

# UNIwise 2025

## Annual Survey Report

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### Inside the minds of Higher Ed: The 2025 assessment outlook

Discover the driving change factors in Higher Ed assessment and administration. The survey captures fresh perspectives from institutions, revealing the real trends, challenges, and ambitions shaping digital assessment in 2025.

#### What's new?

Institutions are moving towards digital platforms, and the transformation continues. With AI gaining ground and calls for better STEM support, innovation and debate are reshaping the sector.

#### Why does it matter?

From boosting efficiency and student satisfaction to tackling the barriers of digital transformation, the survey reveals what's working, what's not, and what's next for Higher Education.

## Executive summary

The survey results indicate that digital assessment has become the standard practice in higher education, with most respondents reporting high familiarity, ease of use, and confidence in digital exam integrity. The satisfaction with support and training is also strong, and most would recommend their current digital assessment solutions to peers.

### Key highlights from UNIwise Annual Survey 2025:

- Digital is the norm: 80% of respondents engage frequently or always with digital exams and assessments (graph 9).
- High comfort and confidence: 80% feel comfortable, and 70% are confident in the security and integrity of digital exams (graph 14+15).
- Ease of use: 62% rate digital exams as easy or very easy to conduct (graph 11).
- Positive impact: 53% believe digital assessment improves student performance and engagement compared to paper-based exams (graph 16).
- Strong advocacy: 79% would recommend their digital assessment solution to peers (graph 18).

**Top drivers:** Administrative efficiency, flexibility, student satisfaction, and better feedback.

**Main barriers:** Cheating concerns, gaps in platform capabilities, resistance to change, and insufficient support for STEM subjects.

## Introduction: A sector in transformation

Higher education is undergoing a profound digital transformation, with assessment practices at the forefront. Across Europe and beyond, universities and colleges are embracing digital assessment not just as a necessity, but as a strategic lever for institutional efficiency, enhanced educational quality, and more effective use of resources.

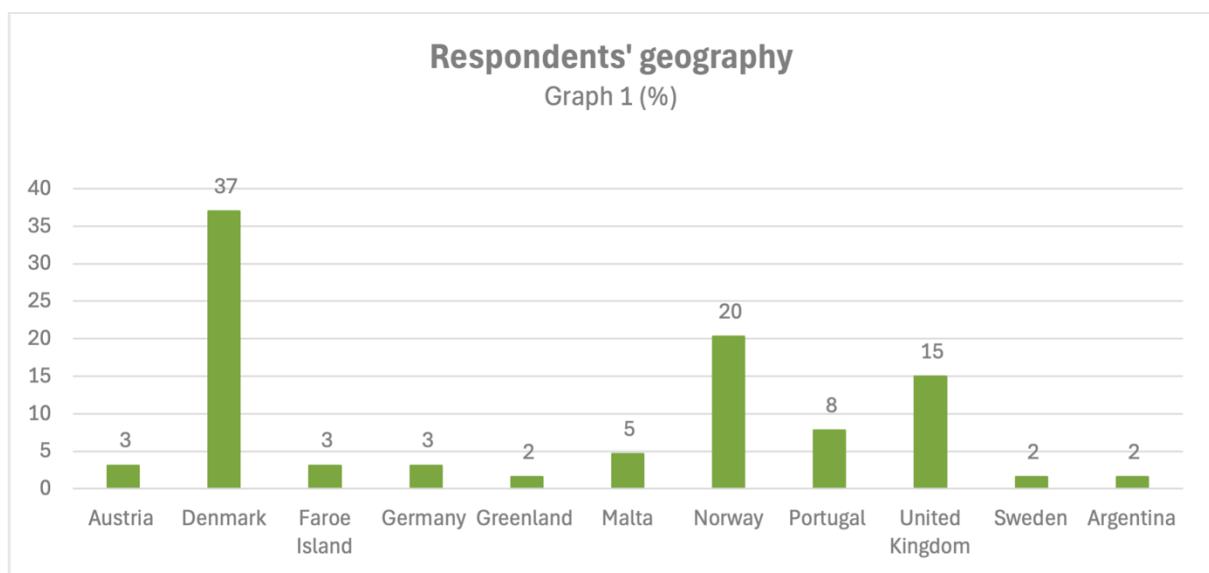
This transformation is being driven by a combination of factors: rapid technological innovation, shifting pedagogical needs, increased focus on cost and growing demands for flexibility, security, and accountability. Institutions are not only responding to external pressures. They are actively seeking smarter, more scalable solutions that align with their strategic priorities.

The UNIwise Annual Market Survey, drawing on [64 responses](#) from a diverse and experienced cohort of higher education professionals, provides a unique window into the realities, challenges, and aspirations shaping digital assessment today. The findings offer actionable insights for institutions navigating this evolving landscape and for those considering the adoption of dedicated digital assessment platforms.

## Respondents and the impact on the insights

The UNIwise Annual Market Survey 2025 draws on insights from a mature and diverse cohort of higher education professionals deeply engaged in digital assessment. This group is not only geographically broad but also functionally varied and highly experienced making their perspectives especially valuable as the sector continues its digital transformation.

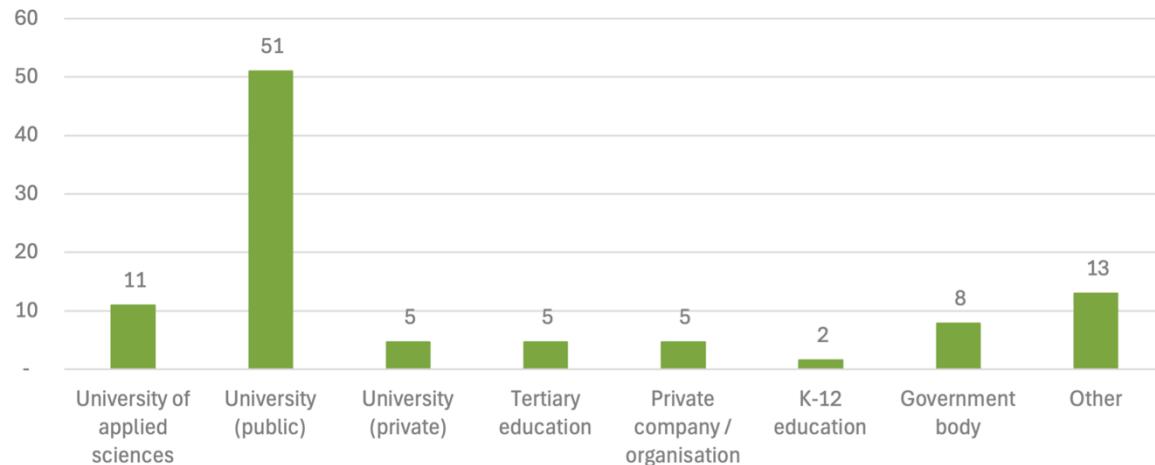
- **Geography [Graph 1]:** The survey reached **64 respondents across** Europe and beyond, with the largest shares from:
  - Denmark (37%)
  - Norway (20%)
  - The UK (15%)



- **Institution type [Graph 2]:** Respondents mainly come from public universities (51%) but also from applied sciences, government, private HE, and tertiary institutions showing broad sector relevance and strategic focus on digital assessment.

