PennState
Eberly College
of Science

Unproctored Online Assessments

INTRODUCTION

Proctoring which enables institutions to verify the identity of test-takers, is not always an option. To ensure a high level of academic integrity in courses using unproctored assessments, consider the overall purpose and structure of the assessment as well as how the questions are written.

A CLOSER LOOK

With well-constructed objective and subjective questions, unproctored online assessments are suitable for assessing lower-level Bloom's skills and knowledge and can be effective measurements of student comprehension.

Purpose and Structure

When planning how you will use unproctored assessments, consider doing the following:

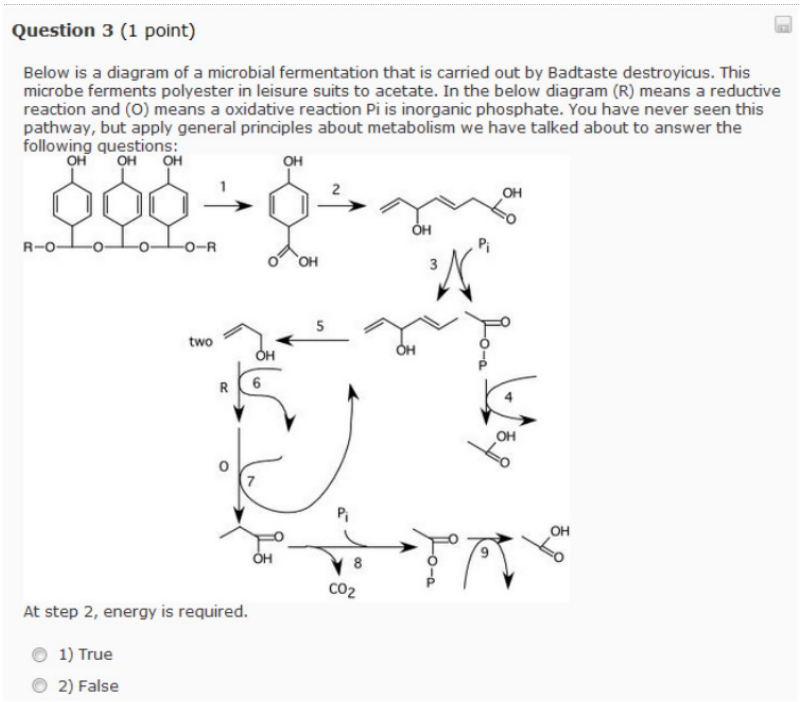
- **Use objective exams as formative assessments.** When designing the assessment plan for your whole course, consider using unproctored exams as practice or learning activities instead of formal assessment. Exams of this type may or may not be required, but exam scores are not considered in the final grade.
- **Limit assessment weight in grading.** If you choose to include unproctored objective assessments in your grading, ideally they will carry less weight than subjective assessment activities. When you think about how learning is assessed throughout the course, you may want to have a smaller percentage of objective assessments than subjective ones. Students should not be able to pass the course by only passing the objective assessments.
- **Break objective testing into smaller units**. Use several small exams instead of just one or two larger ones.
- **Limit time.** By placing time restrictions on assessments, you limit students' ability to look up answers. A common limit is one minute per question, but if a question calls for complex thinking, you should allow more time.
- **Include a certification question.** A yes/no certification question at the beginning of the assessment reminds students of their academic integrity responsibilities. For example: "I guarantee that this is my independent work. I will not consult with anyone or discuss the contents of this exam with anyone. I agree not to show the exam questions to anyone, including other students. To do otherwise would constitute academic dishonesty."
- **Pool and randomizing.** To ensure each student receives a unique exam, draw questions from a pool and consider randomizing answer choices. A general guideline is to have at least twice as many questions in a pool as will be generated per attempt.

Writing Tips

When writing your assessment questions or tasks, consider the following:

- **Does it pass the "Search Engine Test"?** Search online for the answer to an assessment question you have drafted. If the question is written in such a way that it can easily be found by typing the question stem into a search engine, you will want to consider revising it.
- **Use scenario-based questions.** When developing multiple-choice, short-answer, or long-answer questions,use scenarios to place learners in real-world, authentic situations. This helps ensure that learners can't find the exact answers using a textbook or Internet search.
- **Ask a novice to take your exam.** Ask someone with little to no subject matter experience to take your exam. If they pass or do very well, you may want to consider rewriting your questions.

- **Ask students to create vs. respond.** Asking students to respond to assessment questions and tasks by providing their own unique responses helps to ensure that their responses are original, and increases the rigor of the assessment.
- **Add response parameters to questions.** Consider adding an indication of expected length or detail or format. For example, a question about the nature of Lincoln's presidency that requires only 25 words is far different from one requiring 200 words.
- **Require references to be from materials provided within the course.** By limiting the acceptable references it will be easier for you to detect non-original responses.



Question 3 (1 point)

Below is a diagram of a microbial fermentation that is carried out by Badtaste destroyicus. This microbe ferments polyester in leisure suits to acetate. In the below diagram (R) means a reductive reaction and (O) means a oxidative reaction Pi is inorganic phosphate. You have never seen this pathway, but apply general principles about metabolism we have talked about to answer the following questions:

At step 2, energy is required.

1) True
2) False

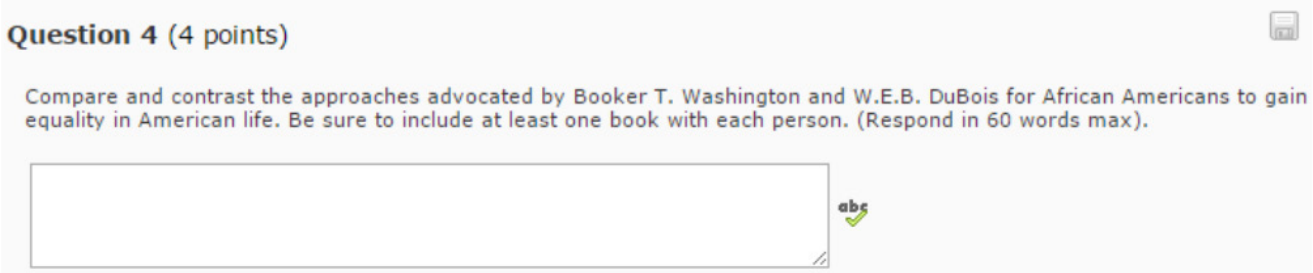
EXAMPLES

Example 1

Above and to the right is an example of an effective true/false question that offers a scenario and a detailed diagram for students to analyze. It is part of a timed General Microbiology exam consisting of objective and subjective questions.

Example 2

Below is a compare/contrast question from an American History course that causes the student to be concise in their response and to include a specific item. A response of this condensed length could not easily be found on Internet sources.



Question 4 (4 points)

Compare and contrast the approaches advocated by Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois for African Americans to gain equality in American life. Be sure to include at least one book with each person. (Respond in 60 words max).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Link: Thwarting online exam cheating without proctor supervision