



shifting entrance exams online

Ashoka University takes to online entrance exams
with Mercer | Mettl

welcome to brighter

About the University

Founded in 2014, Ashoka University is a pioneer in providing a world-class liberal education in India. A strong emphasis on foundational knowledge, thorough academic research based on rigorous pedagogy, and hands-on experience with real-world challenges, have positioned the University among India's most renowned private centers of learning. The University fosters critical thinking and broad interdisciplinary development to enhance professional opportunities.

Ashoka University has over 1400 on-campus students, drawn from over 28 states and 98 cities in India and across 17 countries. They receive a world-class interdisciplinary education through undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctorate programs from a globally renowned faculty.

The prestigious *Young India Fellowship* is one of the prominent postgraduate diploma programs of the University. It brings together individuals from different academic, professional, socio-economic and geographical backgrounds, mentored to reach their real potential.



1400
students



28
states



17
countries

Identifying business requirements

Traditionally, the entrance exams were conducted using the 'pen-and-paper' method. Delhi/NCR applicants could take their exams and interviews at the University's Delhi office. However, the admissions team had to travel to 8 cities for every admission drive to attract a larger applicant pool.

The university understood the importance of having a diverse student base. Hence, academia believed that many deserving applicants were being excluded from the process. Therefore, the university wanted to shift its admission process to the online ecosystem, which was swift and easy.



Challenges

Academicians at the University were well-versed in technology and online platforms. However, they were concerned about accessibility, credibility, tech adaptability and the examination experience for all stakeholders. There concerns in conducting online exams included:



Robust examination platform

Ashoka University's question paper format was distinct for each subject. It consisted of MCQs, lengthy essay-type questions, and quantitative questions. There were other challenges, such as the question order, test duration, scoring logic, and more. The University also required a real-time and reliable evaluation of assessments to make informed decisions. Therefore, it needed a platform that could personalize the exam console, from creation to analysis.



Internet bandwidth

Diversity and inclusiveness were central tenets of the University's approach to education. However, low-speed internet and broadband connectivity were bottlenecks in ensuring a level-playing field for all students. Therefore, the University wanted the online examination platform to function without glitches and offer seamless exam-taking experience, irrespective of the internet speed.



Secure protocols

Data security was a significant concern in administering exams online. The University did not want to expose its examination to question paper leaks or unauthorized data disclosure. Hence, it needed a robust security mechanism to safeguard both applicants' and the University's data.



The integrity of the exams

The academicians explored an airtight solution to preserve the integrity of the test-taking process. The University wanted proctors to monitor applicants and ensure a cheating-free examination process.



Live proctors for validation

Ashoka University was facing a significant challenge in authenticating international exam-takers. While Indian candidates were validated using an aadhar card or a passport, it was difficult to ascertain an ideal identification document for international applicants. Moreover, some applicants appeared for the exam from remote locations and had an unstable internet connection. The screen, therefore, couldn't appropriately capture the image of the id card. Hence, manual proctors were required to validate the test-takers.



Customized proposition

The University was aware that many applicants would confirm their status for the exam at the last minute. Many students were also expected to take tests from cyber cafes, which meant a noisy environment and additional people in the background. Therefore, the University wanted special requests, such as last-minute submission of applications, mindful proctors, etc., to be accommodated.



Flexibility in slotting

The University did not want to be rigid with the time and date of the examination, as at center-based exams. Hence it wished for an extended examination window and was scouting for a preferential resource that considered such an arrangement.

The University's admissions team was exploring a viable association to tide over its on-ground challenges. It included adhering to its test distribution requirements with unique requisites in a short timeline.

The University reached out to Mercer | Mettl, along with some other operators, providing similar services. Mercer | Mettl was the first to respond to its query and detail product offerings.

