

Disability Services

Alternative Assessment Methods

These [methods](#) are borrowed from the University of California, Berkeley's Center for Teaching and Learning.

Not every student learns the same, regardless of ability. Along with traditional testing methods, consider incorporating these options into future exams so that students may have the opportunity to show what they've learned in a format that works better for them. In addition to giving students more flexibility in showing their work, several of these include learning and utilizing other resources on and off campus, such as Library Services, or connecting with the local community.

Annotated Bibliographies

Instead of writing a research paper, consider having students compile a bibliography on a topic of their choice. Students may read related literature, evaluate their accuracies, biases, and relevance, then introduce the bibliography, and write entries containing an explanatory or evaluative paragraph.

Dual Formats for Exams

Some students may have difficult writing. Others may not be able to stare at a computer screen for long periods of time. Consider giving students the choice to take exams on paper or computer.

Exam Series

Big, high stakes exams such as midterms and finals may not always be the best way to really gauge what your students have learned. Consider giving a series of smaller exams throughout the semester instead.

Fact Sheets

Fact sheets can detail anything from health issues, economics, sociology, history, political science, or engineering. With fact sheets, students would learn to search relevant databases for relevant material to evaluate and present in a concise, accessible way. Additionally, relevant fact sheets could be distributed around campus or the wider community, making them more than just another homework assignment.

Memorandums

Memorandums or briefings can serve as a good exercise in synthesizing material, as well as allowing students to practice concise and direct writing. Consider having students prepare a one- or two-page briefing about the material with the following headings: background, problem, possible solutions with pros and cons, final recommendations with implications or impact.

Op-Ed Pieces

An “Op-Ed” piece, similar to what you may see in the local newspaper, would require students to demonstrate not only their knowledge of the material, but an ability to understand and present more than one side of an issue to their audience. Additionally, pieces could be sent to a local newspaper to bring more outside attention to the course or department from the greater community.

Oral Presentations

Some students write better than they speak. But other students speak better than they right. Instead of a final exam or essay, consider giving students the option to present what they've learned to you orally. This option also allows them some creative flexibility, as they may do so in a format of their choosing, such as: making a PowerPoint presentation, giving a speech, or working with a group and presenting to the class.

Portfolios

Portfolios in place of tests, and especially in place of long essays or research papers, are utilized in colleges and universities around the US. Students can compile their best work from the term, write a critical introduction to the portfolio, as well as a brief introduction to each piece of material they've compiled. For example, when the Disability Services Coordinator was in graduate school, she opted for a portfolio instead of a research paper that consisted of smaller essays exploring each of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)'s Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, how her values and practice aligned with each of them, and what were some areas of improvement.

Poster Sessions

These types of projects can help students link class material to every day experiences, making the material relatable and easier to understand through real world application. An example would be to have students pick a topic from a given list, develop a hypothesis, and do their research to support or refute said hypothesis. Students would then present their research on posters to their instructors and peers for critique.

Reflective Papers

In a class that is experiential, consider having students write a reflective paper or critique of their experience that ties into the themes of the course. This can be standalone or added to another paper.

Student-Proposed Projects

If nothing else, consider giving students the option to pick their own method of showing you what they've learned. With specific conditions related to the course goals and learning outcomes, of course.