

# At a Glance: Alternate Assessment Best Practices and Tools

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The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

## Thinking outside the Test

Alternative assessments are non-traditional ways of assessing students' progress. Rather than the typical exam or research paper, alternative assessments attempt to reflect a student's problem-solving, creativity, or critical thinking in relation to the topic of study as opposed to mainly testing recall ability. In addition, alternative assessments can help students make connections between their learning and real-life scenarios and increase their motivation and engagement.

## Best Practices

### Student-Centric Considerations

Consider what students need to learn and to show their learning. If possible, give students a choice of assessments.

- For asynchronous classes, plan for a low-tech option, as well, for students without regular computer access or with low-bandwidth internet. Students' schedules and internet access may change suddenly.
- Plan for accommodations for students with disabilities, including previously undisclosed ones.
- When choosing tools outside of Blackboard, research accessibility concerns to make sure all students will receive an equitable experience.
- Communicate clearly, simply, and in a timely fashion with students about assessment expectations, rubrics, and grades.
- Make sure students know what you're assessing and why.

### Learning Outcomes

- Consider what absolutely needs to be assessed.
  - Specific content
  - Specific skills
  - A product
  - The process required to create the product
- What would you expect students to know/use/understand two or three years from now.
- Check what students need to stay on track for their majors.

## Alternate Assessment Ideas

Offering students choice engages their creativity and interest, allows for differentiation between students with varying strengths and weaknesses, and encourages intellectual curiosity and risk-taking.

- Record a video performing an activity, experiment, project
- Write or record audio of detailed, step-by-step instructions to perform an activity related to the course objectives
- Create plans/diagrams/flowcharts to demonstrate understanding of complex activities or ideas related to the course.
- Design a 3D model, map, or infographic of a process, project, idea, or activity. If students will share with the class, include an explanation or text-only version in the assignment for accessibility.
- Watch a recording of someone else performing a course-related task and write a critical analysis.
- Create a portfolio of previous work with revisions reflecting instructor feedback.
- Use a sample data set to perform a mock activity or analysis.
- Reflect and project: What did you do? How could you use this in the future?
- Write a project proposal or complete a project based on a real-life scenario.
- Create shorter writing assignments about the same topic but for various audiences

## Tools to recommend for students

### Presentations and Recordings

- Zoom
- VoiceThread
- Screencast-o-Matic

### Portfolios of work

- ePortfolio through Blackboard
- Google Sites to create a professional online portfolio

### Graphics

- Canva.com for graphics of all kinds
- Piktochart, Visme for infographics and charts
- Diagrams.net for flowcharts, concept maps, graphic organizers