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The Evaluation of a Biometric-Based Identification System for Remote-Based Exam Invigilation

Clarke, Nathan

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University of Plymouth

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Teaching Fellowship Final Report:

Name of key contact (project leader): Dr Nathan Clarke

Department: School of Computing & Mathematics

Telephone: 01752 586218

E-mail: nclarke@plymouth.ac.uk

Names of other staff involved: Dr Paul Dowland, Prof Steven Furnell

Title of project: The Evaluation of a Biometric-Based Identification System for Remote-Based Exam Invigilation

Type of project: Development

Aims of project:

1. To critically evaluate the technology options available for a continuous biometric-based identification system.
2. To design and implement a continuous biometric-based identification system for use within e-learning. The prototype will be independent but built around the University's current Perception system in the first instance.
3. To evaluate the operational characteristics of the system and the human-factors of acceptance, usability and privacy, and disseminate the system across the University.
4. To investigate the pedagogical factors underpinning this new area of e-assessment.

Background to project:

Prior research has raised concerns regarding information security in e-learning systems for over a decade now (Littman, 1998). However, in reality much more work is needed to ensure information security in e-learning systems (Ramim & Levy, 2006). Specifically, there has been a major concern by university administrators on the validity of e-learning in general when it comes to ensuring that the student is engaged in the learning activities is indeed the same student receiving credit (Ramim & Levy, 2007). The current practice of using passwords has shown to provide little answer in addressing proper user authentication for several decades now (Morris & Thompson, 1979). This concern is also compounded with the fact that "most users choose passwords poorly" (Katz, Ostrovsky, & Yung, 2009). Indeed, prior studies have highlighted that the use of passwords for authentication is often insufficient (Clarke & Furnell, 2007). In the context of user authentication in e-learning, the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOP) of 2008 (2008) requires, as of July 2010, that all academic accreditation agencies ensure that all online/distance education programs will demonstrate proper mechanisms for authenticating e-learners including options beyond the currently used authentication of username and password. Whilst US-based, such expectations and requirements

in the UK will be forthcoming. Although this mandate is used in terms of its specific requirements, the demand to demonstrate that the student is indeed the same student participating throughout the e-learning activities may pose multiple challenges. To begin with, learners' activities in e-learning courses vary greatly (Levy, 2008). Developing a single approach to address proper authentication of e-learners throughout all their e-learning activities appears to pose a great challenge. Specifically, to demonstrate continuous authentication whilst undertaking e-learning activities multiple authentication mechanisms will be required for implementation in order to combat intrusive and inconvenient authentication.

The University is committed to growing its distance e-learning courses, not only for FT learners but to develop new business opportunities in the CPD market-place. Whilst the focus has been on the technology to produce and deliver e-learning materials, little work has been done on enabling remote exam-based assessments. Such assessments would save students (and tutors) time and money as there would be no need for a physically invigilated session. Remote assessments could widen the range of assessments offered to students, increase uptake of distance-based learning courses and enhance the reputation of PU as a leader in e-assessments.

Methods Used:

The project methodology was focussed around four stages of the project:

Stage 1 - This stage of the study will involve a comprehensive literature review of existing research in the area of identity assurance for e-Assessment, particularly in the US where some efforts have already made. Key findings of this stage will feed into the design phase of the study. A thorough evaluation of authentication approaches will also be established in this phase.

Stage 2 – As multiple options are likely to exist, stage 2 will focus upon rapid prototyping of several preliminary systems for evaluation – both in terms of the technology and initial focus-group activities with end-users. The use of biometrics tends to invoke mixed feelings in people and successful implementation of such a system requires the acceptance of the end-user population. All key stakeholders including ILS (now TIS) and Faculty Learning Technologists will be involved in the requirements analysis – to ensure compatibility with existing systems and enable sufficient usability.

Stage 3 – Development of the continuous biometric-based authentication system. Based upon the requirements specification, a secure identity assurance system will be developed that will operate independently of the e-learning/e-assessment environment.

Stage 4 – Evaluation of the proposed system. This evaluation will be split in to two phases – the first examining the operational performance of the system; including the technology requirements and performance of the underlying biometrics. The second phase will undertake a thorough end-user trial of the system to determine

acceptability and usability. Levels of concern with respect to Privacy will also be collected and analysed.

