

Best Practices for Exams in Emergency Remote Teaching Environment

In this remote teaching environment, it is strongly recommended to move away from timed exams and consider other ways to assess mastery of course material to the extent possible. Students may be working more/different hours, caring for family members, experiencing connectivity issues, having to share computers or other resources, and experiencing many other types of stress. However, if an exam is necessary there are many things to consider to ensure an accurate and equitable assessment of student learning.

A quick discussion with a CODL Instructional Designer can provide you with good solutions for your current testing choices. They can be reached at 785-864-1000 or codl@ku.edu. The options/solutions provided below are just the tip of the iceberg for test creation/options. Please consider the following guidelines:

- **Make the exam open-book/open-note.** Make it clear to students what resources are fair game to consult as they complete the exam. Note that it is very difficult to ensure that other resources are not consulted; making an exam as open-resource as possible will help ensure a more equitable assessment.
- **Extend the time for the exam.** This allows students to take the test at a time when they are sure they will be able to focus and concentrate on the exam. This is especially important during this pandemic, when students may be in care-taking roles, living with younger siblings, experiencing connectivity issues, etc. It is hard to predict the technological or real-life difficulties that may occur during an exam- so relieving some of that time pressure is important.
- **Clearly communicate expectations around troubleshooting.** How much time should students allow for a response from the instructor/instructional team? Who is the contact person for exam-related difficulties? What is the “plan” should technological problems occur, such as if a student were to be locked-out from the exam, or prematurely submit the exam, etc.? Have someone who knows how to handle the backend of exams in Blackboard available during the testing window to respond quickly to student communication about troubleshooting.
- **Consider using question banks.** These provide different sets of questions that test the same learning objective. Questions can be randomized for different test takers.
- **Randomize the questions and answers** if giving a Blackboard exam.
- **Consider using Gradescope.** This is a tool available to all KU faculty. An online assignment feature allows students to upload their work directly. Lisa Sharpe Elles (sharpeelles@ku.edu) in chemistry can consult with you about how to do this.
- **Consider partial credit.** Blackboard has many options for this. Alternatively, have students submit PDFs or photos of their work so you can see how they arrived at answers.
- **Consider multiple attempts.** If you do this, think about how and when to show students what they have gotten right or wrong.
- **Reach out to CODL and IT educational technology.** They can help you think through how design and implement online exams. Do not hesitate to ask for help: codl@ku.edu; itedtech@ku.edu.
- **Consult the Blackboard help site** (<https://blackboard.ku.edu/tests-quizzes>). It has advice on such things as creating, deploying and previewing a test; modifying settings; creating exceptions; showing results and feedback; managing due dates and late exceptions; and working with the test access log.

Considerations when designing an Online Exam in Blackboard

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CREATING A TEST:

- Do you want the exam to automatically be graded or do you want to grade all/part of it?
 - If you want it to automatically grade, choose test questions that do that like Fill in the Blank, Fill in Multiple Blanks, Matching, Multiple Answer, Multiple Choice and True/False
 - If your question requires grading, we recommend “essay” even if the question is really a short answer. Essay does not limit the length of the response.
 - If you are going to use both types of questions, consider making a two-part exam. One part with the self-grading questions so students get instant feedback, and one part with the questions that require grading.
- Test description/instruction – you only need to fill out ONE of these areas. It is recommended you include all important information: # of questions, information covered, time allowed, # of attempts allowed.
- What are Question Settings?
 - If you want to use images, files, and web links in test questions, etc. You will need to update these settings.
 - If you know what point value you want all questions to be, update the default point value here. (You can always select all and edit point value later.)
- What TYPE of questions do you want to ask?
 - Calculated Formula – most instructors find this difficult to use, you might consider preparing the questions with a mathematical editor in a word document that students download, complete and submit using an Assignment in Blackboard.
 - Essay vs. Short Answer – choose essay to be sure that a student’s answer won’t be limited.
 - Fill in the Blank and Fill in Multiple Blanks – just remember these depend on exact matching the answers you provide – students may email and complain if they think they should get credit, which results in possibly grading them.
 - Matching – be sure you select the option to randomize the answers or the answers will be in order for example 1 will pair with A, 2 will pair with B.
 - Multiple Answer – you have the option to give partial credit. For example, if you have three correct answers, each one could be worth 33%. You can also decide if you want them to be able to get a negative score. Imagine you have three correct answers out of seven. If the student selected all seven answers, they could be assigned values that punish this behavior.
 - Multiple Choice – easy to set up.
 - True/False – easy to set up, just be careful of using double negatives that can confuse students.
 - Ordering – list items and students place them in order.
 - Hot spot – allows an image to be uploaded and students identify an area of the image by selecting it. This works well for things like recognition of parts of a cell, where the question would be, click on the nucleus.
- Will you create question pools so that not all students will get the same questions?
 - You can use pools to randomly select a set number of questions from a pool.