Solutions

The Mercer | Mettl team was well-positioned to address Ashoka University's concerns. The team realized that the University wanted to take its offline exam-taking experience to the online ecosystem, in a hassle-free manner. Hence, it required an examination system that addressed the need for high usage while managing low bandwidth.

The Mercer | Mettl team deep-dived and alleviated every concern through the 'Online Examination Platform' -an ideal value proposition to mitigate the University's long-standing challenges.

Online platform

Mercer | Mettl's Examine: The Online Examination Software System was a proficient, end-to-end solution to meet Ashoka University's online examination requirements. The comprehensive software enabled the University to host a variety of academic exams in a secure, seamless, user-friendly and credible manner. The platform also supported a large number of exam-takers simultaneously.

Mercer| Mettl solved these significant challenges

1. Hosting the examination

The University's exam papers had multiple templates. Mercer | Mettl offered customization of questions to meet the faculty's diverse needs.

- The faculty could conduct various types of examinations as Mercer | Mettl offered the option of uploading questions in 26 different formats.
- A well-defined test setting helped the faculty to set up the exams for undergraduates, using a combination of multiple question types and lengthy essay type questions.



[Connect with an expert](#)

- The postgraduate English exam paper was created in a qualitative format, while the economics paper was set in a quantitative format.
- The flexibility also helped accommodate a range of other parameters required by academicians.

2. Auto-graded assessments

Automated evaluations of the examination were shared with the test administrators. It significantly reduced the efforts needed in grading the papers. The educators could utilize their time on other important matters.

- The advantages of the platform's auto-grading functionality assisted in reducing the time spent in evaluating the test papers. It streamlined the tedious process and generated immediate results with optimum reliability and validity.
- Real-time data generation enabled quick analysis of the candidates' performance and a comprehensive summary of their attempt.
- The speed and detail of the results provided an in-depth understanding of the necessary course of action.

3. The need for minimum internet bandwidth

Mercer | Mettl's platform ensured an uninterrupted exam-taking experience for applicants, even from the world's remote corners.

- A minimum upload speed of 512kbps abated the University's technical difficulties associated with low-speed internet connectivity.
- This addressed potential bottlenecks due to a slow network, shared Internet connection, or any other such constraints.
- A user-friendly process did not require students' time for downloading software and tutorials. It ran seamlessly on applications' systems, irrespective of their location.

4. Adherence to security norms

Mercer | Mettl's focus on stringent cybersecurity protocols addressed the University's concerns on data breach, unauthorized access and privacy at every stage of the examination/assessment process.

- **Data Security-** Mercer | Mettl's host Amazon Web Services (AWS) was highly secure cloud platform for storage and computation.
- **Data Encryption in Transit-** HTTPS (256 bit SSL encryption) ensured secure data transmission and that webcam proctored tests ran without the need for downloading the software.
- **Data Encryption at Rest-** An uncompromised maximum security storage environment was created for students' personal data, questions data of the institutions, and exam results.
- **Access Rights Management-** The Mercer | Mettl team ensured the safety and encryption of all available data by defining clear access rights, log reports and audit trails of various system resources.
- Multi-factor authentication added an extra level of security by allowing only authorized users to log into the mechanism.
- Mercer | Mettl validation included GDPR compliance and ISO 27001:2013 certification.

5. Academic integrity and candidate authentication

Technical challenges aside, maintaining the examination's and the University's integrity at all times was a significant concern. After all, the rigor of the examination process reflected the values and ethos of the institution. Therefore, a dynamic set of proctoring features were employed, with a stricter focus on monitoring, analysis, and scrutiny to maintain the institute's values.

a) 3-point candidate authentication

Given the diversity of the applicant pool, Ashoka University particularly wanted to ensure that only genuine applicants were taking the exam. Its concern also included ensuring that no student was deprived of the exam-taking process due to any technical complexity. Hence, the Mercer | Mettl team enabled a 3-point candidate authentication system with a prerequisite that students had to share their screen, video and audio. The process that followed:

- First, the webcam asked students to click their photo
- They also had to show their ID proof to the camera
- The manual proctors, available round the clock, verified every applicant's photo ID against the registration details to attest to their legitimacy.

