

Exams and Academic Integrity Considerations Fall 2021

This document is intended to be a consideration guide for instructors to use in the administration of exams throughout the Fall 2021 semester.

Essentially, exams are a way to assess student learning. Therefore, it is important to ask yourself: *How will I assess student learning in my course?*

Exams continue to pose particular challenges even as the PWL campus returns to normal operations that include [University Student Regulations on final examinations](#) as outlined in the University Catalog. While exams for in-person and hybrid courses, including a final exam, are generally conducted in person, it is recommended that alternative arrangements be considered for students who are not able to attend class because of illness or quarantine under [Protect Purdue guidelines](#).

In order to minimize incidents of academic integrity violations for online exams while still ensuring accurate reflections of student learning, consider the following principles when you assess student learning.

Rethinking Exams

When thinking about exams, the most important thing to consider is: *Are exams an effective way to assess student learning in your course?* Second, we strongly encourage instructors to consider alternatives to high-stakes exams, especially those that require digital proctoring.

Allow online exams to be open-book/source: Assume students will use resources while taking an exam, and even encourage them to do so. Try to ask questions that probe deeper levels of knowledge and understanding, enabling students to apply, assess, and evaluate concepts and facts in meaningful ways. Encourage students to share and cite where they get information from and what resources they use.

Encourage students to collaborate/share questions and ideas: Students will likely work together when they are stuck or confused. You can encourage working in small teams and ask them to include in their answers who they worked with and in what ways.

Focus on solving problems while showing work and explanations: In many cases, students may get the same answer, but showing their work reveals meaningful differences in understanding. Sometimes there may only be a few ways to show work, so you may ask for brief prose explanations, or have students record a video of them talking through the process to solve a question.

Consider question formats leading to essays, videos, pictures, and other personal responses: If your class lends itself to it, asking students to express their learning through essays, videos, pictures, or other personalized forms of writing/speaking/communicating requires that everyone create their own work. You can also have students post their responses for each other and assess each other's work through peer grading. Rubrics can help guide students as they develop such work, give each other feedback, and of course, allow your teaching assistants and you a consistent method of assessment.

Use student-generated questions with explanations: Instead of trying to ensure

everyone answers your limited number of questions on their own, ask every student to create their own question with an explanation of how it would assess a certain topic or skill in a meaningful way. You can also assign students to answer each other's questions and state whether those questions actually do assess these skills in appropriate ways.

Respect your own time: Most of these ideas take time to grade. Try to determine what is feasible in your situation and use feedback-based or hand-grading intensive assessments sparingly. Also consider how much feedback students actually need/will use. Many times, feedback can be created for the whole group based on common challenges or problems, as opposed to individual responses.

Guides to Creating and Modifying Online Exams

Use question pools: If you have short-answer or multiple-choice questions, create pools in Brightspace so that students receive different sets of questions (this can also be done with essays and more complex questions).

Ensure clarity in questions and prompts: Especially if your test is timed, your students may not have a chance to ask a question and get a response. It is vital that questions and prompts are clear to novices so that your assessment measures what you want it to. Even if not timed, you do not want to be spending your limited time answering clarifying questions.

Have a clear communication plan: You should expect at least some technological challenges from students that will require accommodation, especially if your exam requires specialized software other than Brightspace. Set guidelines for when students can reasonably contact you and receive a response. Consider [creating a discussion](#) [download Word doc] or place where students can help one another navigate technology issues and highlight this on your course Brightspace.

Testing technologies: Currently, Purdue offers two tested technologies that can facilitate remote exams where you do not interact directly with students:

Brightspace has a robust exam tool that allows for multiple-choice, short-answer, true/false, or short- or long-answer exams. This can be a great alternative to exams that were previously offered via Scantron or as written exams.

Gradescope is a third-party grading tool that integrates with Brightspace and allows students to scan and submit homework or exams via their cell phones. Students can provide answers on their own paper, so they don't need to print off the exam or assignment. Gradescope is ideal for assessing written calculations, graphs, models, or other activities that cannot easily be completed through Brightspace. For more information on getting started with Gradescope, go to the [Gradescope website](#) to view their video tutorials and student workflow guide, or email tlt@purdue.edu.

Practice Test: Consider a very low-stakes or shortened practice version of your final exam prior to finals week to troubleshoot the technological process and prime students for the conditions of the actual exam.

See guidelines for using digital proctoring on the [About Digital Proctoring at Purdue webpage](#). For questions or assistance, contact tlt@purdue.edu

Support During Online Exams

Take advantage of instructional resources prior to your exam including training and drop-in sessions, or by contacting InnovativeLearningTeam@purdue.edu. During finals week, there will

be 24/7 monitoring of crucial software such as Brightspace. If you are offering an online timed final exam, we strongly encourage you to administer the exam through Brightspace, rather than a third-party software that is not centrally supported. If an unforeseen event like a power failure or data loss renders your final “invalid,” please consider revising your course point system in a manner that does not penalize students, and contact the Office of the Provost for assistance.

Tips for Academic Integrity

1. Begin each exam/assignment with a non-graded “pre-question” about the Purdue Honor Pledge. This can be set to be a gateway to continue with the exam/assignment. *I agree with this statement: As a Boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - We are Purdue.*
 - 1) I do pledge to be honest and true and that the information in this exam represents my own work.
 - 2) I do NOT pledge to be honest and true and the information in this exam is not solely my own work.
2. Make explicit your course policies for collaboration and plagiarism. If you do not want your students working together -- either by sharing assignments, answers, or through third-party applications like GroupMe or websites like Chegg.com -- then provide that direct guidance to your students.
3. For quizzes or exams, Brightspace offers features that can help structure these assessments. Download these [Brightspace instructions \[Word doc\]](#) on the following:
 - a. Use an existing question bank or create a bank with different levels of difficulty, topics, and/or concepts.
 - b. Randomize the order of the questions and/or the order of the answers. Tell students you are randomizing to discourage collaboration.
 - c. Set the exam so only one question is displayed at a time.
 - d. Assign a time limit to complete the exam, once started, but double the time that you initially think it will take students to complete, to allow for flexibility. This allows you to leave the exam available for a window of 12-24 hours for all students to complete the exam.
4. Divide an exam into 3 or 4 assignments, thereby lowering the stakes of the exam and its relative weight on the final course grade.
5. The use of plagiarism checking software tools might help detect violations of academic integrity. Turnitin Originality, the plagiarism checker integrated into Brightspace, is available at no cost to students or instructors. The tool works by comparing text in submitted assignments to a database of both student-submitted and published research papers, then produces a “similarity report” that highlights possible instances of plagiarism. For those with assignments involving coding language, consider using the Stanford open-source software [MOSS](#) which can detect significant similarities in written code.
6. Digital proctoring solutions are available but should be avoided with the above suggestions when possible. Digital proctoring should only be used for assessments when all other options have been exhausted.
7. Avoid grading on a curve, which increases the likelihood of students cheating so as to not be disadvantaged relative to the rest of the class.