Best Practices and Test Options for Deploying Online Assessments

Online testing is an essential assessment tool for faculty teaching in part or exclusively in an online modality. As an instructor, it is important to understand how to effectively create an online assessment as well as know which test settings enhance or potentially interfere with your test delivery. The following document presents best practices and recommendations for deploying successful online assessments.

How to Effectively Deploy an Online Assessment

Once a test has been developed the next step is to ensure the correct deployment settings have been chosen. To make changes to the test options, the instructor must click the chevron to the right of the test and access its contextual menu. Then click Edit the Test Options to begin selecting the settings that are necessary for test deployment.

1. Test Availability:

   Make the Link Available

   Making the link available helps ensure that students are able to view the test when they login to the course to take the assessment. To make the assessment available, it is best to change this setting to Yes and use the Display After and Display Until setting. This setting creates a limited timeframe for students to access the assessment.

   Add a New Announcement for this Test/Survey

   Adding a new announcement for a test or survey is an optional feature that will notify students when an assessment is posted in Blackboard. When selecting this option, an automated notification is sent to the students notifying them that an assessment has been made available in the course. If an announcement was previously posted using this feature, and edits have been made, the date and time of the most recent announcement appears.

   Multiple Attempts

   The Multiple Attempts option allow students to take a test or survey multiple times. The status of multiple attempts appears to students at the top of the test or survey. By selecting the Allow Unlimited Attempts option, students are able to take the assessment an unlimited amount of times. With multiple attempts for a test, the instructor can select the score of which attempt they want to use in the Grade Center from the score attempts drop-down list.

   In traditional testing, it is recommended to only use single-attempt assessments to ensure test security. For students that need to retake an assessment or need an additional attempt, we recommend clearing the original attempt or adding an additional attempt for the individual user from the options available in the Grade Center. This ensures that only one attempt is submitted for each user and there is a clear Grade History.
Force Completion

By selecting Force Completion, students must complete the test or survey once the assessment has been activated. This feature only allows students to have access during that test session and once students leave the exam they are unable to return. The Save function is available for students to save the questions as they work through them, but they may not exit and reenter the test or survey once the test has been started. In the instructions, Force Completion is noted and explained to students. If you do not enable Force Completion, students may save their progress, navigate away from the assessment, and return to complete the test or survey.

It is recommended to leave this setting disabled. It is a college wide standard to not use Force Completion as it is detrimental to test takers who are forced out of the test for technical difficulties. If students accidentally close their browsers, leave the test or survey page, or lose power or their internet connections, they cannot continue the exam until the instructor clears their attempt or lets them retake the exam. As an alternative, we recommend using the Set Timer option to limit the student’s ability to exit the test and search for resources.

Set Timer

The Set Timer option is a great alternative to using Force Completion. This feature allows a student to reenter and finish an exam if they lose connectivity, as long as they are within the time allotted. If a student saves and exits the test, the timer continues until they have completed the exam. If you enabled the Forced Completion option instead of the Set Timer option, the students will be unable to access the exam if they lose connectivity during the assessment and will require the instructor to clear their attempt to reenter the exam.

If you set the timer and turn on Auto-Submit, the assessment will automatically save and submit when time expires. If Auto-Submit is not selected, students have the option to continue after time expires and their submission will be flagged as submitted after the time has expired. Instructors then have the option to adjust the grade based on the time the students took to complete the exam. If you choose not to select Auto Submit, it is recommended to inform students of how to proceed once time has expired.

Display After or Display Until

The Display After and Display Until feature allows you to select the date and time that the test or survey will be available to the students. If you choose not to select date and time parameters for your assessment, the test or survey will remain open to the students.
Password

Through the use of a Password you can control who has access to your test or survey. Students will not be able to access the exam until they enter the designated password. Commonly this feature is used when administering an exam in a live classroom to ensure attendance and test security. Passwords have a limit of 15 characters and are case sensitive.

2. Test Availability Exceptions

For existing availability settings, you can make exceptions for individual students or groups. To provide an accommodation to a student who is disabled, or for technology and language differences, you can create the following exceptions: Number of Attempts; Timer; Availability.

3. Due Date

If you are using the Bb Grade Center, set a Due Date to easily include that test or survey in a grading period and on the Bb Calendar feature. To prevent late submissions, you can select the check box for Do not allow students to start the Test/Survey if the due date has passed. Students will receive a message after the due date notifying them that they may no longer complete the test or survey.

When allowing late submissions, they are clearly marked on the following pages:

- Needs Grading
- View All Attempts
- Review Test Submission
- Grade Details
4. Self-assessment Options

Include this Test in Grade Center Score Calculations

If the test is not included, the score does not affect any Grade Center calculations. If you are doing a pre-test to gauge student understanding, this option could be considered. However, in traditional test taking environments, students’ attempts will need to be included in Grade Center calculations.

Hide Results for this Test Completely from Instructor and the Grade Center

This will hide the test score and exclude all student attempt information from the Grade Center. The only information displayed in the Grade Center will be a Complete/Incomplete icon to indicate student participation. Students may view their own scores, but you will not have access to the student’s answers.

5. Show Test Results and Feedback to Students

Test results and feedback are available to students after they complete a test. Instructors can set up to two conditions on when to show results and feedback. Conditions occur based on specific times selected including after submission, a specific date, after all attempts have been graded or after the end of the availability. Each condition specifies when and what to show students; such as scores, answers, and feedback for each question. For test security, it is important to consider when students will see results and what results they will see. For instance, giving students All the Answers with the Correct Answer gives the student a test key and could compromise the test if it is deployed again another semester.
6. Test Presentation

When presenting questions in tests and surveys, there are many options to consider in an effort to protect the student’s ability to easily take the assessment and in protecting the integrity of your exam. The options for presenting questions include:

- **All at Once**
  - *All at Once* presents the entire assessment on one screen. Students are able to scroll through all the questions and can navigate through the assessment question by question. When enabled, you may not choose *Prohibit Backtracking*.

- **One at a Time**
  - *One at a Time* allows students to easily navigate between pages question by question. The *Submit* function appears at the end of the test or survey so that students can backtrack and move freely between questions before submitting their final attempt. With this option, instructors may also *Prohibit Backtracking* and *Randomize Questions* in an effort to protect test security.

- **Prohibit Backtracking**
  - To prevent students from revisiting questions they have already submitted, instructors can activate *Prohibit Backtracking*. This option will present questions one at a time to the students and once they have submitted a response they can proceed to the next question. When selecting this option, it also helps instructors secure the integrity of the assessment. However, students are not able to review their work before submission.

- **Randomize Questions**
  - Randomizing Questions helps to add another security level to testing. When selecting *Randomize Questions*, questions are presented in random order each time the test is taken by the students. If you create an assessment that references or builds upon other questions in the test or survey, *Randomize Questions* will compromise the question numbering of the assessment.