Adapting Assessments for Flexible Teaching

While adapting your face-to-face courses to a remote, web, or mixed mode learning environment (synchronous or asynchronous), please bear in mind the following suggestions.

General Recommendations for Flexible Assessment

- Conduct your course as much as possible in Canvas, to protect your students' personal data and to avoid FERPA violations.

- For remote synchronous instruction and assessment, classes must be held at their scheduled time, with Zoom being the preferred online meeting place.

- Final exams must be administered at the time listed in the Final Exam Schedule.

- Anticipate varying degrees of internet access, consistency, and outages, particularly when an exam or assignment is due. In case of internet or technological difficulties, we recommend setting a 24 – 48 hour window of availability for Canvas assignments or quizzes, with at least two attempts permitted.

- Provide your students with a variety of options for demonstrating participation and completing assignments, such as permitting either written or audio/visual discussion responses.

- Establish a preferred means of documenting internet or technological difficulties, and direct your students to use it. For difficulties with Canvas, we recommend directing students to contact the Canvas Help Desk first. Alternatively, students can call 814-865-HELP (4357) or send an email message to canvas@psu.edu. Students should then contact you regarding their difficulty. You may request a help ticket number as evidence of the students' difficulty.

- Canvas offers multiple assessment formats and integrations with many educational apps already in use by Penn State faculty. Visit Keep Teaching to explore these options.

Strategies to discourage cheating

- Research demonstrates that assumptions about an increased level of cheating online are unfounded, and that relying on a few high-stakes exams can induce cheating. In fact, the biggest factors behind cheating are stress, instability, and lack of engagement. In adapting or creating your assessments, consider the following strategies.

- Use frequent, low- or no-stakes assessments to provide students with multiple opportunities to practice applying newly acquired knowledge and skills optional. However, adding more low-stakes assessments without reducing the number or density of high-stakes assessments can indeed be overwhelming. Make all or some low- or no-stakes assessments optional, and strive for an equitable distribution of content across high- and low-level assessments.

- Break up longer exams into small, lower-stakes, mini-exams.

- Use a large test item bank so that each student receives a different set of questions. Merge item banks across multiple faculty or use published item banks.

- Use [problem- or project-based](#) assessments instead of multiple-choice testing.

- Convert problem sets, projects, worksheets, quizzes, or exams to PDF and upload them to Canvas. Have students complete the document by hand, scan or photograph their work, and upload it to Canvas.

- Use [authentic assessments](#) to prompt unique and genuine student responses.

- Wherever possible, provide several options for completing assignments, such as permitting either typed or audio/visual online discussion responses; writing an essay, recording a video, or creating a PowerPoint presentation; selecting from several topics, problem sets, or homework activities.

- Provide estimates of how much time an assessment should take, clearly express what's to be done, and share your rubric or examples of quality work when possible.

Multiple-Choice & Short Answer Quizzes and Exams

- Administer a series of low-stakes quizzes or mini-exams.

- Offer untimed open book/open note exams that focus on conceptual, applied, or evaluative questions, which cannot be easily looked up in a textbook or online.

- Ask students to develop a Fact Sheet on a topic to demonstrate their ability to evaluate sources, identify key facts, and explain the facts clearly and concisely in their own words.

- Canvas allows faculty to "shuffle answers" and questions/items.

- Convert problem sets, projects, worksheets, quizzes, or exams to PDF and upload them to Canvas. Have students complete the document by hand, scan or photograph their work, and upload it to Canvas.

- After administering a low-stakes exam or quiz, have students either grade it themselves (based on their textbooks or notes) or with an instructor-provided key. Then, have them correct their errors and provide you with a rationale for those corrections.

Written Essays, Papers, Projects, and Exams

- Assign written assessments in Canvas. To approximate an "in-class" essay exam or written assignment, the assignment time frame can be set to correspond with your class time.

- Using [Turnitin](#), students can perform a self-assessment to address flagged items before an assignment is submitted, and all parties can be reasonably assured of academic integrity.

- Canvas [SpeedGrader](#) features highlighting, rubrics for specific comments, a text box for general comments, and audio/visual recording for individualized feedback.

- Condense complex rubrics with multiple criteria and levels of performance into [single-point rubrics](#) for clarity and grading efficiency.

- Student conferences on student drafts can be accomplished via Zoom during regular class time or by appointment.

Student Presentations

- Substitute face-to-face presentations with students' recording of their presentations on their smartphones, tablets, or computers, which they can upload or record directly in Canvas. Alternatively, ask students (individually or in groups) to submit a narrative of their presentation, with images, in a Word or PDF document.

- Using Zoom, presentations can be delivered synchronously during class time or asynchronously and stored in the cloud or uploaded to Canvas. Groups of students can perform peer evaluations in Zoom's breakout rooms, which you can enter at any time to monitor their progress. In the Zoom settings, one can opt for the platform to generate captions and a transcript for future viewing.

- Kaltura is already well integrated with Canvas and also can be used synchronously during class time or asynchronously. Recordings can be stored in the cloud or uploaded to Canvas. Kaltura features split screen capability to display yourself and your desktop, video quizzing, auto-captioning, and auto-transcripts.