Results:

The project has resulted in a preliminary e-invigilation system that provided the basis for a technology review in order to evaluate the feasibility of such a system. The system was designed with both academic and student interfaces and successfully captures the necessary biometric samples for remote analysis. The creation, analysis and technology evaluation of the system has formed the first published paper (please refer to Appendix B).

Unfortunately; whilst the system was sufficient for a technology evaluation, it was not deemed appropriate for a usability evaluation (the final element of stage 4). It became apparent during the process that the Research Administrator employed to undertake the development work lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to develop the system to the required level for end-user testing. This has also had an impact on the wider dissemination, as it has not been possible to demonstrate the output internally to TIS. The research team have however taken it upon themselves to redesign the system from scratch in order to permit the complete usability evaluation. Ethical approval and the necessary survey tool have already been completed and approved. Upon completion of this, it is envisaged that a second paper will be delivered and further dialogue will be made internally to promote the work.

The project did, as anticipated, raise a number of considerations that require further research. These mostly focus upon the development of appropriate biometric techniques that are specifically designed to operate transparently. To this end, we now have a new doctoral student undertaking his PhD in this area (from October 2013).

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Associated publications:

Clarke, NL, Dowland, PS., Furnell, SM. E-Invigilator: A Biometric-Based Supervision System for e-Assessments. IEEE i-Society 2013, Canada, June 2013.
(Please refer to Appendix B for a copy of the paper).

Keywords e-Assessment, e-Invigilation, Biometrics, Invigilation

Appendix A: Confirmation of Ethical Approval

Paula Simson

To: Nathan Clarke <N.Clark@plymouth.ac.uk>
Ethical approval Application

7 March 2013 14:29

[Inbox](#)

Dear Nathan

Thank you for submitting the ethical approval form and details concerning your project:

'e-Invigilation'

I am pleased to inform you that this has been approved.

Kind regards

Paula

Paula Simson | Secretary to Faculty Human Ethics Committee | Dean's Office | Faculty of Science and Technology | 009 Smeaton | Ext 84503 | email paula.simson@plymouth.ac.uk
Working hours: Monday – Thursday 09.30 – 17.00 Friday 09.30 – 16.30

Appendix B: Conference Paper

Clarke, NL, Dowland, PS., Furnell, SM. E-Invigilator: A Biometric-Based Supervision System for e-Assessments. IEEE i-Society 2013, Canada, June 2013.

e-Invigilator: A Biometric-Based Supervision System for e-Assessments

N.L. Clarke^{1,2}, P.S. Dowland¹ & S.M. Furnell^{1,2}

¹Centre for Security, Communications & Network Research (CSCAN), Plymouth University, United Kingdom; ²Security Research Institute, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia
e-mail: info@cscan.org

Abstract

The creation of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) have revolutionized the online delivery of learning materials, from traditional lectures slides through to podcasts, blogs and wikis. However, the way we assess such learning has not evolved – with physical attendance at proctored exams still a necessity for formal assessments. This paper presents a novel model to enable remote and electronic invigilation of students during formal assessment. The approach utilizes transparent authentication to provide for a non-intrusive and continuous verification of the candidates identity throughout the examination timeframe. A prototype is developed and a technology evaluation of the platform demonstrates the feasibility of the approach.

1. Introduction

E-learning is a widely accepted model for learning with a huge number of providers utilizing platforms to deploy materials and educate students. Within traditional education, e-learning platforms are commonly utilized in conjunction with normal classroom-based education to deploy educational materials and to extend the students knowledge. Moodle, a leading open-source Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has over 63 million users, 6.7 million courses and 1.2 million teachers [1]. The business case for e-learning seems to

suggest that the approach is a “no-brainer”, with huge savings possible in teacher time, room costs, travel time and equipment [2].

