



Alternatives to In-Person Exams

The following guide offers suggestions and support for redesigning or revising your assessment plans.

(Re)Assessing Your Assessment Plans

There are many types of alternative assessment options to consider. With the March 16, 2020 transition to online classes for the remainder of the term, modifying your assessment strategy is allowable under UBC Vancouver's Senate Syllabus Policy V-130. Read more about [late syllabus changes](#)¹.

Please note that your Faculty, Department, School, or Program may have provided specific guidance about final exams; be sure that what you choose fits with that guidance, and consult with your Department Head, Program Director, or Faculty for more information if needed.

Exam Alternatives to Consider

In alignment with your Faculty, Department, School, or Program, there are many different approaches you may consider in place of a final exam.

NON-PROCTORED ONLINE EXAMS

Assessments can securely be facilitated through UBC's learning management system, Canvas. Question types include: multiple-choice, multiple-answer, fill-in-the-blank, numerical answer, hotspot, essay questions, and more.

One way of reducing the feasibility of students using outside resources in non-proctored settings is to structure your exam into smaller subsets of questions, creating a number of "mini-exams" with time constraints so only one quiz is open at a time. These timing gates introduce time pressure that makes it difficult for students to consult resources for every question.

To get started with non-proctored online exams in Canvas, visit the [Keep Teaching non-proctored assessments section](#).²

REMOTELY PROCTORED ONLINE EXAMS

Canvas also enables remotely proctoring assessments using a tool called Proctorio. With Proctorio, each student's exam session is recorded with video and audio, along with screen and keyboard activity, to promote exam integrity.

¹ <https://keep-teaching.ubc.ca/faq/#syllabus-faq>

² <https://keep-teaching.ubc.ca/assignments-assessments/#assessments>



To get started with remotely proctored online exams in Canvas, visit the [Keep Teaching proctored assessments section](#).³

ORAL ONLINE EXAMS

If your class context allows, consider collapsing your questions into a shorter, oral online exam. Canvas provides a video/audio web-conferencing tool called Collaborate Ultra where you can privately and securely meet with each individual student to conduct the exam online.

To get started with oral online exams in Collaborate Ultra, visit the [Learning Technology Hub Collaborate Ultra tool guide](#).⁴

OTHER LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Consider your most important learning objectives for the course and how else students might demonstrate their mastery. This might include:

1. **Assignments** submitted online, like case studies, essays, concept maps, annotated bibliographies, videos, portfolios, etc. These can easily be facilitated through Canvas, which allows handing in text as well as file uploads. See the [Keep Teaching assignments section](#).⁵
2. **Presentations** given to you or the whole class online. This can be held in Canvas using the video/audio web-conferencing tool called Collaborate Ultra. See the [Learning Technology Hub Collaborate Ultra tool guide](#).⁴
3. **Discussions** with peers on Canvas discussion boards, which can also be used with groups. See the [Keep Teaching discussion boards section](#).⁶

COMBINATION ACTIVITIES

You can always combine approaches above and use the different tools in Canvas to facilitate distinct phases of assessments.

For example, in place of 2-stage exams, you could ask students to individually prepare a case study, then discuss their findings in real-time with a peer or a group online. The final document could be submitted as an online group or individual assignment.

Examples

Your Current Assessment Format	Alternative Suggestions for Online
In-person written exam Students individually are asked to recall, summarize, and connect information, responding to essay questions, solving problems, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-Proctored Online Exam ● Remotely Proctored Online Exam ● Oral Online Exam ● Learning Activity: Assignment

³ <https://keep-teaching.ubc.ca/assignments-assessments/#proctored>

⁴ <https://lthub.ubc.ca/guides/web-conferencing/>

⁵ <https://keep-teaching.ubc.ca/assignments-assessments/#assignments>

⁶ <https://keep-teaching.ubc.ca/discussions-communications/#discussion-boards>



<p>Problem sets / Simulation Students are asked to solve a problem or simulation. Depending on the discipline, it may require a scientific demonstration, a mathematical demonstration, economic model, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning Activity: Assignment
<p>Case study / 2-Stage exam Students individually prepare a case study online by reading a document or watching a video, then discuss their findings with a peer or in groups. When conducted in class, this activity is completed collaboratively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Combination Activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Learning Activity: Assignment + ○ Learning Activity: Discussion
<p>Concept map Students write keywords and organize them into a flowchart. They can also draw the connections they make between concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning Activity: Assignment
<p>Student presentation (individual or group) Students present in front of the class and may receive feedback from the instructor or peers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning Activity: Assignment ● Learning Activity: Presentation
<p>Portfolio / Journal Personal space of reflection where students gather resources or material they've completed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning Activity: Assignment

Get Support

Although these are challenging times, many resources for support exist. Connect with your colleagues to come up with the best ways for students to succeed in demonstrating their learning. You can also find information on how to contact support or attend virtual drop-in sessions on the [Keep Teaching support page](#)⁷.

Key Considerations for Online Assessments

- **Share syllabus changes with students.** Substantial changes to a syllabus require clear communication with students, per Section 9 of UBC Vancouver’s Senate Syllabus Policy V-130.
- **Clarify expectations.** Make sure students are clear about expectations and instructions on how to successfully complete their exam or exam substitute.
- **Keep it simple.** Consider ways to reduce complexity for yourself and your students by using options that you and your students are familiar with or can easily learn.

