

Exams and Academic Integrity Considerations Academic Year 2023-2024

This document is intended to be a consideration guide for instructors to use in the administration of exams throughout the 2023-2024 academic year.

A 2022 district court case in Ohio found room scans during online exams to be **unconstitutional** if improperly implemented. As a result, the guidance from Purdue's Office of the Provost is to avoid any implementation of "room scans" at the Purdue West Lafayette campus. In **Respondus Monitor**, this means [turning off](#) the "Environmental Check" feature. In other proctoring tools (including **Examity**), this means not asking students to scan their room as a part of any online quiz or exam. Other support for testing is available from Innovative Learning; see the IL [Testing Services webpage](#) for details.

Students who encounter an assessment where the room scan feature is enabled and the student is uncomfortable proceeding with this technology in place, are advised to contact their instructor immediately and work with them to identify an alternative method of completing the assessment. Students who need further support with this may connect with Purdue's Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities at: osrr@purdue.edu.

The higher the impact of a single exam on a student's course grade, the greater the temptation to violate academic integrity. Alternative exam formats, especially in online courses, minimize the need for intrusive and problematic remote proctoring. Guidance and support for alternative assessment creation are listed below.

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?*

Rethinking Exams

When thinking about exams, the most important thing to consider is: *How will you assess student learning in your course?* For constructive suggestions for assessing student learning, see **Teaching@Purdue's modules on [Creating Exams](#) and [Creating Inclusive Grading Structures](#)**. We strongly encourage instructors to consider alternatives like the following to high-stakes exams.

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 need/will use. Many times, feedback can be created for the whole group based on common challenges or problems, as opposed to individual responses.

If you would like additional assistance, Innovative Learning offers individual consultations for assessments, including alternatives to exams. Contact IL at InnovativeLearningTeam@purdue.edu

Support During In-Person Exams

Instructional Data Processing (IDP) offers a [proctoring service](#) that supports and enhances academic integrity. It is a resource for instructors who need help supervising exams and an employment opportunity for Purdue's graduate students. Proctors are available to courses with 70 or more students for exams and during finals.

(continue for Guides & Tips)

Guides to Creating and Modifying Online Exams

Online exams can be helpful in providing access to all students in assessing how well they are meeting the course learning outcomes. Instructors may have concerns such as academic integrity. Consider the following principles as you design assessment for online exams while still ensuring accurate reflections of student learning:

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: Your students may not have a chance to ask a question and get a response, especially if your test is timed. Therefore, it is vital that questions and prompts are clear to novices so that your assessment measures what you want it to. Even if a test is not timed, you do not want to spend your limited time answering/clarifying questions.

Have a clear communication plan: You can 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](#) or place where students can help one another navigate technology issues and highlight this on your course Brightspace.

Testing technologies: Currently, Purdue offers 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.

Support During Online Exams

Take advantage of instructional resources prior to your final, including training and drop-in sessions, or by contacting InnovativeLearningTeam@purdue.edu. As usual, during finals, there will be 24/7 monitoring of crucial software. If you are offering a 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. Check out resources and recommendations on the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities webpage: [Academic Integrity and You: Faculty and Staff](#), including the Purdue Honor Pledge, definitions and examples, understanding academic dishonesty and tips to avoid it.
2. Recent research suggests that a clear warning of the consequences of violating the course academic integrity guidelines can have a significant effect on online academic integrity, while use of an “honor code” alone does not.ⁱ It is important, therefore, to make your course policies for collaboration and plagiarism explicit. If you do not want your students working together -- either by sharing assignments, answers, or through third-party applications like GroupMe, websites like Chegg.com or ChatGPT -- then provide that direct guidance.
3. For quizzes or exams, Brightspace offers features that can help structure these assessments. Download instructions from the [Purdue Brightspace Documentation website](#) 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 is notoriously unreliable in detecting violations of academic integrity related to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLM). Software like Turnitin Originality, the plagiarism checker integrated into Brightspace, has significant problems and false positives when attempting to detect the use of AI/LLMs. For details and suggestions, see the [Measuring Learning](#) module in Teaching@Purdue.
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. Environment checks, or room scans, should not be used (see [above](#)).
7. Research continues to support that grading on a curve increases the likelihood of students cheating so as not be disadvantaged relative to the rest of the classⁱⁱ. See the Teaching@Purdue module on [Creating Inclusive Grading Structures](#) for a comparison of grading policies and considerations as you choose your approach.

ⁱ Corrigan-Gibbs, Henry et al. “Deterring Cheating in Online Environments.” *ACM transactions on computer-human interaction* 22.6 (2015): 1–23. Web.

ⁱⁱ See, for example, Bowen, Ryan S, and Melanie M Cooper. “Grading on a Curve as a Systemic Issue of Equity in Chemistry Education.” *Journal of chemical education* 99.1 (2022): 185–194. Web. This article provides a brief history of grading in the United States, empirical evidence and expert perspectives on diversity, inclusion, equity, and persistence. None of the critiques are chemistry-specific.