

TITLE: Investigating the shift to online delivery of final exams and how this impacted student experience

Abstract: A closed-book and paper-based final examination is the most common summative assessment administered in universities around the world (Williams & Wong, 2009). However, with the COVID-19 pandemic occurring in early 2020, educators were forced to transition to open-book online final exams operated through a range of learning management systems (Dicks et al., 2020). Although online exams are not novel, their use in chemistry courses on such a large scale was undeniably so, with many students and staff having limited experience with them (Nennig et al., 2020).

This study aimed to examine the impact of the online delivery of chemistry final exams, driven by the rise of a pandemic, on both the exam questions and the experiences of academics and students at The University of Sydney. Semi-structured interviews were conducted involving students who had taken both paper-based and online chemistry exams, as well as those who had taken only online chemistry exams. They were asked about their experiences and strategies used to complete exam questions. To date, only students have been interviewed, but interviews with academics will also be conducted. Thematic analyses were conducted on these student interviews, by first using inductive coding on one interview to generate a codebook that was applied to the rest of the interviews. While the exam questions were also analysed for exams written in 2019 (paper-based exams), 2020 and 2021 (online exams) as part of the study, this talk will focus on the experiences of students as extracted from the interviews, such as the various origins of stress when taking online exams and unique exam strategies employed in online exams.