

Cambridge University may end handwritten exams

13th September, 2017



The world-renowned Cambridge University is considering abolishing handwritten exams after 800 years. University officials may ask students to type their exam answers on a computer rather than

use a pen. The move follows complaints from examination markers who say they are finding test papers increasingly illegible due to poor handwriting. Academics say today's students primarily use laptops in lectures and tutorials instead of pens. Students are losing the ability to write by hand. One academic said asking students to hand-write exams actually causes them physical difficulties. The muscles in their hand are not used to writing extensively for prolonged periods of two to three hours.

A Cambridge University lecturer, Dr Sarah Pearsall, told Britain's 'Daily Telegraph' newspaper that handwriting was becoming a "lost art". She said: "Twenty years ago, students routinely [wrote] by hand several hours a day, but now they write virtually nothing by hand, except exams." She added: "We have been concerned for years about the declining handwriting problem. There has definitely been a downward trend. It is difficult for both the students and the examiners as it is harder and harder to read these [exam] scripts." Dr Pearsall says some students' handwriting is so illegible that they had to return to the university over the summer to read their answers out loud to examiners who could not read their writing.

Sources: newshub.co.nz / theguardian.com / xinhuanet.com

Writing

Handwriting is an important art we all need to learn and be good at. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

world-renowned / handwriting / exams / answers / illegible / lectures / muscles / a lost art / twenty years ago / problem / trend / examiners / harder / university

True / False

- Cambridge University has had hand written exams for 800 years. T / F
- Exam markers complained they could not read exam papers. T / F
- Students still use pens more than computers in lectures. T / F
- Cambridge University students have stronger hand muscles. T / F
- A Cambridge University lecturer called handwriting a fine art. T / F
- She said students used keyboards a lot 20 years ago. T / F
- The lecturer said there was an upward trend in legibility. T / F
- Students had to read their exam scripts out loud to examiners. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. abolishing | a. grumbles |
| 2. rather than | b. regularly |
| 3. complaints | c. worried |
| 4. primarily | d. instead of |
| 5. prolonged | e. penmanship |
| 6. routinely | f. getting rid of |
| 7. virtually | g. unreadable |
| 8. concerned | h. lengthy |
| 9. illegible | i. mainly |
| 10. handwriting | j. almost |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you think about what you read?
- To what extent do you think handwriting is an art?
- How often do you need to use a pen?
- Is it better to use your smartphone or a pen to write lists?
- Why is people's handwriting getting worse?
- Would you like to write more beautifully?
- Can you tell someone's character from their handwriting?
- What questions would you like to ask the exam markers?

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Phrase Match

1. Cambridge University is considering
 2. students primarily
 3. causes them physical
 4. not used to
 5. prolonged periods
 6. handwriting was becoming a
 7. Twenty years ago, students routinely
 8. There has definitely been a downward
 9. students' handwriting is so
 10. read their answers
- a. wrote by hand
 - b. writing extensively
 - c. illegible
 - d. "lost art"
 - e. difficulties
 - f. abolishing handwritten exams
 - g. out loud
 - h. of two to three hours
 - i. trend
 - j. use laptops in lectures

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think of Cambridge University?
- b) Should all students use pens to write exams?
- c) How important is good handwriting?
- d) Do people need to write any more?
- e) Should students who can't write legibly get a zero?
- f) How good is your handwriting?
- g) Do you need muscles to write for a long time?
- h) How do you feel about writing for a long period of time?

Spelling

1. glaihoisnb handwritten exams
2. The move follows mntplsacoi from examination markers
3. finding test papers increasingly elqbillei
4. students iyrrlpiam use laptops
5. The ssecuml in their hand
6. for nloopegrd periods
7. students ruetniyl wrote by hand
8. they write uilayrlvt nothing by hand
9. the icnldgein handwriting problem
10. There has ytidefenil been a downward trend
11. read these exam ctrsisp
12. read their answers out loud to eeimxrsna

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. d	3. a	4. i	5. h
6. i	7. j	8. c	9. g	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Exams

You think exams are most important to be written legibly. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): signatures, love letters or directions.

Role B – Signatures

You think signatures are most important to be written legibly. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): exams, love letters or directions.

Role C – Love Letters

You think love letters are most important to be written legibly. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): signatures, exams or directions.

Role D – Directions

You think directions are most important to be written legibly. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): signatures, love letters or exams.

Speaking – Legible

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important things to be legible at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- love letter
- birthday card
- directions
- apologies
- exam
- signature
- doctor's prescription
- shopping list

Answers – True False

a	T	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	F	f	F	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.