

How to choose the right online exam software



welcome to brighter

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Introduction

The means of assessment today have expanded and diversified and are no longer dependent on archaic processes. It has eased the primary concerns of teachers, trainers, or recruiters by advancing technology. How can we forget the long hours that were spent shuffling/selecting questions for academic exams or employment tests? Having these assessments proofread and checked for errors was a big task in itself, which was accompanied by hiring a proctor/invigilator to conduct the further process. Lastly, these steps were needed: finalizing a test venue, arranging sheaves of test copies, and evaluating these manually. And that sounds like a great deal of work! We can't rule out the fact that plenty of physical logistics, time, and money get invested, rather wasted, in this tiresome process. With changing times, many companies and educational institutes are preferring to use online examination software in making informed decisions about recruitment, campus placement, grading, and for some, raising capital. In this ebook, we have covered all aspects of online examination software and explained why there's a pressing need for turning to technology for streamlining the performance evaluation process.



Online tests have gradually ousted the traditional examination process, as evidenced by the rising popularity of advanced exam software. Some of the common problems persisting in the manual examination process were delays in processing results, difficulty in the filtering of candidates' records, maintenance of the system, and more. An online exam system enables any industry or institute to schedule, administer, and control examinations via a secured environment. It utilizes the Internet/Intranet and/ Local Area Network environments for conducting the process. Online examination platforms are instrumental in streamlining assessment systems for educational institutions (primary/secondary schools, colleges, universities, training academies and institutes), recruitment (small, mid-level businesses and large corporations), employee training, learning and development, etc.

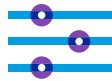
The question, however, is which is the best online exam platform? What features should one consider? There is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to picking the best option as it depends on the business requirement, organizational budget, and approach to learning and development. That being said, let's take a look at essential features that can be crucial in choosing the right online examination software:

At Mercer | Mettl, we have a robust platform to cater to the needs of hundreds of candidates at once. It's being used and recognized by more than 400 clients across eighty-plus countries.



Administering a vast majority of candidates at once

The slightest thought of onboarding poor employees can be distressing for recruiters, which is why validating the professional competencies of candidates is crucial to the hiring process. Conducting an online assessment is an integral part of finding the right fit for any organization. Mostly, hiring managers often grapple with the issue of scalability during campus recruitment drives and hackathons. It's because of online examination software that organizations can now reach to far-flung candidates by sending the assessment link across various locations at one go, thereby minimizing the recruitment effort. All it takes are a computer and a stable internet connection for candidates to take the test. The best part is that everything is on the cloud, and there is no need for installing other software/ third party applications. Moreover, the online exam platform must include customization options for branding. This way, clients can easily configure test landing pages with their company logo.



A comprehensive question library and ample customizing options

In today's fast-paced era, it's impossible to conduct hiring at scale if resources are being incorrectly allocated. Employers need to break out from the burden of preparing questions for recruitment, and that's where an online examination software should come in handy. With its extensive library of well-thought-out questions that cater to various levels of difficulty, the recruitment process becomes more streamlined and effective.

At Mercer | Mettl, we have custom-built assessments along with various customization options to help the hiring managers and recruiters to prepare their unique set of questions for a particular time duration.



Easy accessibility and user-friendly

Various training institutes and recruitment agencies face significant issues in conducting mock tests/employment tests, particularly in their different assessment centers situated across multiple locations. Hence, they must use online exam software, which is easily accessed by both assessors and candidates. An assessee should not feel any difficulty in registering and logging in from any place using a computer and access to the internet. An online exam software must replicate and simulate real-life examination experience for those who can't get enough of the traditional look and feel of an examination.

Before considering any platform, we should ensure that it is a web-based software that operates in the cloud and does not require the users to download/install any additional software.



Highly scalable system and uptime guarantees

Scalability concerns both recruiters and coaching institutes while conducting campus recruitment drives and creating strategies for exam preparation. Online examination software should include support for multiple users across different locations at the same time. A good exam platform should not consume excessive bandwidth and would require optimal broadband connectivity, and in some instances, a webcam to suit the needs of both parties.

