

Assessing Students Online

This guide was created in response to faculty requests for insight into how to assess students while teaching and learning remotely. It contains the following resources:

1. **Formative Assessment in WebEx** - Checking for understanding without assigning a grade (techniques which can also improve engagement!)
2. **Summative assessment ideas** - Suggestions for formal, graded assessments including details on online proctoring of assessments
3. **Canvas Quizzes and Tests** - See this section for support on using the “Quizzes” feature in Canvas
4. **Giving Written Feedback in Canvas** - See this informative video by CTL’s Kiran Bhudrani

This guide is by no means comprehensive, but was designed to support you as you address assessment challenges given the current circumstances. It includes carefully selected resources to support teaching in Canvas and using WebEx for synchronous interactions.

Formative Assessment in WebEx

Teaching while talking to a computer screen is clearly a different experience for those of us who live for face-to-face interaction with our students. Like me, you might be constantly wondering, “How do I know if they understand me?” I also wonder to what extent they are engaged, i.e., how do I know that they haven’t simply logged in and are watching TV in another room?!!!

The following formative assessment techniques (i.e., techniques for checking for understanding for which you DO NOT take a grade) can help you both check for understanding while you’re teaching and create “moments of active engagement” (yes, I realize this oxymoronic nature of that expression).

Asking a verbal question

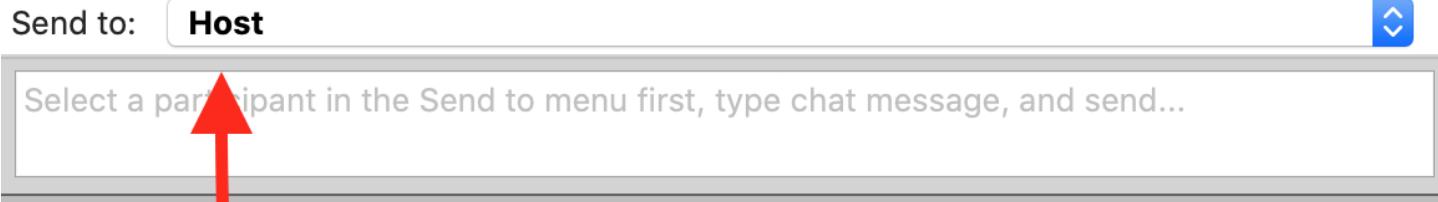
Perhaps the simplest and most common form of formative assessment is that of “questioning.” We all do it quite naturally. Of course, you can pose a verbal question in an online synchronous class (think “WebEx”) in the same way you would in a face-to-face class, but students must first individually

unmute themselves in order to answer. To avoid any potential chaos, you have to establish a procedure for “how” this will happen:

1. Ask a verbal question
2. Tell students to click the “hand” icon above the chat window
3. Recognize the students in order of raised hands - Look for the small number to the right of the hands which will appear to the right of their names in the “Participants” list
4. If they have difficulty unmuting themselves, you can do that for them by clicking on their microphone (to the right of their name) while telling them you have done so.

Total Class Participation through the Chat Window

A positive benefit of teaching in a synchronous platform like WebEx is the ability to equal the playing field by using Total Class Participation techniques. In this example, I use the chat window for a total class participation technique where every student has the opportunity to participate in answering the same question. The technique is simple: Pose a question either orally or by displaying the question on a slide or shared document. Ask students to choose the “Host” option from the “Send to” drop-down menu that appears above the chat window. Having done so, their answer to your question will only be seen by you, the “Host” of the WebEx session, and not the rest of the class.



WebEx Polls

The WebEx Training interface includes a polling feature. Using this feature requires some advanced preparation since you have to create the polls before class so that you can immediately launch them for students. If you are willing to put forth the effort, this is another Total Class Participation technique to create equal opportunity for all students to check for understanding.

In order to take advantage of this feature, I STRONGLY suggest that you create your polls before class. See the following directions for how to do so: [Creating a Poll prior to a WebEx session](#)

Whiteboard Sharing

You can easily add a whiteboard to the WebEx training space at any time. I use the whiteboard in the same way I would use a whiteboard in a classroom: To “write” something in the moment. In this case, you are obviously “typing” and not “writing.” For example, I might type a question or provide an example in response to student questions or interactions. What’s nice about the whiteboard is that you can insert one in a matter of seconds. It appears in addition to any other tabs you have open, like your shared Powerpoint slides or even another whiteboard. Because you can open multiple whiteboards, you might also consider how to use each to prepopulate the WebEx training space with different information in each whiteboard. For example, you might type an activity in one whiteboard, write directions for an activity or learning objectives in another, or even create a few multiple choice questions in another.

