

## Alternative and Innovative Exam Formats

### 30-Minute Session

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#### **Techniques to consider for alternative exam formats include:**

1. **Open book exams.** open book exams encourage students to learn to apply knowledge rather than memorize material and are less anxiety-provoking than regular tests.
2. **Crib Sheets.** Allowing students to bring some notes on test day. The instructor can provide appropriate parameters and guidance.
3. **Take home exams.** Take home exams allow instructors to give students problems which will take longer than a class period to manage and/or require the students to use a variety of references.
4. **Collaborative testing.** have students take multiple choice tests in pairs or small groups. This approach allows students to discuss the materials and ‘teach each other’ usually increases the students’ grasp of the material.
5. **Student portfolios.** Ask students to prepare a collection of class assignments. Because portfolios contain a collection of student work, they often provide a more accurate picture of a student’s achievement than a single test or project could.
6. **Performance Tests.** In a performance test students are required to perform a complex skill or procedure, or create a product to demonstrate that they can apply the knowledge and skills they have learned while the instructor observes and evaluates the process.
7. **Retake policies.** Provide students with the opportunity to repeat an exam (using an alternative form of the exam) benefits most students. It decreases student anxiety and provides the opportunity for students to learn from their mistakes.
8. **Adding the option of explanation to a multiple-choice test.** Sometimes students feel that a multiple choice question can be interpreted in more than one way with one interpretation leading them to choose one answer while an alternative interpretation leads to another.
9. **Replacing tests with summaries.** Some instructors, rather than testing, require students to regularly write summaries of the class readings and lectures which include the main points, a critical reaction to the ideas, and a discussion of what’s most important.

**Other alternative exam formats to consider include:**

10. **Project-Based Learning (PBL):** have students work on a semester-long project highlighting the main ideas and concepts of the course curriculum
11. **Experiential-Learning:** learning by doing; hands-on personal experiences, for example, internships (paid or unpaid); job shadowing assignments; student consulting assignments – designing a company’s website. Having students reflect on their experiences is important.
12. **Gamification and Game-Based Learning:** gamification is the process of applying game mechanics (points, levels, badges, money) to student learning; for example, stock market games, Kahoot!, Capsim
13. **Service-Learning:** combines learning goals and community service in ways that can enhance both student growth and the common good (i.e., major student activities partnered with Goodwill, Habitat for Humanity, or a local Food Bank)

**References**

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