

Are Lockdown/Spyware tools for  
remote test administration ethical?

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# My stance: **Against**

Main points:

- Invasion of privacy
- Psychological impact on student's test taking abilities
- Exacerbate inequities for students in terms of equipment
- Problems with the software itself

# Invasion of privacy

- Most of these testing software require students to do a room scan – a 360 degree picture/video of the room that they are in. This is a bit of intrusion for student's privacy if they do not have another place to take the exam aside from their bedroom/home.
- Testing software usually records camera video, audio and may keep track of what you do on your computer during the duration of the exam. It can feel very big brother.
- A lot of these testing software could also be saving recordings of student's during their exam sessions. Proctors may be able to access these recordings/download and save them on personal devices, which is also morally wrong if a student doesn't want to be recorded.

# Psychological impact on student's test taking abilities

- Has the potential to negatively impact student's test taking abilities by increasing their nervousness/anxiety during exams
- Student's may worry that the test taking software may incorrectly flag them for cheating even if they are not actually doing anything wrong
- These feelings may directly impact a student's performance on an exam

# Exacerbate inequities for students in terms of equipment

- Students may not have the appropriate equipment in order to use the software for the lockdown browser. (Laptop not being compatible, not having a webcam, etc). They may be forced to go out of their way to find an alternative device just to take the exam.
- Students with older equipment are subject to errors if their laptop/device freezes during the exam, or if it does not work well and causes issue with the exam.
- Bad wifi connection could lead to a bad test environment, and also contributes to the anxiety that I mentioned before.
- Even bad lighting in a student's room may cause problems during the exam

# Problems with the software itself

- The AI technology/algorithmic parts of the software (such as facial recognition, eye tracking, etc.) may be biased/not function well and are prone to errors
  - there are plenty of reports of testing software not being able to validate a person of color's identity because "there isn't enough lighting".
  - students with medical conditions may be flagged if they need to take medication during the exam. Similarly, students that need to use the bathroom may be flagged.
- Some testing software are designed with limitations, i.e. separation between sections that do not allow students to go back and check their work/change their answers. It can also prevent students from going forward onto the next section and force them to wait until time is up for the current section.
- Similar to the points about hardware, the software could freeze up on devices/have errors that require troubleshooting in the middle of the exam (or even after).

## Resources used:

- <https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/08/07/1006132/software-algorithms-proctoring-online-tests-ai-ethics/>
- [https://www.technicianonline.com/news/students-speak-out-on-controversial-lockdown-browsers-for-online-courses/article\\_c9693924-1996-11eb-869a-4b90407243a0.html](https://www.technicianonline.com/news/students-speak-out-on-controversial-lockdown-browsers-for-online-courses/article_c9693924-1996-11eb-869a-4b90407243a0.html)