### Respondents' institution types

Graph 2 (%)

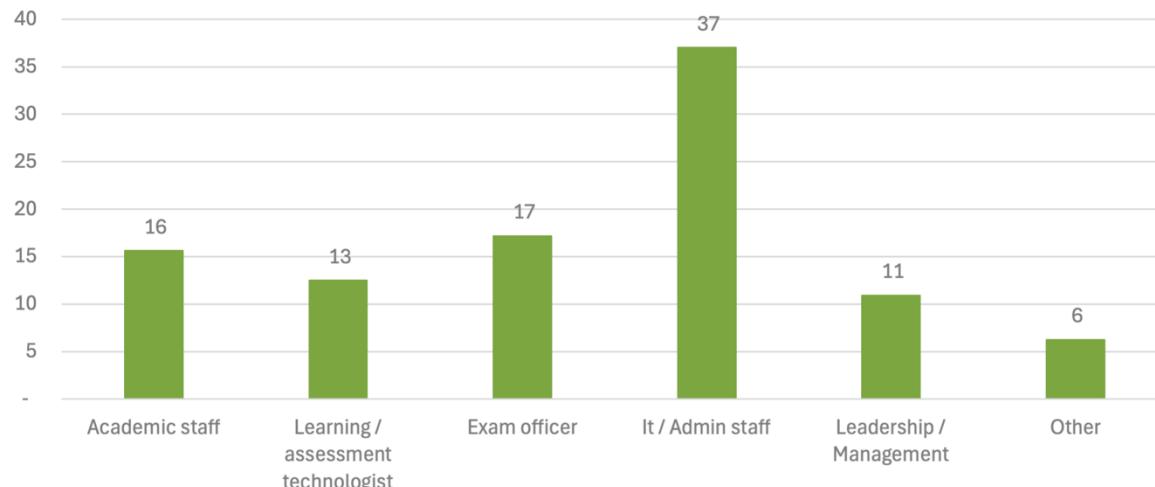


- **Roles [Graph 3]:** The distribution of different roles show that digital assessment is not owned by a single function. It's a shared responsibility across technical, operational, academic, and strategic roles:

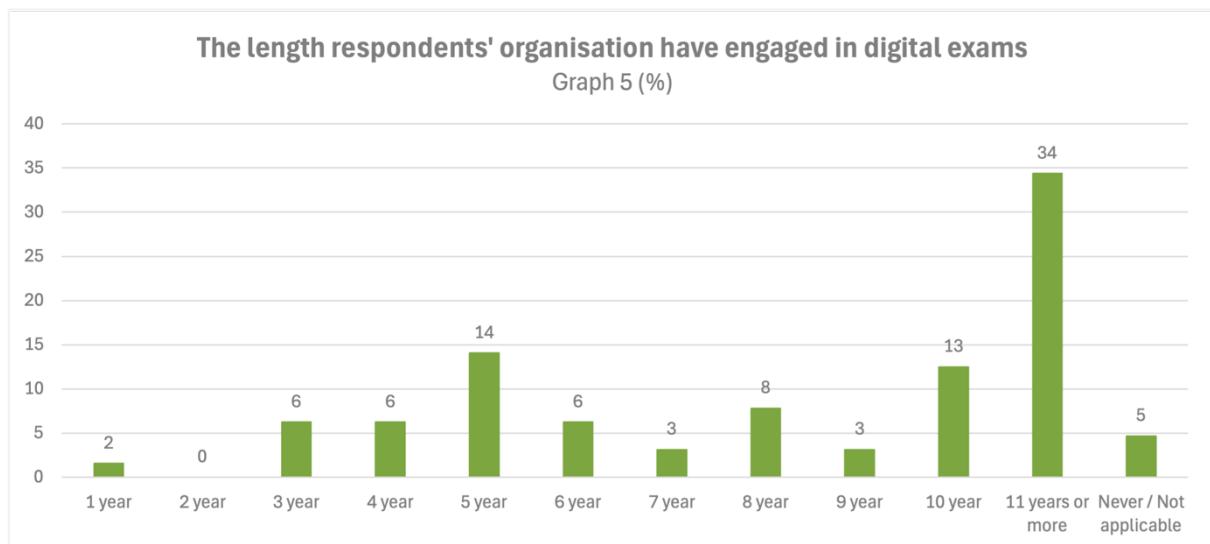
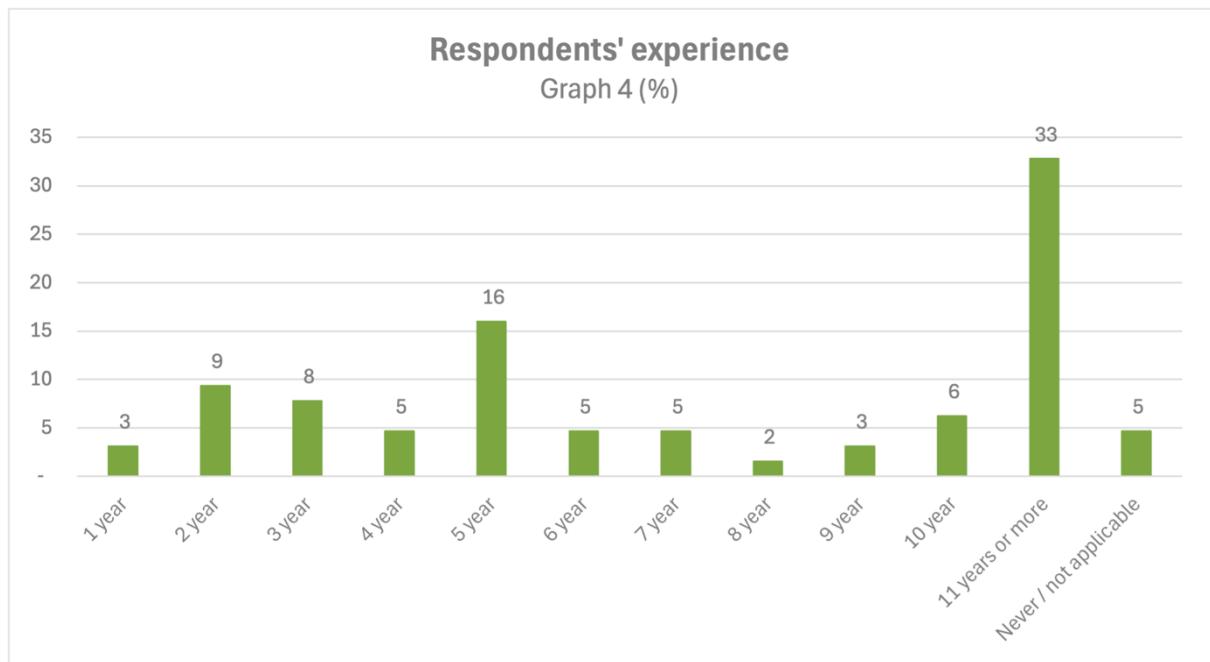
- IT/Admin (37%)
- Exam officers (17%)
- Academic staff (16%)
- Learning technologists (13%)
- Leadership (11%)
- 

### Respondents' roles

Graph 3 (%)



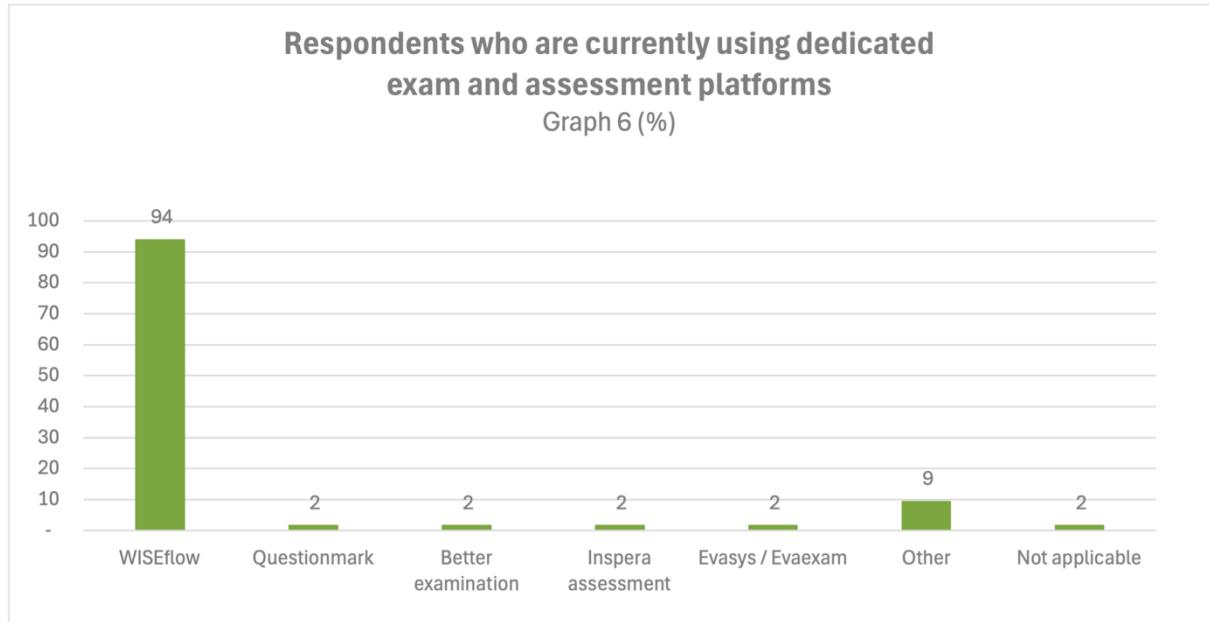
- **Experience [Graph 4+5]:** These figures point to a well-established sector where digital assessment is no longer new, it's embedded and evolving. Respondents offer both long-term perspective and practical insight, making their input highly relevant for future development.
  - 33% have been personally involved in assessment for 11+ years.
  - 34% report organisational engagement with assessment for 11+ years.



