Guidance on midterm and end-of-term assessments for Fall 2020

We recognize that faculty are thinking carefully about how to adapt midterm and final exams to a virtual learning format. Although all in-class exams are still governed by the Honor Code, both students and faculty have questions about how to ensure that these assessments are completed with integrity. Faculty may wish to craft these assessments with an eye towards minimizing the risk of both perceived and actual academic integrity violations.

Below you will find general recommendations and specific advice for preparing and administering traditional assessments (exams, term papers) and alternative (or supplemental) assessment types for both midterms and the end of term. We also invite you to consult with the McGraw Center on adapting or developing a final assessment.

General recommendations:

1. **Level the playing field.** Consider ways to “level the playing field” among students preparing for and completing an exam under variable circumstances. This might mean conducting oral exams in smaller classes, or making a midterm or final exam “open book.” For instance, students might be permitted to consult course resources on the exam, but asked to demonstrate higher-level thinking skills that emphasize generative thinking, synthesis, and establishing connections across course materials (rather than exam questions for which the answers can be easily found in class notes or online). These options can also help to reassure students that none of their classmates can access an unfair advantage. For timed exams, use the timer feature in the learning management system (LMS, such as Blackboard or Canvas) and remind students that you will check the timestamp of their submission (see more information under “End of Term Assessments,” below).

2. **Remind students about academic integrity.** Remind students of their academic integrity obligations. Be clear about what resources students may or may not use to complete a scheduled or take-home exam, and what forms of collaboration (if any) are permitted on these assignments. We would recommend not allowing the use of the internet during exams (beyond connecting to the exam itself) to avoid confusion about whether students can use online solutions or solutions provided by an “expert.” We also encourage faculty to remind students that Rights, Rules, Responsibilities explicitly states that students may not use online solutions (such as those available on Chegg or Slader) when completing work for credit, nor can they publish, sell, or distribute course-related
3. **Vary Exam Structures.** Both Canvas and Blackboard offer instructors the opportunity to randomize exam questions so that students in the course will not receive questions in the same order. If an exam is being administered to different subsets of a class at different times, the exams could be varied to prevent students from obtaining the exam questions from others. Exam settings can also be established that prohibit a student from returning to an exam question once it is completed. Other exam formats, such as splitting a three-hour exam into three one-hour parts where the answer for each part must be uploaded before proceeding to the next part, could help prevent students from seeking help online or from others.

4. **Troubleshoot:** If you are relying on technology for a timed assessment, do an early “test run” to identify and resolve problems before the assessment itself.

5. **Academic accommodations:** Students who have been approved for testing accommodations should continue to receive these accommodations for an end-of-term assessment, regardless of how it is administered. Please consult the Faculty Guidance for Accommodating Students for Remote Class Administration developed by the Office of Disability Services or reach out to ODS directly with questions. ODS will notify you directly of any students who are approved for accommodations.

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**End of Term Assessments**

All Princeton courses should include an end-of-term assessment. But the challenges of teaching remotely may encourage faculty to offer additional and more explicit instructions and guidance for students who will be completing this work in variable circumstances.

**Scheduled exam:** Final exams scheduled by the Registrar may be administered via Blackboard or Canvas during your exam time. We recommend that faculty give students a 24-hour window of time to access an exam on the day the Registrar has scheduled for the course exam. Faculty should use the LMS timer to set the amount of time students have to complete the exam within that window of accessibility – both Blackboard and Canvas have a “timer” or “count down” feature. Students should receive no more than three hours for a scheduled final examination unless specific accommodations have been approved by ODS. We recommend letting students know that time stamps on their submissions may be checked and that they must adhere to the stated time limits. Both LMSs allow faculty members to give additional time to complete an exam to a student who has academic accommodations.

Exams scheduled by the Registrar, even when taken remotely, fall under the jurisdiction of the Honor Committee.
Take-home exam: Take-home exams may be administered beginning on December 9 and must be submitted by the University deadline of December 12. Both Blackboard and Canvas allow faculty to make a take-home exam available for a defined time window (for example, 72 hours). We recommend that you limit the number of hours it will take to complete a take-home exam within that window to no more than 8 hours.

Take-home exams fall under the jurisdiction of the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline.

End-of-term written work: All written work, including end-of-term papers and lab reports, is due by Dean’s Date, Tuesday, December 8. No extensions may be granted beyond this date without the advance permission of the student’s residential college dean or director of studies.

Faculty are encouraged to provide opportunities for students to draft, get feedback on, and revise their end-of-term written work. You’ll find guidance on how to set up a virtual peer review assignment on the McGraw Center website. The Writing Center is offering virtual appointments this semester; you may want to encourage your students to schedule an appointment for a one-on-one conference with a trained Writing Center Fellow.

We encourage faculty to use their course website or a file-sharing service (like Princeton’s Google Drive or OneDrive) to collect assignments, rather than collecting them via email, to minimize your risk of overlooking a student’s exam submission. If completing library or archival research has become impossible for students, you may wish to substitute a portfolio for a term paper (see below).

Alternative (or supplemental) assessment types:

Portfolios: Portfolios are a cumulative collection of work that allow faculty to measure a student’s growth and change over the term in a holistic manner. You can allow students to revise individual assignments before compiling them into the portfolio and invite them to introduce the portfolio as a whole, reflecting on how their work has evolved over the semester. Each piece in the portfolio can also be annotated by students with comments on their creative or analytic process.

Oral exams or presentations: Oral exams or presentations allow students to demonstrate their ability to explain course concepts, describe their thinking or problem-solving process, and respond to questions. Presentations can be delivered via Zoom or other web conferencing tools.

Reflection papers: You may ask students to write a reflection paper that discusses their intellectual growth in your course. While this assessment type does not test knowledge or skills, it may give you insight into the course’s impact on your students. Reflection papers can be completed in an untimed and offline environment, and submitted via your course website.
**Reports and memos:** Often written for an intended (if sometimes imagined) audience, reports and memos allow students to synthesize and apply course knowledge and skills. These may be cumulative, drawing on the semester’s materials, or more focused.

If you develop an alternative assessment, we recommend that you also develop a **grading rubric** for the work. A grading rubric identifies what you will value and reward in your students’ work. We recommend that you share that grading rubric with your students (we’re happy to consult on developing one).