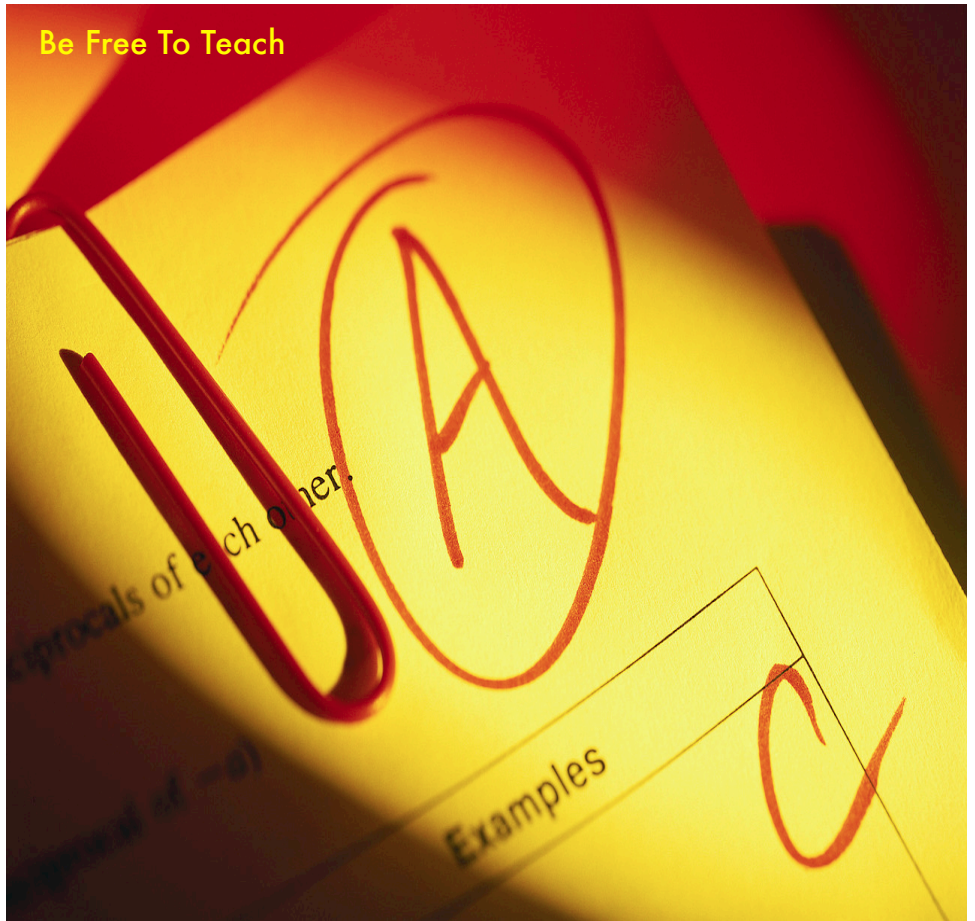


BLACKBOARD 6

online assessment

Be Free To Teach



Using Online Assessment in Face-to-Face Courses

Blackboard's Assessment Features

Blackboard's Assessment features provide instructors with tools for building online assessments using different question types. These assessments can provide students with immediate feedback, are automatically graded (with the exception of essay questions), and scores are logged into the online Gradebook.

Instructors can use the Assessment features to test student knowledge, measure student progress, and gather information from students.

Blackboard offers two assessment options:

- ☀ **Tests:** Tests are created to check the knowledge and skill level of students enrolled in the course. The tests option allows the instructor to assign point value and feedback to each question. When a student completes a test it is submitted for grading. The results are recorded in the Gradebook automatically.
- ☀ **Surveys:** Surveys are useful for polling purposes, evaluations, and random checks of knowledge. They function in the same way as tests and offer most of the same options. Surveys cannot give feedback to the user, they cannot be graded, there are no points associated with a survey, nor will a name be associated with a submitted survey. The online Gradebook will reflect that the survey has been taken and submitted by issuing a check mark next to the user's name.

