



Classroom Technology



Resolving Issues with Blackboard Tests

Resolving issues with Tests in Blackboard

Some issues associated with Blackboard tests and suggestions about how to address them are listed below. We recommend having a back-up plan and clear policies in place, should problems arise. **NOTE:** Most of the suggestions below assume that cadets are taking the exam at their own computers, rather than in a centralized, proctored location.

Technical Issues

- **Browser configuration:** We recommend asking cadets to **take practice tests** on the machine they intend to use before the date of the exam to ensure that their browser is configured correctly. Cadets should run the Blackboard browser test to check for basic browser issues. Cadets should **disable their pop-up blockers** in order to take the exam (e.g., cadets will not receive a one minute warning for timed tests if their pop-up blocker is enabled). We recommend that cadets use the **Firefox** browser; while Internet Explorer does work, we have seen problems with the timer. Internet Explorer users must enable Active-X on their computers.
- **Getting locked out of exams:** Cadets may lose their work and get locked out of the exam if their internet connection times out, their computer crashes, or they accidentally close their browser window and forget to save their test. Below are some steps you can take to address this issue:
 - **Do not** choose the "**force completion**" option. If force completion is selected, cadets will not be able to resume their exams should they be interrupted due to a technical issue.
 - If you do use force completion and a cadet gets locked out of an exam, you will need to **clear their attempt** to allow them to begin the exam again. When you clear the attempt, the cadet will have to start the exam again. **NOTE:** In order to do this, you must be monitoring the exam and must provide a way for cadets to communicate with you during the exam (e.g., via email).
 - Consider selecting the "**one at a time**" option for presenting test questions. When this option is selected, cadets' answers are automatically saved when they go to the next question. If a cadet gets locked out and must re-enter the exam, the work he/she has already completed will be saved. Alternatively, if you choose not to present questions one at a time, remind cadets to **save their responses** to each exam question as they work.
 - Create **multiple short tests** instead of one long one to reduce the probability of time outs. Scores on the short tests can be combined into a single score.
- **Policy:** Have a clear policy about how you will deal with technical issues and communicate this policy to cadets before the exam. For example,

will you allow cadets to make up an exam if their internet access is not available? How will you grade an exam if a cadet goes beyond the allotted time for the exam because of technical issues? If a cadet cannot continue an exam due to a technical glitch will you allow them to retake the exam? If so will you use the same questions previously given or create a new exam?

Timed Exams

Blackboard gives you the option of setting a timer, which records the total amount of time spent taking the exam.

- **Setting a time limit:** There are two options for setting a time limit for an exam.
 - If you select the "Auto-Submit" option, cadet work will automatically be saved and submitted when the time limit is reached.
 - If you do not select "Auto-Submit," cadets can continue working after the time limit is reached and the timer will record the total amount of time taken to complete the exam. If a cadet exceeds the time limit, his/her exam will not be automatically graded; instead you will see an **exclamation point in the Grade Center** and will need to grade the exam manually. If you use this option, we recommend that you have a clear policy about how you will handle exams that exceed the time limit.
 - **On-screen timer:** The on-screen timer, which appears at the top of the screen, records the **total time taken for the exam**. If the "force completion" option was not selected and a cadet re-enters an exam, the timer will record the total time from when the cadet first entered the exam until the exam is submitted. The recorded time will include time when the cadet may not have been viewing the exam (e.g., if a cadet needs to reboot the computer, the timer will continue to run). The timer will be reset if an exam attempt is cleared by the instructor.
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Academic Dishonesty

You can take steps to minimize the possibility of cheating; however, these steps are not foolproof. Cadets may find other ways to share exam questions and answers, especially if they are taking the exam on their own computers, without a proctor.

- **Make the test unavailable** after the exam period.
- Set the test options to **display "score only" during the exam period**, so that cadets cannot see their own answers or the correct answers when they have finished taking the exam. You can change this option later if you would like cadets to be able to see the correct answers after the exam period is over. You may also choose to display the scores only after the exam period is over.
- Check "**randomize questions**" under "Test Options" so that questions are displayed in different orders.
- Select the option to **display the answers in random order** for multiple choice questions.
- Use the "Random Blocks" or "Question Sets" to create randomized tests, in which **each cadet receives a different set of questions selected from a pool**. **NOTE:** If you use this option, you will not be able to see "attempt statistics" for each question.

Make-up Exams

Make-up exams can be made available to a specific cadet or cadets by going to "Test Options" and **creating a password for the exam** that can be shared with cadets who need to take a make-up **OR** by using Adaptive release to make a copy of the exam available to specific cadets.