⁷ <https://keep-teaching.ubc.ca/support/>



- **Be flexible.** One assessment strategy may not work for everyone. Some students may struggle with technical (e.g., internet connectivity), physical (e.g., different time zones), mental, or emotional challenges brought on by remote assessment.
- **Loosen time restrictions.** Students may encounter technical issues outside their control in taking or submitting exams online. Giving them a wider window of time for the exam as well as allowing second attempts helps accommodate the unexpected.
- **Provide clear support points.** Whatever approach you take, make sure students know where they can go for technical help.
- **Remember the big picture.** Our priorities are the health, safety, and success of our students in an inclusive and diverse learning environment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Many faculty are expressing concerns about how to retain academic integrity when students are learning and being assessed online. Communicating clearly what your academic integrity policy is and establishing a good tone right away will prompt your students to work with you on this.

Online academic integrity tips:

- For any type of online assessment, ask students to agree to an integrity pledge first. You may want to have it set up in a way that students should accept it before starting the exam.
[Example integrity pledge language](#)⁸ developed by UBC's Faculty of Science:
 - "I hereby pledge that I have read and will abide by the rules, regulations, and expectations set out in the Academic Calendar, with particular attention paid to the: Student Declaration & Responsibility, Academic Honesty & Standards, Student Conduct During Examinations, and any special rules for conduct as set out by the examiner. Additionally, I affirm that I will not give or receive any unauthorized help on this examination and that all work will be my own."
- Explain this language and its purpose to students before the exam, so students have time to ask questions about what they are agreeing to. Explicit discussion will promote academic integrity because students will think more about their actions during the exam.
- Try to avoid focusing exclusively on penalties for academic misconduct. This does not deter academic misconduct; instead, it can contribute to feelings of mistrust.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION

UBC is committed to providing access for students with disabilities while maintaining academic standards. As the provision of academic accommodations can be complex given the range of possible in-person exam alternatives, providing accommodations is best accomplished through a collaboration between the instructor, the student, and an Accessibility Advisor.

As an instructor, you have a responsibility to:

1. Familiarize yourself with [University policies and procedures on accommodation](#)⁹.

⁸ https://skylight.science.ubc.ca/it/guides/alternate-exam-resources/#_p18szhvfurui

⁹ <http://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/sites/facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/files/policy73.pdf>



2. Treat information about a student with a disability as confidential according to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
3. Consult with the UBC Centre for Accessibility to ensure that your courses or programs are accessible to students with disabilities.
4. Implement accommodations listed on the Academic Accommodation Letter provided by the Centre for Accessibility for a student with disabilities who has self-identified themselves to you.

For more information, visit UBC's [Centre for Accessibility's guidelines](#).¹⁰

Keep in mind that accessibility accommodations have broader applications than disabilities. An additional accessibility concern with online exams is that scheduled exam times may now occur during the night for students in different timezones.

Additionally, it is important to consider students' access to the Internet and required hardware like webcams, printers, or cameras when you are planning online assessments.

¹⁰<https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/student-engagement/centre-accessibility/accommodating-students-disabilities>



Appendix: Additional Resources

[Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education's Keep Teaching Site](#)¹¹

The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE/SAPES) has developed an online resource for faculty transitioning to online teaching. This website gathers useful tips and strategies from various institutions across Canada.

[McGill University's Five Principles for Making Decisions about Assessment in Challenging Times](#)¹²

This guide provides five principles to help you when developing your assessments online: 1) Simplify 2) Prioritize 3) Offer alternative assessment formats 4) Consider extending assignment deadlines and 5) Communicate.

[Indiana University \(Bloomington\)'s Alternatives to Traditional Exams and Papers](#)¹³

This resource provides useful alternatives to traditional exams. Some of the strategies shared may require some rethinking of your assessment strategies; guiding questions are provided to help you in this transition.

[Connecticut College's Considerations for Moving Courses Online](#)¹⁴

11 teaching-focused items to consider when moving your course online.

[Yale University's Assessments for Academic Continuity](#)¹⁵

This resource on Academic Continuity helps faculty adapt their assessments for online delivery and consider alternatives to in-class assessments. The guiding questions at the beginning will help you make informed decisions for developing your assessment online.

[University of Wisconsin's Unproctored Online Assessments](#)¹⁶

Considering the potential challenges (intensive staff support, student webcam, etc.) that come with online exams, here is a list of alternatives to a proctored final exam.

University of Calgary: The Taylor Institute of Teaching and Learning's Resources

Some resources available to help instructors promote academic integrity as they transition to new ways of teaching and learning.

- [University of Calgary's Alternative Online Assessments](#)¹⁷
- [University of Calgary's Academic Integrity and Online Learning](#)¹⁸

A Guide from UBC's Keep Teaching Website (keep-teaching.ubc.ca)

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¹¹ <https://keep-teaching.ca/>

¹² <https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/instructors/class-disruption/assessment-principles>

¹³ <https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/assessing-student-learning/alternatives-traditional-exams-paper-s/index.html>

¹⁴ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OmAqer6B9LjtOMytIB1z6sli3NV-ZvPC4yeg8kI3J9o/edit?usp=sharing>

¹⁵ <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/Academic-Continuity-Assessments>

¹⁶ <https://ce.uwex.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/UnproctoredAssessments.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/teaching-continuity/student-assessment-ideas>

¹⁸ <https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/academic-integrity-online-learning>