Blackboard also has a Pool Manager. The Pool Manager allows instructors to store questions for repeated use. Instructors can create new questions to include in Pools and add questions that have been created in other Tests or Pools. Pools from other courses can be imported through the Pool Manager.

Handout Highlights

[Blackboard's Assessment Features](#)

[Keep In Mind](#)

[Weighing the Pros and Cons](#)

[Test Formats for Effective Learning](#)

[Bright Ideas](#)

[Planning Your Assessment](#)

[Writing Good Quiz Questions](#)

[For Further Exploration](#)

Keep in mind that...

- ☀ **Online assessment should never be the only type of assessment used in a course.**
- ☀ **Making the assessment 'worth something' to the students, either point value or educational value, will increase student use.**
- ☀ **You can save time building assessments using Microsoft Word and/or Respondus. The Center for Educational Technologies can show you how.**

Weighing The Pros and Cons

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- ☀ **Increase student engagement in the curriculum** - When students see their test results immediately, they are more likely to be interested in the outcome than when they have to wait days for a grade. In addition, these types of assessments can increase the time students spend looking at and grappling with the material.
- ☀ **Provide detailed and immediate feedback** - Blackboard grades all questions, with the exception of short answer/essay, automatically and therefore can present students with scores and explanations immediately. With the built-in feedback options, you can set Blackboard up to give students the appropriate feedback. *"Yes, good job, you really understand this concept."* might be an example for correct answers. *"No, sorry, that's not the correct answer. You can refer back to page 29 of your textbook for more information."* might be great feedback for an incorrect response. Giving students the tools to search out correct information may make it much more likely that they'll take the initiative to do it.
- ☀ **A painless way to integrate technology** - Often instructors are encouraged to use technology in the classroom but don't have the time or resources they need to implement their technology plans. Online assessment is an easy way to begin using technology on a regular basis -- without using extra time or resources.
- ☀ **Location and time independent** - Students can take a test from anywhere that provides access to the Internet, during whatever time period you specify, using their own equipment if desired. Students can take tests while on vacation or home sick.
- ☀ **Automatic score recording** - Blackboard scores tests (with the exception of essay questions) automatically. These scores are logged into the online Gradebook and are immediately visible for student access. This takes the responsibility of grading and recording off of the instructor or GTF.
- ☀ **More frequent assessments** - Increased assessment may help instructors more accurately gauge student learning.
- ☀ **A time saver** - Online testing saves teachers grading time. More importantly, online testing saves instructional time, both in class and out. Often students can complete online tests in less time than it takes to complete pen-and-paper tests. The extra time can be used for higher-order thinking projects that apply the material on the tests.
- ☀ **Practice with technology-based test formats** - Many standardized tests, such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), can now be taken on a computer. The skills necessary for taking tests digitally (whether using software or the Internet) are different from those required for pen-and-paper tests. Many computerized tests, for example, don't allow students to return to a question after submitting an answer. The first guess, therefore, must be the best guess. Using online assessment introduces students to those emerging test strategies.
- ☀ **Introduction of website and media** - This can include sound, video, images, animation, and interactivity. These can be useful for problem-solving simulations, challenging critical thinking and for students with different learning styles.
- ☀ **Timeliness** - When and how long the assessment is available is controlled by the instructor. If you are using the assessment as a learning check, the timing can be set up so that the assessment is available immediately following class time. Students can test themselves on material and if necessary access additional assistance while the content is still fresh in their minds.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS (AND WAYS TO MINIMIZE THEIR IMPACT!)

If a student didn't like to write would you let them opt out of the term paper? If they didn't like to speak in public would you let them slide on the class presentation? The answer really depends on your teaching style. Is the technology requirement all that different? Technology is becoming an ever-increasing part of daily life. Preparing students for their 'rest-of-life' experience now means preparing them to use technology as well. It's okay then to require students to use the technology, even if they don't want to, provided you do what you can to assist them in this process. This doesn't necessarily mean becoming a tech expert and spending hours a day troubleshooting student concerns.

