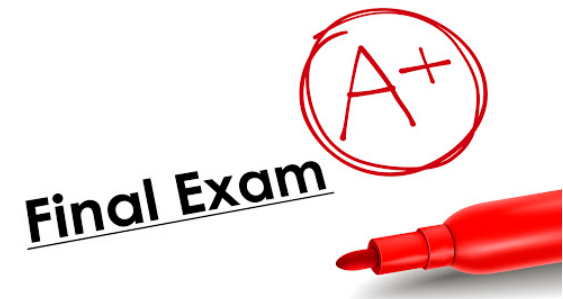


EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS for ONLINE EXAMS

Guidance for Final Exams for Spring 2020

This semester, more than ever, it's important to recognize that our students are facing stresses and challenges that are completely out of their control, which may be impeding their ability to effectively engage with our courses. The reality is that a majority of our students did not sign up for an online course, nor did they expect or agree to take tests online. It is also the reality that the majority of faculty also did not sign up to teach online, and did not have exams prepared that are conducive to the distance modality. While testing is the way we, as faculty, are accustomed to assessing student progress, and a way of ensuring normalcy, please remember these are extraordinary times!



As such, it is important for us to acknowledge that adjusting to new technologies like Proctorio, Zoom, or anything else might be unsettling and anxiety provoking. Additionally, it might penalize students who may have poor internet connections, lack of laptop capabilities, broken technology, and/or lack of privacy at home.

Even for students who signed up for an online course where proctoring was planned, their home environment and life situation has potentially been dramatically changed due to COVID-19 and the Shelter in Place Order.

With that in mind, we encourage you to err on the side of understanding and accommodating students and use this as an opportunity to rethink what needs to be assessed and the most effective way to go about accomplishing it.

To help you through this planning process, we have compiled some important aspects/questions to consider, examples, and additional resources.

Aspects to Consider while Creating a Plan for Your Final Exam

Infographic LINK (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/gforsythe/49663350067/>)

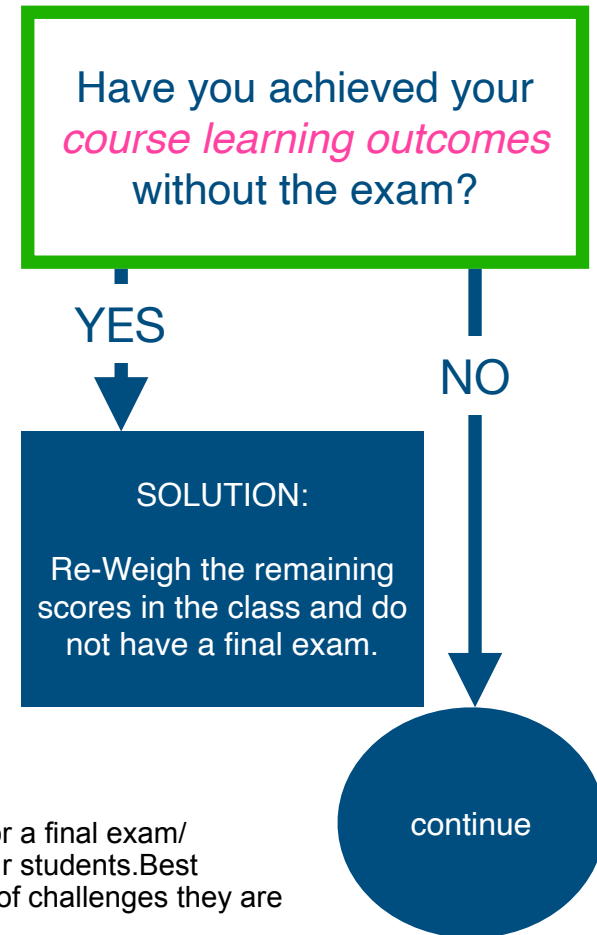
- Have students, through the work already submitted, achieved the SLO's?
Remember, at this point, we should be focusing on SLOs and what students absolutely need to know.
 - **Yes** - Consider ways to wrap up the semester on a positive note