Whilst much effort has been expended on the creation and deployment of VLEs, less focus has been given to the associated problem of providing e-invigilation. Formal exams and tests still need to be undertaken under controlled conditions within defined classrooms with physical invigilators present to maintain the integrity of the assessment process. This results in a costly model for both the institution and the candidate. Whilst for a subset of students, this is arguably less of a problem, as they are attending class physically, a growing segment of the market is focused upon the complete remote-delivery of courses. In these cases, students that could be studying courses from providers many hundreds of miles away are still required to attend assessment centers to undertake their examinations. The fundamental problem in providing remote assessment is the ability to verify the authenticity of the candidates.

This paper proposes an approach to remote invigilation that seeks to build upon prior research that capitalizes on providing a monitored and supervised environment for the candidate to undertake their assessment through the application of transparent authentication. Current approaches all require a user to intrusively provide an authentication sample (e.g. password or fingerprint); however, in circumstances where the user is complicit in the misuse, such approaches have a significant failing in that users know when and how to circumvent the system. The approach

presented in this paper authenticates candidates non-intrusively and continuously throughout their session with the resulting system automatically identifying possible misuse.

The paper begins with an analysis of the current state of the art in e-assessment and goes on to describe the domain of active authentication. Sections 3 and 4 present a model and prototype implementation for achieving e-invigilation. The paper then concludes with a discussion and identifies areas for future research.

2. Background Research

2.1 e-Assessment

Prior literature into e-Assessments has largely focused upon the desire to increase invigilation and monitoring within a classroom or controlled environment during assessments that utilize computers. They are designed not to replace physical invigilators but to provide additional layers of monitoring to ensure candidates are not performing any actions on the PC that do not conform to the assessment policy (i.e. using an Internet browser to search for a solution). Many of these systems incorporate some network-based monitoring, which in itself requires appropriate network infrastructure and monitoring software. Percival et al proposed "The Virtual Invigilator", an approach that utilizes Intrusion Detection-type functionality to detect possible deviations away from standard procedure [3]. Other approaches, such as commercial offerings by Software Secure and Respondus have taken the approach of locking down what the browser and/or system is able to do during an assessment, thereby removing the opportunity for possible misuse [4,5]. Yuan and Yang [6] have proposed a SIP-based video surveillance system. Whilst these

approaches all have merit and are certainly required within an e-invigilation system, they fundamentally fail to verify the authenticity of the user.

Software Secure have recognized the desire for remote-proctoring of exams; however, their solution incorporates real-time videoing of the candidate during the assessment. Whilst this does provide a level of authenticity, the real-time nature of the capture is storage and bandwidth heavy and the solution still requires a manual inspection by the academic to verify whether any problems exist. No level of automation exists within the process.

The ability to fundamentally verify a user's authenticity has been previously addressed within classroom-based scenarios and a number of commercial partners such as Remote Proctor by Software Secure provide a fingerprint recognition system. The premise of the concept of utilizing biometrics to verify users authenticity is certainly stronger than using passwords; however, their implementation to date has two significant drawbacks. Firstly the Remote Proctor system requires dedicated hardware. Whilst feasible within a classroom environment, the idea of requiring each candidate to purchase the hardware for remote assessments is unlikely to be very cost effective. The more significant issue however is with respect to the nature of the authentication. In all cases described in the literature thus far, authentication of the user is performed intrusively and thus the user is aware when credentials are required. In an environment where a candidate is looking to cheat, this provides information to the user as to when to provide the sample. Furthermore, beyond the initial verification at the beginning of the assessment, no further verification is performed – although levels of monitoring through video and microphones can be provided.

A system that is capable of authenticating a user non-intrusively or transparently would provide a mechanism for

continuously verifying the authenticity of the user but without them having to explicitly provide credentials or biometric samples.

2.2 Active Authentication

The domain of active authentication is relatively new in comparison to traditional authentication technologies. Its focus is on the ability to non-intrusively and continuously authenticate a user utilizing (largely biometric-based) credentials obtained from the user whilst they normally interact with the electronic device or system. For example, within the context of a mobile device, a number of biometric-based approaches can be utilized to transparently capture and verify the authenticity of the user (as illustrated In Figure 1).