The exam platform should also have a sturdy server structure that comes with high response time and is scalable as well. It must be easily scaled up should the need arise and must have a redundant infrastructure to tackle situations like power failure or any similar technical glitch. Additionally, an auto-save feature in place would save participants' responses in no time.

An ideal online exam software will also include anti-cheating features to keep cheating activities at bay. When a test link (often IP locked) is being sent to a candidate, it comes with a PIN (a combination of random alphabets and numerals), which the receiver needs to activate the test session. This way, the test validity and candidates' authenticity are maintained.



There's no need for invigilation!

It might be desirable to have a perfect score, but this urge also paves the way for unlawful activities like cheating, deception, etc. Sometimes tech-savvy candidates try high-tech tactics to cheat their way to success, such as someone using Google docs concurrently to help the student with cheating, opening multiple browsers in Google/Bing, etc. Moreover, there should be no room for trickery while conducting high-stakes tests like University entrance exams, certification tests, employment tests, etc.



Helps in creating tests with utmost ease

Academicians who are pretty new to the idea of an online exam platform need stepwise instructions to develop and administer tests. FAQs/demos explaining each step of the test creation process should be nicely represented on the product's website to address that concern. The test that is to be prepared using the exam software should have elements such as the number of problems, sections, time limit, total marks, and qualifying marks listed on it.

The exam software must integrate all the questions into a single-assessment format, which include: objective questions, MCQs, skills-based questions, essay type questions, simulation-based questions, and personality tests, etc. The availability of questions banks in the online exam system could help recruiters save a lot of time and logistics efforts. Assessors should also be able to use and upload their questions on the platform.

Candidates should also be allowed to take the test without any difficulty through a link/login, and as soon as the test is over, the test window must be automatically closed. The software should be robust enough to manage the credentials of each applicant, which can be updated as per requirement.

Auto-proctoring is yet another approach to maintain the sanctity of assessments. What separates the perfect online examination system from the rest is its ability to offer flawless proctoring using a webcam, with options like flagging when the candidate navigates away from the screen or disabling copying options on the candidate's screen. This approach eliminates the need for a manual proctor and does away with the need to pay an invigilator for manual inspection.



Comprehensive reports and in-depth analysis

We can't rule out the importance of reporting and analysis for trainers and teachers who undertake the arduous task of correcting copies manually. Based on the calculated scores, once the test is over, both the assessor and participant should be able to see the scores at the same time.

The report being generated should underscore the critical performance area through thorough question-wise feedback and a suggestive approach towards wrong answers. Data that is generated from the report helps trainers and teachers to design their learning/training modules.



Easy integration and configuration with other apps

All organizations, institutions, coaching centers, no matter how big or small, make use of a learning management system(LMS) for conducting their assessments. It's usual to choose an online exam platform that seamlessly integrates with their LMS and IMS, short for Information Management System.



Exceptional technical, operational and customer support

Unsurprisingly, old-fashioned teachers and recruiters feel overwhelmed by the technicalities related to the software. They are not usually very well-versed in handling operational and technical issues. Terms like "bug-fixing" and "latest updates" seem like complicated jargon. It's highly likely that they'll appreciate proper software support at each stage of implementation of online assessments. They might face difficulties during conducting the tests, especially while dealing with high-stakes and skills-based simulation tests. Such situations call for operational support, which should ideally be a live chat or phone call away.

A perfect online examination software offers its customers outstanding support services and has a technical backend team fighting tooth and nail to deliver an immaculate software experience.



Freemium model definitely works

Most organizations consider their budget before subscribing to hefty software packages. There is no downside to opting for freemium tools for such organizations as it helps them understand their business requirements in a much better way. The customary goodness of an online exam platform is also determined by its free trial version that allows clients to use the software without interruption unless they want to use the advanced version. This way, they can select those features that matter most to them. Most importantly, there are certain privileges available for premium users that positively intensifies the overall user experience.

