

# Alternative assessments

## WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This resource provides considerations for converting assessments that require proctoring or time-intensive grading typically done by TAs to shorter, or more automated options.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

Consider these tips for incorporating alternative assessments into your course. To discuss individual considerations for adapting assessments, [contact CET](https://cet.usc.edu/contact-us/).

### General considerations for alternative assessments

* Communicate changes to the course or assessments to your students as soon as possible and in multiple ways (i.e. verbal and written):
  + If you significantly revise or condense assignments consider revising,  re-sharing, and going over an updated [assignment description](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/assignment-description-template/) with students so that they have clarity on the changes.
* Be transparent about your availability and reasonable timelines for grading and giving feedback to students. Let students know that grading times will be longer than is typical because you will be grading all student work. Review this CET resource on strategies for [effective instructor communication with students](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/communication-strategies-for-instructors/).
* Wherever possible, set earlier assessment dates to allow more time for grading.
* Incorporating rubrics, feedback banks, and learning management system (LMS) auto-grading are great ways to make grading more efficient and equitable. See the last section of this document for CET resources on these options.
* After revision, consider whether your assessments are still [aligned to learning objectives](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/selecting-assessments/) for your course.
* If possible, identify ways to adjust your workload in other areas temporarily to allocate needed time to preparing assessments, grading, or providing feedback.
* Consider soliciting feedback from a trusted colleague on which aspects of your assessments are essential, and which could be abbreviated or eliminated.

### Considerations for specific types of assessments

#### Quizzes, tests, or exams

* Convert all or a portion of your assessments to questions that can be graded automatically in the LMS or by scantron. Question types include multiple choice, matching, or fill in the blank. Review this CET resource on [tips for efficient grading](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/tips-for-faculty-to-reduce-grading-stress-at-the-end-of-a-semester/).
* Convert longer, essay questions to outlines, lists, short responses, or diagrams.
* Allow students to choose, for example, 2 out of 3 questions to respond to.
* Generate rubrics for written responses and consider creating them in the LMS to automate grading. [CET short essay question rubric resource](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/short-essay-question-rubric/).

#### Papers

* Consider oral or recorded presentations instead.
* Ask students to outline their research, rather than writing a full paper.
* Shorten length requirements to specific sections of the paper. For example an abstract, methodologies, or discussion.
* Consider asking students to evaluate sample papers, rather than writing their own, using a set of criteria and then write a short analysis or reflection on key takeaways.
* Consider using feedback banks, which allow you to cut and paste common, repetitive feedback. Review CET’s [checklist for effective feedback](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/a-checklist-of-considerations-for-effective-student-feedback/).

#### Presentations

* Have students submit recorded presentations.
* Assign group, rather than individual presentations to reduce the number of presentations that need to be assessed.
* Shorten the required length of the presentation.
* Use [rubrics](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/selecting-different-rubric-types/) to clarify expectations for students before assessment and to make grading and feedback more efficient.

#### Performance or studio classes

* If possible, have students do ensemble performances.
* Convert to critique and evaluation of a recorded performance instead of multiple individual performances.
* Consider asking students to record their performance or provide a recorded artistic statement on their body of work.
* Shorten the performance time requirements.

#### Practical exams, studio, or lab assessments

Consider incorporating [online experiments](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/considerations-for-teaching-labs-online/), demonstrations, or simulations to streamline the preparation or set-up of practice-based, studio, or lab assessments.

### CET resources

* [Selecting assignments](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/selecting-assessments/)
* [Tips for faculty to reduce grading stress at the end of a semester](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/tips-for-faculty-to-reduce-grading-stress-at-the-end-of-a-semester/)
* [Types of assessments](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/types-of-assessment/)
* [Test question design](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/test-question-design/)
* [Types of rubrics](https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/selecting-different-rubric-types/)