

Required Procedures & Recommended Practices to Address Security and Quality of eLearning Courses

The goal of this document is to establish campus-wide guidelines on academic integrity and quality of eLearning courses as well as to articulate the responsibilities of all parties involved (faculty, staff, students, and administration) at Cleveland State University. This document also affirms the University's commitment to enforce such procedures and practices to support faculty and staff in handling academic integrity matters pertaining to eLearning courses. There are no perfect ways to prevent student cheating in either traditional, face-to-face (f2f) or eLearning classes. Under these circumstances, the following are required procedures and recommended practices for faculty to consider when designing and implementing eLearning courses, assignments, and assessments. These procedures and practices have been developed based on recommendations from the University Electronic Learning Committee following a review of the literature on best practices, and experiences of faculty members with teaching experience in online courses, in consultation with the Director of the Center for eLearning. The procedures and practices outlined in this document could also be applied to exams administered on the Blackboard Learning Management System.

This information will be made available on various websites, such as Blackboard, Cleveland State University, Michael Schwartz Library, department- and course-specific, in addition to in syllabi and assignments of eLearning courses, wherever applicable. The default shell on Blackboard, created by the Center for eLearning, will post current updates on courses, exams and proctoring logistics, wherever applicable. Moreover, for programs that feature student orientation events, a copy of this document will be provided so that these ideas are reinforced at multiple levels. Appropriate action for alleged instances of academic misconduct, as spelled out in the [university's Student Code of Conduct](#) and procedures, should be undertaken by individual faculty members, instructors, department chairpersons, or college deans, in accordance with the circumstances. This document shall be revised with input from all parties involved at least once every two years by the Admissions and Standards Committee and the Electronic Learning Committee who will be joint owners of this document.

Security Features

The following are required procedures for the implementation of all eLearning courses, or courses with eLearning as a module or component.

Required Procedures:

1. At the time of registration, Campusnet will ensure that students enrolling in these courses are already photo-identified in the system. This is intended to eliminate impersonation and to ensure that the same student enrolled in the course is attending the online lectures and taking the exams. This requirement will put Cleveland State University in compliance with security measures proposed by the US Department of Education for future eLearning courses. Additional considerations include:

- i. Students without pictures in Campusnet will receive an alert during course registration. Enabling this option on Campusnet is feasible, according to IS&T.
 - ii. When a student's picture is not available in Campusnet, the student has the option to provide a biographical statement and picture, or post a short introductory video (30-60 seconds) as a preliminary assignment.
 - iii. Where applicable (e.g., exams), alternate picture IDs, such as a State-issued driver's license or State ID cards, could be presented to the faculty, in lieu of campus ID card. How would this ID card be presented to the faculty? Through email, course messages?
2. A *High-stakes test* is defined as any test contributing substantially ($\geq 25\%$) to the final grade. If the class is designed so that high-stakes closed-book testing is required (a course where students cannot display mastery of the course through alternative means), the test must be held on campus. Students who are unable to take such a test on campus will consult with Center for eLearning for off-campus options and reach an agreement with the instructor for alternative testing arrangements prior to the exam. There may be a fee associated with off-campus proctoring, for which the students will be responsible. Student picture IDs must be checked prior to administering high stakes exams such as final tests.

Recommended Practices: In addition to the required procedures outlined above, a set of "recommended practices" is listed below. These are general guidelines and up to the faculty member's discretion to implement based on course requirements, needs, and outcomes. These practices have been grouped into three separate categories for clarity.

1. **Testing:**

- i. Randomize questions in a test/quiz so that each individual student gets the questions in a different order. If possible, randomize the answers in multiple choice exams. This would minimize collaboration of two or three students who might try to take the test together, in a computer lab.
- ii. Use of timed tests requires students to know the information prior to beginning the exam, and reduces the chance that they will discuss questions with distant or nearby "consultants." This also prevents students from looking up answers in their notes, textbook or on the internet.
- iii. Use testing software that keeps track of the time a student takes to answer each question. At the end of the exam, instructors should be able to identify the outliers and patterns in the amount of time it takes to answer each question.
- iv. Narrow the testing window (the test will be administered on a specific date and time only), so that plagiarism can be minimized.
- v. Check the document "properties" for the "creation date, time and author" of submitted documents (e.g., Word, Excel, pdf files).
- vi. Use unique question sets, whereby one topic may have 5-10 questions in it and the computer will randomly assign 1-2 questions from that topic to each student. A question set can be used for each topic, allowing Blackboard to create a large