Figure 1. Transparent Authentication within a Mobile Device

A wide range of literature exists within the domain, with many research studies looking at developing transparent biometric techniques and considering the architectural issues that exist when developing a multimodal biometric system [7,8]. The approach, referred to as TAS – Transparent Authentication System – has a generic architecture that involves the non-intrusive capture of biometric samples, extraction and processing prior to verification and intelligent monitoring (as illustrated in Figure 2). The types of authentication approaches that lend themselves to non-intrusive authentication do vary in terms of their authentication performance. The stronger biometric techniques such as

fingerprint recognition do not lend themselves to transparent capture. It is the weaker behavioral-based approaches that tend to (but not exclusively) contain a non-intrusive component.

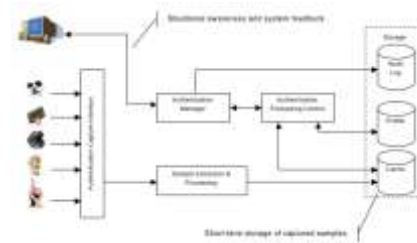


Figure 2. A Generic TAS Framework (Clarke, 2011)

The key advantage of applying a TAS-based approach to e- invigilation is the unpredictable nature of the biometric capture, with samples being taken continuously throughout the assessment without the candidates' knowledge that the sample is being taken. The system also provides the capability to automatically perform verification of the candidate through utilizing biometric systems, enabling academics to easily identify possible candidates that have misused the system.

3. A Model for e-Invigilation

The application of TAS to e-invigilation provides a series of distinct advantages over existing approaches:

1. It removes the ability for the candidate to authenticate to an exam or provide credentials to do so and subsequently allow another individual to actually take the assessment.
2. It provides continuous verification of the user throughout the session.
3. It provides the academic with an automated means of identifying misuse through flagging candidates whose biometric samples fail.
4. It does not require any specialized hardware or additional biometric capture devices over

standard PC hardware (e.g. keyboard, camera, mouse and microphone).

As illustrated in Figure 3, the model for e-Invigilator is a flexible and modular framework that permits the inclusion of a suite of transparent biometric techniques. Which techniques are in use will be a function of the candidate's hardware (i.e. do they have the necessary biometric capture technology), the academic requirements (i.e. the academic might decide upon a specific suite of techniques to be used), the availability of biometric software (i.e. the system has the backend biometric software to process the samples). It is envisaged that a wide-range of transparent biometric techniques could be suitable within the e-Invigilator, but which techniques are appropriate will depend upon the nature of the assessment. For instance, if the assessment requires oral responses, then voice verification can be utilized. If the assessment requires textual-based inputs then keystroke analysis or linguistic analysis could be appropriate. In the majority of scenarios it is envisaged that facial recognition will be available – as this is a technique that lends itself particularly well given the natural placement of a web camera on top of the laptop or monitor screen.

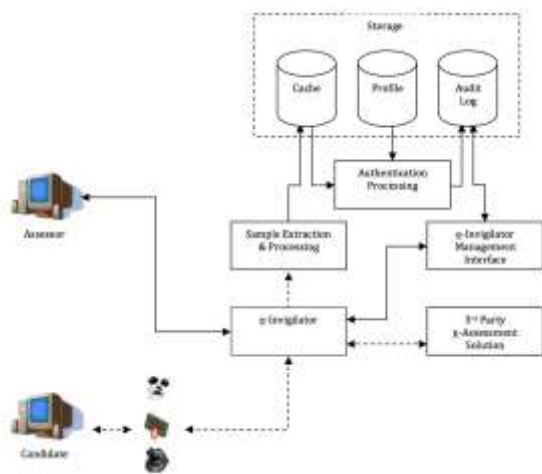


Figure 3: An Architectural Model for e-Invigilation

From a process perspective, e-Invigilator is designed to be lightweight and user friendly. As such the system is deployed via a web browser, removing any need to download and install applications. The system is split into two modes of operation dependent upon the role of the user: candidate (highlighted with a dash in figure 3) or assessor (highlighted with a solid line in the figure). The purpose of e-Invigilator is not to provide the e-assessment platform. There are already pre-existing systems that provide a whole host of functionality for supporting numerous assessment types. E-Invigilator is rather an umbrella, which provides for authentication and monitoring of the candidate independent of the e-assessment solution. The only assumption with this solution is that the e-assessment solution can be provided through a web browser.

