Guidance on Alternatives to Proctored Timed Final Exams

There are many alternative culminating assessments beyond a traditional final exam. For an online course, a proctored synchronous exam is not the only solution.

Alternative Culminating Assessments:

• A Final Project

A range of options are possible, such as an annotated timeline, creative project, original writing, written analysis of a case study, literature review, etc. Many other ideas below could be framed as a project, but the main idea is that students would have some time to complete it, with it being due at the time of the final exam, rather than it needing to be completed *during* the scheduled exam time.

A variation of a prior assignment that students are already familiar with from earlier in the course is also an option.

In the remaining time this semester, the scope of such a project would need to be limited. Now is *not* the time to spring an additional time-consuming project on your students. The time on task should be framed as replacing the time they would normally spend studying for and taking an exam.

• A Canvas Quiz with Question Groups and an Extensive Random Question Bank

Yes, you might assume some "collaboration" will occur between students, especially if the quiz is not timed. However, using question groups with questions randomly selected from an extensive question bank will minimize the ability to share answers. Writing questions that ask for students to analyze the information you build into multiple choice questions, rather than just recite/choose terms/definitions, will also help. See *Concerns about Academic Integrity* below for more details.

• An Open-Resources Assessment

You could think of this an old-school "take-home exam," facilitated through Canvas. Recognize that a series of questions you might give would *not* necessarily be an assessment whether or not students have memorized content, but would be a test of how well they can *retrieve* accurate information from notes, texts, the internet, or, yes, even peers.

Many may find this idea controversial, but one way around unauthorized collaboration is to simply build it into the assessment and allow it. In the working/civic world, problems are seldom solved by individuals working in isolation. Recognize such an assessment should allow students some time to complete it - maybe even up to a week - in order to level opportunities that will be limited for some by slow bandwidth, or access via cell service only.

• A Presentation

This could be a reflection piece on prior learning, could ask for responses to prompts related to course content/concepts, or could be a summary or analysis of prior course content. Students can give interactive presentations on FlipGrid (asynchronous) or Zoom (synchronous). You might think of this as an oral response to an extensive culminating essay question on an exam. Students would

have time to write presentation notes in advance, then record their presentation and submit it in Canvas, with the due date being that of the scheduled final exam time. Or they could present at scheduled times through Zoom during the final weeks of class.

- **Flipgrid** is an asynchronous method for an interactive presentation feature. There are many settings and possibilities available with this tool. (See CIDL's FlipGrid training session). Having students view and reply to one another's presentations creates an interactive presentation experience that is still flexible with students' time.
- By making students co-hosts on **Zoom** during their presentation time, they can access several features such as screenshare, whiteboard, and polls to make an interactive experience. Also in Zoom, breakout rooms can allow for smaller sets of students to present to one another if there are time considerations with large classes. You can't be in every breakout room at once, but you can record, review and grade presentations later.

Scheduling live presentations during the final exam time would only be feasible for very small classes, and you would run the risk of encountering many of the technological limitations that make a timed, proctored exam via Proctorio impractical.

The CIDL Learning Experience Designers are available to support individual faculty with any of these tools and other ideas.

• A Short Written Formal Analysis

This could be an analysis of an artifact from your discipline, such as an essay, performance, design/artistic expression, or case study…

• A Short Written Topical Discussion

This could be based on a prompt to summarize and explain interrelated terminology and concepts in the discipline. Such a framework could be applied to a specific content unit from class, or a pivotal event, development, or controversial debate within the discipline….

• A Short Written Reflection

This could be a reflection on prior learning, asking students to discuss a concept that was most difficult for them, and how their understanding changed over the course of the semester. Or, it could ask them to reflect on what was successful about a prior project/paper/assignment/creative production, and what they might do differently if they could repeat such an assignment…

For any of the above written assignments, *short* is the operative word. Think in terms of an essay exam or question(s), rather than a "paper." Consider that this is *not* the time to spring a lengthy (or even moderately lengthy) research paper on your students. To be fair to students (and to yourself) as we land this semester, focus such written assessments on no more than 3 to 5 specific prompts that must be addressed, or perhaps just one major prompt with some subpoints. Whatever they create and turn in should not take them longer than the two hours they would normally have during a seated exam. That could be stretched some - again, any additional time on task should be framed as replacing the time they would normally spend studying and preparing for a traditional final exam.