- Example 1: Provide students a final reflection and have them discuss their “ah-ha” moments in the course
 - Example 2: Critical reflection on a topic learned in class that connects to students’ lived experiences.
 - Example 3: Synchronous celebrations of their resiliency and dedication.
 - Example 4: Give students the choice to accept their current grade; or complete a final assessment/assignment for a chance or possibly improve their grade.
- **No** - Continue thinking through various aspects of the final exam/assessment
- Are your students struggling with technology and internet connectivity issues?
 - **Yes** - Is there a low-tech option that can be used to assess student progress? Are there other types of assessments that could be made available to students instead?
 - Example: Asynchronous submission of assessment
 - **No** - Continue thinking through various aspects of the final exam/assessment
- Do you have students with accommodations?

Remember, these accommodations are still applicable (if not more so) in the distance education modality.

 - **Yes** - Please check-in with one of the DRC counselors to discuss your plan for a final exam/assessment to ensure we are providing the necessary accommodations to our students. Best practice during this time is to consider all students holistically and the variety of challenges they are facing.
 - [Cañada DRC](#)
 - [College of San Mateo DRC](#)
 - [Skyline DRC](#)
 - **No** - Continue thinking through various aspects of the final exam/assessment
- Does your final exam/assessment need to happen only during the scheduled final exam period?

Remember per the contract, we are required to hold a final meeting during the scheduled final exam time, but can be flexible about the final exam itself.

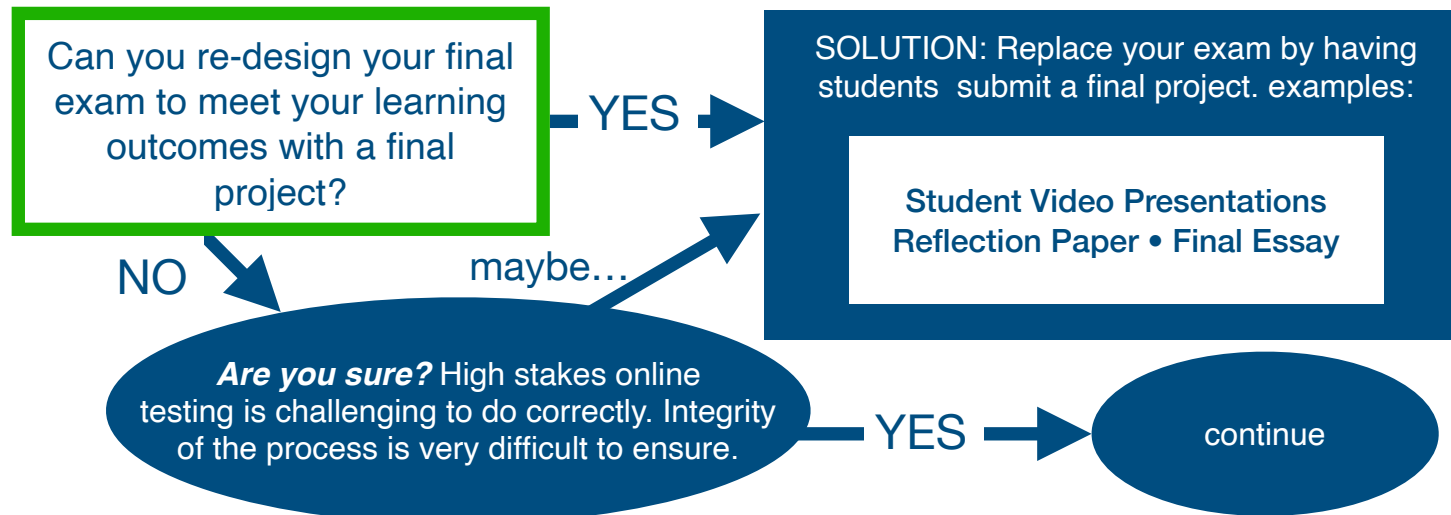


Additionally, our students may no longer be in the Pacific time zone, so it is helpful to be flexible and try to provide students as big a window as possible to complete their final exams/assessments.