It should also be noted that although the model in Figure 3 does not specifically state it, it is assumed that such a system would incorporate the monitoring and lockdown functionality that pre-existing systems have already established. The purpose of this diagram was merely to emphasize the transparent biometric functionality.

As depicted in Figure 4, the process model presents a process for enrollment and subsequently the ability to undertake assessments for the candidate role. With respect to the assessor role, they have the capability of creating new assessments, adding student cohorts and managing the results of the assessment (from a biometric perspective).

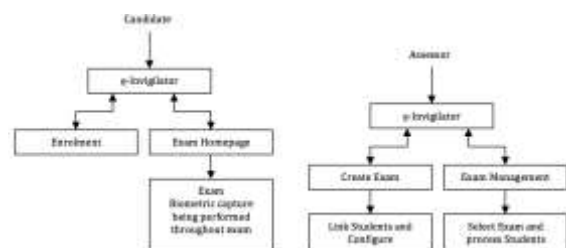


Figure 4: A Process Model for e-Invigilator

4. Prototype Development of e-Invigilator

A prototype of the aforementioned model was developed in order to better assess (in the first instance) the technological aspects of such a model. Due to financial development costs, the range of biometric technologies supported by the prototype was restricted to facial recognition only. Whilst limiting, it was felt such a restriction would not have an impact on the technology evaluation.

In order to highlight the ease of use and lightweight nature of the model, screenshots of key functionality are provided below. Figure 5 presents the interface for the assessor to create and define an exam. The start and end timestamps and duration can be utilized to enable the assessor to either restrict candidates from taking an exam until a predefined slot, or alternatively, the assessor can set this up so that the candidate is able to undertake the exam at any point between the two dates. This particular setup of the model has been developed with Plymouth University internal systems in mind, with the ability to directly link a student cohort to the exam (and thus remove the need to enter a list of students that are taking each exam).

Create Exam
Please complete 10 of the fields below to create a new exam.

Enter the name of the exam: Name of Exam (Text)

Enter exam start time (24 hour format): Start Time of Exam (Hour: 00 | Minute: 00)

Enter exam end time (24 hour format): End Time of Exam (Hour: 00 | Minute: 00)

Enter the exam start date: Date of Exam (21 JAN 2011)

Enter the exam end date: End Date of Exam (15 JAN 2011)

Enter the exams duration: Exam Duration (Hour: 1 | Minute: 0)

Click 'create exams' to create the exam: Select attending module (Dropdown: CMET103)

Enter the exams url, currently defaulted to www.cscan.org: Exam URL (Text: http://www.cscan.org)

Click 'create exams' to create the exam: Create Exam (Button)

Figure 5: Exam Creation Interface

Assuming an individual assessor has multiple exams, the *Exam Management Interface* provides an overview of all

current and previous exams that have been defined during any particular academic year. As illustrated in Figure 6, the system provides a quick and easy approach to identifying which exams have students failing (biometrically) so that the assessor can query that exam.

Available Exams

Use the drop-down menu to select the year of the exam you wish to view.

Year of Exam: 2012 - 2013 2013 - 2014 2014 - 2015

Exam Name	Test Finished	Participants	Pass	Fail	Visual Checked
CMET103 Advanced Security	8 FEB 2013 at 1:00hr	35	0	5	0
Security Test	22 JAN 2013 at 15:00hr	35	2	3	0
CMET103 Security Introduction	Test Finished	Participants	Pass	Fail	Visual Checked
Security	25 JAN 2013 at 15:00hr	31	0	1	0
ISAD103 Database level 1	Test Finished	Participants	Pass	Fail	Visual Checked
Database SQL	30 JAN 2013 at 17:00hr	33	0	3	0

Figure 6: Assessors Exam Management Interface Overview

Clicking on the search icon (in Figure 6) provides a detailed listing of all candidates assigned to the examination with a traffic-light system indicating which students have undertaken the assessment and whether they have passed or failed the biometric test (as illustrated in Figure 7). Candidates that require further examination, can be checked through a subsequent interface that provides all candidate biometric information. For techniques, such as face and voice, these samples provide the assessor with a further manual verification if required. Samples marked in red are those that have failed the biometric test. Please note, for privacy purposes the image shown in Figure 8 is a mockup of the functionality rather than an actual person's face.

