

Take home exams

Take-home exams can be a good assessment method to test higher levels of learning in a flexible way. Keep in mind that the chosen assessment method always needs to be in line with your learning goals.



What is a take-home exam?

A take home exam is ...

- Given to students to **complete on their own time**, over a **specified period of time**. It is typically assumed to be open book.
- **Assessing students' ability to find and apply information and knowledge**, often used in subjects requiring direct reference to written materials, like law statutes, statistics or acts of parliament.
- Taken in an **unsupervised environment**, usually with access to different types of materials.
- Typically **consisting of essay or constructed response questions**, which allow for lengthier responses from students and permits students lots of flexibility in their responses.

When would you use take home exams?

Use take home exams ...

- **To assess the higher levels of Bloom** by requiring students to organize and integrate information, interpret information, construct arguments, give explanations, evaluate ideas and develop original thoughts/ opinions. Take-home exams also provide a way of testing a students' ability to communicate in writing and to present their responses in a logical manner.
- **To assess how students apply their knowledge to a specific situation**, context or problem (e.g., a case study), rather than regurgitating facts.
- **To assess small groups of candidates** because grading can take an extended amount of time to score. Larger groups are possible if you have multiple assessors for your course.

Essential guidelines for communication to students

As a teacher you need to be very explicit about what is and what is not permitted. Also make sure to set a specific timeframe for the exam.

Information to communicate towards students:

- ✓ Make them aware of the confidential nature of the test and their responsibility to take it honestly.
- ✓ Specify the materials/resources that may and may not be consulted.
- ✓ Specify whether consultation or collaboration with other students is permitted.
- ✓ Let students confirm and sign that they have read and understood the instructions.
- ✓ Include consequences for breach of guidelines.



Tip: test if students can apply, analyze, evaluate and/or create



Tools you can use

Canvas assignments

- In Canvas assignments you can set 'availability dates'. You can create a date and/or time range in which the assignment is available and can be submitted. [Here you can find more information about how to do that.](#)



Tip: Create a quiz question in Canvas to let students confirm that they have read and understood the instructions.



Challenges & opportunities

Advantages

Challenges

Solutions

Opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to reason, organize and synthesize knowledge and convey judgement and higher-order critical thinking skills in writing.

With assessments involving subjective scoring such as essay questions or case studies, the scoring can be unreliable because of biases. E.g. not all students took the exam in the same environment, under the same circumstances, so this can have a negative influence on the reliability of the results.

A clear correction model ensures a sufficient degree of objectivity and transparency. With assessments that require original responses, a certain amount of subjectivity is inevitable.

Can be an authentic way of assessing because students need to organize and interpret information from various resources and generate and communicate thoughts and ideas.

For extended response formats, it is time consuming to appropriately read and score candidate responses.

Digital assessment increases legibility and grading efficiency. Optionally, allowing students to work in groups can also reduce the correction-load.

Increase accessibility as students can complete the test at a time and location of their choose and can use special hardware, software or adaptive technology if needed.

The unsupervised testing format allows the opportunity for unauthorized collaboration and consultation with others, plagiarism and access to unauthorized materials.

With well-constructed essay questions, that require elaborate and original responses and assess the higher levels of bloom's taxonomy, plagiarism can be detected using software.



Helpful materials

Click [here](#) for an overview

- How to construct essay questions?
- How to score essay questions?
- How to make correction models?



Estimate the length of open-ended questions exam, response time depends on complexity of question

Answer requires...	Response time
1 word or phrase	1 minute
¼ page A4	5 minutes
½ page A4	10 minutes
1 page A4	25 minutes
2 pages A4	60 minutes