One way to minimize the impact potential problems is to think about them ahead of time. Ask yourself, "What am I going to do when..." and then develop a plan of attack. Using a student diagnostic survey at the beginning of the term to get to know your student population is a great way to get a heads-up on would-be troubles. Become familiar with campus resources and alert your students to places they can go for help, making sure to include phone numbers and email addresses for off-campus access as well.

- ☀ **Accessibility** - All students must have regular reliable access to computer hardware and a connection to the Internet without undue time restrictions. Recognize that while it's true that all UO students have access to a computer, it's not always easy access. Students that live off campus may not have fast connections or the latest software versions. Students with full or even part time jobs, families or other time commitments may not be able to make it back to campus during lab hours.

Minimize the Impact! To aid some students with accessibility you may:

- ☀ choose to make hard copies of quizzes available to those students having a trouble accessing the online version.
- ☀ give students more time to complete online assignments.
- ☀ tell students up front that the technology will be a required part of the course (put it in your syllabus) and then encourage them to plan accordingly.

- ☀ **Students require some technology skills** - Students need to have at least baseline competencies in using the technologies. The opportunities to practice the skills needed for dealing with any time critical assessment item should be given.

Minimize the Impact! To help build these skills in your students consider:

- ☀ several smaller assessments, each with less impact. Students can learn the technologies in a less stressful manner.
- ☀ give students practice with the technology outside the scope of the content. This is a great way to make sure students can all access and use the technology without the worry of content knowledge. For an online assessment, consider creating a Student Diagnostic.
- ☀ familiarizing yourself with campus resources for students and make contact information for these resources readily available to students that might need them.

- ☀ **Cheating** - How do you know the person sitting at the computer is the student in your class? How do you know they don't have their book open, or whether or not they are taking the test with a buddy? The truth is, in most cases, you don't. It is suggested that Blackboard assessments fall on the lower end of the assessment spectrum, should not carry a severe impact on students' grades, and should not be the only measure of learning in the course.

Minimize the Impact! To help secure Blackboard assessments consider:

- ☀ several smaller assessments, each with less impact. It is unlikely that a student could get someone to take every assessment for them.
- ☀ creating assessment questions that require application of concepts. Even if a student is looking at his/her book, they will need to understand the material in order to correctly answer the question.

- ☀ implementing assessments that fall on the lower end of the assessment spectrum and encourage students to use appropriate resources. (In other words, make the tests open book, open note, open buddy. Depending on the purpose behind the assessment, this may be a great way to get students interacting with one another.

☀ **Impersonality** - Although students are getting feedback on their performance, the human touch is missing. Students may become excessively discouraged if they encounter frequent poor results.

Minimize the Impact! To personalize the online assessments you can:

- ☀ develop feedback comments in your tone and style. Write the feedback as if you were talking to the student.
- ☀ check the online Gradebook and find a few students that did well. Send them an email congratulating them on the job well done. Rotate those students for each assessment and change your comments. Students will know then that even though the assessment is computerized, you're still looking at their work. In the same regard, select a few students each assessment that didn't do as well as you'd like to see. Invite them to your office hours for assistance.

☀ **Technology Problems** - Technical problems (e.g. failed hardware, phone line outages etc.) may need to be allowed for, and participants should be encouraged to document these problems rather than just complain, "It doesn't work."

Minimize the Impact! To handle technology trouble:

- ☀ familiarize yourself with campus resources for both yourself and the students. Rest assured, you don't need to know it all, to implement the tool.
- ☀ be flexible. Sometimes the cyber dog really does eat the homework. If the server goes down and students cannot take the assessment, make it available for another day. Give those students that had trouble a hard copy to take. And no, often times you won't know for sure whether they're telling you the truth, just as often times you won't know for sure about in class troubles as well. Trust your gut and when in doubt, err on the side of the student. If they are playing you, there's a good chance, you'll find out somewhere along the line.