Available Exams

Use the drop-down menu to select the year of the exam you wish to view.

Year of Exam: 2012 - 2013 2013 - 2014 2014 - 2015

Search Exams

Exam Name	Test Finished	Participants	Pass	Fail	Visual Checked
CMET103 Advanced Security	8 FEB 2013 at 1:00hr	35	0	5	0
Security Test	22 JAN 2013 at 15:00hr	35	2	3	0
CMET103 Security Introduction	Test Finished	Participants	Pass	Fail	Visual Checked
Security	25 JAN 2013 at 15:00hr	31	0	1	0
ISAD103 Database level 1	Test Finished	Participants	Pass	Fail	Visual Checked
Database SQL	30 JAN 2013 at 17:00hr	33	0	3	0

Figure 7: Assessors Individual Assessment Interface



Figure 8: Assessors Individual Candidates Interface

The student's view of the software has been kept very simplistic. The authentication credentials required to initially login to the system are based upon their wider institutional credentials using delegated authentication. Upon login, the candidate is initially provided with a screen for enrolment – in this case, the system takes a series of images of the user, which are subsequently used in the verification phase. After enrolment has been completed, the candidate will be presented with a screen listing the available assessments for them. Clicking on the assessment will result in the third party e-assessment loading. From an e-invigilation perspective, a small window in the upper right hand side of the browser presents a video of the camera taking the facial recognition. Whilst no indication is provided to the candidate about when an image is taken, the purpose of this screen is to provide feedback to the candidate that the e-Invigilation software is in operation.

5. Discussion

The use of biometric technologies that require no additional hardware and are transparent in nature clearly has a distinct advantage over pre-existing solutions. There are however, a number of aspects that require further consideration.

For instance, whilst the prototype demonstrated the capability of acquiring image samples from within a web browser

and successfully uploading the images to the e-Invigilation servers with no impact on the candidates ability to undertake the assessment through the third-party provider, concerns do exist over the scalability of such a solution – both in terms of the individual system capturing and processing multiple biometric samples and also in terms of how many concurrent users a server would be able to cope with. The “umbrella” nature of e-Invigilator has specifically been designed not to present any impact upon the candidate or the third-party e-assessment tool as it could have an impact upon the candidate's performance.

The prototype has been designed specifically with facial recognition in mind, as it is an approach that can be tested both automatically through biometrics but also manually verified if required by the assessor. Not all biometric technologies would enable such manual assessment and therefore the performance of the underlying biometric becomes even more important. With facial recognition it is less important if the biometric flags misuse when none is present, as the assessor can manually check. This has implications over how each biometric technique is setup and configured in terms of the performance it is trying to achieve (i.e. a threshold, which is essentially a measure of similarity between the enrolment and verification samples, needs to be set). For face, due to the availability of manual checking, a value can be set that is on the cautious side. However, for other approaches, such as keystroke analysis or linguistic profiling, with no manual verification possible, the technique needs to be strengthened.

The final aspect that needs to be highlighted is the current availability of transparent biometric technologies. Whilst biometrics themselves have proven increasingly popular, their success is largely dependent upon their application in very controlled environments. With transparent approaches, they have an inherent requirement to operate in less controlled

environments and as such it is not advisable in most cases to directly deploy an intrusive biometric technique in a non-intrusive manner. As such, few transparent authentication techniques currently exist commercially. That said, research into the development of transparent biometrics has been on going for a number of years and it is envisaged that such techniques will be available in the future [9, 10, 11, 12].

6. Conclusions & Future Work

The paper has proposed an approach to provide remote-based e-Invigilation of assessments through the use of transparent biometrics. This removes the need to have physical invigilators, assigned classrooms or assessment centers and provides both the assessor and candidate with a degree of freedom yet providing the level of integrity you would expect from a formal assessment procedure.

Whilst the prototype has undergone a technical evaluation to determine whether such a model is feasible, further validation of the model under stress is required. Future work will therefore focus upon performing a full evaluation of the software with a group of candidates undertaking an assessment concurrently. The evaluation will also include an end-user survey to ensure no negative impact upon the assessment process is experienced and to measure the overall usability of the system.

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