Best Practices for Test & Quizzes

Many instructors have concerns about online testing, and for good reasons:

- Students may encounter technical glitches, which can disrupt their test session or cause their answers to be lost.
- Students can use notes, books, web sites, etc. or get help from others while taking the test.
- Students can print/copy/capture the test and share it with others.

No perfect solution exists, but below are some good practices that can help minimize problems and deter cheating.

Do NOT delete drafts!

- ONLY DRAFTS can be copied to your future Sakai course sites, NOT published tests.

Select test settings wisely

When choosing test settings, be sure to...

- Set a time limit
- Display "each question on a separate web page" (so answers will be saved automatically)
- Be careful about displaying feedback (answers) to students, which they can share with other students. Some instructors choose to display no feedback at all; others display feedback only after all students have taken the test.
    - *For a summary of recommended test settings, see page 1 this handout:* *Best Practices for Online Testing: Technical Tips for Instructors Using Sakai* [http://bit.ly/sakai-test-tips-page1]

Use randomization techniques

Randomizing makes cheating a bit more difficult because it gives each student a different version of the test. In Sakai, you can…

- Randomize the order in which questions appear
- Randomize the order of answer options on multiple choice questions
- Select random blocks of questions from test pools (advanced)
    - *For step-by-step instructions on using randomization, see page 2 of this handout: Best Practices for Online Testing: Technical Tips for Instructors Using Sakai*

Point students to tips for avoiding problems

Durham Tech's Sakai Help for Students [http://bit.ly/Sakai-student-help] web site provides tips to help students avoid problems with online tests.

We recommend that instructors link to these tips and ask students to review them before starting a test:

- How can I avoid problems with online tests? (web page) or http://bit.ly/Take-online-tests
- Tips for taking a test in Sakai (video) or http://bit.ly/take-online-tests-video

Educate students about academic honesty policies

And post frequent reminders!

Give a low-stakes practice quiz before test time

The first week of class, consider requiring students to take an online syllabus quiz. This can accomplish 3 things:

1. Motivate students to read and learn important class policies,
2. Familiarize students with the testing tool in Sakai, and
3. Bring out technical issues or incompatibilities early in the course so they can be resolved before exam time.

Treat all tests as open book

Construct test questions that can't be looked up quickly and that require application of concepts.

De-emphasize tests

- Use a variety of assignments (forums, blogs, projects, etc.) that require creativity and demonstration of understanding.
- Adjust course grading policies to emphasize assignments that are less susceptible to cheating.

Consider in-person or proctored final exams

- If teaching a hybrid course, give major tests during class meetings, where you can monitor students.
- In some fully online courses, instructors require students to come to campus or to find a local proctor for a monitored final exam. This requires considerable advance planning and coordination but can work in certain situations.