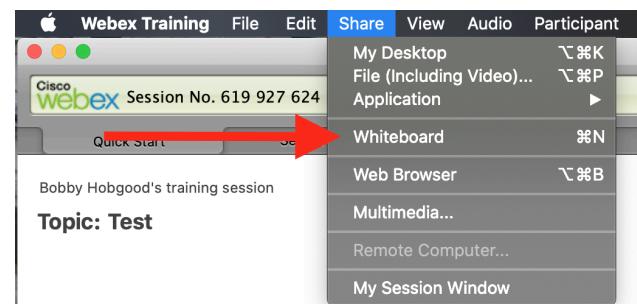


The screenshot shows a WebEx session interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Quick Start', 'Session Info', 'Whiteboard' (which is selected and highlighted in blue), and 'Whiteboard 2'. Below the tabs is a toolbar with various icons. The main content area contains the following text:

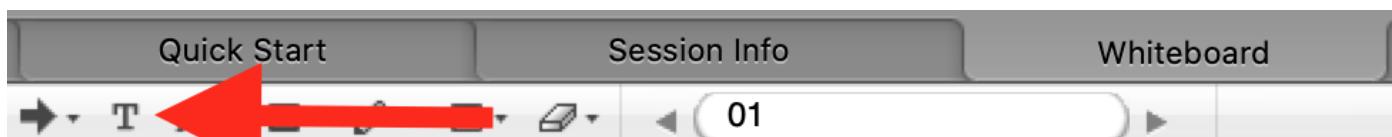
For this activity, please change the “Send to” menu in the chat window to “Host.”
You will be sharing your answers with me privately.

In the image above, you can see the tabs of different whiteboards and an example of some text I prepopulated in a whiteboard in preparation for an activity.

The image here shows clicking the “Share” menu to then select “Whiteboard,” but the process is the same on a PC.

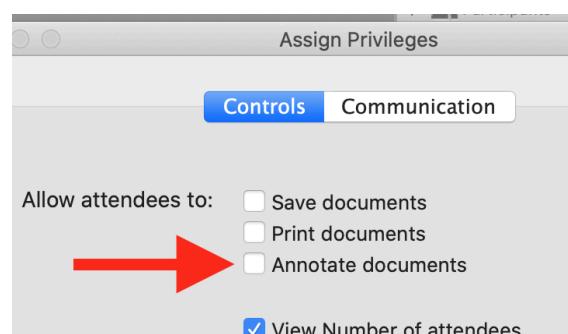


In order to type on the whiteboard, you must give your students the privileges to use the Annotation Tools, specifically the text annotation tool, the letter “T” icon that appears in the annotation toolbar. (Note: This looks slightly different on a PC.)



The screenshot shows a WebEx session interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Quick Start', 'Session Info', and 'Whiteboard'. Below the tabs is a toolbar with various icons. A red arrow points to the 'T' icon in the toolbar, which represents the text annotation tool.

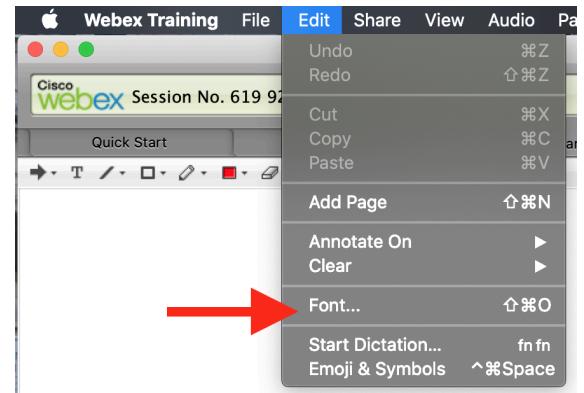
I suggest you give them all this privilege before the



session begins by clicking on “Assign Privileges” from the “Participant” menu. Doing so reveals a window like the one seen here, where you click the checkbox to allow students to annotate documents.

Students will then see a toolbar with the annotation tools and can choose the color of their text. They can also change the font and size of their text from the “Edit” menu.

