

Guide to Transitioning Assessments to Remote Environments

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The Pass/Fail Policy: How to implement in your course

For the Spring 2020 semester, faculty should use SPS's Pass/Fail policy to assign grades to students. According to the policy, students who receive a grade higher than a D receive a Pass score; students receiving below the score of a D receive a Fail score. When you enter your grades into SSOL at the end of the semester, please translate the grades into P/F as per the table below:

Letter grade	Pass/Fail
A	Pass
B	Pass
C	Pass
D	Pass
Less than D	Fail

You should continue to grade your students as usual. The standards by which you grade student work should remain the same as should the grading rubrics, except for instances where assessments must be redesigned to accommodate for remote instruction.

Revising Assessments and Assignments in Remote Environment

As you move your class online, you need to be able to continue to assess your students' learning, both for purposes of monitoring their learning throughout the course (e.g., through low-stakes assessments or contributions in class) and also as a method for examining students' overall course performance (e.g., their final projects, presentations, or exams).

Some of the assessments in your class may be easy to adapt for the online environment (e.g., if your students are writing a research proposal for their final project, that may be just as easy to do now as when your class met face-to-face), but others may require some more creativity, thought, and planning. For example consulting projects with companies that involve interviews or time spent in the company might involve virtual interviews and perhaps even virtual work environments. Zach: you should add an example here too that may be more challenging).

Principles for Transitioning Assessment to an Online Environment

In the next section, we will provide some examples of how you may wish to adjust your assessments, but here are some general principles to keep in mind:

- **To the extent possible, keep your assessments the same.** Your current assessments were designed to [align with your course's learning objectives](#), and you should aim to keep that alignment in place as much as possible. Maintaining similarities in assessments will also aid in preserving course continuity and keep students from getting confused or frustrated by major changes to the course.
- **When you do need to make changes, consider the key cognitive skill(s) that your assessment was designed to measure.** When you have an assignment that simply won't work for remote instruction, consider the most important skills you need to have your students demonstrate, and use that to guide your changes. For example, imagine you have an assignment in which students need to interview an employee at a nonprofit organization. If a key skill of this assignment is for students to develop interviewing skills, you may not be able to forgo the interview portion. However, if the objective is simply to learn about experiences of working for nonprofits, you may be able to replace it by asking students to read an existing interview or book about the nonprofit experience and instead write a reflection about what they read.
- **Be mindful of the impact that the recent changes may have had on your students' work schedules and processes.** For example, your students may have a difficult time connecting with their peers on group projects now that they don't live in the same city, and they may need more support or time to connect with their groups. The changes in their living situations might also increase the amount of time needed to complete assignments, as they may not be able to dedicate the same amount of time to their studies as before. Wherever possible, be flexible and considerate of their changing circumstances (as you would hope they would be flexible and considerate of yours).

Practices for Transitioning Assessments to an Online Environment

Here are some suggestions for how you can adjust your methods of assessing student learning and performance in an online environment.

Assessing Participation

In face-to-face classes, instructors use multiple means of measuring participation such as through students' verbal contributions, through a sign-in sheet, or by monitoring the class visually for signs of engagement. You can still assess participation through verbal contributions in an online environment, but you might also consider using other methods such as:

- Ask students to "sign-in" by providing their names and emails into the chat (which can be saved for record-keeping).
- Track student engagement by asking questions periodically and having students respond to a poll or by using the [reaction](#) buttons in the Participation window. Keep note of whether students make use of these features or not.
- Incorporate student contributions to Canvas discussions as a measure of participation. See [The Remote Instruction Guide](#) for instructions on how to use Discussion Boards in Canvas.

Monitoring Student Learning in Class

Temperature checks: In face-to-face classes, instructors may conduct a quick, informal check of students' understanding by scanning the room to look for confused or disengaged students, or by asking students to raise their hands if they want to revisit a particular topic. In online environments, these checks may be accomplished using other methods such as:

- Using the [poll](#) feature in Zoom.
- Having students use the [reaction](#) buttons in the Participants window.
- Having students complete an exit ticket at the end of each class session. You can ask students to explain a key concept, summarize the main points, or tell you the point that is still confusing to them. This information will help you gauge whether there are topics you need to revisit in future sessions.

