

Leveraging Proctoring to Support Academic Integrity

One of the challenges our community will face in the coming weeks is how to assess learning in an online environment. In addition to assessment tools available through Blackboard, Mason provides access to a suite of online proctoring tools powered by Respondus:

- **Respondus 4.0** is a tool for creating and managing exams that can be printed to paper or published directly to Blackboard.
- **Respondus LockDown Browser** is a custom browser that locks down the testing environment within the Blackboard environment. It locks down student browsers and prohibits them from accessing the internet on their computer while taking an exam.
- Recommended by the Office of Academic Integrity, **Respondus Monitor** is a compliment to the LockDown Browser and uses a student's webcam and video analytics to prevent cheating during non-proctored exams. iPads are supported. Students will need to use an internal (built-in) or external (USB) webcam. Faculty and TAs can review the video of student behavior the system has flagged as suspicious.

The Stearns Center is available if you would like assistance converting your paper-based exam to a Blackboard-friendly format using Respondus 4.0, importing them into Blackboard, and even deploying your exams. Please request this service via our [Exam Conversion](#) form. The Blackboard Support team has also provided a [Knowledge Base](#) for Respondus.

Here are some general tips that will help prevent cheating:

- **Consider an Honor Code statement** at the beginning of your exam. Set this up in Blackboard as an assignment question that doesn't generate points, but is required prior to unlocking your exam. *See quiz and statement examples at the end of this guide.*
- **Randomize questions** with online exams. It's possible to create a question bank and have the system pull a certain number of questions from it. So, every time someone takes your exam, they'll get a different set of questions.
- Cheating can take time, so **set a time for your exam**. This can be an adjustment for students and increase test anxiety, but it reduces the ability to Google everything or get outside help.
- **Use problem-solving questions** that require some thinking and cannot easily be found in a textbook or on the Internet.

Respondus Monitor should work for the majority of our students; however, for those who do not have access to a webcam, or have ethical/religious objections, it may not be a suitable solution. In these unprecedented times, solutions such as going to a testing center may not be available. So we wanted to provide a few suggestions for students who need special accommodations.

- **Add phone-based video:** if students have a smart phone, ask students to download the appropriate phone app for your video conferencing tool (like WebEx) so that students can access the meeting through their phone, turn their camera on and point it at

themselves for the duration of the exam. Faculty or TAs can watch the session as proctors. Using this method, in conjunction with Respondus LockDown Browser, provides a very close proxy for Respondus Monitor. Just be sure to remind students that their phones should be fully charged and plugged in for the duration of the exam.

- **Consider alternative proctors**, such as family or librarians (if libraries in the area remain open) for example. When considering this option, reach out to the selected proctor to discuss expectations and make sure to provide a deadline for returning the exam.
- **Conduct oral exams** using WebEx or Bb Collaborate (or similar technology) – even if webcams are unavailable, oral exams provide a way to reduce the possibility of cheating since students don't have a physical exam in front of them. Consider timing each question.
- Finally, take some time to rethink what assessment means for your course, considering what is it that you most want students to be able to do. Is there a way for them to demonstrate mastery without having to take an exam? Can you do a final project or essay instead?

[Our support team can help](#) you design assessments that meet your goals while adapting to these extraordinary circumstances.

Regardless of what proctoring method you use, it is essential to set clear expectations for students. Transparency and clarity are essential learning tools for everyone in most situations, but they are more critical now.

Honor Code Statements from the Office of Academic Integrity

Honor code statements communicate the meaning and importance of academic integrity to your students and supports you and the larger Mason community in maintaining the highest standards of conduct. At George Mason University, academic Integrity is demonstrated in our work, community, the classroom and research. We maintain this commitment to high academic standards through Mason's [Honor Code](#). It is an agreement made by all members of our community to not "cheat, steal, plagiarize, or lie in matters related to your academic work."

While students sign an agreement to adhere to the Honor Code on their application for admission to Mason and are responsible for being aware of the most current version of the code, it doesn't hurt to remind them at the beginning of your assignments and exams.

The Honor Code Pledge reads as follows:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Faculty can set up Honor statements in two ways:

1. Require students to **attempt** a quiz that includes a true/false or single-option multiple choice question that asks them to agree with the statement
2. Require students to **get a perfect score** on a single-question quiz asking students to agree with the statement

If a student refuses to sign their name to it, the faculty then has license not to grade the assignment at all. While failure to sign the agreement, wouldn't necessarily be an honor code violation, it's a failure to follow instructions that results in the assignment's failure. If the student signs and then proceeds to violate the certification, they should be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity. The other option is to make the statement required and the unlock of the assessment contingent on the completion of the certification.

Potential Assignment certification language (adapted from language provided by Dr. John Bono, former professor for Information Technology, Volgeneau School of Engineering and former Honor Committee member)

"The purpose of this assignment is to assess how well you are able to apply the course material you are learning and to serve as practice for the course exams/assessments. **By submitting an assignment, you certify it contains only original, individually completed work and complies with all requirements in the syllabus and required by the [George](#)**

Mason University Honor Code. Any instance of detected misconduct will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity (OAI). The potential penalty for a finding of responsibility will be [insert penalty here]”

Potential Exam certification language (adapted from language created by Dr. David Gallay, Assistant Professor of Finance, School of Business)

I have reviewed the [George Mason University Honor Code](#) as well as the syllabus instructions regarding academic integrity. I pledge that I have complied and will comply with George Mason University's Honor Code as well as syllabus requirements regarding integrity. In taking this exam, I certify that I did not give nor receive any unauthorized aid on this exam. I promise not to discuss this exam in any way with any other student who has not yet completed their exam.