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The Mercer | Mettl way

Mercer | Mettl's online examination platform is a holistic tool that encompasses the features mentioned above and significantly eases the process of conducting assessments. Online candidate screening becomes an effortless task by using a battery of assessments that is available on this platform. The platform is extensively useful for gauging the skill, personality, and ability of candidates through specialized tests like Psychometric, Aptitude, Coding, Sales Profiler, and Domain Tests, etc. When it comes to conducting academic tests/ pre-employment assessments in a highly secured environment, there's nothing better than using a holistic exam platform that offers the best user experience.

All question formats are supported

The assessments at Mercer | Mettl are crafted as per the 'Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals,' which is a framework widely adopted by experts in creating assessments for online examination software.

Out of the six levels propagated in Bloom's Taxonomy, our assessments are divided into two major categories:

- Knowledge-based questions
- Application-based questions





Knowledge-based questions

Knowledge-based questions analyze the candidate's ability to learn and remember facts, terminologies and any other details without the need to understand the concept. There are seven categories of knowledge-based questions:

1. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) (True or False, etc.)
2. Checkbox Question (MCA, etc.)
3. Short Answer Question (one word or few words, etc.)
4. Fill in the blanks Question (single or multiple blanks, etc.)
5. Long answer type question (essays, equations, freehand graphs, etc.)
6. Upload type question (.docx, .pdf, .png, .zip, etc.)
7. Diagram type question (flowchart, clipart, UML, etc.)

Our USP

- The online examination platform allows the candidates to solve simple to complex formulae writing, equations, calculus, integration, differentiation, trigonometry, matrices and more. Additionally, solving chemical notations and equations has also become hassle-free.
- Examiners can easily set diagram based questions as the platform allows creating flowcharts, graphs or cliparts.



Application-based questions

Application-based questions enable candidates to apply their learning to a real-life problem or situation different from the one intended at the time of learning.

They can be divided into 10 categories:

1. Code snippet question (C++, Java, PHP, etc.)
2. App development question (C, C#, C++, Java)
3. Database query question (Oracle, SQL etc.)
4. Frontend coding question (HTML, CSS, JS, jQuery etc.)
5. Case study question (business simulations)
6. Typing simulator (typing speed, accuracy etc.)
7. RStudio question (R Simulator etc.)
8. Mean stack question (Mongo, Express, Angular etc.)
9. Audio recording question (record candidate's audio)
10. Video recording question (record candidate's video)

Our USP

- The right online exam management software enables faculties to design video-based questions that allow test-takers to record their responses in the video format. The audio recording is also available.
- Online business case studies provide simulations of strategic problems that may be encountered by candidates at their workplace. The case study simulator presents candidates with a background scenario and reports. This question type evaluates the candidate's approach to effective problem-solving.

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Autograding provides real-time results

The autograding feature of Mercer | Mettl Examine efficiently grades MCQs and coding simulators without the need for human intervention. This enables providing real-time results, hence reducing the turnaround time of the examination cycle.

When used for grade coding questions, the autograding features not only generates a specific score but also provides insights on the approach taken by test-takers, code quality and plagiarism check. The report consists of the total, section-wise and individual question-level scores.

The report also provides a holistic view of:



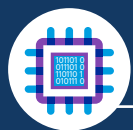
Time complexity:

The time taken by coders to write code.



Space complexity:

