Shifting your Assessments to the Remote Environment

As part of the transition to remote teaching, you may need to alter your assessments so that they continue to align with your course learning outcomes, while also providing effective means for students to demonstrate their learning. Although many assessment formats have a remote or online equivalent, the same assessment method may not be as effective in the remote environment, or may assess unrelated or unintended learning outcomes. For example, if students are expected to learn new technologies to complete an assessment, they may spend more time learning the technology than they will learning the content or skills you intended.

This document is a concise adaptation of our Adapting your Assessments for Remote Teaching and Learning planning guide, which provides detailed information, steps, templates, and resources for adapting your assessments.

Key Principles of Effective Assessment

1) **Focus on learning:** Students focus their effort on learning content that will be assessed. When deciding how students will demonstrate learning, keep your course learning outcomes in mind.
2) **Provide frequent, low-stakes assessments:** Frequent assessment is important in the remote environment, where student engagement benefits from the added accountability of assessments.
3) **Balance structure with flexibility:** Offering choice in your assessments (e.g., format, deadline, topic) can help students calibrate their workload to cope with personal/academic circumstances.
4) **Provide clear expectations:** As many students are still novices in remote learning spaces, it is important to articulate your expectations and provide clear instructions for assessments.
5) **Provide opportunities for practice and feedback:** Integrate practice assignments and scaffolded projects with multiple steps, offering instructor, peer, and self-feedback along the way.
6) **Foster a climate for academic integrity:** Academic honesty can be encouraged through careful assignment design that follows the key principles for effective assessment.

Selecting Your Assessment Type: Questions for Reflection

As you consider various assessment types, reflect on the following questions:

Alignment	• Which assessment types align best with my learning outcomes and the level of understanding being assessed? • Do I want to assess students' acquisition of knowledge or their ability to apply that knowledge to new situations (or both)? • Do I want to assess a product that students produce, or the process they went through to produce it, or both?
Appropriateness	• Which assessment types would provide students with an effective means to demonstrate their knowledge or skills?
Balance	• Which assessment types would complement other assessments in my course, offering students variety and flexibility with demonstrating their learning?
Comfort	• Which assessment types do I feel comfortable supporting and evaluating in the remote environment? • Which assessment types would students feel comfortable engaging with, based on their skill level, technological expertise, and content knowledge?

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Sample Assessment Strategies for Different Learning Outcomes

Review your course learning outcomes and select the appropriate assessment strategy that aligns with the level of your learning outcomes.

Bloom's Level	Sample Course Learning Outcomes "Students will be able to…"	Sample Assessment Strategies
Remember / Understand	• Recall basic concepts and definitions • Describe basic concepts	• Frequent, low-stakes quizzes (multiple-choice or short answer) • Justification of a multiple-choice answer • Meaningful paragraph or short summary (given a list of terms, students use the terms in a paragraph that demonstrates their understanding of the terms and their interconnections)
Apply	• Apply course concepts to address real-world situations • Apply course concepts to one's own experiences • Synthesize course concepts to solve hypothetical problems	• Case study • Reflection paper • Policy memo, executive summary • Newspaper article, editorial, webpage, blog post • Development of a product or proposal • Chart, graph, or diagram with explanation
Analyze – pros/cons/ impact	• Discuss the benefits and shortcomings • Articulate the pros and cons for different stakeholders • Analyze the quality of sources	• Short papers or summaries • Case study • Annotated bibliography • Infographic, poster, presentation, webpage • Newspaper article, editorial, advertisement • Analysis of an event, performance, work of art
Analyze – make connections	• Make connections between course concepts • Organize and structure course concepts and ideas • Integrate information	• Concept maps, diagrams, infographics, posters • Portfolio with reflection • Presentation • Executive summary • Analysis of data or a graph • Debate • Annotated bibliography, literature review
Evaluate/Create	• Compile information in a new way • Justify decisions by evaluating information • Evaluate the appropriateness or effectiveness of a solution • Design, generate, or create an original product, piece, or problem • Develop a set of guidelines	• Debate • Legal brief, policy memo, executive summary • Diagram, table, chart, or visual aid • Webpage • Review/critique • Reflection • Development of a product or proposal • Poem, play, or dialogue • Performance, work of art, music, architecture, sculpture

Adapted from:
https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/instructors/class-disruption/strategies/assessment
https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/assessing-student-learning/alternatives-traditional-exams-papers/index.html

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Designing and Implementing your Assessments in Synchronous or Asynchronous Formats

The following image is a snippet from a larger table in our planning guide (p. 19-21), which provides information about how to implement various assessment types in asynchronous and synchronous formats and possible technology solutions for implementation.

Assessment Type	Asynchronous Format	Synchronous Format	Things to Keep in Mind
Collaborative writing or group reading and annotation in a single document	Shared documents (e.g. Google Docs, Wiki)	Shared documents (e.g. Google Docs, Wiki)	Students may be in different time zones, so synchronous collaborative work may be challenging.
Discussions (individual or group)	CourseLink discussion board	CourseLink discussion board, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other synchronous audio/video platform. For group discussions, consider platforms that have breakout rooms, such as Zoom.	See section on Online Discussions
General formative assessment (checking for understanding during class meetings, after class meetings, or while students are learning content asynchronously)	Quiz or discussion board in CourseLink for students to submit questions or feedback	Poll tool in Zoom, quiz in Google Forms for live results, Zoom chat, raise hand feature in Zoom	Embed quizzes into course content to help students check their understanding and receive immediate feedback

Adapting your In-Class Written Exam to Another Format

Written exams present several challenges in the remote environment that hinder their potential for effectively and fairly assessing your learning outcomes. Written exams can be changed to a different format or a combination of formats, depending on your learning outcomes:

- Assignment/project (individual or group, see p. 2 for ideas depending on your learning outcomes)
- Remote written exam (open-book, take-home format)
- Remote oral exam (see our resource on Oral Assessments and Examinations)
- Series of shorter quizzes

For more information about how to adapt your exams and quizzes, see p. 27-30 of the planning guide.

Additional Resources

Adapting your Assessment Strategies for Remote Teaching: A Planning Resource for Instructors, McGill Teaching and Learning Services

Assessment Strategies, McGill Teaching and Learning Services

Remote Exams and Assessments: Tips for Exams and Alternative Assessments, Rutgers School of Arts & Sciences

Alternative Online Assessments, University of Calgary, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

Alternatives to Traditional Testing, Berkeley Center for Teaching and Learning

Alternatives to Traditional Exams and Papers, IU Bloomington Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning

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