Peer review of assignments: In face-to-face classes, students who are performing a peer review might physically exchange papers during class. In an online environment, asking students to share their assignments as Google docs will serve a similar function.

Revising High-Stakes Assessments

Exams: Timed, closed-book exams may need to be proctored by using a software such as Proctorio, if given online, which can pose a significant expense. As long as you measure the same learning objectives, you might consider using open-book exams or timed, closed-book exams. [This resource](#) provides alternative exam types to consider in remote environments.

Presentations: Rather than asking students to give presentations in real-time, ask them to record their presentations and submit their recordings. If students are to give their presentations individually, you may want to use [Panopto](#). If your class requires group presentations, [consult this resource](#) on how those presentations can be recorded and submitted using BigBlueButton.

Group projects: Since students are no longer able to work together in person, there may be some logistical considerations in supporting group projects. You may also want to consider how you will track their progress and ensure that students are working well together.

Additional Resources

[Inclusive Approaches to Support Student Assignments During Times of Disruption](#)

Provides many useful assessment tips, particularly creative approaches to developing assessments.

[Best Practices for Assessments](#)

Offers additional assessment considerations and resources.

[How can I provide effective whole-cohort and personalized feedback at scale?](#)

Details principles and practices for providing effective feedback for students.

[Collecting assessment data](#)

Provides information relating to different forms of assessment practices, such as direct and indirect measures of student learning.

[How do I assess my students' learning in an online course?](#)

Offers practical tips for assessing students in online courses as well as suggestions for monitoring assessments for academic integrity.

[Ten tips for alternative assessments](#)

Provides useful alternatives to proctored exams. Includes specific advice for open-book assessments for quantitative courses.

[Alternatives to traditional testing](#)

Offers more useful alternatives to proctored exams.

Providing Feedback to Students

Basic Principles of Providing Good Feedback

Though good feedback is always important, no matter what modality, in remote learning it is particularly essential that your feedback is clear, consistent, and helpful. Here are some basic principles to consider when providing feedback to students:

1. Ensure that students know the standards they are aiming for
2. Be specific with both positive and negative comments
3. Make sure feedback is focused on course objectives
4. Provide feedback as soon as possible

[Quality Matters](#), an external organization that seeks to ensure quality development of online courses, provides some additional more specific guidelines to follow when producing written feedback to students, summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Characteristics of good feedback according to Quality Matters

Characteristic	Description
Constructive	Identifies areas for improvement and offers solutions that will improve the work
Specific	Is explicit about what could be improved, where it could be improved, and how it could be improved
Measurable	Describes an observable change to the work
Sensitive	Uses sensitive language that speaks to the students as colleagues, without being so sensitive that the need for change is obscured
Balanced	Points out areas for improvement and also meaningful strengths when it is appropriate to do so

Providing Feedback on Student Work in Canvas

If students are submitting a resource through Canvas, the [SpeedGrader](#) is a handy tool to allow you to efficiently grade and provide feedback to students' work. Here are a few ideas on how to use SpeedGrader:

- [Create a rubric](#) in Canvas and provide feedback in the rubric. Rubrics are useful for letting students know how you graded their work and where their work's strengths and weaknesses are, but you can also create rubrics that allow you to provide comments in addition to the score to provide more specific feedback.
- Use the SpeedGrader to [leave written, audio, or video comments](#).

- Use the markup tools in SpeedGrader to [highlight and annotate student work in-text](#). This function is especially useful if you like providing specific, in-depth comments and editing.

Other Ways of Providing Feedback to Students

Audio or video recording of your feedback. This is effective when you want to provide prompt, nuanced feedback to students. The strategy might be especially useful for instructors teaching a language or a communications class, where pronunciation, tone, or body language is especially important. For example, you can use tools such as [Panopto](#) to insert audio comments into pre-recorded presentations by students, pointing out places that need improvement. An additional advantage of using audio or video for feedback is that it creates a much more personalized classroom “space” and students may feel more connected to you. You may not have time to hold additional office hours to give individual feedback to a large class but a recording could help you connect with your students on an individual basis. Sign up for [Panopto](#) training to learn how to use videos to give feedback.

Additional Resources

[How to give your students better feedback with technology](#)

Advice guide on essentials of feedback, as well as key qualities of good feedback.