- What about feedback to students?
 - Most question types allow you to provide feedback to students for a correct answer like “great job” and feedback for incorrect answers like “explore page 214 in the text to get a better understanding” or “the correct answer is...”

TEST OPTIONS AND TEST DEPLOYMENT:

- Under the test description, choose to have the test open in a new window.
- Test Availability – make available to students.
- Will the students be allowed multiple attempts to answer any questions?
 - Select this check mark if you want to allow multiple attempts. Allow unlimited or choose number of attempts.
 - If you allow multiple attempts determine which score/grade will be recorded – your choices are last attempt, highest score, lowest score, first attempt, or average grade of attempts.
- Will students be able to save and come back to an exam (probably most likely for an essay exam)? If not, choose the Force Completion check box.
- How much time will you give students to complete the exam?
 - The “basic” rule for multiple choice tests is approximately 2 min per question. This will be more time than students traditionally take, but allows for the extra time technology can add to the experience. Anticipate that students will have access to all resources during this time (internet, books and notes).
 - If your test will take more than an hour to complete, we recommend breaking it into two parts. This helps avoid connectivity issues.
 - If a timer is used – do you want it to auto submit if they go over time – if so be sure to turn Auto-Submit to ON.
- Is the time the same for everyone or are there exceptions?
 - All tests which are set up with a timer, have an easy way to provide individual users with additional time and/or access. In an area called Test Availability Exceptions.
- How long will the exam be available on Bb?
 - Tests have availability dates/times called Display After and Display Until. These dates determine if the link to the test appears in the student view. For example, if you make an test available for two hours (4-6 pm) with a one hour time limit, students will be able to start the exam anytime between 4-6 pm. If the student starts at 6 pm, then they will be able to complete the test until 7 pm when the one hour time limit is up.
 - The latest communication from the chancellor mentions that we may not want to limit the time of day to a small window. Instead, we might use due dates to track if people complete it by a set time and date. We would just not release the feedback/correct answers until after the due date.
- Will you require a password?
 - You can set one, and communicate it to students at a particular time.
- Does a student require accommodations like extra time, extra attempts or longer access?
 - Set Test Availability Exceptions
- Do you want to set a due date – so that it appears automatically on students calendar in Blackboard?
 - Set a due date.

- You can also select the setting that does not allow a student to access the test if the due date has passed. If not selected, it will notify the instructor that it was submitted late and requires attention.
- What feedback do you want to provide to students and WHEN do you want it to appear?
 - These are options in the Show Test Results and Feedback to Student area in the Test Options.
 - If students are giving multiple attempts, you could choose to give the feedback “after submission.” This allows the student to understand what they got wrong, and then possibly learn from it.
 - You can choose feedback to be released After Due Date so students can’t share the answers with each other.
 - Check out other options also.
 - Score per question – shows which points they earned.
 - Will they see the answer options? If you want them to SEE ALL, CORRECT, and/or SUBMITTED.
 - If you created feedback within test questions, choose the FEEDBACK option.
 - Most importantly, choose **show incorrect answers** so students are able to see what they missed.
- How will the test be presented?
 - All at once.
 - One at a time is NOT recommended because it requires the user’s computer to connect with the Blackboard server multiple times which increases the load and chances of connectivity issues.
- Will you randomize questions within the exam?
 - This can help with student cheating.
 - However, don’t choose this option if you intentionally want questions to appear in order so students can access and reference the book.

EXAMS NOT USING THE TEST FEATURE

- How will the students submit their answers?
 - You can use the Assignment feature, where students would download the exam, complete it on paper, scan/photograph, and upload that image.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- What happens if students lose connectivity or Blackboard crashes during the exam?
 - You will be able to see the attempt and determine if you would like to clear it and allow the student to retake the exam.
- Who should students contact if they have a problem with the exam?
 - Only the INSTRUCTOR can reset an exam – students can contact technical support but technical support will reach out to the instructor to determine if the student should have access and also support the instructor on how to make that happen.
- Is there a rubric in Bb associated with the exam?
 - There is an ability to associate a rubric with an exam, but it needs to be an essay question type.