## Platforms, tools and LMS

A clear preference for dedicated platforms that support the digital assessment workflow is present, followed by appropriating the LMS for the same. Respondents show strong alignment around a few core systems, with WISEflow leading as the primary exam platform and Moodle and Canvas as the most common LMS environments.

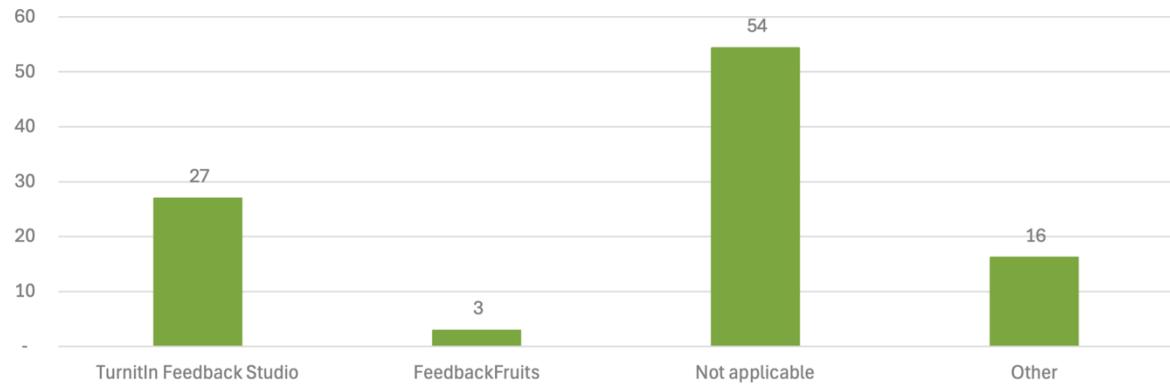
- **Dedicated platforms [Graph 6]:** Among those naming a platform, WISEflow dominates with 94% of the responses. Other platforms like Questionmark, Inspera, Evaexam, and Moodle are mentioned occasionally.



- **Assessment tools [Graph 7]:** Turnitin Feedback Studio is the most cited single tool (27%), followed by a mix of “Other” tools such as in-house systems and accessibility aids. A large “not applicable” (54%) segment suggests many institutions consolidate assessment functionality within their main platforms.

**Respondents who are currently using dedicated exam and assessment tools**

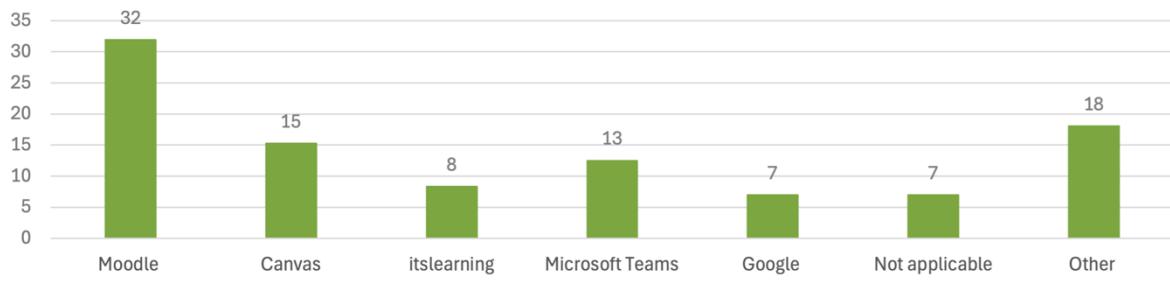
Graph 7 (%)



- **LMS for summative exams [Graph 8]:** The learning management systems that the survey highlights as being most used for summative exams across higher education are:
  - Moodle 32%
  - Canvas at 15%
  - Microsoft Teams and itslearning also feature among respondents' choices.
  - The “Other” category covers a range of tool-specific contexts, reflecting the diversity and evolving nature of digital exam solutions in the sector.

**VLE / LMS systems applied to support summative assessment and exams?**

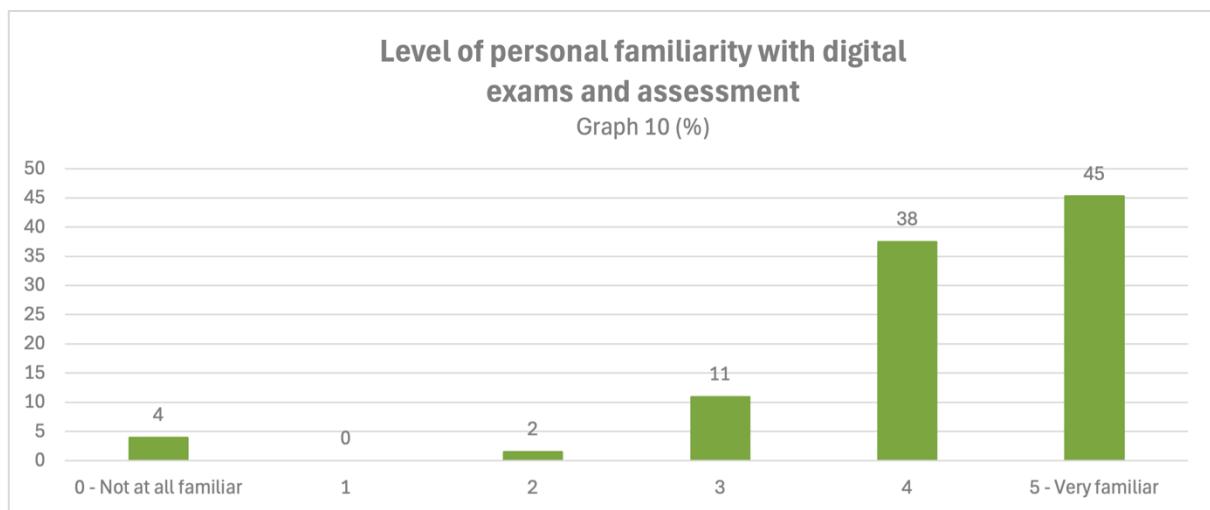
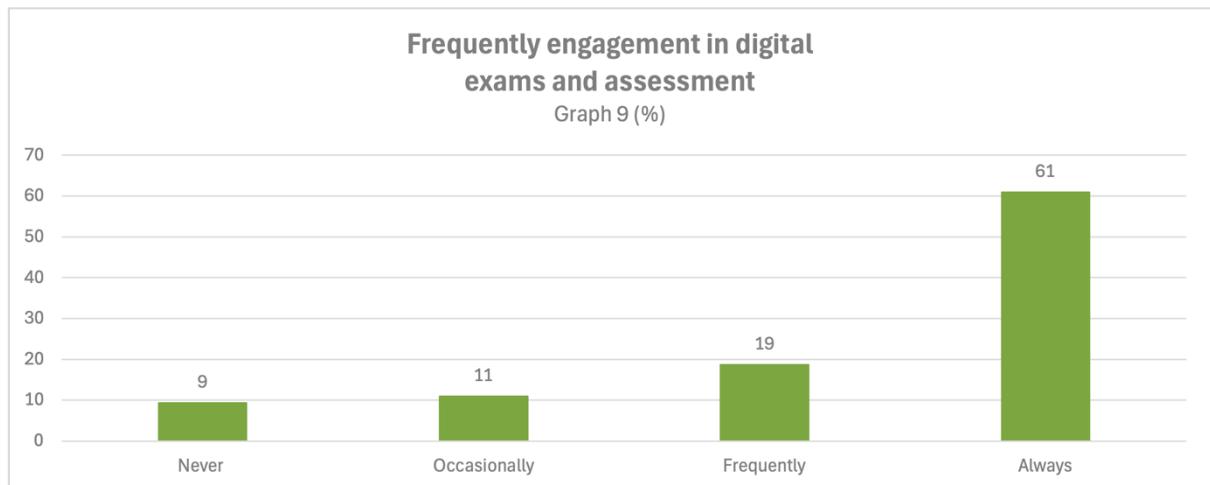
Graph 8 (%)



## Operations: Ease, support, accessibility, and integrity

The operational experience of digital assessment across European higher education institutions reveals a sector that is both confident and committed, yet still evolving. It is clear from the results that digital assessment has become the default mode for many, supported by established processes and growing institutional familiarity.

