currently, there are three major types of **remote proctoring** available for the universities and colleges to choose from. The options available are - live online proctoring, recorded proctoring and automated proctoring. Let's explore each one in detail.

Live online proctoring

A qualified proctor or invigilator monitors the candidates' audio-video and screen share feeds in real-time sitting at a remote location. Therefore, it is not very different from offline proctoring except for the flexibility of the proctoring location & AI driven assistance available to the proctors.

The real-time proctoring helps to reduce the unnecessary movement of the students and fraudulent activities at their end. This is the best option when a high-stake exam needs to be conducted. A devoted proctor is mandatory for invigilation.

Automated proctoring

This is the latest and most advanced form of proctoring. It almost removes any need for human intervention at all. AI based face recognition helps authenticate the candidates' identity. The system records the audio-video and screen share feeds and simultaneously monitors them for any suspicious activities using advanced video and audio analytics.

Detailed analytical reports are available, presenting detailed insights on the candidate's exam taking session. The comprehensive recording is available for further investigation by the institute authorities.

These modes of proctoring can be enabled on a normal browser (viz. Chrome, Safari, Firefox, Edge) OR on a Secured Exam Browser (SEB). SEB locks the candidate's screen and forbids access to system resources/ settings, disallows copy-paste, disallows inbound or outbound connection requests, kills all background processes – thereby providing an extra layer of security for the exam. We at MeritTrac offers all these proctoring services with an **end-to-end examination management software named, Pariksha**. This software, coupled with remote proctoring options and safe exam browser, has been successfully utilized in several educational institutions around the country.

With this, the educational institutions can conduct the examinations effortlessly, especially in this time of pandemic crisis. There are multiple question types that are supported, including descriptive type with a file upload option.

Let's quickly take a look at the five advantages of remote proctoring-

1. Agility

The examination is a time-consuming process and involves many steps and people. The online examination can be conducted without wasting time and efforts of several people. Remote proctoring improves the process by reducing the involvement of individuals to invigilate the students. This makes the examination more agile. Since it eliminates the presence of individuals, the candidates from remote locations can also take the exam.

2. Security

To secure the examination, educational institutions need to take extra caution and spend money at various steps. Since the online examination system alone checks the untoward incidents, the institutions can stop worrying about the lack of efficiency. Remote proctoring is a reliable solution to secure the entire exam administration.

3. Scalable

The advanced remote proctoring enables to conduct the online examination in mass scale. The candidates can participate in the exam from their own personal devices and monitors individual exam taker. There is no issue of space constraints or human resource to administer the test. The exam can be taken on any of the latest browsers and the bandwidth required is easily available through a hotspot connection.

4. Fast delivery – exams, evaluation & results

As discussed above, the agile online examination platform helps institutions quickly deliver the exams. The exam software combined with remote proctoring also intensifies the evaluation and result declaration. The system can evaluate the answers automatically in the case of objective type questions and the result can be declared as soon as the candidate finishes the exam. Even for subjective type questions, the evaluation can be done with a few clicks and declare result.

5. Cost-effective

Cloud based platform-as-a-service is not capex intensive. The institutions do not need to invest in IT infrastructure; they can simply focus on designing the exam. The pay-as-you-use and build-as-you-grow model can marginally reduce the cost of conducting examinations. Uploading questions and details of candidates into the software is the only steps involved in the process before the examination.

These are some of the advantages of the online examinations coupled with remote proctoring. The pandemic crisis has opened the doors for this digital transition from the legacy mode of conducting the assessment.

A case in point: MeritTrac remotely proctors MAHE entrance exams successfully

MeritTrac Services partnered with the Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) as its digital examination solution provider, and successfully concluded live remote proctoring of their annual entrance exams MET 2020. The exams were held for MAHE's undergraduate and Ph.D. courses from August 1-13, 2020. In a first for India, close to one lakh exams were remotely proctored live, seamlessly without any disruptions. While a lot of universities are contemplating cancellation or postponement of exams, MAHE decided to hold their entrance exams for the new academic year. To ensure no student faced any issues on the main examination day, mock tests were organised to help them get accustomed to the digital interface and new exam environment. Furthermore, a help desk number was shared with each candidate that they could call for support at any time.

Dr. Narayana Sabhahit, Registrar, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, said, "With the technology and tools available today, we saw no reason to cancel our exams. The entire process was meticulously designed, planned, and executed without any interruptions. It was a great experience for us as well as students appearing for the exams from across India and abroad. Apart from the advanced AI-based tools, it was also the exceptional quality of proctoring professionals who made the exams a success. At the end of it, it was no different from an exam we would've held at test centres. In fact, it was far more convenient, efficient, and economical." MeritTrac's large pool of professionally trained, seasoned proctors have hands-on training and in-depth expertise in the online examination and proctoring process. Administrators were assigned to manage the proctors, oversee the entire examination, and provide continuous updates to the MAHE leadership team. Additionally, help desk resources were available throughout the duration of the exam to assist students, if needed.

Remote proctoring tools used were AI/ML-based that help combat issues like duplication and impersonation. Features like blocking virtual access, disabling Bluetooth devices, checking & disabling toggling of browsers or screens during the exam, monitoring consistency of face, eye movement, voice and background noise, webcam recordings, audio-video analytics ensured that the entire proctoring process was precise, accurate, and secure. This allowed efficient monitoring; screening candidates appearing for an online examination all through the test duration and thus, maintain the sanctity of the exam. Amrish Sinha, CEO, MeritTrac Services, said, "It's exciting to see what we can achieve with technology to make lives easier for the student and institutions especially during these uncertain times. Our commitment towards our clients, and the drive to change the education landscape pushes us to innovate constantly. Digital exams have helped us manage student experience and learning outcomes during the pandemic. We believe remote and online proctoring is here to stay and will be used extensively in the future for entrance exams as well as semester exams in higher education institutes. We're happy to have partnered with MAHE to conduct of 'one of the first' remote proctored high stakes exam in the country - MET 2020. We look forward to innovating with MAHE on future of assessments and digital examination solutions in the times to come."



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