- **No** - Consider allowing students more time to complete their final exams.
 - Example 1: If you typically don't open final exams in Canvas until finals week, consider opening them the week before and closing them at the last possible moment.
 - Example 2: Consider removing specific time limits on the final exam.
- **Yes** - Continue thinking through various aspects of the final exam/assessment.
 - If you are going to give a synchronous/live final exam, make sure that it is at the scheduled final exam time
 - Consider giving an asynchronous final exam that has a flexible time period for completing the exam (for ex. Allowing students a 3 day window for students to sign in and complete an exam)
- Does your final exam/assessment need to happen synchronously?

Remember, our students may no longer be in the Pacific time zone, so it is helpful to be flexible.

 - **Yes** - Consider adding guidelines/provisions for unplanned interruptions (i.e. internet outage, device issues, or domestic responsibilities that may interrupt a synchronous exam).
 - Example 1: Provide students with multiple days and times they could synchronously complete the final exam/assessment
 - Example 2: Allow students the opportunity to reschedule if unplanned interruptions should interfere.
 - **No** - Consider a take home exam or Canvas quiz. Make your life and your students easier.



- Does your final exam need to carry the same weight as it did prior to the COVID-19 pandemic?
Remember, students' lives have drastically changed, even if they signed up for a fully online course, so trying to reduce the amount of stress caused by heavily weighted exams/assessments will be helpful.

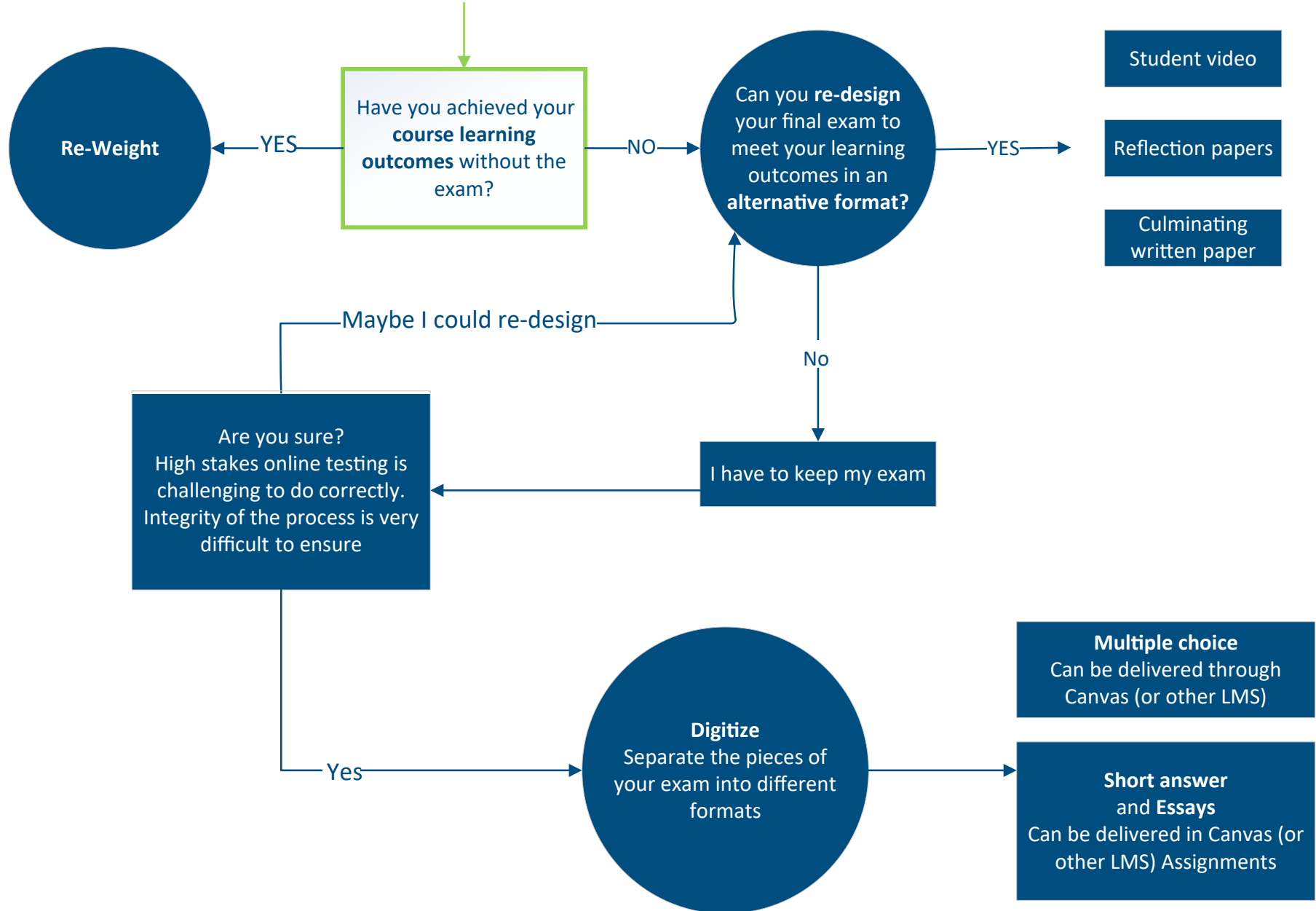
Additionally, as faculty, we can change the weight of assignments, the ability to grade on a curve, what assignments count towards the final grade, and whether the final exam can just be graded as a P/NP.