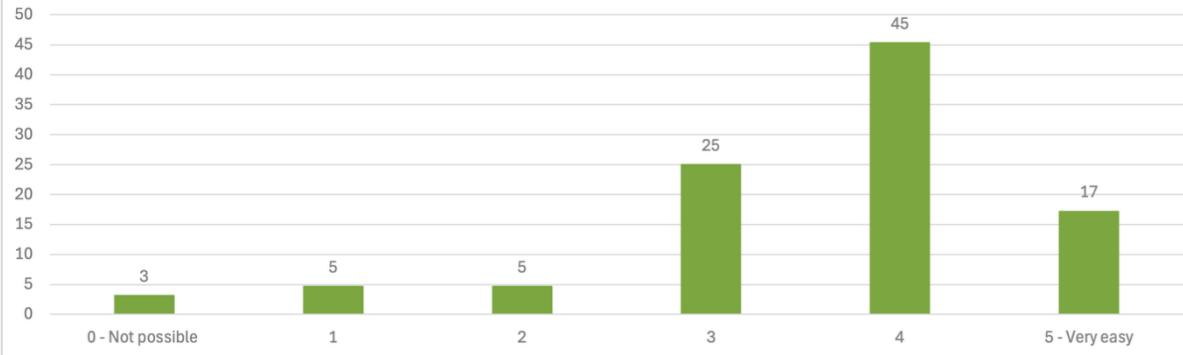
- **Familiarity & frequency [Graph 9+10]:** A striking 83% of respondents rate themselves as highly or very familiar with digital assessment, and 80% engage frequently or always in digital exams. This reflects a mature adoption curve where digital is no longer experimental, it's embedded in the participating organisations.



- **Ease of use [Graph 11]:** Running digital exams is perceived as straightforward by most, with 62% saying it's easy or very easy. However, the comments suggest that while core workflows are solid, edge cases such as STEM-specific require more attention.

**The level of easiness to conduct digital exams and assessments in respondents' organisations**

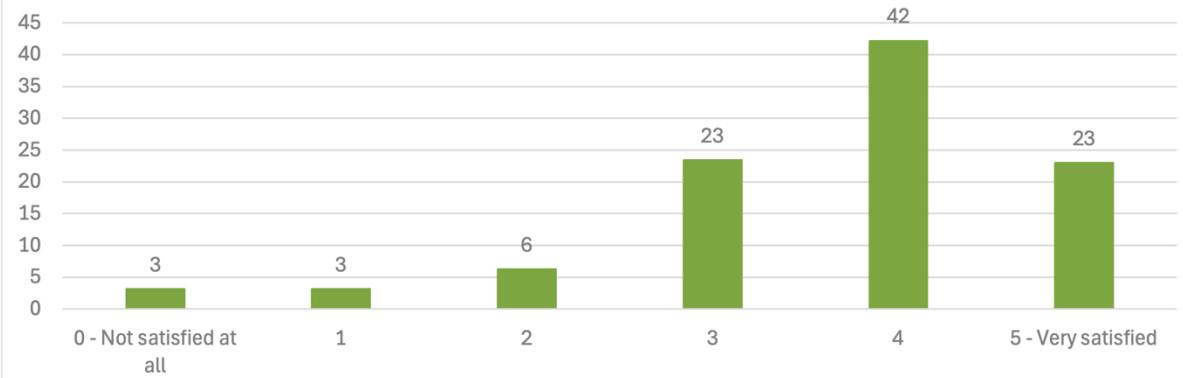
Graph 11 (%)



- **Support & training [Graph 12]:** Support structures are generally well-received, with 65% satisfied or very satisfied. Yet, qualitative feedback points to a need for more targeted onboarding and internal capacity-building:
  - *“Train the trainer approach aimed at admin staff at Uni is crucial for success in transformation to digital exam.”*
  - *“Provide training for assessors and facilitate adoption.”*
  - *“BYOD is great, but drawing/calculation is tough without the right hardware.”*

**The satisfactory level with the support and training for digital exams and assessment within respondents' organisation**

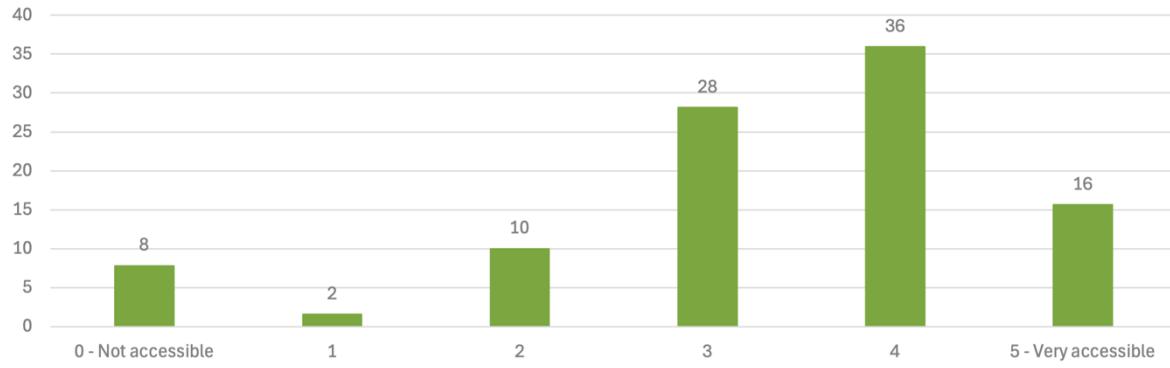
Graph 12 (%)



- **Accessibility [Graph 13]:** Accessibility is progressing, with 52% rating digital exams as accessible or very accessible, and another 28% moderately accessible. Still, there's room for improvement in accommodating diverse student needs.

### Accessibility level of digital exams for students with disabilities in respondent's organisations

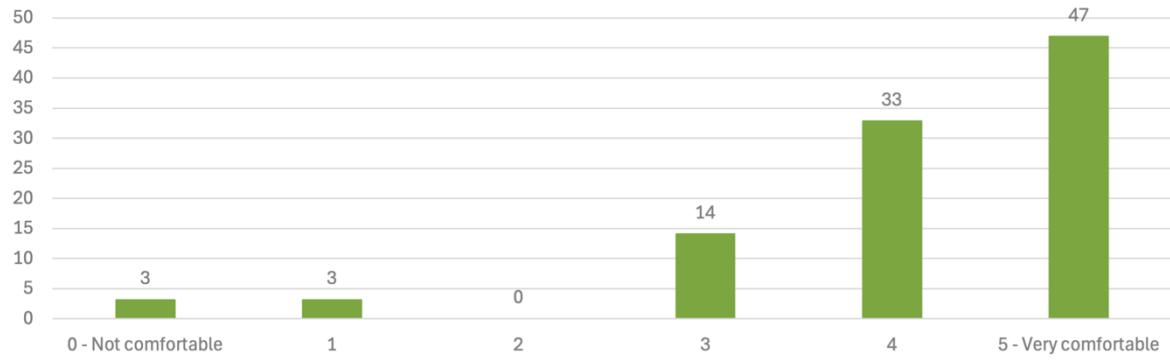
Graph 13 (%)



- **Comfort & integrity [Graph 14+15]:** Confidence in the system is high: 80% feel comfortable or very comfortable, and 70% are confident in the security and integrity of digital exams. However, emerging technologies like AI are prompting new conversations: “Integrity is good, but AI raises new questions.”

