



# ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST FOR ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

## Written, Open-book, Asynchronous, Unproctored, Final Exams

[The Academic Accommodations](#) process is designed to remove barriers for students who experience disability related impacts. Academic accommodations:

- Equalize learning opportunities for students
- Do not guarantee academic success. All students, including those with accommodations, must meet the academic requirements and standards of their courses.
- Do not remove the regular academic challenges. Student with accommodations will experience similar challenges and successes as peers in their programs.

### How to support Students:

- Work with [Queen's Student Accessibility Services \(QSAS\)](#) to address accommodation requests in a timely manner so that students who need accommodations do not have the added stress of worrying about them
- **On the exam**, clearly state whom to contact with questions and when students can expect a response (e.g., "A TA will be available to answer questions between 9:00am – 12:00pm EST and between 1:00 – 4:00pm EST")
- Provide the exam in an accessible format (see [Accessibility Checklist for MS Word](#))
- Don't make assumptions about what technology students have available to them (e.g., printers, scanner)
  - Identify technological requirements at the beginning of the term
  - Recognize that students might not be able to purchase new technology
- During the term, provide some low stakes assessments that use the technology required on the final exam (e.g., quiz tool, dropbox, OnQ, MATLAB etc.) so that students become familiar with the technology they will need to use on the final exam
  - Be explicit about the rationale for these low stakes assessments with students (e.g.: These assignments were created so that you can become familiar with the technology required during the course. If you experience any issues, please contact your TA at \_\_\_\_\_").
- Become fluent with the technologies you are using for exams and test them out, perhaps with your TAs or your 'Teaching Buddy', ahead of time. Check with a Technology Specialist at the CTL if you have more questions.
- Advise students and TAs to immediately double check that exam files were submitted as intended. Address any problems right away

- **For timed exams within a window of availability:**
  - Provide a sufficient window of time when students can take the exam
  - Do not implement academic integrity measures that compromise students' ability to perform well with integrity. Specifically,
    - Do not restrict students' ability to go back to a previous question
    - To account for differences in time zones, set a sufficiently wide window of time (e.g., 24-48 hours) for students to take the exam
    - Set an exam duration that provides sufficient time for students to complete the exam.
      - Be sure to include extra-time for students with Letters of Accommodations
    - Do not set the time limit of the exam to an unreasonably short duration in the hope of preventing students from copying or sharing answers over the internet
    - Provide ample time for students to complete the exam and add an additional 30 minutes for students to upload their exam files, (i.e., if it a 2-hour exam, the extra time for upload should make it a 2-hour exam + 30 minutes for upload)
- For untimed exams within a window of availability:
- Provide clear and reasonable expectations re: scope and time to complete (e.g., "essay answers should be approximately 250 words"; "This exam is designed to be completed in 2 hours.").

#### Additional Resources to consider:

Gernsbacher, Morton Ann et al. "Four Empirically Based Reasons Not to Administer Time-Limited Tests." *Translational issues in psychological science* vol. 6,2 (2020): 175-190.

## Virtual Oral Exams

- Recognize that virtual oral exams
  - are only feasible for instructors who have experience conducting oral exams (if you have never done this before, this is not a good time to try it),
  - may require an ASL interpreter
  - significantly increase students' anxiety, and
  - require students to have technology that they might not have and might not be able to purchase easily.
- If you do decide to have an oral exam
  - Allay students' anxiety around oral exams by providing practice sessions for students and make it clear that students will not be penalized for technology glitches during the exam
  - If synchronous oral exams are not feasible, consider using asynchronous video or audio-recorded questions (but recognize that these, too, increase students' anxiety).
    - Captioning may also be required for both asynchronous video or audio-recorded questions.

## Summative Assignment

Summative Assessment occurs at or near the end of a period of learning and may be used to inform further instruction. Typically associated with a mark that goes toward a student's final grade. Common summative assessments include midterm exams, final projects, and papers. See this link for more examples: <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/Formative-Summative-Assessments>

- Consider Time Management Challenges
  - Scaffold the assignment to assist students with time management challenges related to learning in a term with few or no scheduled classes (e.g., have students submit a proposal or outline on which you provide feedback in Week 8 or so. You can also have more steps: outline, introduction, bibliography, etc.)
  - Provide detailed, clear instructions and expectations at the beginning of the term, or at least several weeks in advance of the due date
  - Remind students of the due dates more than once
- Reduce Unnecessary Effort and Stress (For You and Your Students):
  - Provide a clear and consistent navigation so students can quickly locate assignment instructions and marking guides
  - Provide a marking guide or rubric with the assignment instructions and encourage students to use it as a guide
  - Be available to address students' questions in a timely manner right up until the assignment due date
  - Provide detailed instructions so students do not need to email you with question
  - Do not make assumptions about what technologies or bandwidth students have at home
  - Do not use rigid due dates with harsh late penalties
  - Ask a 'Teaching Buddy' colleague or TA to review draft assignment instructions
  - Provide opportunities for self-assessments before midterms (e.g., practice questions)
- For summative assignments that are presentations, provide opportunities for students to practice with the technology
- If students need to video record themselves for their summative assessment, stick to your marking guide and be mindful of unconscious biases that can occur when you are watching someone on screen

All assessments occur in the term (i.e., no final exam or summative end-of-term assignment)

- Consider Time management Challenges
  - Scaffold assignments: Break down a larger assignment into smaller assignments that focus on skills or types of knowledges students need to succeed in the larger assignment.
  - Aim to strike a workload balance between multiple frequent small-stakes tasks and very few heavily weighted assessments (e.g., bi-weekly quizzes rather than weekly quizzes)
  - Reduce Unnecessary Effort and Stress (For You and Your Students) Provide practice questions

- Post thorough assignment instructions and marking guides
- Check to make sure your tech works in your learning management system (e.g., Narrated PowerPoint presentation embedded into a course page)
- Communicate what to expect on quizzes and assignments
- Provide opportunities for self-assessment (e.g., practice questions before graded quizzes)
- Help students maintain a schedule
  - Offer students the opportunity to help one another stay on track by self-enrolling in “virtual study buddy” groups. Virtual Study buddy groups can work on the course ‘together’ at designated times each week. Be sure to tell students when it’s okay to work with others and what they need to complete on their own.
  - Provide regular reminders of upcoming due dates
- Incorporate flexibility
  - Offer 'slip days' and extensions where feasible
  - Consider requiring students who need a no-penalty extension to meet with a TA or instructor to get help
  - Do not post rigid due dates with harsh late penalties
- Plan to extend (without penalty) any due dates that fall in weeks 1 and 2 for students who enter the course on the last day of the "Add" period.
- Do not make assumptions about students who enter the class at the end of the “Add” period; there is a wide range of reasons for this.
- Have some assessments early in the course so that students can
  - determine how they are doing so they can improve over the term, and
  - make an informed decision about staying in the course before they incur penalties for dropping.
- In courses where content builds on previous content (e.g., Mathematics), consider having a recovery plan for students who have gotten behind due to their disability

*This resource has been adapted and built from the University of Waterloo’s [“Accessibility Checklist for Alternative Assessments”](#). The Centre for Teaching and Learning at Queen’s would like to thank Alan Jeans, Andrew Ashby and Thomas Abrams for their thoughtful comments and support with adapting this resource to the Queen’s University context. All content is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)*