☀ **Time Commitment** - Although online assessments can decrease your overall workload, building the assessments take time. As the instructor, you'll need to find the time upfront to build the assessments. Also, while an online assessment may take less time on the student side as well, it cannot as easily be started and stopped if necessary.

Minimize the Impact! To budget the time commitment:

- ☀ consider visiting the Center for Educational Technologies for a tutorial on Respondus, an application that allows you to edit your Blackboard quizzes on your PC prior to uploading. (Note: Windows users can install this software onto their office computers. If you are a Mac user, feel free to make an appointment with a CET consultant to use their software.)
- ☀ take baby steps. You don't have to create all your assessments at once. Maybe you use it every other week. Maybe you only use it for one thing, a Midterm Assessment of Teaching or a Practice Midterm for example.
- ☀ help students plan time for the assessment. Taking the actual assessment may take less time but getting to a computer and logging into Blackboard may take some planning on the students part to help balance the workload.

Bright Ideas

Online assessments can be used in a number of ways in the blended classroom. A blended classroom is a traditional, face-to-face method of delivery combined with the use of digital tools and Internet resources. Here are eight ideas to get you started. Use online assessment to:

1. **Gather diagnostic information about your students** - It's always a good idea to gather some information about your students. For example, you might ask students about their background with the course material, why they are taking the course, and/or how many have their own computers.

Hot Tips!

- ☀ To increase participation and reward students for their time, consider giving students credit for completing the diagnostic.
- ☀ If you use the test feature, Blackboard will store each student's answers in the gradebook automatically. At any time during the quarter, you can go back and review the information you gathered from that student.
- ☀ Using the survey feature will give you access to information about the class as a whole.

2. **Assess your teaching** - Why wait until the end of the term to see how your students think you're doing? Assessing your teaching early and often gives you a chance to make any necessary changes before the end of the term. Students respect the fact that you value their input and they often times do a wonderful job with the feedback process.

Hot Tips!

- ☀ Get immediate Midterm Student Feedback using the survey feature.
- ☀ Trying something new? Get feedback on how it went. Expand on the midterm feedback idea and use this feature several times over the course of the term.
- ☀ To increase participation and reward students for their time, consider giving students credit for completing the diagnostic.

3. **Student-side Learning Checkpoints** - Using an online assessment feature in this way can help students gauge their understanding of the material. With the right feedback, you can even guide students to further their own learning.

Hot Tips!

- ☀ Using the test feature, well written feedback can help students take responsibility for furthering their understanding of the material.
- ☀ You can flag important information from readings and lectures by focusing test questions on it.

Test Formats For Effective Learning

First, determine what is most important for your students to know of or be able to do as a result of your course. If it is important for them to identify and understand an extensive list of terms — use multiple-choice, fill in the blank, short answer or true and false formats.

If you want your students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of concepts, be able to compare and contrast characters, periods of history, movements, etc., it may be more appropriate for them to take an essay exam.

Planning Your Assessment

Creating an assessment is much easier if you plan it out before you begin to develop it online. Students cannot raise their hands and ask you to clarify something they don't understand; therefore, online material must be written as clearly as possible to avoid any confusion. There are a few important things to ask yourself before you begin to create your online assessment:

- ☀ Why do I want to use an online assessment?
- ☀ What type of assessment will I use?
- ☀ What instructions will be included with this assessment?
- ☀ What type of questions will this assessment contain?
- ☀ What is the point value, if any, associated with each question?
- ☀ What sort of feedback, if any, do I want to give my students?

4. **Pre-test your students to determine existing knowledge** - Meeting your students where they're at is a great way to increase their chances of success. You can use Blackboard to help determine students pre-existing knowledge regarding specific subject matter.

Hot Tips!

- ☀ Challenge your students to analyze their thoughts. Use the survey feature to poll students on their thoughts then deliver your lecture from an opposing perspective.
- ☀ Use the survey feature to gain a general understanding of where students are starting from and plan your lecture accordingly.
- ☀ If you use the test feature, consider comparing pre/post outcomes to gauge knowledge acquisition.

