UBC Forestry

Navigating the Choice: Online or In-Person Assessments?

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, the decision to choose among online, in-person or hybrid assessments has gained significant importance. As instructors, we understand the need to ensure a fair evaluation of student learning while upholding academic integrity, especially with the emergence of generative AI tools. To aid your decision-making process, we present a comprehensive guide that delves into the key aspects you should consider when pondering over this pivotal choice. As education evolves, balancing technological advancements with academic integrity is a delicate task that requires careful consideration.

Ten Aspects to Guide Your Decision:

1	**Nature of Assessments**	Consider the types of assessment (e.g., written responses, oral presentations, practical demonstrations), and think about which assessments would best suit the learning objectives.
2	**Learning Objectives**	How seamlessly do your assessment methods align with the learning objectives of your course? What assessment format will better reflect the skills and knowledge you intend your students to showcase?
3	**Class Size and Resources**	Consider your available resources and support structures to effectively administer and grade assessments, particularly in larger classes. Will you be able to manage technical glitches during online assessments? Will the teaching team be able to handle the grading workload in a pen-and-paper exam and storage of the exam materials in a large class? Will a hybrid setup, such as running an in-person exam on Canvas, work?
4	**Teaching Philosophy and Course Design**	Understand how your teaching philosophy and course design influence your assessment choice. Which format aligns better with your teaching style and objectives?
5	**Accessibility**	Examine whether all your students will have equal access to and be able to complete online assessments. What potential barriers might exist for students with disabilities or those with limited access to technology?
6	**Academic Integrity**	Design assessments that deter cheating and promote academic honesty. What measures and technologies can you implement to minimize unauthorized collaboration or external aids? Will you allow the use of generative AI tools in the course and the assessments?
7	**Flexibility and Convenience**	Reflect on how the chosen assessment format may impact your students' convenience and flexibility in completing the assessment. Will online assessments accommodate diverse schedules and situations?
8	**Engagement and Interaction**	Consider how your chosen assessment method fosters student engagement and interaction. How can you encourage active participation and critical thinking?

9	**Technical Proficiency**	Gauge your students' familiarity with technology and online platforms. Do you have the resources to provide technical support if required?
10	**Feedback and Assessment Speed**	Analyze how quickly you can provide feedback with each assessment format. Will students receive prompt feedback to facilitate their learning journey?

Here is a simplified comparison table that outlines the key differences between in-person and online assessments:

	In-Person Assessments	**Online Assessments**	**Hybrid Assessments (e.g., In-Person Exam on Canvas)**
Class Size	Easier to manage in small to medium-sized classes	Scalable for both small and large classes	Scalable for both small and large classes
Resources	Require physical space, materials, equipment	Primarily digital, require tech infrastructure	Require physical space and tech infrastructure
Accessibility	May pose challenges for disabled students to access the physical space or equipment	Potential for accessibility tools, remote access	Potential for accessibility tools, remote access
Academic Integrity	Face-to-face supervision, limited external aid	Measures and technologies needed to deter cheating and collusion	Face-to-face supervision, limited external aid. Require Internet connection and equipment setup.
Flexibility	Limited by scheduling, location	Offers flexibility, asynchronous participation	Limited by scheduling, location
Interaction	Real-time interaction, immediate clarification	May require additional technical setup for immediate interaction if necessary	Real-time interaction, immediate clarification
Technical Proficiency	More focus on content, minimal tech expertise required for pen and paper assessments. There are still technical setups for the lab exams.	Tech-savvy students, possible support required	Possible support required
Collaboration	Limited peer collaboration during the assessment	Risk of unauthorized collaboration	Limited peer collaboration during the assessment

Tips for online assessments

Should you choose to proceed with online assessments, the subsequent sections of this document offer resources developed in line with UBC's educative approach to academic integrity and guidelines on ChatGPT and Other Generative AI tools.

Quick recaps of the university guidelines on AI tools:

- Students should **not** assume that all available technologies are permitted.
- The use of generative AI tools is a **course-level** decision and there is no overall ban in teaching and learning at UBC. As such, the use of ChatGPT or other generative AI tools does not automatically equate to academic misconduct at UBC.
- However, if using generative AI tools has not been discussed or specified by the instructor, then it is likely to be considered prohibited.
- And if using generative AI tools on coursework has been prohibited by the instructor, then using these tools would be considered to be academic misconduct.
- **If using generative AI tools has been permitted by the instructor,** then instructors should make sure to convey the limitations of use and how it should be acknowledged, and use should stay within those bounds.

