forestry
university of british columbia

PFFAC Tip Sheet

Assessments and Alternatives to Proctoring Online Exams

PFFAC Recommendation

Using invigilating or proctoring software (*eg*, Proctorio) for exams can have negative impacts on and/or be disadvanagesous for both students and instructors. There have been many discussions at UBC about the effectiveness of administering proctored online exams. Instructors in the Faculty of Forestry are free to use Proctorio; however, after studying problem closely, the *Faculty of Forestry Planning for Fall Adhoc Committee* recommends that instructors not use this software for following reasons below:

Students

- Impacts on students' privacy
- Impacts on equity of students with disabilities, difficult home environments, or those who experience exam anxiety
- May requre purchasing extra equipment (*eg*, webcam and microphone)
- Requires having access to good, reliable internet connection

Instructors

- Takes up more time and energy on before, during, and after exams
  - Setup – it is recommended that a demo exam for students be implemented to test their computer setups and become familiar with the proctoring system
  - During – instructors need to stand-by and monitor (remotely on the instructor's computer screen) all of the students during the examination (which can range from 3 hours if all students are doing exam at the same time to 24 hours or more if students are allowed to do the exams at different times because of time-zone difference)
  - After – Proctorio monitors/analyzes students during the exam. It generates a report (Proctorio Gradebook) showing the "Suspicion Level" percentage based on the Proctorio exam settings, selected/controlled by the instructors. The suspicion level can be highly inaccurate or misleading. Therefore, instructors need to spend extra time looking into the result; time which cold be spent grading the exam (*eg*, last term, an instructor from spent an extra 6 hours clarifying this issue before even beginning to grade the exam)

Hints for administering non-proctored exams

- Modify existing exams
  - Creating large question pools – Canvas can randomly assign a small number of them for an exam
  - Shuffle choices within questions – ensure letter choice answers for students are randomized (Canvas allows the possible answers of all the questions to be shuffled)
  - Use critical-thinking, multiple-choice questions (*eg*, on the same multiple choice question, pick ideas/statements from different topics/lectures within the course; making it difficult for students to open the slides and find the answer in a short period of time)
  - Ask open-end questions – answers will vary from student to students
- Reduce the amount of time allocated for students to complete exams and shorten the window of time to access an exam
  - Limits collusion between students
- Re-work assessment strategies
  - Allow retakes of the exams for full or partial credit
  - Reduce high stakes exams, and opt for more frequent, lower stakes assessments (worth no more than 30% of the final grade, but typically much less) – using more frequent, low-stakes assessments can reduce the motivation for students to cheat and can also reduce overall stress levels and provide room for improvement for students.
- Prepare an honesty pledge (see examples in the *PFFAC Online Teaching and Learning Best Practices document)* or ask students if they understand the consequences of cheating (receive a zero, disciplinary action, etc.)

Some alternatives to proctored exams

- Open-book exams
- Oral exams (if feasible given your class size).
- Smaller frequent quizzes
- Written assignments – final paper
- Use Reflection Activities
  - Multimedia assignments (videos, audio, podcast)
  - Presentations (pre-recorded, live)
  - Online debates (synchronous, asynchronous)
  - Problem solving projects
  - Case studies or experience sharing
  - Peer review (Canvas, Peer Scholar)
  - Self-assessment and peer evaluation (iPeer)
  - Student created questions and matching solutions (Peer Wise)
  - Summaries and other written discussion posts
  - Collaborative writing (UBC Wiki)
  - Mind mapping
  - Minute paper
- Wherever possible, create a rubric to deliver clear and detailed instructions for assignments and participation (see Module 3 from CTLT online teaching program: https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/52088)