

MEMORANDUM

To: Course instructors
Date: 26 April 2021
Re: Remote Proctoring Guidelines

Once again for 2021 Spring/Summer courses, the COVID-19 pandemic has required most instructors to shift instruction online, changing the way they deliver content as well as how students interact with them and their peers.

Need to assess students

Other than a few exceptions noted in the Academic Calendar, undergraduate courses at Western are graded numerically. Formal definitions of grade ranges are provided in Senate regulations, and these grades are used by students to seek employment and gain access to graduate and professional schools. The value of our degree is supported by our standards and others' perception of our standards. In order to confidently evaluate a student's mastery of the learning outcomes and rank their relative standing in a class, it is essential that grades are based on data that can be unambiguously traced to that student.

Forms of assessment

Proctored, in-person final exams are a "traditional" tool for assessing students' achievement of learning outcomes, as are other means such as term papers and group projects. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person assessments are not possible in many cases, for instance because the course has been advertised as fully-online so that students are not required to be present in London or because the class size is too large to be examined on campus under our safety protocols. For this reason, Western has provided an online proctoring solution, currently *Proctortrack*, to instructors.

While duplicating a "normal year" by requiring proctored online exams is a simple solution that requires little change to a course format, any perceived convenience of this choice should be weighed against potential challenges, including:

- the added requirement on students of possessing a suitable computer with a webcam and reliable internet connection,
- the possibility of technical issues during a remote exam,
- student privacy concerns and/or anxiety over remote monitoring,
- extra time required for the instructor to set up and review remotely proctored exams,
- extra time and steps required for student onboarding for each exam, and
- a likely lower effectiveness of online proctoring vs. proctoring in a traditional in-person exam.

In many cases, the integrity of an evaluation can still be achieved through alternative assessments, such as term papers that can be checked for similarity to other student submissions as well as published works via *Turnitin*. It is recommended that alternative assessments be employed where practical. Nevertheless, it is recognized

that in some cases, alternate means are not feasible and the integrity of the course will require some form of proctored assessment.

When is remote proctoring Appropriate?

Remotely proctored examinations should be reserved for cases when alternative assessments alone cannot effectively assess student achievement of the learning outcomes of the course or there are additional requirements that warrant remote proctoring. Such cases largely fall into three broad categories:

1. Proctored examinations are a requirement for accreditation by an external body.
2. In an introductory course in which demonstration of the learning outcomes consist primarily of, e.g., recollection of basic facts and definitions, brief explanations of concepts, or demonstration of an ability to apply short procedures to solve a problem.
3. When accurately grading alternative assessments, such as term papers requiring a deeper level of understanding course material, would require a workload far exceeding the resources of the program.

In all cases, instructors should consider alternatives to proctored assessments and be able to clearly elucidate why a proctored assessment is the only viable means for evaluation for their particular course.

In cases where remote proctoring is employed, its use should be restricted to the final examination and one or two midterm tests.

Messaging to Students

When remote proctoring is to be employed, instructors must provide advance notice in the course outline, including a brief description of the system requirements and a link to resources for more information. The following statement for course outlines is adapted from the one circulated in summer 2020:

Tests and examinations in this course will be conducted using a remote proctoring service, currently *Proctortrack*. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide **personal information** (including some biometric data) and the session will be **recorded**. More information about this remote proctoring service is available in the Online Proctoring Guidelines at the following link:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/onlineproctorguidelines.pdf>

and the Remote Proctoring at Western website at

<https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. Information about the technical requirements are available at the following link:

<https://www.proctortrack.com/tech-requirements/>.

In addition, it is **strongly recommended** that the instructor add a paragraph explaining *why* remote proctoring has been selected. If an instructor finds that they are unable to explain this, they should consider whether an

alternative assessment would be possible. For their convenience, instructors are welcome to use one or more of the sample paragraphs below as a starting point for their statement.

Option 1:

This course must use proctored assessments to ensure continued accreditation by XXXX. Because the size of the class precludes in-person delivery, assessments must proceed online, which in addition supports the ability of students to take the course from a remote location. Online proctoring assures students that they can write assessments on equal terms with their classmates and signals to prospective employers, graduate supervisors, and professional schools that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Western has endeavoured to maintain the high standards that are at the core of our degrees.

Option 2:

I have elected to use remote proctoring in this course as a means for validating that students have met the learning outcomes of the course. Given the introductory nature of the learning outcomes tested, unproctored assessments such as term papers or take-home examinations, would not provide an adequate way to distinguish between answers provided by different students. Use of online proctoring assures students that they can write assessments on equal terms with their classmates and signals to prospective employers, graduate supervisors, and professional schools that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Western has endeavoured to maintain the high standards that are at the core of our degrees.

Option 3:

I have judged that online proctoring represents the best solution for some of the assessments in this course. This allows us to assess students in a way that preserves the integrity of the course without increasing the number of papers assigned, which would both add to student workload and divert limited teaching resources to marking, and away from supporting learning.

It is important for students and instructors to understand that the use of remote proctoring is not an implicit accusation of cheating, any more than use of in-person proctoring (or indeed assignment submissions tied to login credentials through OWL) would be such as statement. Rather, proctoring is employed to provide a measure of confidence – to instructors, students, and external bodies – in the integrity of a Western degree. It allows instructors to confidently assign grades, students to be assured that they can write an exam on equal terms as their classmates, and external stakeholders to understand that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Western has endeavoured to maintain the high standards that are at the core of our degrees.