In certain contextual cases wherein it was difficult to identify the applicant's details, Mercer | Mettl's proctoring team promptly shared the details with the University's admission team to resolve the discrepancy.

b) AI+Human proctoring

Mercer | Mettl's AI algorithm trained with more than 2.8 million proctored assessments can detect up to 18 dynamic digressions with over 95% accuracy. But the logic was minimized considering multiple test-takers were going to take their exams from places other than their homes. Hence, AI-assisted human proctors were engaged to simulate an AI-abled test environment.

- With one-to-one and one-to-many proctoring features, proctors had a classroom view to monitor the session remotely, from start to finish.
- They helped flag instances that had been restricted initially to the AI algorithm.
- Conversely, intelligent algorithms flagged cases such as the non-visibility of face/ presence, mobile phone detection, and a distracted eye movement, among others.
- With a live chat option and an added feature for pausing/ stopping/resuming the test in real-time, invigilators could chat with the students in case of any suspicion, with complete awareness of situational concerns.



c) Credibility index

As a large number of students took the test, the University did not have the bandwidth to validate everyone's credibility. Hence, the Mercer | Mettl team activated its proprietary algorithm- 'the Credibility Index' - that provided an integrity score of every exam-taker.

- This excellent predictor provided the most relevant results to the administrators with an auto-generated report.
- Calculations were based on the combined insights from AI flags, recorded details of live/manual proctoring sessions, and the test finish status.
- With valuations such as high, medium, and low, the faculty could quickly identify and filter out candidates who might have resorted to cheating.
- Offline availability of the recorded video footage was beneficial for future references.

6. Flexibility

Online examinations ensured that the University did not spend time planning the admission process and traveling across cities. Mercer | Mettl offered the flexibility to create slots and schedules and invite test-takers to take glitch-free exams.

- The registered applicants were able to take the exams as per their preferred time and date.
- There were no restrictions on the number of test-takers in one slot.
- The platform was able to accommodate last-minute entries.
- There was no change in the exam-taking experience for the students.
- The University witnessed excellent participation from students across continents.



“The Office of Admissions has been collaborating with Mercer | Mettl since 2018. Currently, Mercer | Mettl helps us host and proctor all entrance tests for undergraduate, postgraduate and Ph.D. programs.

Mercer | Mettl’s team is efficient, thorough, helpful and flexible. It continually keeps all communication channels open. We deeply appreciate its support and collaborative spirit.”