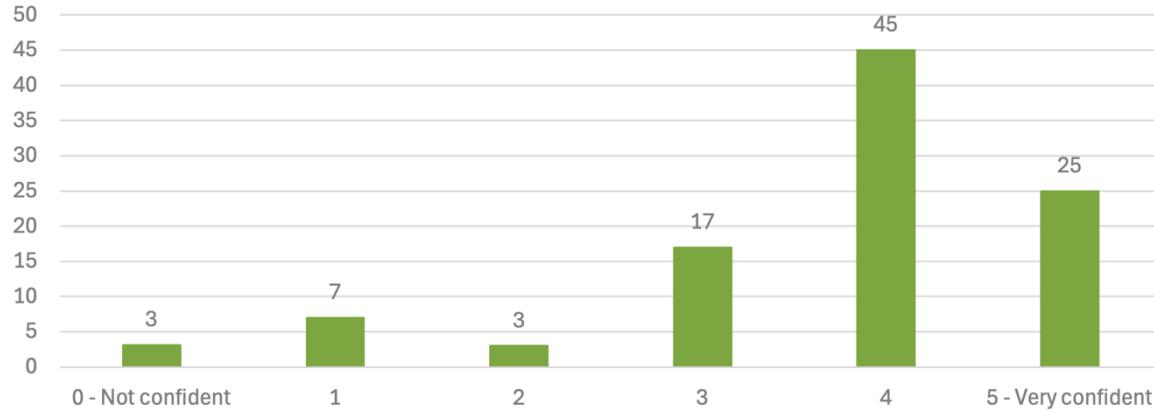
### Level of comfort respondents feel when engaging in digital exams vs. paper-based exams

Graph 14 (%)



### Confidence level in exam security and integrity at respondents' organisations

Graph 15 (%)



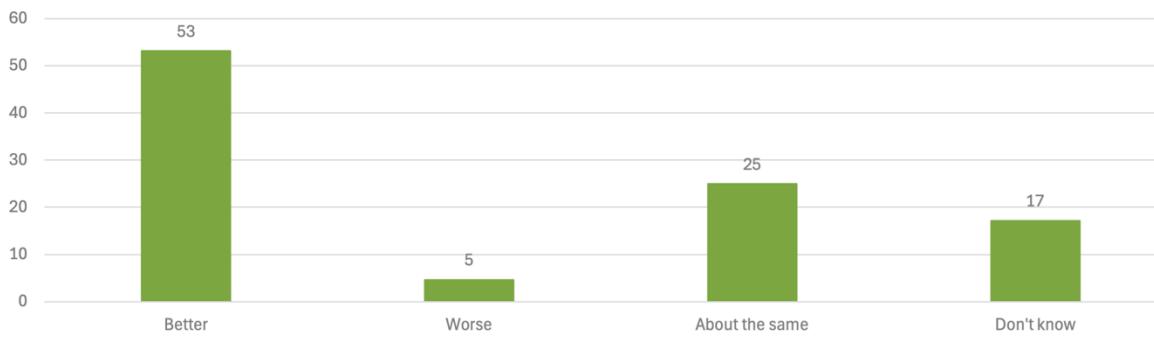
## Impact and perception: Student experience, viability and endorsement

The survey reveals a strong and growing belief in the value of digital assessment. Not just as a practical alternative to paper, but as a better experience for students and institutions alike. The data shows that digital assessment is no longer a question of if, but how well it can be implemented and scaled.

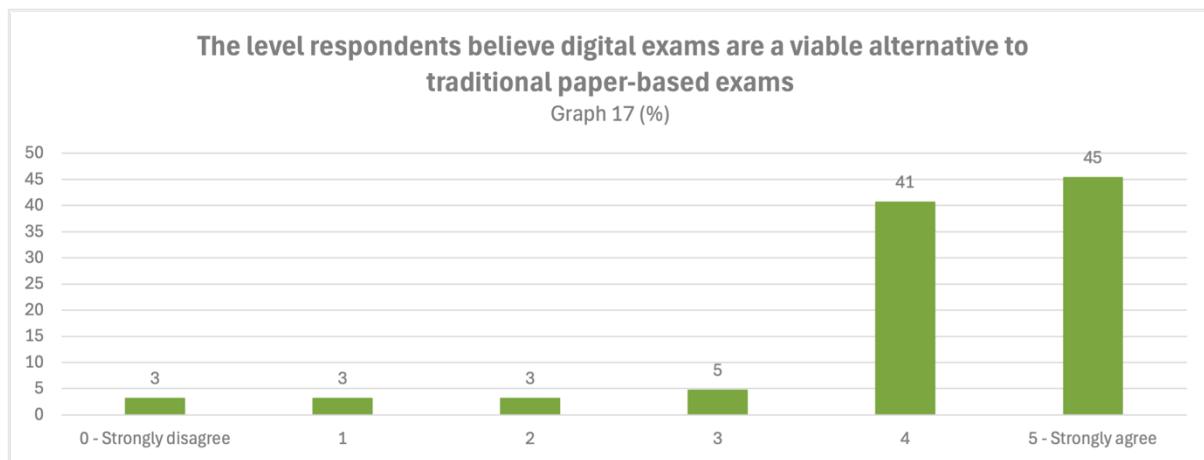
- **Impact on students [Graph 16]:** More than half of respondents (53%) believe digital assessment has a positive impact on students, while 25% say it's about the same as paper-based methods. Only 5% see it as worse, and 17% remain unsure. The qualitative feedback highlights the importance of timely feedback and efficient workflows:
  - *“Engagement improves when marking is timely.”*
  - *“Delivery is only half; marking and moderation must be just as efficient.”*

### How respondents believe digital exams and assessment impact student performance and engagement vs. paper-based exams?

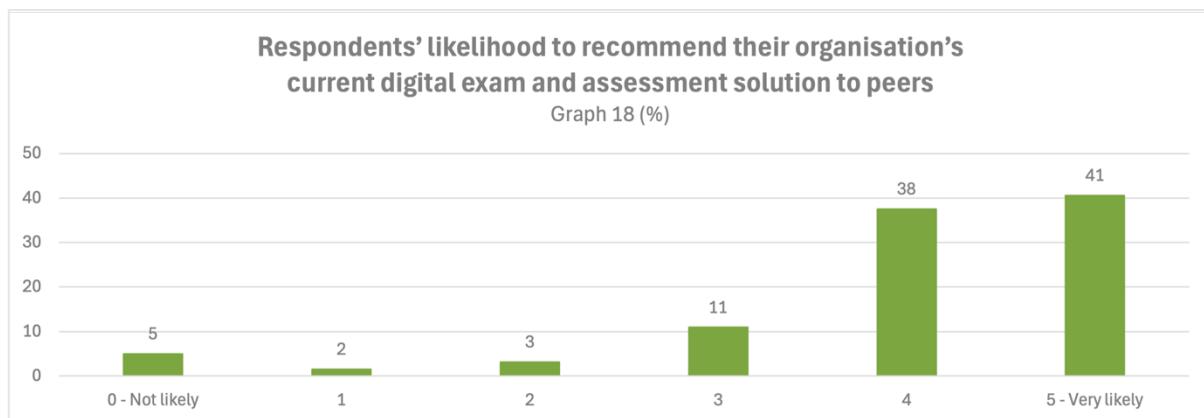
Graph 16 (%)



- **Viability of digital assessment [Graph 17]:** A resounding 86% agree or strongly agree that digital assessment is a viable alternative to paper. This reflects a sector-wide shift in mindset, where scalability and sustainability are key drivers:
  - *“Digital is better than paper and definitely viable.”*
  - *“Paper won’t scale.”*



