

ADAPTING YOUR ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR REMOTE TEACHING

A PLANNING RESOURCE FOR INSTRUCTORS

This document offers guidelines to help you embed assessment strategies that promote learning into your remote courses. The focus is on strategies that:

- link assessment to learning;
- allow students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways by expanding the possibilities for assessment;
- foster a climate for academic integrity;
- provide opportunities for practice and feedback;
- incorporate opportunities for debriefing and reflection after assessment.

You are not expected to incorporate all the guidelines; rather, we recommend that you select a small number of strategies that would best support student learning in your course context.

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Teaching and Learning Services (2020), McGill University

LINK ASSESSMENTS TO LEARNING

Students will naturally focus their attention on learning content that will be assessed. Therefore, try to ensure that each assessment is an opportunity for students to deepen their learning. Here are some guidelines:

- Help students see how assessment is linked to learning by explaining the value of each assignment/exam in terms of student learning. Try addressing these questions:
 - Why is the assessment part of the course?
 - How does the assessment relate to course learning outcomes?
 - Where might students use the new knowledge or skill after the course?
- Explain to students how each assignment will be assessed. Here are some strategies:
 - Share sample assignments/exams that received different grades (shown with permission) and ask students to discern differences in the quality of the work. (See how you can [collect sample assignments](#).)
 - Show students tools you use to assess their work, such as a list of [questions, a checklist, or a rubric](#).
- Explain how you expect students to use course materials to learn and prepare for assessments.
 - Describe—or demonstrate—your strategies for reading, annotating, synthesizing, and doing practice exercises. For example, do you read articles from beginning to end? (Why/why not?) What sections of a book or article do you pay particular attention to and why? How do you [decide what to take notes on](#), and how do you [take those notes](#)? Do you read required and supplemental materials the same way?

ALLOW STUDENTS TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR LEARNING IN A VARIETY OF WAYS BY EXPANDING THE POSSIBILITIES FOR ASSESSMENT

On-campus assessments, such as 3-hour invigilated exams, may no longer be viable in the remote teaching context. Such assessments will therefore need to be adapted so that they support students with achieving the course learning outcomes while at the same time encouraging students to respect academic integrity. You can also change the traditional on-campus exam to a different type of assessment task that still corresponds to the intended learning outcomes.

ADAPTING EXAMS

In our remote context, all exams can be conceived of as “open-book” because they are not invigilated. An “open-book examination” can be defined as an assessment method that allows students to consult materials such as class notes and summaries, a “memory aid,” textbooks, or other **approved** material or sources *while completing the exam*. It is important to communicate to your students what materials, if any, are approved for consultation. An exam cover page is one way to communicate to students what materials are approved for consultation. Download a cover page template [here](#).

You can adapt your on-campus exams to timed or take-home formats. Timed exams must be started and completed within a specified number of hours. Once students start the exam, they have a designated time to complete it (e.g., three hours). (For information about setting times, see [Overview of Quizzes, Surveys and Self Assessments in myCourses](#) and [Best Practices: The Quiz Tool](#).)

Take-home exams allow more flexibility. Students can start, finish, and return to these exams within an extended period of time (e.g., 48 or 72 hours). These exams should be of a length and difficulty that would take a maximum of three hours to complete regardless of the allotted time.

Here are strategies for adapting your exams:

- Remove, add and amend questions.
 - For multiple choice questions, use question pools and randomization features (e.g., [randomize the order of the questions](#) and the order of the answers within a question using the Quizzes Tool in myCourses.)
 - Pair some multiple choice questions with an “explain your answer” open-ended question so that students articulate their understanding.
 - Replace questions that require students to recall facts with more complex questions that prompt students to apply, analyze, and evaluate. For example, provide students with a link to an existing dataset and ask them to perform calculations or statistical analyses.
- Change the assessment criteria/rubric. Keep the same questions and adjust the weighting of your grading criteria so that higher order thinking questions that require students to go beyond recall by applying, analyzing, and synthesizing their learning have more value.

More adaptation assessment strategies are available here:

- [A Guide for Academics – Open Book Exams](#) (The University of Newcastle, Australia)
- [Assessments: Making Your Exam Work as a Take-Home Assessment](#) (Herriot Watt University)
- [Best Practices for Administering Remote Exams](#) (Crowdmark)
- [Remote Exams and Assessments: Tips for Exams and Alternative Assessments](#) (Rutgers University)

TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Some assessment formats might be better suited to the remote environment than the traditional exam. Here are some examples:

- Ask students to critique a current research article.
- Develop a case study and ask students to make recommendations from the perspective of a particular stakeholder.
- [Assess students’ learning orally](#) by having them upload an audio or video recording of themselves explaining an answer to a subset of questions on the exam (possibly just one or two) or, depending on class size, you could conduct phone or web interviews with students.

