

*Decisions regarding remote teaching and graded assessments or examinations should reflect three key values: Alignment, Transparency and Fairness.*

## Values to guide decision making: Alignment, Transparency and Fairness

**ALIGNMENT:** Assessments or evaluations (also known as assignments, quizzes, tests or examinations) should align with learning outcomes and goals. If an activity does not align specifically to a learning outcome, instructors might consider its value to the student experience and whether or not the material being assessed is foundational to later concepts.

**TRANSPARENCY:** Instructors should share with their students the learning outcome an assessment or evaluation measures and why their achievement of this learning outcome is measured this way. If adaptations are necessary for teaching remotely, a clear articulation of the rationale for the change will lead students through successful learning and completion of tasks.

**FAIRNESS:** Remote teaching decisions related to evaluation of student learning outcome achievement “must be equitable, providing students equal chances to earn a good grade by demonstrating equal knowledge,” and remote assessments should not be more difficult than the original approach (Perlman, 2006).

“There are no easy answers here, especially if you planned to have a good chunk of a student’s grade hinge on what would have been a proctored, in-person test. Perhaps you could take another route to summative assessment for the course, such as replacing a big supervised test with some type of project that is easier to personalize and less dependent on proctoring” (Miller 2020).

---

Adapted from Fulmer, S.M. (Feb. 22, 2016). Three guidelines and two workarounds for tackling makeup exam policies. Faculty Focus. <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/educational-assessment/three-guidelines-and-two-workarounds-for-tackling-makeup-exam-policies/>.

Miller, M.D. (March 9, 2020). Going online in a hurry: What to do and where to start. Chronicle Vitae. <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/2315-going-online-in-a-hurry-what-to-do-and-where-to-start>.

Perlman, B. (2005). Dealing with students missing exams and in-class graded assignments. Observer, 18, 6. <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2006/june-06/dealing-with-students-missing-exams-and-in-class-graded-assignments.html>.

## How do I recreate assessments remotely?

One of the greatest concerns among instructors as they prepare to teach remotely is the challenge of replicating the in-person assessment model. Our best recommendation, based on current research, is to shift away from a need to recreate the “final exam” environment and **think about what it would take to be convinced that students have achieved a learning outcome.**

Our colleagues at Ohio State and around the country are developing resources that offer check-lists and how-to’s:

- <https://keepteaching.osu.edu/assessments> has excellent advice about remote administration of exams, quizzes, and other assignments.
- The Chronicle of Higher Education has compiled a list of resources for remote teaching during a crisis: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Preparing-for-Emergency-Online/248230?cid=rclink>.

## How do I know I’m still teaching well and students are learning what they need to learn?

Instructors have come to UITL with concerns that go beyond the “how to” of remote teaching and have posed questions of accessibility, equity, and inclusion. Some have concerns that their professional integrity is challenged by moving to a distance format on such short notice.

What are the larger implications of this move, even for those who are not experiencing the technical hurdles or find them less daunting?

Terence Day, author of “Academic continuity: Staying true to teaching values and objectives in the face of course interruptions,” used interruption as **a chance to study student learning**. Here he reflects on that experience and how it prepared him for the current teaching context: <https://issotl.com/2020/03/19/lessons-learned-from-a-sotl-study-on-remote-teaching-a-conversation-with-terence-day/>.

UITL’s [Instructional Redesign](#) program may offer instructors an opportunity to do the same type of reflection.

---

## Remote Teaching: **Accessible and Inclusive Assessments**

### How do I ensure assessments remain accessible to students while teaching remotely?

Two strategies assist with accessibility. Those include **flexibility with timing and lowering the stakes of graded activities, assignments, tests, and exams.**

**1. FLEXIBLE TIMING:** Instructors can provide a “window” of time during which an assignment is available for completion; this allows students to access assignments based on their remote learning schedule, and accommodates time zone differences among students.

Anne-Marie Womack (Assistant Director of Writing, Tulane University) notes, “Extended time is a common disability accommodation because learners perform at different speeds, and college students juggle multiple commitments. Allowing extensions for individual students can give some individuals more time but does not help those who don’t feel comfortable enough to ask for them” (517).

---

Womack, A. (2017) “Teaching is Accommodation: Universally Designing Composition Classrooms and Syllabi.” *College Composition and Communication*. 68:3 494-525. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2f42/e76cc1041505f7a29d47845e338b4cb47e7e.pdf>.

---

**2. LOWER THE STAKES:** Instructors might allow students to demonstrate their knowledge through low-stakes opportunities which invoke disciplinary fluency and facilitate self-reflection about their learning.

Stephen Downes, a specialist in learning technology, media, and theory at the National Research Council of Canada, explains how he uses **informal conversations to look for an overall fluency in the discipline** from the student, rather than the completion of a particular metric.

“Even in technical disciplines like logic and computer science, I found I could easily see whether a person had an overall aptitude for the subject...I could see their progress overall through a process of continual engagement—how they responded to me, how they responded to each other, how they interacted with the guests we had in the course” (163-4).

Jon Dron (chair of the School of Computing and Information Systems at Athabasca University and Honorary Faculty Fellow at the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Brighton) **designs online assessments in an intentionally flexible and inclusive way** to give his students more motivation and control of the learning process.

He notes, “I have steadfastly avoided exams in my own courses, using combinations of techniques like personally chosen projects, embedding the sharing of work with other students, negotiable personal outcomes, portfolios of flexible evidence, shared reflective diaries, community building ... and so on. Every activity contributes to both individual learning and the learning of others, gives learners control, and is personally relevant and uniquely challenging for every learner” (Conrad & Openo, 2018, p. 177).

Lisa Marie Blaschke (associate professor and program director of the Master of Distance Education and E-Learning program at Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg) **evaluates student performance through reflective assignments**, which gives students the opportunity to improve on previous work, invest in their own growth, and to be coached as they learn and change.

She writes, “Some of the key learning tools within this context are the online e-portfolio and the reflective journal (or blog) that students keep as part of their e-portfolio, which showcases their acquired skills and competencies .... The learning journal not only gives students an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and how they have learned it but also gives me a window into the student experience, insight into their abilities, and an idea of what interests them the most” (Conrad & Openo, 2018, p. 172-3).

Open book exams let you ask harder questions and gauge students higher-order thinking: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/educational-assessment/why-open-book-tests-deserve-a-place-in-your-courses/>.

---

Conrad, D., & Openo, J. (2018). *Assessment Strategies for Online Learning: Engagement and Authenticity*. AU Press. doi: 10.15215/aupress/9781771992329.01

---

There’s a lot to think about here. But as this article suggests, teaching online (or remotely) will make you a better teacher, period: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Teaching-Online-Will-Make-You/247031?cid=rclink>.

**UITL staff will always be here to partner with instructors** as they seek answers to questions that will surely arise in the days, months and years ahead. In the meantime, instructors are invited to participate in remote consultations and to share tips, methods and recommendations for remote teaching:

**HOW ARE YOU TEACHING?**