"An intuitive all-in-one system": The Insurance Institute enhances the experience of their professional candidates and exam markers with TestReach

The Insurance Institute

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Background

Established in 1885, the Insurance Institute is committed to the professional development of over 17,500 members and provides both education and training to its membership base. Its qualifications are accredited by Atlantic Technical University. The Institute's Certificate in Insurance Product Advice (APA) and Certificate in Insurance Practice (CIP) qualifications meet the Central Bank's Minimum Competency Code (MCC) requirements, enabling graduates to provide accredited advice to insurance consumers.

The Institute delivers around 7,000 exams per year. Prior to moving online, traditional paper-based exams were delivered through test centres, situated around the country. This required candidates to travel to the centres. The Institute also had to manage the logistics of exam centre set-up and the circulation and collection of paper-based exam papers and scripts. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the exams transitioned online with remote proctoring. It was essential that the security, integrity and professionalism of the exam process be maintained at the highest level.

Solution

Following careful due diligence, The Insurance Institute partnered with TestReach. A major factor in the decision was the fact that TestReach provided exam creation functionality and live proctoring within an all-in-one application. TestReach enabled the Institute to author questions and exam papers on the system. The exams could then be delivered with supervision by TestReach invigilators, who are familiar with the underlying software. This helps to ensure a professional and supportive service is provided.

The TestReach live proctoring service delivers a level of supervision ideal for the high-stakes nature of these exams and the secure computer lockdown feature prevents access to other applications for the duration of the exam.

Candidates are required to perform a pre-test in order to confirm connectivity and system compatibility, which helps ensure candidates are relaxed and technically prepared for their exam.

TestReach provides various accessibility options for candidates with special needs, including alternative exam canvasses / colour schemes, reasonable adjustments and the facilitation of scribes if required. The Institute were also attracted to the TestReach comprehensive marking module – over time, all marking of constructed-response questions was transitioned to more streamlined management within the platform.

Results

The Institute surveys all candidates after completing their exams and feedback regarding the TestReach exam process has been overwhelmingly positive. Candidates welcome the convenience of not having to travel to an exam centre, and pass rates have remained consistent with pre-Covid test centre exams.

Graham Kavanagh, QA/Assessment Manager at the Institute, said *"Candidates have been delighted with the online exam experience and support from TestReach. Our feedback surveys consistently show a 95% positive approval rating. TestReach is an intuitive all-in-one system that has given us a lot of flexibility and the approach is more innovative for candidates and the Institute. Switching to online assessment took hard work and careful planning from our perspective but has ultimately proved to be easier than managing test-centres. The TestReach team are fantastic.*

There's a really good energy and customer support are very helpful."

Online marking has been transformative: security has improved and the administrative burden on Institute staff in managing the process has been reduced. *"The system is very intuitive and really helps to streamline the marking process for all involved,"* Graham Kavanagh outlined. *"The distribution of scripts is much cleaner and more secure with everything contained within the platform. The exams marked online are 2-hour exams with short answer questions. After the test, sample scripts are taken and the standardization function in TestReach is used, so we can ensure that papers are being marked appropriately and consistently by the correction team. We can also see how markers are progressing, through the live marking function. It's a nice interface, where we can view the question that was asked or hide it, and we also use the script annotation feature. If a candidate has unfortunately failed but is still reasonably close to the pass mark, we can set up an online meeting and give them constructive feedback as to how their script was marked."*

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As for the future, the Institute will continue to conduct its exams online, and will look at different ways to further develop its online assessments. *''There are many more question types within TestReach and we want to explore how we may be able to utilise these into the future. We also see innovation coming from the strong partnership we have with TestReach and being able to explore and benefit from new features in their roadmap."*

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