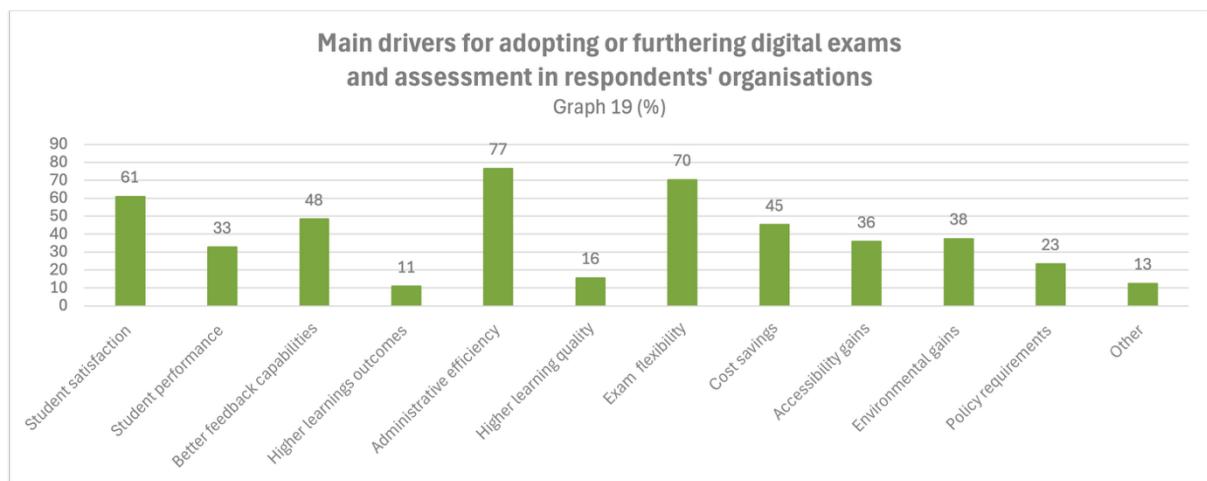
- **Recommendation intent [Graph 18]:** Confidence in current solutions is high, with 79% of respondents likely or very likely to recommend their current digital assessment platform. However, this endorsement is conditional on continued improvement and responsiveness to user needs:
  - - *“We’d endorse what we use if it keeps improving.”*
    - *“Delivery is only half; marking and moderation must be just as efficient.”*
    - *“Engagement improves when marking is timely.”*



## Drivers and barriers: What moves digital assessment forward and what holds back

The sector is motivated by clear operational and pedagogical benefits yet still navigating technical and cultural hurdles. The transition to digital assessment is driven by efficiency and flexibility but challenged by concerns around academic integrity, subject-specific needs, and platform fit.

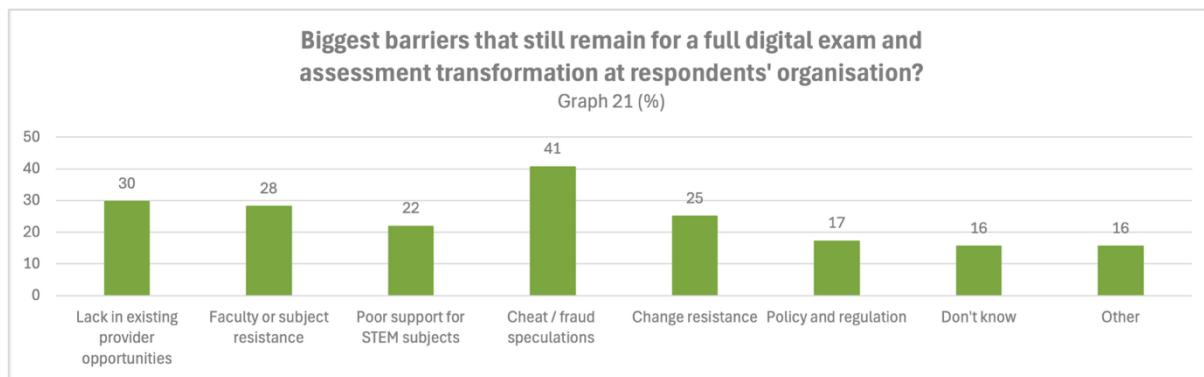
- **Key drivers of adaptation [Graph 19]:** Respondents identified several compelling reasons which reflect a desire to streamline exam processes while improving the student experience for embracing digital assessment. The top motivators include:
  - Administrative efficiency (77%)
  - Flexibility (70%)
  - Student satisfaction (61%)
  - Better feedback (48%)
  - Cost savings (45%)
  - Environmental benefits (38%)
- **Implementation challenges [Graph 20]:** Despite strong drivers, institutions face practical challenges during implementation that highlight the importance of aligning platforms with institutional workflows. The most cited issues include:
  - Technical problems (64%)
  - Resistance to change (38%)
  - Training gaps (25%)
  - Security concerns (22%)
  - Inadequate process support (28%)



- **Transformation barriers [Graph 21]:** Beyond implementation, deeper barriers to transformation persist. These include:
  - Concerns about cheating and fraud (41%)
  - Gaps in provider capability (30%)
  - Faculty or subject resistance (28%)
  - General change resistance (25%)
  - Poor support for STEM subjects (22%)

Respondents emphasised that certain disciplines, especially those requiring drawing or calculations still rely on paper:

- *“Maths/drawing still push us back to paper.”*
- *“We need better tools for calculations/drawing; maths & physics still run on paper.”*
- *“Most exams have optionality, and this is poorly catered for by all major assessment platforms.”*
- *“Concerns relating to the use of AI during exams.”*

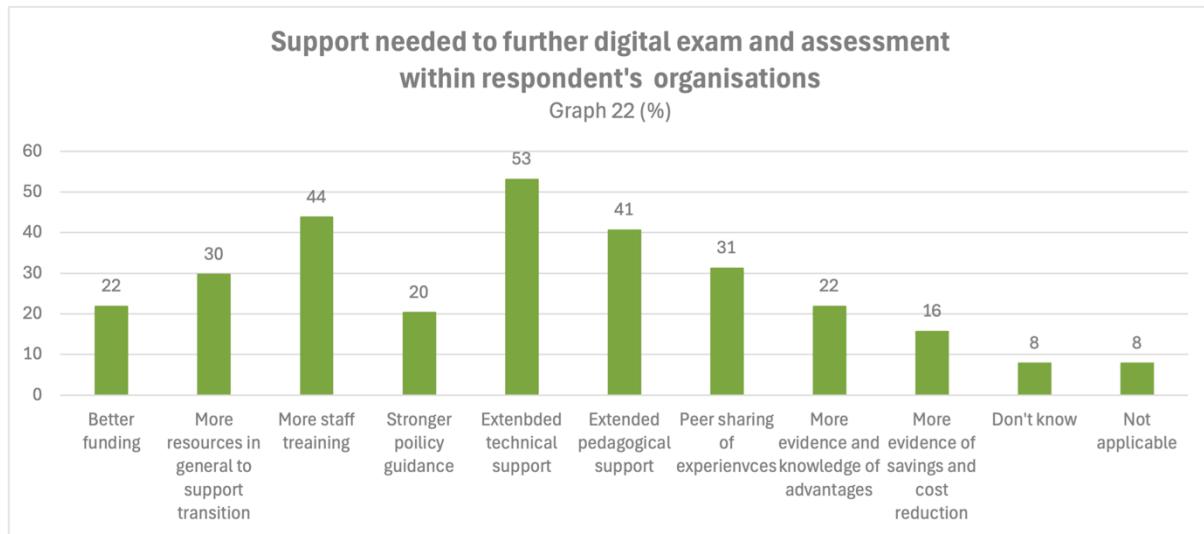


## What support and improvements institutions wish for

Institutions are eager to scale digital assessment in ways that are sustainable, streamlined, and sensitive to real-world workflows. The call is clear: *“Help us scale, standardize, and integrate without extra clicks.”* Respondents emphasised the need for better support structures and smarter platform design to reduce friction and improve adoption.