5. **Instructor-side Learning Checkpoints** - If your students have ever left class with their eyes glazed over and you weren't quite sure why, this might be a powerful tool for you. Using the online assessment in this way, instructors can see where students got lost and build a more on-target approach for getting them back on track.

Hot Tips!

- ☀ Using the survey feature, well written questions can help instructors pinpoint areas of student confusion build a targeted approach for clarification.
- ☀ You can flag important information from readings and lectures by focusing survey questions on it.
- ☀ To increase participation and reward students for their time, consider giving students credit for completing the diagnostic.

6. **Facilitate Class Discussion** - It seems a safe bet that the more students know about a given subject, the more likely it is they might contribute to a discussion. You can use an online assessment to push students to delve into the reading and therefore, better prepare themselves for a discussion on the material.

Hot Tips!

- ☀ Build open book, open note, open buddy assessments. Whether students are reading the material and taking the quiz, looking the answers up as they go or talking to their roommate about them as they take the quiz together, students are looking at the information.
- ☀ Consider randomizing the test from a pool of questions to help minimize cheating. If students take the test together, they are in effect answering more questions than they would have individually.
- ☀ You can flag important information from readings by focusing test questions on it.

7. **Reflection, Free Write, or Minute Paper** - Using short answer/essay questions allows you digital access to the information and gives students more time to reflect. This could be a great time-saver if you intend to use the content your students produce.

Hot Tips!

- ☀ Gather student thoughts electronically. The survey feature gives you access to student responses as a bulleted list. The test feature would allow you to read each student's response separately.
- ☀ Gives time for reflection.
- ☀ Great way to elicit feedback and/or questions from large classes.

8. **Practice Tests** - Why surprise students with what is going to be on that midterm or final? Help them review the material with a practice test. This let students know the types of question you might ask, it flags important information. Students understand how they should learn the content (memorize vs apply) and students study using a real test format to aid with text anxiety.

Hot Tips!

- ✿ Consider randomizing the questions from a pool and allowing multiple attempts. If you've used the online assessment tool throughout the quarter, you may have a lot of questions to draw from.
- ✿ Set the gradebook to not include the test score in the final grade calculations and generate a separate gradebook entry giving students that used the study tool extra credit.

9. **Interactivities** - Get students engaged with multimedia and online resources. Interactivities combine several of the above mentioned ideas. Well developed interactivities can help you meet your students at their current level of understanding. Students can develop subject matter knowledge outside of class so class time can be spent delving deeper or answering additional questions.

Hot Tips!

- ✿ You can flag important information from readings by focusing test questions on it.
- ✿ Using the test feature, well written feedback can help students take responsibility for furthering their understanding of the material.
- ✿ Use the survey feature to help students gain a general understanding of the subject matter and collect questions for class discussion.

Writing Good Quiz Questions

Premise - Consequence

Students must identify the correct outcome of a given circumstance. **NOTE:** To increase the difficulty, provide more than one premise.

Example

If nominal gross national product (GNP) increases at a rate of 10% per year and the GNP deflator increases at 8% per year, then real GNP:

- (a) remains constant
- (b) rises by 10%
- (c) falls by 8%
- (d) rises by 2%

Analogy

Students must map the relationship between two items into a different context.

Example

E-mail is to an unmoderated listserv as office hours are to:

- (a) class lecture
- (b) class discussion
- (c) review sessions
- (d) tutorials

Case Study

A single, well-written paragraph can provide material for several follow-up questions.

Example

1. Alice, Barbara, and Charles own a small business: the Chock-Full-O-Goodness Cookie Company. Because Charles has many outside commitments and Barbara has a few, Alice tends to be most in touch with the daily

operations of Chock-Full-O-Goodness. As a result, when financial decisions come down to a vote at their monthly meeting, they have decided that Alice gets 8 votes, Barbara gets 7, and Charles gets 2 with 9 being required to make the decision. According to minimum-resource coalition theory, who is most likely to be courted for their vote?

