

# Testing and Evaluation

## Teaching Remotely: Shared Experiences

Summary of virtual panel event held on August 20th, 2020  
[\[Link to video\]](#)



In the online space we must rethink traditional methods of evaluation and testing. Fortunately, there are many individuals at the University developing authentic, meaningful and impactful ways to assess students in an online environment.

### Panelists:

**Elzbieta Grodek**, Assistant Professor, French

**Colin McDonald**, Assistant Professor, Mechanical Engineering

**Frances Tuer**, Assistant Professor, DeGroote School of Business

**Felicia Vulcu**, Assistant Professor, Biochemistry and Biomedical Science

### Panel Questions:

Why do we need to rethink evaluation and testing in an online space?

What unique challenges do we face in an online space that we may not face in the classroom?

How do these challenges differ between large and small classes?

Are there ways to deter cheating that don't take away from student privacy?

Is there a way to move beyond online proctoring? If so, how? What are the alternatives?

### 5 Key Takeaways from the panel

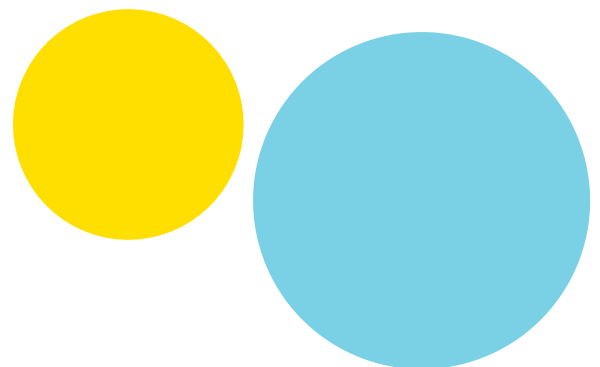
1) There are many concerns associated with high stakes testing environments and final exams. Faculty members must question their rationale behind final assessments and re-evaluate how these examinations affect students wellbeing.  
[2:20 - 4:30]

2) McMaster is currently exploring and working to implement an online proctoring software that best suits our culture and meets our standards of privacy.  
[4:31-5:14]

3) Implementation of proctoring softwares does not mitigate the obstacles associated with online assessments. Faculty members can defer cheating through creation of alternative assessments. They may also consider finding novel ways to inform students of the consequences associated with academic dishonesty.  
[19:50- 24:10]

4) 'Assessment strategies for online learning' is a great resource for faculty members to learn more about how they can create authentic assessments using various online platforms. [30:39- 28:21]

5) There are many benefits and consequences of a virtual learning environment. While it may provide students with more flexibility there are many issues concerning academic dishonesty and increased student anxiety.



## Some key takeaways from each panelist

### **Elzbieta Grodek, Assistant Professor, French**

- The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages(CEFR) provides comprehensive guidelines on how to construct curriculum guidelines, create language syllabuses and design teaching and learning material for proper assessment. [11:28-12:47]
- Language fluency is competency based. It is important to ensure learning and assessment focuses on performance. Traditional testing methods such as final examinations are not an accurate representation of overall student proficiency and comprehension. [12:48-16:41]
- More weight must be attributed to continuing formative assessments for a more balanced evaluation distributed throughout the semester. This may also involve creating non-graded assessments to allow students to monitor self-progress.[16:42-19:41]

### **Frances Tuer, Assistant Professor, DeGroote School of Business**

- It is crucial that faculty members strive to create alignment between their learning objectives, activities and evaluations. [25:33-26:06]
- The Community of Inquiry Framework from Alaska forces faculty members to re-evaluate their teaching presence, social presence and cognitive presence [26:07-26:34]
- The education system as a whole needs to reassess why we put such a great emphasis on differentiating between a B-,B, B+. This is not only a waste of resources but it also places extra strain on students' mental health. [26:50-28:10]
- We must revise our assessments to incorporate more application based questions such as case-studies. Alternatively, integrating group presentations and field work can help enhance learning whilst mitigating the need for proctoring softwares. [30:39- 28:21]

### **Colin MacDonald, Assistant Professor, Mechanical Engineering**

- Rethinking evaluations is imperative. Many employers today don't even glimpse at student transcripts. They are more concerned about students' experiences and skills. [41:00- 42:00]
- Faculty members should consider balancing out assessments throughout the year as well as evaluate their options to incorporate project-based learning. In our current state, this can be accomplished through creating virtual online spaces for collaboration on teams. [42:01- 44:14]
- Creating avenue quizzes allows faculty members to add a degree of randomization to their questions and allows them to control how students progress through the examination. This helps eliminate the need for proctoring tools while avoiding high class averages. [45:15-46:56]
- Faculty members may also consider assessing group work based on interviews. This can help professors get a better understanding of individual participation and give them the opportunity to ask specific questions to each group member in order to gauge understanding. [47:00- 48:00]

### **Felicia Vulcu, Assistant Professor, Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences**

- It is imperative for faculty members to consider alternative assessments and different ways to engage the students in the subject matter. This can be achieved through team-based and project-based learning. [55:53- 57:00]
- Due to the recent shift towards virtual learning there has been a dramatic surge in mental health issues such as depression and anxiety among students. It is important that faculty members prioritize students' wellbeing and create safe spaces for them to stay connected to their peers. [57:01-1:00:00]
- There are many ways to ensure that students remain engaged with course content. For example, faculty members can attempt to reduce the length of their videos, incorporate interactive activities and utilize small group projects to retain motivation. [1:00:01-1:02:22]

### **Referenced Resources:**

[Tests and Exams in Avenue to Learn](#)  
[Assessment Strategies for Online Learning](#)  
[Contact North](#)  
[Flipgrid](#)