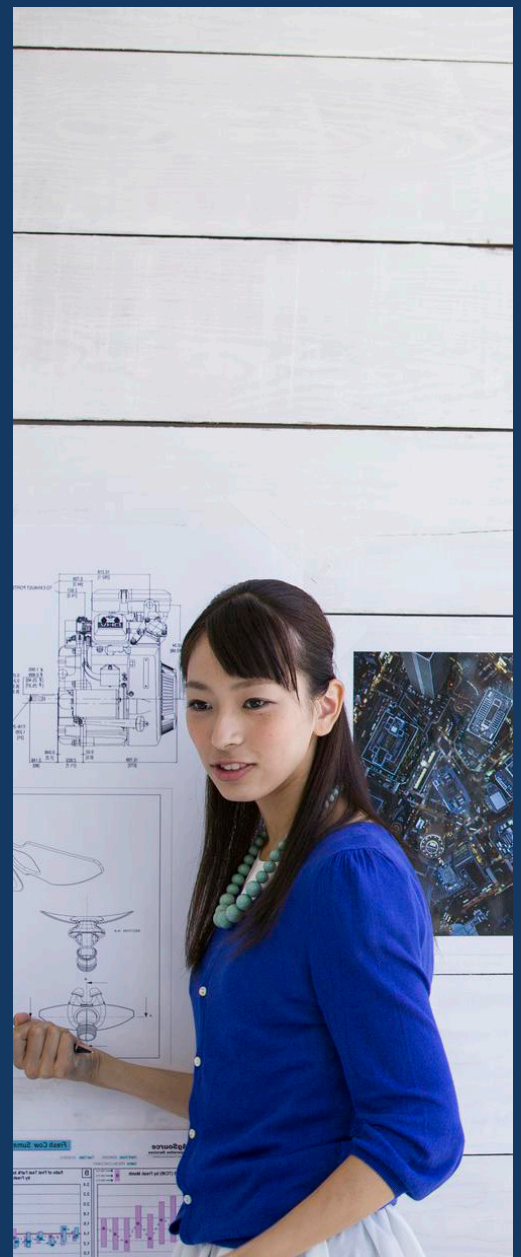
The space occupied by a code in the drive.



Code complexity:

The number of decision statements candidates used in the code.

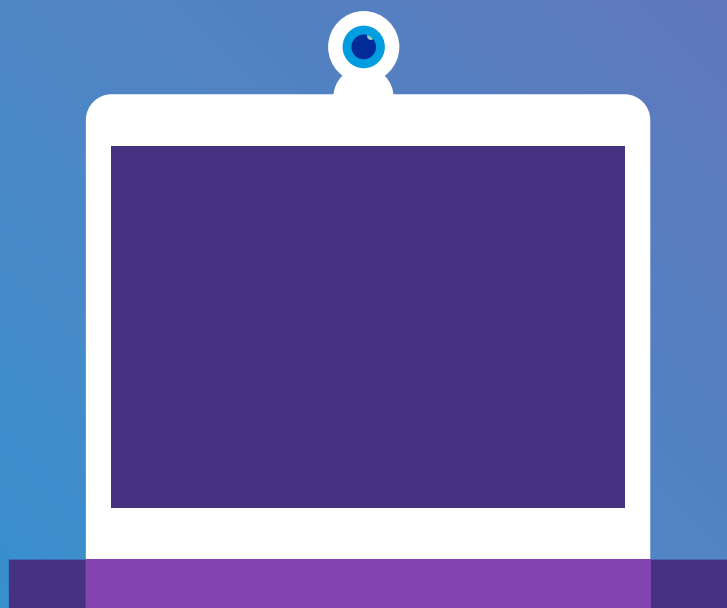
A grading logic can also be set-up at the time of test creation by allotting marks to each section, in addition to negative marking. Long answers and upload type questions, which are not auto-graded, are available for manual evaluation.



Remote proctoring eliminates instances of online cheating

Institutions question the authenticity of online exams as candidates employ multiple means to cheat on their tests. From impersonation to seeking external help and screen sharing to task switching, candidates employ various means to ace the exam. However, with technological advancements, a majority of cheating instances can be averted. Secure browsing does not allow the candidate to navigate out of the test window and auto proctoring reduces malpractices significantly by flagging any suspicious activities. Mettl Proctoring as a Service (MPaaS) addresses all the apprehensions associated with cheating by providing credible exam results via live, manual and auto proctoring. Mercer | Mettl offers seamless integration with proctoring technology for organizations that already have a functional Learning Management Systems (LMSs).

These necessary features will enable you to make informed decisions in choosing the best online examination software. Do comment and share your thoughts with us.



About Us

At Mercer | Mettl, our mission is to enable organizations to make better people decisions by making credible people decisions across two key areas: Acquisition and Development. Since our inception in 2010, we have partnered with 2900+ corporates, 31 sector skill councils/ government departments, and 15+ educational institutions across 90+ countries.

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