Surpass Viewer

Frequently asked questions

1. Why are Adobe withdrawing flash support?

There are some underlying security vulnerabilities with Flash when content is accessed via browsers. This makes the technology more susceptible to malicious attacks. Flash is now no longer considered an industry standard. Adobe have announced that they will be withdrawing support for Flash at the end of 2020 and, as such, web browsers will be removing the ability to run Adobe Flash.

SQA use Flash-based content to administer and mark tests and offer practice tests via OpenAssess. To allow continued and uninterrupted access to our Flash-based content beyond Dec 2020, we require the use of Surpass Viewer (a customised software app with Flash embedded) which you will need to download and install.

Once installed, you'll be able to continue to access relevant areas of SOLAR beyond the withdrawal of Adobe Flash from browsers.

From January 2021, you will only be able to access this content via the Surpass Viewer. This is not a permanent solution and SQA are working towards HTML delivery in 2021.

2. What services are impacted and what customer groups are they used by?

The following services are impacted:

- **Surpass** – used by centre staff
- **'Enter Keycode' Web delivery** – used by students to sit tests
- **OpenAssess** – used by students for familiarisation and preparation of a live test experience.

To access SOLAR tests or to administer the tests, you must download and install the Surpass Viewer on your machine to allow continued access.

3. Why have SQA decided to launch the Surpass Viewer over converting Flash content?

Whilst it would have been a preferred option to migrate over to more current technology, such as HTML5, the reality is that this was not a feasible option to offer all re-authored content in our question banks within the new HTML system by Jan 2021, this means that we will need to continue the delivery of the current qualifications on the Flash based systems in place until their withdrawal.

Surpass Viewer has a stable version of Flash embedded. To mitigate against security concerns, it will only work with allowed and trusted content, so will not be susceptible to the wider browser-based security risks associated with Flash.

In preparation for Adobe withdrawing Flash support from 1 January 2021, we strongly advise you to download and install the Surpass Viewer now to access any of the above applicable services.

4. What direct impact will this have on me?

All SOLAR users will need to download, install and use the Surpass Viewer for continued access of full content and functionality. From Jan 2021, all access to SOLAR surpass content must be via the Surpass Viewer. The website itself will continue as normal through browser. SecureClient and the Surpass App will receive a separate update to install the new Flash version. They are not delivered through the Surpass Viewer

Students
All students completing any of the following actions:
- Accessing Formative tests via OpenAssess
- Using the 'Enter Keycode' delivery screen to access a test.

Centre staff
- Anyone doing Scheduling, Invigilation and checking Results – specifically Centre Administrator access to SOLAR.

5. What is the difference between the Surpass Viewer app and my standard browser (such as Chrome, Internet Explorer etc)?

Areas which will need to be accessed via the Surpass Viewer:
- (SOLAR)
- Online Formative tests (OpenAssess)

Only pre-listed areas can be accessed through the **Surpass Viewer** unlike a standard browser

You should continue to use your standard browser for everything else on the SOLAR website. e.g. new subject requests, viewing guidance training materials etc

Technical Support

1. Who can I contact if I have any issues downloading Surpass Viewer?

For any support queries relating to Surpass Viewer please email us using the Helpdesk form on the SOLAR website

2. How do I install Surpass Viewer on different computers and is it available for mobiles?

An installation guide has been created to guide you through the steps for downloading and installing on Windows and macOS machines. The Surpass Viewer is not supported on mobiles. This is not currently supported for Chromebooks or Linux devices at present, however we are working on making this available for Chromebook users.

3. Are there security issues with Flash?

To mitigate against any security issues, the Surpass Viewer has been designed so that it can only be used to access the administrative and delivery parts of the SOLAR website. It cannot be used to access any other sites so will not be susceptible to wider browser-based security risks related to Flash.

Please note that Surpass Viewer will only work with the following content:
- (SOLAR)
- Online Formative tests (OpenAssess)

4. **Which computers at centres will need Surpass Viewer installed?**

Any machines where SOLAR, and online Formative tests are accessed will need to have the Surpass Viewer installed. It will need to be installed on each machine individually.

5. Will the Viewer open automatically when I open any SOLAR content?

Yes, provided you have already installed Surpass Viewer. If you attempt to open any Surpass (SOLAR) content but have not installed the Surpass Viewer, you will be prompted to do so and be taken through the installation process onscreen (See our installation guide). Updates may be required as you start the viewer, these should be accepted and then the content accessed again through the SOLAR website.

6. What are the troubleshooting guidelines?

Installation and user troubleshooting steps have been added to the installation guide. We encourage you to read through this guide before beginning your installation.

7. Who do we speak to if we have any issuing during installation?

For any support queries relating to Surpass Viewer please email us using the Helpdesk form on the SOLAR website

8. Can you give any guidance on configuring permissions and firewalls?

As these can vary between different makes, models, operating systems and networks, regrettably we are unable to offer specific advice on how to do this.

9. If I don't want to make any changes to my firewall, what are my options?

If your firewall settings prevent you from downloading and installing the Surpass Viewer, your security settings will need to be relaxed / exceptions added for the Surpass Viewer. If you do not do this, you will not be able to install the Surpass Viewer. If you are unable to install the Surpass Viewer, once Adobe ends Flash support, you will not be able to access SOLAR or use OpenAssess.

10. What are the system requirements?

Please refer to the Installation guide for full details.

11. Will there be updates to the viewer or any downtime?

The Surpass Viewer updates automatically. When there is an update, you can choose to restart the application to begin using the updated version or wait until you next open it. You do not need to reinstall the Surpass Viewer. You may need to use the SOLAR website again to access the content once an update has been installed.

12. Is it a one-time install?

Yes, you will only be required to download this once per machine. But updates will take place. Also your network restrictions may impact this – please refer to the installation guide.

13. Are there any alternatives that you can offer?

Regrettably, there are no other alternatives at present but SQA is working towards HTML delivery.