Adapting Assessments for Remote Teaching

Below are strategies to consider as you adapt to the synchronous remote course environment. They are arranged by some of the common course formats and course types.

Perfection is not expected. Your goal is to adapt your current course plans, teaching strategies, and assignments to make the best of things in this challenging situation. The strategies provided below can help you do that. These recommendations are not intended to be a checklist, nor do we suggest that any instructor has to implement every item.

General Recommendations for Online Assessment

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

- Before making substantial changes the distribution of points across course elements, consider how these shifts will advantage some students and disadvantage others. Students should be notified in advance of any changes.

- Canvas offers multiple assessment formats, including Math Editor. Visit Penn State Canvas Learning Center for tutorials.

- Final exams must be administered the time listed in the Final Exam Schedule unless the format of the final assessment has been changed (e.g., open book/note or final paper).

Strategies to discourage cheating

Concerns about cheating and violations of academic integrity are valid in any learning environment. Research demonstrates that assumptions about an increased level of cheating online are unfounded. Instead, the pressure of high-stakes testing, combined with students' individual personal or cultural pressures, foster a belief that one must cheat to succeed. The following strategies are offered as a means of relieving students' anxiety about your assessments in order to foster a culture of deep learning, as well as to address your own concerns about academic integrity.

- Relying on a few high-stakes exams can induce cheating.

- 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.

- Pair short answer quizzes with longer written or recorded answers [video or audio if permitted] to which you can refer if you suspect the authenticity of your student's short quiz response. You will be able to go back to their longer submission as an extra resource for you to discern if the student is talking about the material in a convincing way.

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 include fewer 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 also 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, 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 you can be reasonably assured of academic integrity.

- Canvas's SpeedGrader enables highlighting, rubrics for specific comments, a text box for general comments, and audio/visual recording for individualized feedback.

- Face-to-face 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 your settings, you 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. It features split screen capability to display yourself and your desktop, video quizzing, auto-captioning, and auto-transcripts.

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