Once you have typed something on the whiteboard, it does not automatically appear for others to see until you then “click out” of the text, meaning click anywhere on the whiteboard space. This action makes your text visible.



Summative Assessment Ideas

When we consider summative or formal assessments online, we are of course concerned with academic integrity, in a word “cheating.” During these times when everyone has been thrust into teaching and learning without proper preparation and with short notice, we may be forced to make some concessions regarding academic integrity. In other words, don’t worry as much about students who are going to cheat on a Canvas assessment, whether it is a quiz, test, or exam. Given the circumstances, accept that some will do so. While I do not personally like the thought, I am realistic in my thinking and know that it is beyond my control.

Rethink the assessment

One way to address cheating and plagiarism for major assessments or assignments is to rethink the assessment. This means creatively assessing students in a different format whereby access to notes, books, the Web, or another person would not make a huge difference, if any difference at all. For example, instead of select response assessments (multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, etc.), you might ask students to create the assessment themselves, indicating the correct answer. Or, instead of the traditional items where students must provide the correct verb form, or adjective form, etc. for a sentence or paragraph, create a context-based assessment where students respond to a prompt through writing. For example:

You and your family are visiting the capital city of Dakar. Use the past tense to describe your weekend visit, talking about activities done as a family as well as those done on your own.
You will receive points for grammar, vocabulary use, and creativity.

This kind of assessment will obviously require more work on your part, so it may not be a viable option.

Also, consider placing a time limit on the assessments you create in Canvas. For certain topics, having access to outside sources won’t help in a limited amount of time.

Open Book Exams

These resources may help you develop assessments where students have access to any number of resources.

For Faculty

- [A Guide for Academics - Open Book Exams](#) [PDF] from Newcastle University; explains how to create open book exams
- [Why Open-book Tests Deserve a Place in Your Courses](#) - article from Faculty Focus

For Students

- [Open-Book and Take-Home Exams for Students](#) - a tipsheet for students from University of New South Wales Sydney
- [Exam preparation: Strategies for Open Book Exams](#) - test taking tips for students from Simon Fraser University

Oral assessment

I plan to use my WebEx Personal Meeting Room for one-on-one Oral Exams this semester. The Personal Room is better suited for this purpose since your video and the video of the students can be more easily enlarged to fill the screen. Further, you don't have to schedule a WebEx training, but instead give the students the URL to your Personal Room. Schedule some break time between meetings, perhaps 10 minutes, to account for any students who might enter the room early. Consider providing specific details to them for the process of completing the oral exam, i.e, not just the exam itself, but how, when, and where to login.

Assessment Proctoring via Lockdown Browser & Respondus Monitor

We now have access to a free proctoring solution for online assessments. Known as "Lockdown Browser & Respondus Monitor," this web-based solution requires that students have a certain hardware, browser, and operating system in order to work. In essence, the platform leverages their webcam to record them as they take an online assessment through Canvas, then providing you with "red flags" or notification at various points during that video recording which could be signs of cheating. For an overview of how this works, see the following video:

[Preparing for an Exam using Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor](#)

While this sounds like a great idea, I would encourage you to consider whether or not all of your students 1) have access to a webcam and 2) have a **reliable** Internet connection and 3) have a device other than a smartphone or tablet before you make the decision to use this option for monitoring assessments. You might perhaps give an alternate assessment to those students who do not have the necessary hardware and software. To learn more about using Lockdown Browser with Respondus Monitor, see the following detailed page: [Respondus Monitor Online Proctoring](#)

Canvas Quizzes and Tests - Center for Teaching and Learning

Most exams that you offer in paper-based formats can be transferred into Canvas. Canvas refers to quizzes and tests interchangeably. Once you have your questions ready to go, Canvas provides options for you to select time limits, number of allowed attempts, and how and when students can view feedback. All of these options can help ensure the academic integrity of your exam.

Resources for Adding New Quizzes:

- [Creating a Quiz](#)
- [Quiz settings](#)
- [Randomizing Questions](#)
- [Respondus LockDown Browser](#)
- [Respondus Test Question Software](#)

Grading Quizzes:

- [Grading Canvas Quizzes with the Speedgrader](#)

Giving Written Feedback in Canvas - Kiran Budhrani (CTL)

[Giving Effective Written Feedback in Canvas thru the Feedback Continuum \(YouTube Video: 28 minutes\)](#) - This video explains how to use Canvas Speedgrader to provide positive and corrective feedback.

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