Grading should be focused on content, and *not* necessarily on mechanics, grammar, and syntax, and this should be made clear to students when the assignment is given. As our friends who teach composition like to say, "Writing is revision." However, at this point in the semester, there is no time for revisions and feedback on iterative drafts, so focus your assessment on the demonstrated content understanding, and not on the quality of the structure of the writing. See *Concerns about Academic Integrity* below for more details.

• A Paper (or Project) Revision

> Asking students to revise a prior work, based on feedback you *already* gave when it was originally graded, is another option. (The grade for this new version would serve as the grade for the scheduled final exam, and not replace the prior grade.)

Other Considerations:

Set Clear Expectations.

> Letting the students know what the alternative assessment will be as soon as possible is critical. Clarify (for yourself, and for them) that it should not take them longer than they would normally take to prepare for and take a traditional seated final exam.
>
> Once you decide what to do and communicate that to them, be flexible as needed for individual students, but don't change tack on the whole class again in the next couple of weeks.

High-Stakes or Low-Stakes?

> You might be tempted to make the final exam alternative a lower-stakes assignment than it was originally weighted in the final course grade. Doing so could mediate the impact of undetectable dishonesty, or just encourage your students. However, consider that some of your students are counting on that final exam being the published 25% of the course grade they need to bring up their final grade. Instead of making the exam alternative worth less, consider just making sure the work you ask of them is reasonable and attainable.

Timing Issues…

> Timed assessments (Canvas Quizzes, Proctored exams, etc.) are still going to be challenging for some, due to technology limitations on the other end. Don't assume students will all let you know if they are limited, and don't assume the technology will be 100% reliable, even if every single student says they are onboard and okay.
>
> Synchronous participation during a scheduled exam session is still challenging for many students, and that is not likely to change for some of your students by finals week.
>
> Do not schedule alternative times for a synchronous experience outside of your normal class time or scheduled final exam time. You'd be likely to cause schedule conflicts for the students.
>
> Due dates for final assessments should fall during the scheduled exam time. Do not make the due date for an alternative final assessment later than the final. Consider what would happen for a student if all of their faculty did so. Deadlines might not end up being staggered, and everything could come due at once for a student. Yes, they might actually have more time to work on everything, but having the predictable schedule and staggered deadlines might actually help them more, especially if they are prone to procrastination. We know this issue is already exacerbated right now for many students who are feeling overwhelmed.

Be Mindful of Accommodations.

> Review any students' Academic Accommodations as authorized by the Center for Student Success, and consult their staff for advice on administering the alternative final assessment, if needed.

Concerns about Academic Integrity…

For **written assignments**, AU's Canvas has a built-in originality checker with **Turnitin**. To enable Turnitin on Canvas Assignments (not Quizzes), choose "Enable Turnitin Submissions." Then, choose "Advanced Turnitin Settings" for more options. Turnitin will check submissions against the web, publications, and database of student papers for content matches. You may turn off quoted materials, small matches, or bibliographic material. Students will agree to an integrity pledge upon submitting an assignment that has Turnitin enabled.

The **Canvas Quiz** tool has many built-in features to support academic integrity. Here are a few ideas to give you peace of mind when using Canvas quizzes for a major assessment:

- Use question groups to ensure a sufficient number of randomized questions per concept.
- Shuffle answers.
- Set a time limit so that even if students can start at any time, they must finish in an allotted time.
  (Note: Use caution when setting time limits. Recognize that some of your students' best technology option may be to take the quiz through cell service on a smart phone.)
- Set feedback options to not show correct answers after test, but at a later date.
  (Note: the default is set to show correct answers.)
- Add an integrity pledge to your first question for students to understand the importance of academic honesty. Below is suggested language from the recent work of the Academic Integrity Honesty Revision Task Force.

The Honor Code Pledge:
"In keeping with Anderson University's ethical standards of academic integrity and institutional values guided by its Christian mission, on my honor I pledge that I have not given, received, and/or witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work."

Ask for Help.

Lean on the CIDL and the CLTE for assistance and advice with designing and implementing alternative final assessment through Canvas.

Nope. It is still Proctorio or the Highway for me…

If you are still convinced that using Proctorio to proctor an online exam during the scheduled final is the *only* acceptable way to close the semester, please contact the CIDL to explore the limitations, technical requirements, and fairness of that option, and contact your dean for approval.

Find more Teaching and Learning Guides and Resource Documents under Teaching at auclte.com.

Nathan J. Cox | 8.9.2020