A. Online Written Assessments

UBC Academic Integrity recommends that instructors consider introducing randomness into questions to maintain academic integrity during online assessments. One effective approach is by utilizing Canvas Quiz to randomize question orders and answer choices, making the assessment less predictable for students and discouraging collaboration or seeking help from peers.

Another strategy involves creating multiple versions of the same question with slight variations or setting up question banks for random selection. This further enhances the element of surprise, making it difficult for students to share answers or use unauthorized aids.

To address contract cheating, longer assessments can be divided into smaller, separate ones. This approach reduces the time window for external assistance and makes it harder for students to solicit help from dishonest sources.

Please check out more assessment design considerations from UBC Academic Integrity.

Additionally, online written assessments can be conducted either in-class or at home.

For **in-class** assessments, students are required to bring their own devices (e.g., laptops, smartphones, tablets). However, it is recommended that the teaching team provides alternative paper assessments for students experiencing internet or technology issues.

For **take-home** assessments, instructors can choose between two options: (1) open-book, which allows more flexibility for students, or (2) closed-book with the support of invigilation tools (see Section C) to monitor and

ensure academic integrity. The choice depends on the specific requirements and learning objectives of the assessment. Please be aware that if using ChatGPT and/or generative AI tools on coursework has been prohibited in the course, there are no effective ways to detect or prevent using these tools during the take-home assessments.

B. Online Oral Assessments

As an alternative to written assessments, the teaching team may consider incorporating oral assessments for courses that involve group projects, final essays, and final presentations. This approach aims to encourage students to showcase their critical thinking, understanding, and reflective abilities.

However, it is crucial for the teaching team to be mindful of supporting students who have English as an additional language or those with accessibility needs, such as disabilities or anxieties related to public speaking.

Providing additional resources and guidance to improve English language proficiency and scholarly speaking skills can be beneficial. The UBC Precedents Archive for Scholarly Speaking (PASS) and the PASS Instructor Guide offer valuable guides and examples that instructors and students can use to enhance their scholarly speaking abilities.

C. Online Assessments with Invigilation Tools

LockDown Browser, a centrally supported tool at UBC, is useful for invigilating online assessments. It does not record or offer proctoring functions. Instead, it prevents students from accessing external websites or applications during the assessments, ensuring a controlled environment. Students cannot print or copy questions, visit other websites, access other applications, or close the assessment until it's submitted. Quizzes and exams created for LockDown Browser cannot be accessed using standard browsers. Please note that Forestry IT will test the lab version of the LockDown Browser and will provide updates on whether it can be implemented in Forestry UB labs.

In conjunction with LockDown Browser, Zoom can be utilized to monitor progress or provide a communication channel for addressing urgent needs during assessments. To facilitate a seamless experience, organizing practice sessions for students to install and test LockDown Browser before actual assessments is highly recommended.

To accommodate students who are unable to install LockDown Browser on their devices, the teaching team may arrange alternative options:

- Online Canvas Quiz (without LockDown Browser) + Zoom Monitoring
- In-person Canvas Quiz (without LockDown Browser) with invigilation

Here are the UBC LockDown Browser guides for instructors and students. More details about using LockDown Browser and Zoom for Exams can be found here.

D. Online Assessments for Large Classes (> 200 Students)

Canvas quizzes for large classes (more than 200 students) may require additional settings to ensure smooth functionality and successful rendering of quiz statistics. It's also essential to note that having all students access the same quiz simultaneously can cause slowdowns in both the SpeedGrader and Gradebook. Please be aware that there are no effective ways to detect or prevent using generative AI tools during the take-home assessments.

Even awesomeness has limits. We can't render statistics for this quiz, but you can download the reports.

Student Analysis | Item Analysis

To address the issue, the teaching team can consider two options:

(1) Staggering the start time among students to access the same quiz	**(2) Duplicating the quiz to reduce the number of students in each quiz**
Pros: • There is only one quiz to manage, grade, and moderate. • Automated setup is available. Cons: • Instructors need to clearly explain the start and end times for the quiz to ensure that students are not confused.	Pros: • There is no need to stagger the start time among students. Cons: • There are multiple quizzes to manage and grade. • The setup is manual and can be relatively slow depending on the class size.

To discuss and implement either option, we recommend the instructor contact the Forestry Teaching & Learning Support Team (forestry.tls@ubc.ca) at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled exam.