



## CSULB Online Proctored Exam Considerations

Traditional timed, proctored exams will be made accessible through BeachBoard and Respondus Monitor. While there are high stakes tests that do require this structured framework, it is important to be aware that *proctored remote exams have known drawbacks*:

1. Proctored remote high stakes exams can be more stressful for students than in-person proctored exams, which can negatively impact student performance.
2. Proctored remote exams require substantial planning and setup on the part of the instructor and the student, and proctoring software can generate many “false positive” flags that must be reviewed by an instructor after the exam.
3. Not all students have access to the appropriate technology to use services; instructors will have to make accommodations for such students.
4. Students may have privacy concerns about third-party recorded remote proctoring. Unlike when students agree to the use of such systems when they register for online courses, students did not agree to remote instruction when they registered for spring 2020 and instructors will need to make accommodations for these students.

In light of these considerations, during this time alternatives to timed, proctored exams are recommended wherever possible. *Large courses reliant on in-person exams may consider open-book exams or frequent low-stakes assessments ([BeachBoard LMS Assessment Manual](#)) as alternative assessment strategies that can be relatively easy to grade.*

Your learning goals are an excellent place to start when considering alternative assessments: what do you hope students will be able to do by the end of your course, and in what ways can they demonstrate what they know?

### ReThinking Cheating: Alternative Low Stakes Assessment to High Stakes Online Proctored Exams

*Before deciding to maintain a traditional exam, it may be helpful to think of alternative assessments to engage students. [ATS Instructional designers](#) are available to assist with any instructional assessment needs. Below is a selection of suggestions:*

Series of quizzes: offer a low-stakes opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery of material, and provide faculty ongoing information about student understanding. Frequent quizzing has been shown to reinforce student understanding. BeachBoard can randomize questions in quizzes, making cheating more difficult. ([Guide](#), Faculty Focus)

Student-developed quiz questions (also called Cooperative Quizzes): writing quiz questions both builds and demonstrates students’ understanding of the material. This assignment can be structured as a collaborative group activity. ([Guide](#), University of Iowa)



Open-book, take-home assessments: many disciplines have a tradition of take-home exams, typically involving more conceptual or applied questions that students cannot quickly look up in a textbook. ([Guide](#), University of Newcastle, Australia)

Professional presentations or demonstrations: students can create audiovisual presentations using a variety of media, PowerPoint, Word, and other tools. ([Guide](#), Vanderbilt University)

Peer- and self-review activity: these allow for personal reflection on learning and peer-to-peer instruction, both of which reinforce and deepen understanding. Students do need instruction in the task of providing constructive feedback. Rubrics laying out expectations for student work are very helpful. ([Guide](#), McGill University)

Non-Traditional Paper or Project: creative assignments work best when students have some “real-world” relevance and offer students some choice in delivery format. ([Guide](#), Vanderbilt University)

Group Project: group projects require students to demonstrate mastery of subject matter and develop their ability to communicate and work collaboratively. It is crucial to make your assessment criteria and grading scheme clear, and to ensure that there are clear, explicit expectations for each team member. ([Article](#), Inside Higher Ed)

Replacing tests with summaries: rather than testing, students are required to regularly write summaries of the class readings and lectures which include the main points, a critical reaction to the ideas, and a discussion of what’s most important. This requires a great deal of reading on the part of the instructor, but students report that they prefer the summaries over tests.

### **\*Special Advice for Open Book Assessment in Quantitative Courses**

STEM and other quantitative courses face a particular challenge in creating effective online exams, in part because it's so easy to cheat and in part because so many questions are computational. Compiled advice from the Rutgers Mathematics department:

- Ask more conceptual questions (e.g., "what is the next step in this problem?", "state the definition of...", "explain why this hypothesis in the theorem is necessary")
- Ask students to identify an error in a proof or computation (effective since it can't be Googled)
- Eliminate multiple-choice and fill-in questions in favor of show-all-work questions where students must scan and upload their work
- If using problems from a textbook, change not only the numbers but also the names (e.g., John to Alice) and the scenario (e.g., pulling a boat in to letting a kite string out). The reason for this is that popular textbooks will probably have many problems already solved online somewhere
- Use letters and variables in place of specific numbers



- When randomizing the exam, don't just randomize numbers. Also randomize discrete parts of the problem. For instance, one version might have a problem like "maximize the volume of the box given its surface area" whereas another version might have "minimize the surface area of a box given its volume". (The numbers can even be the same for the two versions.)

- Avoid questions that consist of only simple computations. For example, instead of "calculate this integral", present students with some application in which they also must set up a proper integral. "Write an integral expression that is equal to the probability that..." or "write a triple integral which is equal to the mass of the region" are good alternatives. There are online calculators that will not only solve many computational problems, but also give step by step solutions. Adding more words and applications to a problem makes it more difficult to cheat and tests the real learning goal: do students know how to apply basic principles? (*Ultimately, anyone can use a calculator, but only if you know what you want to calculate.*)

Adapted from [SAS Keep Teaching Page](#), School of Arts & Sciences, Rutgers University

#### **Additional Open Book Exams/Oral Exams Resources**

- For Faculty:
  - [A Guide for Academics - Open Book Exams](#) [PDF] from Newcastle University; explains how to create open book exams
  - [Why Open-book Tests Deserve a Place in Your Courses](#) - article from Faculty Focus
- For Students:
  - [Open-Book and Take-Home Exams for Students](#) - a tip sheet for students from University of New South Wales Sydney
  - [Exam preparation: Strategies for Open Book Exams](#) - test taking tips for students from Simon Fraser University

#### **More Ideas**

These sites present many more ideas for alternatives to traditional final exams:

- [UC Berkeley Alternatives to Traditional Testing](#)
- [IU Bloomington Alternatives to Traditional Exams and Papers](#)
- [IU Bloomington Handling Exams When Your Course Unexpectedly Moves Online](#)
- [Chronicle of Higher Education: Final Exams or Epic Finales](#)