- number of unique exams. Implementing question sets reduces the ability of students to cheat.
- vii. Require students to turn off their cell phones and other communication devices during the exam.
 - viii. Limit the amount of time it takes to answer a question (for example, set a 45-second time limit for a multiple-choice question).
 - ix. Display test questions one at a time. This makes it more difficult to copy the test and forward it to others. For example, the copy-paste feature of the webpage could be disabled using Respondus LockDown Browser feature on Blackboard.
 - x. Assign a password right before the test. The password would be changed for those students who are taking the test on a different date and time. A new password should be assigned for each test.
 - xi. Don't post grades or provide feedback to students until all testing is done.
 - xii. Prompt all students to complete the exam so that they can't re-enter the test.
 - xiii. If possible, develop and administer numerous tests throughout the semester. This would not only help curb cheating in online tests, but it also helps instructors to regularly assess student performance and intervene with those who are falling behind.
 - xiv. If possible, faculty should offer more open-book exams to build positive relationships with students, enhance learning outcomes, and make subject material meaningful.
 - xv. Develop tests containing higher-order level questions that require analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application, rather than simple recall or comprehension. Similarly, assignments and exams that emphasize written work and problem-solving should be encouraged to minimize plagiarism and enable critical thinking and originality of ideas. Examples include essays, and/or online discussions.
 - xvi. Make use of different types of remote proctoring tools for enhanced online test security and proctoring. <https://www.csuohio.edu/center-for-elearning/test-proctoring-and-security>.
 - i. Tegrity Remote Proctoring: This is available through Blackboard.
 - ii. ProctorU: Students who intend to use this have to pay a nominal fee.
 - iii. Respondus Lock-Down Browser: This could be used in conjunction with Tegrity Remote Proctoring software. This is available through Blackboard.
 - iv. Respondus Monitor: This is also available through Blackboard at CSU.

2. Course Syllabus:

- i. The syllabus for the course should contain the following statement: "Educational access is the provision of classroom accommodations, auxiliary aids and services to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their disability. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services at (216)687-2015. The Office is located in MC 147. Accommodations need to be requested in advance and will not be granted retroactively."

- ii. Instructors should establish a culture for academic integrity in online courses just as they would in an onsite course. Faculty can include an academic honesty statement for every assignment and exam. For example, include a “Yes/No” statement in online assessments: “I pledge my honor that I have not violated the Cleveland State University Honor Code during this examination.” Alternately, have the students include that statement in their assignments.

3. **Writing:**

- i. Assignments that build upon each other (e.g., corrections to assignment 1 are included in assignment 2) can help the instructor look for consistency in writing, the student's method of addressing feedback, and consistency in performance.
- ii. All previous drafts of writing assignments should be submitted with the final draft and could include edited comments from the Writing Center for students who have gone there for assistance. The name of the tutor, date, and the time that student met with the Writing Center should be included.
- iii. Faculty can ask students to submit (or at least cite) copies of reference articles or books, annotated bibliographies, or previous drafts of their submission, to encourage authenticity of the written work.
- iv. Plagiarism can be addressed in distance education in ways similar to onsite courses. Faculty could use one of these tools (Turnitin, SafeAssign) for all submitted written work, where the work product lends itself to these tools (e.g. it doesn't work with Excel projects or Microsoft PowerPoint presentations). These two tools are available for free on Blackboard. However, output from these tools should be cautiously used by instructors as there is evidence that they may flag phrases or sentences that are not plagiarized, such as titles, topics, certain phrases, or citation. Instructors should compare various assignments from the same student to look for changes in writing style, format, etc., if they are long-answer or discussion-oriented questions.

General guidelines to Instructors:

1. In the course outline, clearly define **Plagiarism** and what constitutes plagiarism for that particular course, so that there is no ambiguity or confusion on part of the student or instructor. Include University plagiarism policy in eLearning course outline. It is the responsibility of the instructor to let the students be aware of the consequences of plagiarism in any form. Finally, the instructor should be aware of the various options available for checking plagiarism, and let the students know in advance that such options will be exercised as necessary.
2. If assignments are weighted more heavily (participation in live or threaded discussions, group projects, or presentations) than tests, the impact of cheating on a high stakes test is reduced.
3. A pre-test can be useful to establish baseline knowledge of each student vs. performance later in the course.

4. New student orientation programs, the Introduction to eLearning course, admissions documents, and student handbooks should emphasize that academic dishonesty in online or onsite courses will not be tolerated, and examples of academic dishonesty in online courses should be included in these documents or orientation sessions. We recommend this academic dishonesty policy be put on the Center for eLearning website and included in the "start here" or "read this" sections of all on line courses.

