

Mobile Internet and SMS blocked during exams in Uzbekistan

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Internet and messaging services were suspended across Uzbekistan on Friday during university entrance exams in an apparent bid to prevent cheating which is reported to be widespread.

Two major national mobile operators shut down mobile Internet and text and picture messaging from 8:30 am until 1:30 pm, citing "urgent maintenance work on [telecommunications networks](#)".

Although voice services were not suspended, the restrictions affected not just those taking tests, but all of the country's estimated 19.6 million [mobile phone users](#) in the Central Asian nation of over 30 million people.

The restrictions on the additional services have become an annual practice on exam day as authorities fight against corruption and cheating.

According to local media reports, students use mobile Internet and text-messaging to cheat on their exams. Police conduct a thorough search for phones and cheat sheets before students enter university buildings.

Incidents of students entering exam rooms with mini-phones hidden inside the soles of their shoes and calling tutors have also been reported.

Some shops at Tashkent's main electronic market have posted notices in recent days averting students: "We have run out of mini-phones, use your head to take your exam."

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