- **Support needs [Graph 22]:** Respondents identified several areas where additional support would help institutions scale digital assessment more effectively:
  - Extended technical support (53%)

- Staff training (44%)
- Pedagogical support (41%)
- Peer sharing (31%)
- More resources (30%)

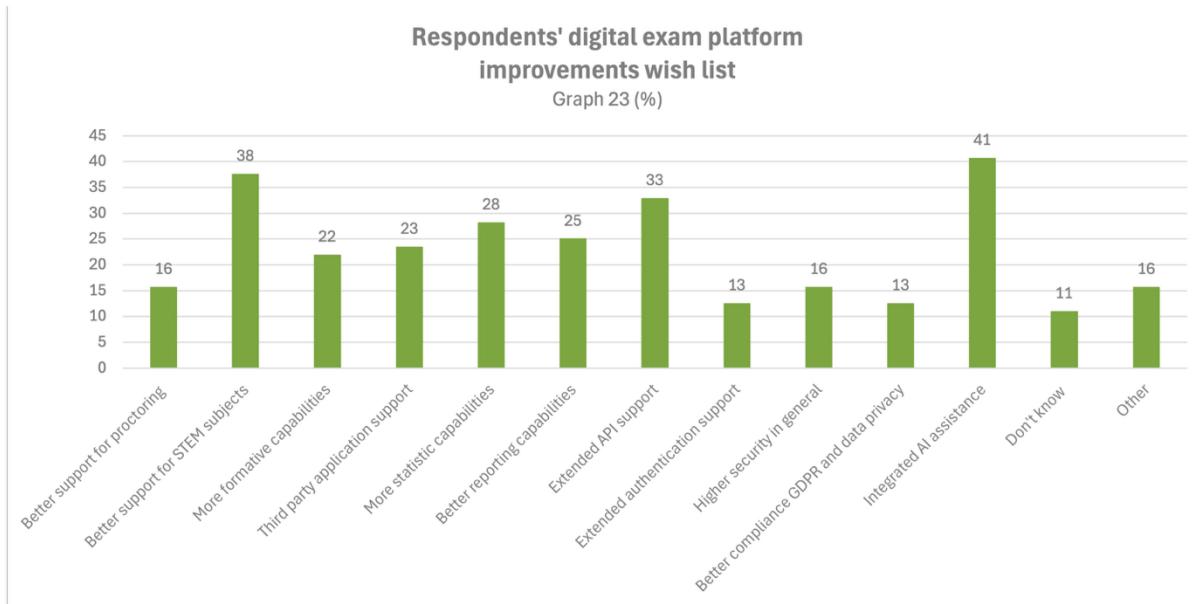


- **Platform improvements [Graph 23]:** Institutions also pointed to specific platform enhancements that would improve usability and integration:

- Integrated AI assistance (41%)
- Better STEM support (38%)
- Extended APIs (33%)
- Analytics/reporting (28%)
- 3rd party app support (23%)

Additionally, several respondents shared further comments highlighting areas for improvement. These insights reflect recurring themes around usability, administrative efficiency, and adaptability to evolving needs:

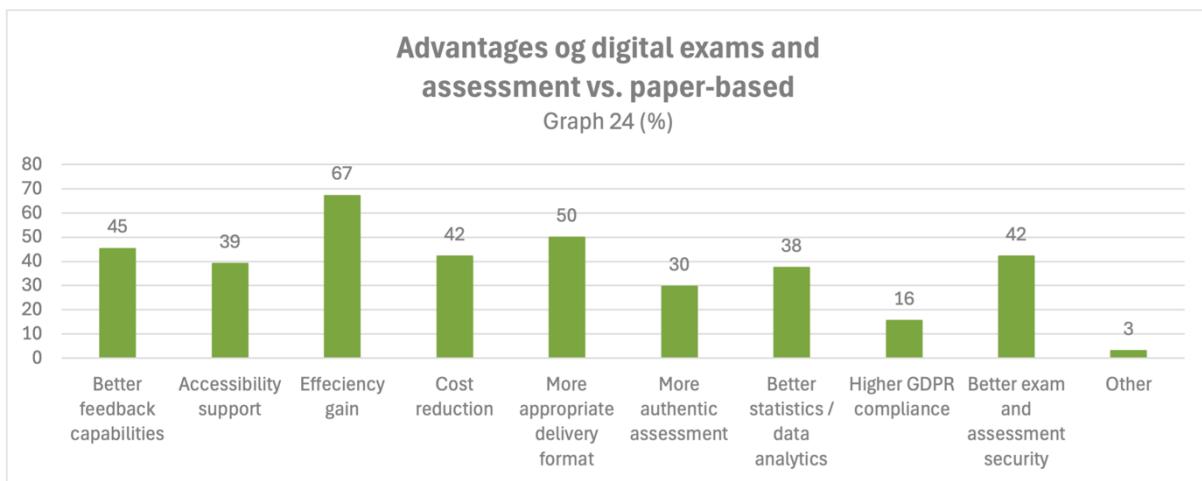
- *“Greater flexibility in supporting our marking processes.”*
- *“Interfaces should be more coherent, fewer mass-redirects.”*
- *“Don’t make admin more complicated, the latest update added clicks.”*
- *“Focus on the administrative journey; regulation and exam formats keep changing.”*



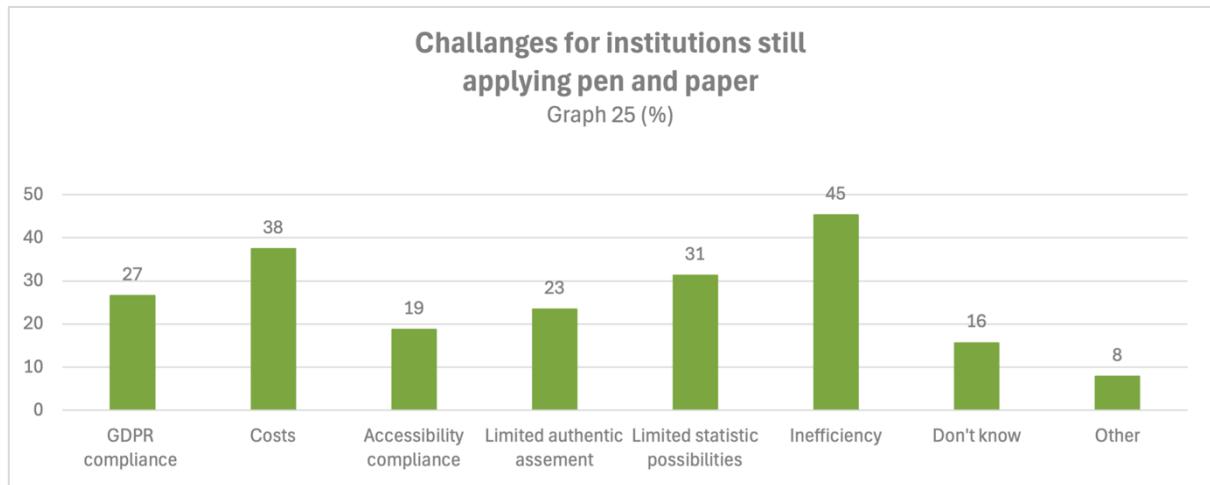
## Digital vs. paper-based exams: Advantages and challenges

The responses reveal a clear consensus: digital assessment is not only about convenience. It is increasingly seen as a strategic enabler of efficiency, quality, and resource optimisation.