- (a) Alice
- (b) Barbara
- (c) Charles
- (d) no trend toward any specific person

2. In the scenario in question 1, according to minimum-power coalition theory, who is most likely to be courted for their vote?

- (a) Alice
- (b) Barbara
- (c) Charles
- (d) no trend toward any specific person

Incomplete Scenario

Students must respond to what is missing or needs to be changed within a provided scenario. **NOTE:** When using a graph or image, try to lay it out differently than how the students have seen it. This is equivalent to using new language to present a familiar concept and prevents students from using rote memorization to answer the question. For example, a diagram may originally have been split left to right instead of top to bottom and may not be as detailed as the diagram they saw in the book.

Example

Use the diagram below to answer the following questions.

1. What belongs in the empty box in the upper right corner of the diagram?

- (a) hardware devices
- (b) client services for Netware
- (c) logon process
- (d) Gateway services for Netware

2. If the Applications resided below the heavy black line, they would:

- (a) be open to hackers on the network
- (b) compete with the OS for memory
- (c) be preemptively multi-tasked
- (d) launch in individual NTVDMS

Problem/Solution Evaluation

Students are presented a problem and a proposed solution. They must then evaluate the proposed solution based upon criteria provided.

Example

A student was asked the following question:

"Briefly list and explain the various stages of the creative process."

As an answer, this student wrote the following:

"The creative process is believed to take place in five stages, in the following order: orientation, when the problem must be identified and defined, preparation, when all the possible information about the problem is collected, incubation, when no solution seems in sight and the person is often busy with other tasks, illumination, when the person experiences a general idea of how to arrive at a solution to the problem, and finally verification, when the person determines whether the solution is the right one for the problem."

How would you judge this student's answer?

- (a) EXCELLENT (all stages correct in the right order with clear and correct explanations)
- (b) GOOD (all stages correct in the right order, but the explanations are not as clear as they should be)

- (c) MEDIOCRE (one or two stages are missing OR the stages are in the wrong order, OR the explanations are not clear OR the explanations are irrelevant)
- (d) UNACCEPTABLE (more than two stages are missing AND the order is incorrect AND the explanations are not clear AND/OR they are irrelevant)

About Our Organization...






The University of Oregon supports the teaching endeavors of its faculty and graduate students through the Teaching Effectiveness Program (TEP), a division of Academic Learning Services.

The Teaching Effectiveness Program offers a variety of activities and services to engage the academic community in viewing, assessing, and improving undergraduate instruction. TEP services are free to faculty members, graduate teaching fellows (GTFs), and university departments.

Be Free To Teach

TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS PROGRAM
ACADEMIC LEARNING SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

For Further Exploration

- 
Assessing Learners Online (<http://ericacve.org/docs/pfile03.htm>)
 This issue of the Practitioner File looks at issues and techniques related to the assessment of online learning. Inside you will find discussions of the principles, advantages, and challenges of online assessment; the concepts of continuous assessment and interactivity; the role of the instructor; and descriptions of types, tools, techniques, and resources.
- 
Student Assessment in Online Courses (<http://illinois.online.uillinois.edu/IONresources/assessment/default.asp>)
 This website, authored by the Illinois Online Network and the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, offers information on quizzing, testing, and homework on the internet, Bloom's Taxonomy, strategies to minimize cheating and more.
- 
Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (<http://www.aahe.org/assessment/principl.htm>)
 This website houses brief descriptions of the 9 principles written by American Association for Higher Education.
- 
Student Assessment: How Can I Assess Student Learning Online (<http://www.imd.macewan.ca/imdgot/teachinghtml/assessm.html>)
 This website, published by Grant MacEwan College, offers information on methods and examples of online assessment as well as strategies to minimize cheating online.
- 
Strategies to Minimize Cheating Online (<http://www.ion.illinois.edu/IONresources/assessment/cheating.asp>)
 When giving an exam online, how can you be sure a student is actually doing his/her own work? What is the most secure way to handle online examinations? This website, developed by the Illinois Online Network offers strategies to accurately assess student performance online and minimize a student's temptation to cheat.