- Create a two-stage exam, where students first complete and submit the exam individually and then, working in small groups, answer the exam questions again. During the group part, students receive immediate, targeted feedback on their solutions from their fellow students and see alternative approaches to the problems. This makes the exam itself a valuable learning experience while also sending a consistent message to the students as to the value of collaborative learning. [Read more about implementing two-stage exams.](#)

More examples of different assessment strategies are available here:

- [Example evaluation schemes](#) (learning outcomes, assessment type, tools) (TLS web resource)
- [Alternative Online Assessments](#) (University of Calgary)
- [Remote Exams and Assessments: Tips for Exams and Alternative Assessments](#) (Rutgers University)

FOSTER A CLIMATE FOR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Focus on supporting learning rather than on punishment and surveillance. The suggestions below are in line with a holistic approach proposed by the [International Center for Academic Integrity on promoting academic integrity in remote learning.](#)

Start by assuming that most students are honest and want to learn. If you perceive plagiarism, consider that students might not be aware that they are plagiarizing because they lack knowledge about academic integrity, or the integrity norms at their previous learning institutions are different from those at McGill. Here are some specific strategies for fostering academic integrity:

- Reinforce with students that creating a culture of trust and respect is a two-way street. Have a class discussion about what academic integrity is in your discipline and why it matters. Be explicit about your expectations for students and ask them what they expect of you. Such discussions can demonstrate that both students and instructors are responsible for creating that climate.
- Create a [course honour code](#) that you post on myCourses and revisit before major assignment and exam due dates. See [more examples of honour codes.](#)
- Build in opportunities for students to demonstrate the thinking process informing their work, such as through multi-stage assignments, where students submit components of the assignment at staggered due dates. For both written and oral assignments, you can ask students to submit an annotated bibliography, their research question, an outline, and/or an opening paragraph. For assignments that involve calculations, you can ask students to explain the thinking underlying their answers.
- Ask students to integrate personal experience and reflections when possible in answering questions.
- Point students to [The Fair Play online resource guide](#) on McGill's Academic Integrity site and follow up with a discussion in a myCourses discussion forum.
- Consult [your liaison librarian](#) for support in creating a course guide and/or tutorial on information literacy and research behaviours in your discipline.

More resources for fostering academic integrity are available here:

- [Academic Integrity Faculty Checklist](#) (International Center for Academic Integrity)
- [Academic Integrity and Online Learning](#) (University of Calgary)
- [Building Academic Integrity into Your Course](#) (Rochester Institute of Technology)

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK

The remote delivery environment requires students to be more self-motivated and independent than in the typical on-campus, classroom-based setting. You can promote these dispositions by reducing the content students will be responsible for learning, and increasing opportunities for students to practice and get feedback on their work. Increase those opportunities by integrating more low-stakes assignments that will incrementally prepare students to succeed on higher-stakes assignments and exams. For example:

- Ask students to develop a draft for peer feedback.
- Break down large assignments into stages, with components due at different times of the term. Staged assignments allow you to see how students are progressing, and feedback at the different stages can help them move forward with the assignment. See an [example of a multi-stage assignment on p. 19 of this TLS resource document](#).
- Have students do a similar type of assignment twice: first, with support, and then, more autonomously. The second assignment can also be more conceptually challenging.
- Have students work both individually and in small groups. Students can submit work individually to ensure accountability, and then, through peer support in small groups, students can work out problems together.
- Help students prepare for exams by:
 - Having students select three things from their class notes they think they will need to know for the exam and share these things with one or more students. This strategy helps each student review content and expand their understanding of other content that might be important to attend to.
 - Using [Polling @ McGill](#) (also known as the Student Response System or SRS) to assess students' knowledge of material that will appear on an exam.
 - Scheduling online study sessions where students do homework and TAs are available to answer questions.
 - Having students complete practice exams (individually or in small groups) and discuss results together.
 - Promoting self-assessment to raise students' awareness of their progress. The [Quizzes tool in myCourses](#) allows you to set up self-assessments that will provide students with immediate, ungraded feedback on their understanding of course content.
 - Having students review course materials and submit potential exam questions (with answers). For practice, students can answer exam questions submitted by their peers.

- Having students contribute to an exam preparation study guide. You can set up a collaborative “study guide” in [myCourses](#), [Microsoft Teams](#), or [OneDrive](#).

See more ideas on [pp. 2-5 of this TLS Strategies for Exam Preparation and Debriefing resource document](#).

INCORPORATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEBRIEFING AND REFLECTION AFTER ASSESSMENT

Once an assignment has been handed in, or an exam has been taken, it doesn't have to be “over.” Debriefing major assessments can be learning opportunities for students. Here are a few ideas for encouraging students to deepen their learning by reflecting on their performance.

- Suggest students use a tool like the [Test Analyzer: Exam Review Self-Reflection](#) to become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their performance. Invite students to share the results of this self-reflection with you so that you and students can work together toward better preparation for future exams.
- Moderate a discussion forum where students correct their exam answers and submit corrected answers (possibly for grades).
- Give feedback to the entire class by posting a written memo or an [audio recording](#) to myCourses, and then lead a discussion in which you share common strengths and weaknesses you saw in students' work. Encourage a conversation about how the weaknesses could be addressed.
- After a major assessment, describe links that you see between student actions and student success. For example, you can track who has accessed myCourses and attended Zoom sessions, and then correlate the data to grades. The data might help students see how their actions can directly affect their success.
- Pick several questions from the exam. Ask students if their notes included the information they needed to answer the questions and if they understand the notes they took.
- Prompt students to write themselves a memo that addresses one of these prompts: “What did I learn taking this exam that I want to remember for the next one?” or “What did I learn completing this assignment (or from the instructor's feedback) that I want to remember for future assignments?” Collect these memos and return them to students shortly before the next major assessment or collate them into a study guide for the class.

See more debriefing and reflection ideas on [pp. 6-7 of this TLS Strategies for Exam Preparation and Debriefing resource document](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [McGill University Student Assessment Policy](#)

TLS INSTRUCTOR RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

- [Designing Peer Assessment Assignments](#)
- [Feedback Strategies: Engaging Students in Dialogue](#)
- [Strategies for Exam Preparation and Debriefing](#)
- [Writing Assignment Toolkit](#)