 - **No** - Consider a combination of lower stake activities/assignments
 - Example 1: Weighing the value of their homework grade or their grade prior to the transition into online learning more heavily than a final exam/assessment.
 - Example 2: Breaking the parts of a final exam/assessment into smaller assignments.
 - **Yes** - Continue thinking through various aspects of the final exam/assessment.

- Are you considering using Proctorio or other new technologies for final exam/assessment?
Remember, these technologies were not part of the expectation for students when they signed up to take the class. As such, the requirement of webcams for recording, dedicated private spaces, or other restrictions may not be possible for some students. This is an equity issue in finding the resources needed to comply with some requirements.
 - **Yes** - These technologies may be confusing for students to navigate. They requires practice, patience, and planning to use. This may not be the time to explore all of Proctorio's features (i.e. room scanning, etc.). Giving students ample opportunities to practice using this technology before using it for a final exam. Give yourself time to e
 - Example 1: if you are using Proctorio for the first time, let your class try it out before the actual test, so they figure out how it works.
 - Example 2: If you are requiring students to upload files or videos to Canvas, allow your class time to practice before the day of the exam.
 - Example 3: Proctorio can be used simply to lock down the browser, you don't have to use the camera features.
 - **No** - There is time to explore over the summer. Keep it simple. You are not required to use all the new tools available.

- Have you considered the time you'll need to grade your assessment?
Remember you, too, are a priority in creating your final exam/assessment, so please do what is best for yourself and your students.
 - **Yes** - Great! The auto-grading feature in Canvas quizzes can be a great time saver.
 - **No** - Consider your options. This has been a stressful semester and you should choose the exam option that does right by you as well your students.

So... you need to put your exam online.....



Communicating Your Plan to Your Students

As soon as you have developed your final exam/assessment plan, it is important to clearly communicate it with students via email, Canvas, etc.

When communicating:

- Be transparent in the exam/assessment timing, method, expectations, weight, etc.
- Provide information and resources about any new technology being used
- Acknowledge what resources will be made available to students.
 - Example: You will be allowed to use your textbook, notes, past homework assignments, calculators, formulas, etc.
- Explain the amount of preparation you feel is still needed for students to be successful in the exam/assessment.
 - Example: Please make sure to organize and review the class materials before beginning on the exam
- Ask students to share their specific concerns or needs with you as soon as possible.

Real Solutions from SMCCCD Faculty

Below are some real examples from your colleagues about how they are adapting their planned finals to this new reality:

Story 1 - adapting examinations

“We usually have a final exam that includes both essay questions and multiple choice. For our online final we will split our final into two sections and let students do each on their own schedule.

For the multiple choice section, we are using the Canvas quiz system. It has been pretty easy adding these kinds of questions. Features like automatically shuffling answers and putting four random questions from a set of six for each part of this section make every test equivalent but unique.

