Using a Blackboard Test as part of an exam alternative

This is your guide to using the Blackboard Test tool as a component of an exam alternative. To support academic integrity, a Blackboard Test should not be used as an exam replacement, but instead used in conjunction with other assessment tasks as part of a whole-of-unit approach to Student Identity Verification. If written responses are required (e.g. short answers, essays), it would be more effective to use a standard submission approach through Turnitin or Cadmus (in consultation with your ADTL).

Building a Test in Blackboard

To create a Test in Blackboard, follow the steps outlined here. To create the Test questions, you can:
- Import questions from an Excel spreadsheet using the Blackboard Test Manager,
- Upload questions from a Word document using the Blackboard Exam Converter tool, or
- Copy/paste text from Word into the Blackboard Test creator.

In addition, use these measures to minimise the risk of technical and access issues during the Test:

1. Set your Test availability for a window of 1-2 days. This allows all students to plan an appropriate time to attempt it, and coordinate the resources required (e.g. computer, Internet access).
2. If more than 100 students will be taking the Test in the same time period, contact elearningAssist@ecu.edu.au who will check other scheduled tests and provide advice.
3. If you choose to enable auto-save for students, include no more than 20 questions on a page.

Question types in Blackboard Test

In addition to standard multiple-choice questions, Blackboard Test offers other question types that might be useful in an exam alternative (see below). Some of these can be automatically marked, while others (marked with a *) cannot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question types</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiple Choice</strong></td>
<td>Choose the correct/best answer. If you elect to randomize answers as an academic integrity measure (see p.2), then do not include &quot;none of the above&quot; or &quot;all of the above&quot; as options, as these will appear out of order for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiple Answer</strong></td>
<td>Choose multiple correct answers. E.g. ‘Select all items that are classified as Personal Protection Equipment: mask, gloves, helmet, scarf’.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jumbled Sentence</strong></td>
<td>Select words, phrases or numbers from a menu to fill in blanks in a sentence. E.g. ‘Single water molecules are held together by ___ bonds and multiple water molecules are held together by ___ bonds.’</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Calculated Formula</strong></td>
<td>A question prompt that requires students to make a calculation and give a numeric answer. Numbers in the question can change with each student. E.g. If a small glass holds [x] ml of water, and a large glass holds [y] ml of water, what is the total volume of water in 4 large and 3 small glasses?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>File Response</strong> (upload a file)</td>
<td>Recommended for diagrams, images and other non-text-based work. Where students are asked to upload photos of work (e.g. picture of a hand-drawn diagram taken on a smartphone), ask students to position their student ID or an appropriate alternate form of identification in the photo so it is visible with their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fill in (Multiple) Blanks</strong></td>
<td>Useful when word choice and exact spelling are being assessed (e.g. drug names or discipline-specific vocabulary). Students fill in blanks in a sentence using free text (not a menu of options).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hot Spot</strong></td>
<td>The correct answer is a particular point on an image, e.g. map, photograph, diagram. Useful when students need to demonstrate knowledge of a visual system, e.g. anatomy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ordering</strong></td>
<td>Used for sequencing a process e.g. largest to smallest, most effective to least effective, oldest to newest.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Matching</strong></td>
<td>Students create paired matches of items from list A with list B, e.g. animals to their diets.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Increasing Test integrity

For developmental or low-stakes Tests, students benefit from having plenty of time to prepare for and think about their answers, and from having the ability to make multiple attempts. However, for an exam alternative you need to build in appropriate measures to increase integrity. In conjunction with setting your Test availability for a window of 1-2 days (see p.1):

1. Use the settings in the Blackboard Test creator to randomise questions, so that each student gets the Test questions in a different order.
2. Select the option to ‘show answers in random order’ in multiple choice and multiple answer questions, as long as you are not using ‘none/all of the above’ as options. This will limit the ability for students to quickly share their responses by text or chat (particularly if question order is also randomised).
3. Consider using random blocks, which allow you to store comparable questions together in blocks, and then students each receive a different (but comparable) version of the Test.
4. In conjunction with the above, consider forced completion, which means that students can only open the Test once, and they must complete it once opened.
5. If it is important that students complete the Test in a set time frame, you can set a timer to either auto-submit the Test when the timer ends, or allow students to continue working and manually submit (with completion times visible in their submissions). Note that if some students are unable to finish the test during the allotted time due to technical difficulties, you may need to prepare a deferred test for these students.
6. Ensure the Test is set to release answers to students only after the test has closed for everyone in the class. This is so that the first students to complete the test cannot provide the answers to others.

General guide to writing test questions

- Have a colleague read your draft questions to check they make sense. This will help avoid student appeals and the need to remark the Test.
- Avoid questions from textbooks – the answers for these are readily available on the Internet.
- Consider a case study approach – provide students with scenarios or cases prior to the test (or use some from the unit that students should be familiar with) and refer directly to these in the questions.
- Keep each question as concise as possible – avoid irrelevant material, digressions, and qualifying information to keep students focussed on the question itself.
- Make all multiple-choice question options roughly the same word length - students often guess that longest option is the correct, properly qualified one.
- Include an appropriate number of options for every multiple-choice question – not all questions require the same number (e.g. 4). Some questions may have only three plausible options (e.g. "increases," "decreases," and "remains unchanged").
- Avoid negative questions, e.g. ‘Which of the following are not classified as Personal Protection Equipment’. In a testing situation, students can miss the word ‘not’. If you must have negative questions, underline, CAPITALIZE, or bold such words.
- Consider using ‘sentence stems’ for question and answer options. These require students to identify the concept or principle that is being applied:
  - An N95 mask is an example of: Personal Protective Equipment, a disguise, breathing apparatus

Where to get help

For ideas on test and question design that aligns with Unit Learning Outcomes, contact your School’s Senior Learning Designer.

For training or support in creating Blackboard Tests, contact eLearning Training & Support: elearningtraining@ecu.edu.au or 6304 2255