Quality

We recommend the following for eLearning courses:

1. The Center for eLearning encourages new (and existing) faculty to take the "Faculty Online Teaching and Design (FOTD)" course, which covers teaching in an online environment as well as best practices in course design. All of the content is consistent with Quality Matters™ (QM) standards, but it is not a QM course. A stipend of \$500 is provided to faculty for completing the FOTD course.
2. Each online course at CSU should use the CSU template designed by the Center for eLearning in order to comply with QM standards and to ensure inclusion of pertinent university policies.

The following are suggestions for best practice:

1. All faculty are encouraged to engage in additional learning about distance education by participating in classes, online learning modules, or other methods of instruction provided by the Center for eLearning and the Center for Faculty Development to constantly update and improve their online courses. Documentation of a minimum of one activity per year is required of faculty who teach completely online courses or blended courses. Eventually we would like to see faculty complete a three-course certificate and maintain this certificate by attending at least one event per year through the Center for eLearning or the Center for Faculty Development. Faculty Senate approved the recommendation made by the University Electronic Learning Committee and professional development was identified as one activity per two years.
2. Faculty are encouraged to collaborate with the Center for eLearning to earn certifications for their distance courses such as that provided by the QM Program, and to be certified as QM Course Evaluators/ Peer Reviewers, or obtain other advanced qualifications as an online instructor. Courses should be developed to meet QM standards and encourage the review process for courses.

Operational plan for conducting high-stakes testing in eLearning courses

It is difficult to propose a comprehensive plan of operation for all possible scenarios involved in such testing. The Center for eLearning will need to rely on instructors to seek assistance for any special situations. The operational plan outlined below was based on the proposals from the Center for eLearning, and in consultation with the Registrar's office:

1. Faculty offering eLearning courses should explore (if they aren't already doing so) the use of online proctoring tools in courses where high-stakes closed-book testing is required. Some of those tools, already available for free through CSU, were listed in the section above on "recommended practices".
2. Courses that have the face-to-face (f2f) exam requirement should be scheduled as blended courses with notes that indicate the testing dates and requirements for students. The testing dates should be published in the course scheduling/ registration system so that students could see that there are on-campus requirements when registering for the course. Scheduling them as blended courses will also allow the Center for eLearning to proactively identify the courses that will need this requirement, and reach out to instructors to help them coordinate the details.
3. Blended courses that have only f2f testing requirements should first utilize departmental space when possible, since general classroom space is at a premium. Each department would be responsible for providing a room for their own exams instead of relying solely on rooms from the general classroom pool. Such decisions about online courses needing f2f exams should be made well in advance by the instructor to secure classroom space. In case such rooms are unavailable within a department on that date/time, the department could request the Registrar's office to provide a general classroom for some f2f exams, contingent on their availability. The Registrar's office shall allot available rooms on a first-come-first-serve basis. It is advisable to schedule f2f exams during off-peak hours (e.g., 7-9 PM slot) so that classroom space is more easily available.
4. Instructors should make every attempt to offer such f2f exams in a single time slot for the entire class to maximize the chances of classroom availability (and possibly minimize cheating). The date/time/location of such f2f exams should be communicated in the course syllabus to all registered students at the beginning of the semester.
5. Once the courses that require f2f testing or proctoring are identified, the Center for eLearning will contact the instructors to offer assistance to students who are unable to attend f2f testing. This could be achieved, in part, by creating an online form for students who need other accommodations. Students need to fill out the form to request accommodations, and the Center for eLearning would work with the student to secure a proctoring alternative (f2f at their testing center or another testing center; or one-to-one online proctoring) and they would work with the instructor to obtain the test to be delivered.
6. Students who are unable to attend the f2f testing at CSU during the scheduled time and require an alternative f2f proctoring environment would be responsible for any additional

costs. Live online proctoring and live f2f proctoring at a testing center could have costs that typically start at \$40 per testing hour, which would be paid by the student. It is not advisable to use eLearning fees for this purpose to make these options free to students. This is because, depending on the circumstances, a student could easily exceed the amount of the eLearning fee they pay per course if the course requires 2 or more hours of testing (live proctoring). The only other option is to use live proctoring and not pass the cost along to the student would be to earmark a certain percentage (e.g., 30%) of eLearning fees to live, online proctoring. However, that would require the Center for eLearning to manage all pertinent requests and act as the gatekeeper.

7. The Center for eLearning should create “request forms” on their website where faculty could request assistance in proctoring exams. The Center should also hold workshops and webinars to inform faculty on the use of these tools, and possibly offer incentives (e.g., gift certificates) to utilize proctoring tools in their courses.

A pilot version of this plan would be conducted in Fall 2017, with active participation of several instructors, before it is rolled out for large scale implementation in Spring 2018.