

Adapting Your Final Exams & Assessments

Due to the current emergency remote teaching needs caused by the Covid-19 virus, traditional methods of administering final exams will not be an option this semester. As you think about what changes you will need to make to adapt your final exams to this unprecedented period, please keep in mind that nobody signed up for this. Many of your students would not have chosen to take an online course, just as many of you would not have chosen to teach online. The suggestions and reminders below are intended to help faculty and students have a successful final exam period in Spring 2020.

Key Tips for Final Exams Planning (details below):

1. Keep it simple.
2. Review learning outcomes (including ELOs).
3. Adapt your assessment.
4. Use a low-tech approach, or use the features of learning technology, to address your concerns about academic integrity.
5. You don't need to reinvent the wheel.
6. We're in this together.

1. Keep it simple -- avoid adding technological hurdles, and plan around students' real constraints.

Before deciding on a new assignment or assessment, please check your assumptions about the technology that you're requiring, including bandwidth limitations, students who may be sharing computer time with others, and students who do not have access to a printer or video camera. **Please ensure that you are providing accommodations for students who are registered with Disability Services.** This is a matter of equity; keeping things simple is the best way to proceed.

A couple of things to avoid:

- Do not create a final that requires the use of equipment that was not required at the start of the course, or campus facilities that students can no longer access.
- Do not schedule a "live" exam at any time other than the one assigned for your course by the Registrar.

2. Review your learning outcomes (including ELOs).

Review your outcomes and try to design an exam that gives your students an opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the course learning outcomes, bearing in mind that other outcomes may not need to be assessed at this time. **Which are absolutely critical for students to demonstrate on the final?** Have students already demonstrated some outcomes that you can set aside for the final?

3. Adapt your assessment.

One size definitely does not fit all, but here are some ideas for changing your final that still allow students to demonstrate their learning:

- If you're giving an exam, make it open book or untimed. Students' ability to find or apply the right answer might be more critical than their recall. (See below for tips from Rutgers about doing this in quantitative courses).
- Try to avoid assessments that require complex setups or instructions. With technology and support systems stretched as they are keeping things simple will help ensure the assessment run smoothly and if there is a problem that it can be resolved more quickly.
- Allow collaborative exam completion. Yes, some students may do more work than others, but our students are pretty sharp about not being taken advantage of. You might ask students to provide an individual reflection on the exam, e.g. what they had mastered, what they couldn't do on their own, etc.
- Consider breaking up your exam into a set of quizzes to make each piece shorter and less stressful. This might also reduce your grading time.
- Switch from an exam to a narrated PowerPoint that students can do on their own time (see UML faculty e.g. below).
- Rather than doing, for example, 5 problems, have the student select one and then write a short paragraph to explain the process. Or have the student select one and write a paragraph to explain the applied use of the process.
- Turn multiple choice tests into short answer tests and reduce the number of items.
- Offer students who are doing well the ability to opt-out of the exam.
- Can you reduce the pressure on this assignment while giving students a chance to demonstrate learning? If so, re-weight the final, consult with your students, and publish that change in your revised syllabus. Tell

students what kind of feedback to expect, and know that, under these circumstances, it's okay if you give less feedback than you otherwise might. Just let them know they can reach out to you with additional questions.

Resist the urge to make your final harder or longer! We're all under a lot of pressure.

4. Use a low-tech approach, or use the features of learning technology, to address your concerns about academic integrity.

Many faculty members are understandably concerned about academic integrity in this remote learning environment. Although it is important to be flexible this semester, you have every right to expect and require your students to complete their courses honestly. Below are some additional steps you might consider to ensure the integrity of your exams.

- For Final Presentations: Use [Blackboard Collaborate](#) or [Zoom](#), you can ask students or groups to [share their screens](#). Students can simultaneously present and share any slides or visuals at the same time.
 - Ask others to mute their computer microphones to minimize feedback noise.
 - Log into the room ahead of time to be sure it is functional.
 - You can schedule a Zoom meeting in advance and invite attendees.
 - Make sure to add a password and enable a waiting room, to make it more secure.
 - Make sure you have an alternate plan (e.g., sending you a narrated slide deck that you can share on screen) for students that are unable to participate or who do not have a camera.
- Create a final paper in blackboard using the [Assignment tool](#)
 - Have students submit to [SafeAssign](#) or [Turnitin](#) (for academic integrity checking).
 - SafeAssign is a feature within Blackboard Assignments.
 - Turnitin is a 3rd party integration within Blackboard (available in the Tools menu)
- Create a test using available technology and support personnel:
 - [Create a test in Blackboard](#) (from scratch) or import tests into blackboard using [Respondus](#) (Windows users only – Mac users, please contact bbhelp@uml.edu for assistance.)
 - Create a test using [Gradescope](#) (additional options for fully online tests).
 - Limit the amount of time students have to complete the test (don't use "force-completion").
 - Modify test questions to require unique answers that students are less likely to copy and share.
 - Add variety and/or randomization to exam questions and answers; Blackboard tests have this capability.
 - If possible, try out your Blackboard assessment ahead of time by using the [student preview](#) to make sure it works the way you intend.
 - If the assessment method will be brand new to your students, consider giving them a practice example to help them become familiar with the new format and lower any anxiety.
 - Need help? Attend a [webinar](#) or contact bbhelp@uml.edu, please provide five business days if you need help creating a test in blackboard.

5. You don't need to reinvent the wheel.

Below are a few links to practical tips from other universities.

Rutgers University's specific, practical tips for going open-book in quantitative courses:

<https://sasoue.rutgers.edu/teaching-learning/remote-exams-assessment#special-advice-for-open-book-assessment-in-quantitative-courses>

Indiana University Bloomington's suggestions for adapting assessments:

<https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/assessing-student-learning/alternatives-traditional-exams-papers/index.html>

UC Berkeley's list of ideas for alternative assignment types:

<https://teaching.berkeley.edu/resources/improve/alternatives-traditional-testing>

Brigham Young University's descriptions of several final exam alternatives:

<https://ctl.byu.edu/tip/final-exam-experience>

6. We're all in this together.

If you have additional suggestions, please share them on UML's Excellence in Teaching and Learning listserv! To subscribe to the listserv, visit <https://listserv.uml.edu/cgi-bin/wa.exe?SUBED1=TEACHING-EXCELLENCE&A=1>, add your information, and hit "Subscribe."