- **The biggest advantages of digital exams vs. paper-based [Graph 24]:** Digital exams are widely seen as a strategic upgrade, offering benefits that go beyond convenience. Respondents emphasise improvements in feedback, compliance, and accessibility. But the most significant advantages are:
  - Efficiency gains (67%)
  - Better feedback capabilities (45%)
  - Cost reduction (42%)
  - More appropriate delivery format (50%)



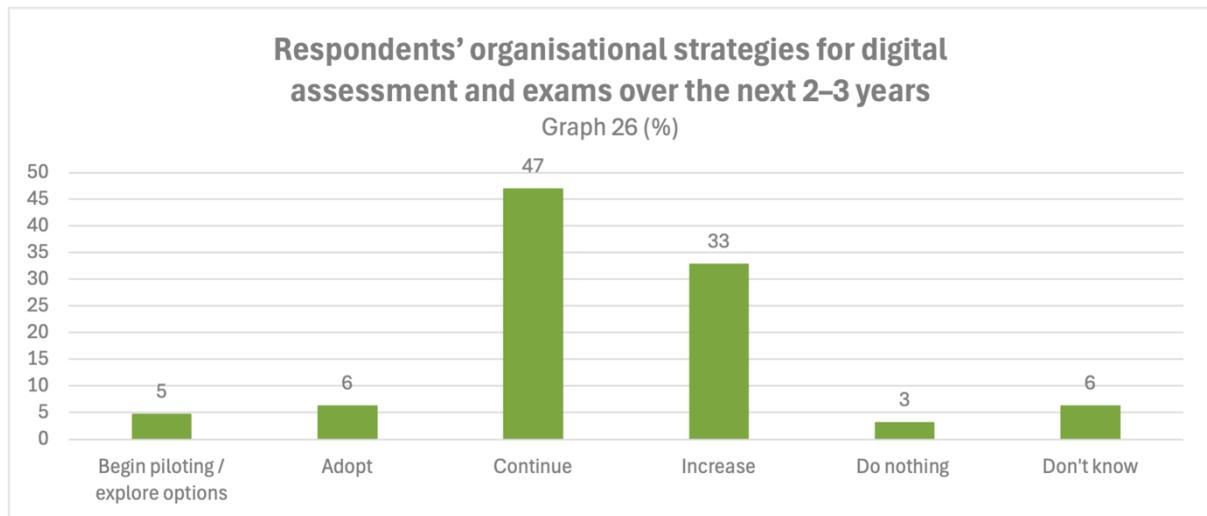
- **The biggest challenges for institutions still using paper [Graph 25]:** Survey responses reveal that the paper-based approach creates significant operational and compliance risks. The most pressing issue is inefficiency, but costs, limited analytics, and difficulties in meeting GDPR and accessibility requirements also stand out as major barriers to modernisation.
  - Inefficiency (45%)
  - Costs (38%)
  - Limited statistic possibilities (31%)



## Strategy and trends

Institutions are committed to expanding digital assessment, with most already scaling efforts rather than initiating them. The next phase will be shaped by AI, data, and governance priorities.

- **Strategic direction [Graph 26]:** Organisations are taking a measured approach to digital assessment, with a clear emphasis on growth through consolidation. Rather than rapid transformation, many are choosing to build on existing systems and practices. The data shows that:
  - Continue (47%)
  - Increase (33%)
  - Adopt (6%)
  - Pilot (5%)



- **Emerging trends [Graph 27]:** As respondents look ahead to the future of digital assessment, several key areas are gaining momentum. These trends reflect both technological innovation and the evolving regulatory and operational landscape:

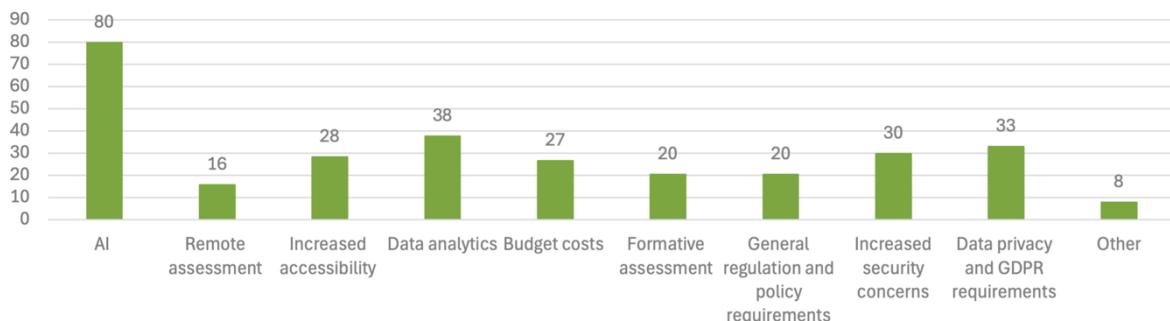
- AI (80%)
- Analytics (38%)
- GDPR/privacy (33%)
- Security (30%)
- Accessibility (28%)

Further, the following comments highlight both optimism and caution. While AI and analytics offer exciting possibilities, practical constraints such as staffing and funding may limit progress in some areas.

- *“Move toward authentic assessment practice, design with AI in mind.”*
- *“AI assistance focus both for students and assessors.”*
- *“Lack of resources means that growth will be minimal.”*

**Trends respondents' expect will impact digital exams and assessment in the next 2-3 years**

Graph 27



## Analysis and Forward-Looking

The survey data paints a picture of a sector that has largely embraced digital assessment, with most respondents reporting high levels of comfort, confidence, and satisfaction. Digital platforms, especially WISEflow, are deeply embedded in daily operations, and learning management systems like Moodle and Canvas play a supporting role.

**Ease of use and support are strong**, but there is a clear call for ongoing training and enablement, particularly for assessors and administrative staff. Respondents value administrative efficiency and flexibility the most, seeing these as the main benefits of digital assessment. The ability to deliver timely feedback and improve student satisfaction are also important motivators.

**Barriers remain**, especially around academic integrity (cheating and fraud), technical limitations (particularly for STEM subjects), and resistance to change. Respondents **highlight the need** for platforms to better support complex exam formats, such as those requiring mathematical notation or drawing, and to streamline administrative workflows.

**The impact of digital assessment** is viewed positively, with a majority believing it improves student performance and engagement. There is strong consensus that digital exams are a **viable alternative to paper-based exams**, and most respondents would recommend their current solutions to peers.

**Looking forward**, respondents expect the next few years to be shaped by trends such as AI, data analytics, privacy and GDPR, and increased security concerns. There is a desire for platforms to integrate AI in ways that support both students and assessors but also caution about privacy and regulatory compliance. Authentic assessment practices and the ability to adapt to changing regulations are seen as increasingly important.

## Conclusion

Digital assessment is well established and widely accepted among higher education professionals. The sector is moving towards greater integration of technology, with a focus on efficiency, flexibility, and support for diverse assessment formats. Continued attention to training, technical support, and platform capabilities especially for STEM and authentic assessment will be key to sustaining progress. Respondents' feedback underscores the importance of listening to user needs, adapting to regulatory changes, and ensuring that digital assessment remains secure, accessible, and effective for all.

The survey data is clear: digital assessment is not just established. It is essential. However, the sector faces growing pressure from budget cuts and the need to do more with less. In this context, the choice of assessment platforms becomes critical.

### Cost and effectiveness as key drivers

- Administrative efficiency and cost savings are top priorities for institutions. Digital assessment platforms like WISEflow streamline processes, reduce manual workload, and enable leaner operations directly addressing the need for efficiency in an era of constrained resources.
- The ability to deliver timely, high-quality feedback and support diverse assessment formats enhances both student satisfaction and learning outcomes.

### Security, quality, and compliance

- Dedicated platforms offer robust security features, ensuring exam integrity and compliance with data privacy regulations which are areas where paper-based and non-digital solutions often fall short.
- The risk of lost scripts, errors, and GDPR breaches is dramatically reduced with digital solutions.

### Better than paper

- Digital assessment is not just a replacement for paper; it is a step-change in quality, scalability, and reliability.
- Platforms like WISEflow are purpose-built for assessment, offering features and integrations that generic LMS or ad hoc solutions cannot match.

### Future-proofing assessment

- As AI, analytics, and regulatory requirements evolve, dedicated platforms are best positioned to adapt, integrating new technologies, supporting authentic assessment, and responding to user needs.

- Institutions that invest in specialised solutions are better equipped to navigate change, maintain high standards, and deliver value for students and staff alike.

The UNIwise Annual Market Survey 2025 confirms that digital assessment is here to stay and that dedicated platforms like WISEflow are central to delivering the efficiency, quality, and security that modern higher education demands. As budget pressures mount and expectations rise, the case for investing in purpose-built digital assessment solutions has never been stronger.