

**May 5, 2020**

**Sent to Academic Senate and Academic Federation Members  
Guidance for Assessing Student Learning in Spring 2020**

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the dedication, care, and commitment that you are bringing to your courses during this emergency time of remote instruction. It is because of your extraordinary efforts that we are able to continue our teaching mission.

Student learning assessments, including exams, are an integral part of learning and the educational experience of a course. All assessments require mutual trust between instructors and students: Instructors need to be able to trust that students are adhering to the [UC Davis Student Code of Academic Conduct](#); students need to be able to trust that their instructor is conducting a fair assessment and that their classmates are also upholding academic integrity.

Because remote instruction raises challenges about fairness and academic integrity in this assessment process, we write to share up-to-date guidance about assessing student learning. For further details, please visit the [Keep Teaching](#) website.

### **Why We Discourage the Use of Holding Proctored Exams at a Single, Set Time**

Many of our students do not have reliable internet, functional computer cameras and microphones, or dependable access to a quiet, private space. Moreover, many students currently live in other time zones, including locations outside of California, and the United States.

Thus, having a proctored examination at a single, set time can create significant obstacles and hardships outside of students' immediate control. Accordingly, we encourage instructors to assess student learning through means other than proctored exams, such as alternative assignments, oral examinations, or unproctored exams.

[Turnitin](#) is now available at UC Davis. This tool helps instructors check for originality and independence in student work, including short-answer and essay examinations. Turnitin can also be used as a student-facing, self-assessment tool to improve student writing and citation.

Putting a copyright statement on the bottom of each page of your exams or other assignments may prevent them from being posted on [Chegg](#), [Course Hero](#), or similar sites that students use to post or view exam questions, problem sets, or written assignments.

### **Guidance for Unproctored Examinations**

There are ways to preserve academic integrity for unproctored examinations:

1. **Utilize open-book, open-note exams.** This creates equal opportunity for all students to access their learning materials. If the exam is a timed exam, students with greater preparation will still perform comparatively better than students who prepared less (it will

be very challenging to learn the material while taking the exam itself). The [Student Resources](#) page of the Keep Teaching site has new student guides on [Preparing for Exams](#) and [Preparing for Open-book and Other Test Types](#). Please alert your students.

2. **Avoid grade curves.** Grade curves can increase temptation to cheat because of the higher stakes of success being determined by relative performance. Grade curves can harm students who take exams with academic integrity if they are compared to students who enhance their performance through dishonest means.
3. **Vary questions, randomize question order, and institute time limits on exams.** There are many options that you can use on Canvas quizzes or Qualtrics to create variations in how exams are administered to each student in your course. Look under the “Alternative Assessment” tab on the [Testing page](#) of the Keep Teaching site.
4. **Avoid directly taking exam questions from textbook test banks.** Questions from textbook test banks may be searchable online.
5. **Require a statement acknowledging academic integrity.** This could be modeled after honor codes routinely used at [Princeton](#) and [Stanford](#), or could follow alternative formats (e.g., have students sign an academic integrity statement prior to turning in an assessment or taking an exam; [Keep Teaching](#) provides some examples).

### **Tools Available for Proctored Examinations**

If you determine that it is essential to hold proctored exams, it is important to know that remote proctoring raises privacy and security concerns. See [here](#) for current advice from our campus legal experts. Below are the available proctoring tools for instructors to use in Spring 2020:

1. **[Examity Auto-Proctoring](#).** Instructors will have access to Examity’s auto-proctoring option. The Examity software uses artificial intelligence to flag potential inappropriate behavior during an exam for an instructor to review afterwards. If you choose this option, you must schedule a consultation in advance with ATS ([onlineproctoring@ucdavis.edu](mailto:onlineproctoring@ucdavis.edu)), as incorrect setup will compromise the testing experience. Live proctoring with human observers via Examity is not available for Spring 2020.
2. **Live Proctoring via [Zoom](#).** This option would require the instructor and teaching assistants to monitor students as they take their exams. Keep in mind that some students may not have reliable internet or webcams. There are also substantial privacy issues related to requiring students to be observed and recorded live in their private residences. For more information on using Zoom for live proctoring, look under the “Alternative Assessment” tab on the [Testing page](#) on Keep Teaching.
3. **[Respondus Lockdown Browser](#).** This is a secure testing browser that limits the student’s computer to the test taking interface. Note that it does not prevent students from accessing written notes or online material using a separate computer, tablet, or phone. Details will be made available on the [Keep Teaching](#) website as soon as it is available.

Whatever you decide for your course, we strongly encourage you to minimize changes to how you evaluate students from what you specified in the syllabus at the start of the term. Fewer

changes will help reduce students' anxiety and raise their sense of control and predictability in this already stressful and uncertain time.

Again, please look to the [Keep Teaching](#) website for centralized, current information to assist you with your remote teaching and student learning assessments.

We greatly appreciate everyone's continued efforts.

Thank you,

**Ralph J. Hexter**

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