Mercia Prince

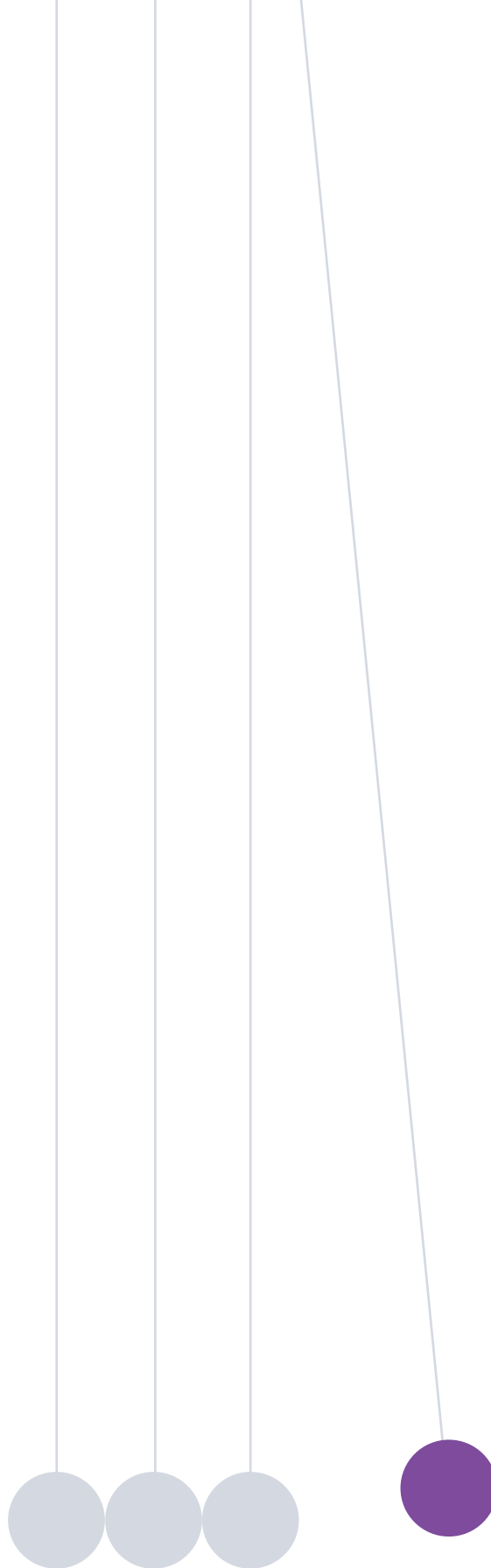
Deputy Director-Office of Admissions
Ashoka University



The impact

- The platform accommodated a total of 500 postgraduate and 400 undergraduate test-takers simultaneously.
- Mercer | Mettl's platform was used for creating different questions papers for the undergraduate program and Master's in Economics and Master's in English, for postgraduate exams.
- The University was able to offer a longer test-taking window to the applicants (9 am to 5 pm across different dates).
- Mercer | Mettl's online platform's compliance enabled a comprehensively wider reach, with significant applications from global candidates.
- A documented report of every applicant provided the University a detailed oversight, which could be leveraged for decision-making.
- Proactive customer service and strict security protocols ensured there were no issues with the quality of the experience.
- Lockdown and the ensuing disruption did not impact the entrance exam's timelines. It ensured examination continuity as the University had already migrated online with Mercer | Mettl's assistance.
- Elimination of logistic hassles diverted the admission team's attention toward more pressing concerns, such as the admission drive.
- Intensive efforts of the workforce related to assessments and grading were also minimized.
- Unhindered internet access, examination entrance dates, and no change in the exam experience ensured enhanced candidate experience and flexibility.
- The University received a positive feedback from the exam-takers on the user-friendliness of the exam interface.

[Connect with an expert](#)



The way forward

As the educators witnessed a sizable increase in exam-takers through the web, mobile devices, and other technologies in its undergraduate entrance exams, they saw an opportunity to modify the examination process for the masters and doctorate program as well. Coupled with the Mercer | Mettl team's turnaround time in assuaging its concerns, Ashoka University gained the confidence to employ online platforms for high-stakes exams.

It came as no surprise that despite the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the University could seamlessly manage the disruption and ensure continuity for its students and applicants, with Mercer | Mettl's assistance.



About Us

At Mercer | Mettl, our mission is to enable organizations to make better people decisions by making credible people decisions across two key areas: Acquisition and Development. Since our inception in 2010, we have partnered with 2900+ corporates, 31 sector skill councils/ government departments, and 15+ educational institutions across 90+ countries.

India Office

+91-9555114444

Plot No. 85, Sector 44, Gurgaon,
Haryana, India - 122003

Australia: +613906 99664
Indonesia: +6285574678938
Singapore: +6531386714
South Africa: +27875517192
UAE: +9718000320460

✉ contact@mettl.com

🌐 www.mettl.com

Robust Information Security System



Be sure to carefully read and understand all of the disclaimers, limitations and restrictions before using the assessment services, reports, products, psychometric tools or the company systems or website.

Read the complete disclaimer here
www.mettl.com/terms-of-services