We have set the essay part up as a Canvas assignment. The assignment with prompts will unlock at 8:00am and students have all day to think about and write their essay. We’ve showed them how to use free software to take pictures of their final essay and save it as a PDF. The smart camera software creates a better scan than my home scanner, but I think most students may just type it and save as a PDF. At the end of the day, students can upload the PDF to the essay question assignment. We’ve done this already with other assignments throughout the semester so students seem pretty comfortable with the plan.”

Story 2 - keeping Proctorio use simple

“I use Proctorio as part of the class setup checklist, to help students get familiar with it and insure everyone is ready to go before the first assessment. Students also use it every week for a low stakes assessment to increase comfort and familiarity.

To keep things simple I do not require the ID check or room sweep. I have Proctorio make sure there are no other monitors and select the option to prevent them leaving the browser or going to other websites during the assessment. I set the Canvas quizzes to be available anytime in a 24 hour window to make it easier for the students.

Although I didn’t use Proctorio’s camera and screen recording initially, I do now. When students said they were concerned about being watched while taking the test or what might happen if a pet or child interrupted them, I reminded them Proctorio is just a tool. It allows the student to take a proctored exam where they want and when they want, but it doesn’t grade or penalize them.

Proctorio just flags a part of the video if something unusual happens to have me look at it. Same as a TA might bring something to my attention in a face to face exam. I let them know Proctorio is the students advocate. It gives me the ability to confirm these students took the class, did well on the exams, and earned their grade—with the same certainty and confidence as an on campus class.”

Story 3 - a different assessment strategy

“Typically, the final assessment in my Public Speaking course consists of an oral presentation and a Skills Showcase (An application style exam). When it comes to the oral presentation, I have asked students, given their technology, internet speeds, and life schedules, to select one of the following options:

Option #1 — Synchronously present their speech through Zoom

Option #2 — Asynchronously record their speech and upload it to Canvas

To meet students where they are at, for the synchronous Zoom meetings, I am offering options on four different class days at four different time slots (8:10, 9:10, 10:10 and 11:10 am) to help find a day and time that works with their new schedules. Those that are asynchronously recording their speeches have a week to complete the recording and upload it.

As for the Skills Showcase, I have taken this application style exam (normally a 2-3 hour in-class exam) and broken it down into three, different, smaller activities on Canvas in which students have two weeks to complete. My thinking is that this will allow students the chance to carve out smaller windows of time (when it works best with their life schedules) and work at their own pace to complete each part of the whole exam. The points values remain the same, but I feel it will reduce some of the anxiety around the Skills Showcase.”

Other Resources

- University of Denver - [Moving Your Final Exams Online](#)
- [Unconventional Final Exams to Give Your Students](#)
- [A Different Kind of Final - Faculty Focus](#)

Additional Resources for Alternative Final Assessments

- [Alternatives To Traditional Testing](#) (Center for Teaching and Learning: UC Berkeley)
- [Alternatives To Traditional Exams and Papers](#) (Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning: Indiana University)
- [Moving Your Final Exams Online](#) (Office of Teaching and Learning: University of Denver)
- [Online Alternatives to In-Person Proctored Exams](#) (Office of Distance Learning: University of Florida)
- [Final Exam Options](#) (Keep Teaching: UC Davis)
- [A Different Kind of Final](#) (Faculty Focus)
- [The Final Exam Experience](#) (Center for Teaching and Learning: Brigham Young University)

Considerations for Student Accommodations

In Canvas:

- [Once I publish a quiz, how can I give my students extra attempts?](#)
- [Once I publish a timed quiz, how can I give my students extra time?](#)

Final Thought:

While not all students are experiencing the same circumstances right now, we need to be as compassionate and flexible as possible in working with them. Faculty have purview over their grading mechanisms, but that also means that you can choose to work with and evaluate students differently based on individual circumstances, and we strongly encourage you to do so. Not all students need to be, or should be, treated the same way, and being fair in grading is not necessarily giving all students the same thing, but ensuring they all have the things that they individually need to succeed. Please take into consideration what is needed to assess that learning has taken place, what is needed to demonstrate that a student has learned enough to allow them to succeed at the next level, if necessary, and that learning can be demonstrated and evaluated in different ways.