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TO: Department Course Contacts, Department Chairs, and Instructors of Record
FROM: The Committee on Courses of Instruction (COCI)
Date: 07 April 2020
RE: Undergraduate Final Exams and Final Assessments for Spring 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The Committee on Courses of Instruction (COCI) has formulated the following guidelines regarding final examinations for Spring 2020. As we are all well aware, the campus response to the global COVID-19 pandemic has required every member of the campus community to be flexible, imaginative, and compassionate in finding the best, or least-bad, strategies to sustain the university's academic mission in this period of unprecedented challenge. Therefore our guidance on final exams is based on the following general assumptions and principles:

1. No one-size-fits-all solution can adequately account for the range of challenges being faced across the thousands of classes being offered on our campus this semester. Therefore these guidelines are intended to allow instructors and programs the greatest possible flexibility that we view as compatible with basic academic norms. Where possible we also offer general advice on tools and strategies instructors may consider in devising the best solutions for their own particular circumstances.
2. The pandemic, as well as the campus response, is still unfolding and potentially volatile. Thus the guidance offered here remains subject to change as dictated by further campus directives that may be issued as the situation continues to evolve in the remaining weeks of the Spring 2020 semester.
3. We urge instructors to bear in mind that—even in classes where the usual methods of instruction and assessment seem to be more or less replicable under the new Spring 2020 conditions—our students are facing heightened levels of stress and anxiety in all aspects of their lives. Disparities relating to housing, family situation, internet access, and so on, moreover, are likely to be only exacerbated now that most students have left campus. Therefore we offer this guidance on final examinations in the hope that instructors will use some of the flexibility provided here in order to address, as much as possible, not simply instructional continuity, but student well-being as well.

COCI's specific guidelines for Spring 2020 final examinations are as follows:



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- Consistent with systemwide [Senate Regulation 772](#), all undergraduate courses that do not have a permanent final exam waiver must continue in Spring 2020 to administer a final assessment, either a written final exam or an alternative final assessment (e.g., final project, final paper).
- The form of this final assessment in Spring 2020 will not be limited to examinations in the narrow sense, in-person or otherwise. Alternate final examination methods such as take-home exams, term papers, etc., may be used in lieu of an in-person (or proctored online) final exam, at the discretion of the instructor, and with approval of the department chair. Such one-time changes in examination format do not require authorization from COCI for Spring 2020.

Departments should track such changes to final exam methods and report them to the Office of the Registrar.

- Courses that were previously approved by COCI as exempted from final exams remain exempted. Authorized department course contacts should consult the [Course Management System](#) to determine which courses have been previously exempted.
- At the discretion of the instructor of record, in consultation with their department chair, instructors are permitted to alter the value of the final exam or final assessment from what was originally listed in the syllabus at the beginning of spring 2020. For example, if a syllabus lists the final exam as being worth 40 percent of the total grade, the instructor may redistribute a portion of that 40 percent to one or more other assignments.

NOTE: In the event that an instructor decides to alter the value of the final exam or of other assignments, it is vital that any such change be communicated to students in a clear and timely manner, and that an updated grading rubric be posted in a revised syllabus distributed to students via bCourses and/or other appropriate mode of communication the instructor has established with students.

- The Academic Senate does not require final exams for graduate courses. Instructors in graduate courses currently approved with final exams, however, may make adjustments along the lines of those listed in the bullets above, as they deem necessary and in consultation with their department chair.



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- For exams that will still be administered during the assigned time and day slot in the Final Exam Week, instructors should be mindful that many students are now in different time zones across the globe. Changing the scheduled day and time of an exam for all students may cause conflicts with other exams. Imposing the same examination time for all students, regardless of circumstances, on the other hand, may cause unneeded hardship for students who may thereby be forced to take the exam at an inopportune time (e.g., 2:00 am). Where feasible, consider using available tools in bCourses to assign a time limit to an activity during a specified period (e.g., a 3-hour time limit in a 24-hour period).
- For further specific guidance regarding remote examinations and proctoring, please consult the resources linked below.

For more resources, please refer to the [Executive Order Regarding Exam Proctoring](#) from the Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost's Office and the [Best Practices - Remote Examinations](#) recommendations from the Academic Senate's Undergraduate Council and Instructional Resilience Task Force. Please also refer to this [repository of statements on responding to COVID-19](#) from the Academic Senate.

Standing guidance from COCI regarding final exams and final assessments is available in the [COCI Handbook 2.1.3: Final Examinations](#) and the [RRR Week Guidelines](#).

Sincerely,

Robert Ashmore, Chair
Committee on Courses of Instruction