Hello and welcome to this video tutorial “Re-imagining Invigilated Exams” where we will consider what is reasonable and what is feasible.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, York University has cancelled all in-person exams during the formal winter exam period of April 7th to 25th of this year. So, we are forced to re-imagine any in-person exams that were planned. There are some guidelines in place to help us and I encourage you to review the Senate Executive Communications available via the link on the current slide.

What do these guidelines tell us? Well, first, instructors have flexibility to change the number, type, and weight of assignments as required, although this does not apply to Osgoode Hall Law School.

- Specifically, where a course director has graded assignments that amount to 70% or more of the final grade in a course, the instructor may give individual students the option of receiving a final grade that is based on a re-weighting of assignments already completed, provided the instructor is satisfied that the learning objectives of the course have been achieved and that fairness to students and academic integrity are preserved. (This means it may be possible to eliminate your final exam and re-weight other course work if you think this is appropriate.)

- However, students must have the option of completing additional assignments that follow the original grading scheme in the course, understanding that this decision may require deferred evaluations which may delay course completion. This means, even if you eliminate the final exam, you need to consider back-up options for students. Although you might feel that the only possibility is to defer an invigilated exam, we want to emphasize the need for flexibility and creativeness in transitioning your courses away from in-person formats in a manner that upholds academic integrity and provides options for course completion that are fair to students. The focus of this video tutorial is to provide options for you to consider.

In this short tutorial, I prompt you to think of what is reasonable for you and your students given the current unpredictable and unprecedented circumstances as well as what is actually feasible for you and your students to be able to do and/or complete? You may find that you’ve had to adjust course content and need to balance this with decisions about assessments, including re-imagining your planned final exam.

For your assessment plan, consider what outcomes have already been assessed, and what is left that must be assessed. If all course outcomes have already been assessed, is a final exam even necessary? If you, or your students need more assessments, is a final exam necessary, or are other alternative assessments possible? Consider what are reasonable and feasible assessments. To answer all of these questions, use the Course Completion Plan Assistant to help you, which is linked on this slide.

This assistant, as pictured here, has been designed to help you think through all that you had
intended to do in your course and what is absolutely critical for your students to do and/or demonstrate under the current circumstances and within alternate learning platforms.

Now, let’s consider timelines. As previously communicated, Course Completion Plans are due to your Chair/Director/Dean (for undergraduate courses) or GPD and Associate Dean Graduate (for graduate courses) by no later than Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

- By no later than Friday, March 27, 2020 all students should be informed by their instructors of any adjustments to evaluation and grading schemes.
- Please enlist the help of your TAs, if you have them, to communicate with students as well. Your TAs will also need to be informed of these same timelines, to allow them time to plan for completing their work.

If you determine that a final exam or other assessment is necessary in your course, let’s first consider some characteristics of final exams which will outline the parameters you have to work within when re-imagining your final exam. Final Exams are used because of the logistics of assessment in large classes, because we want to assess students’ abilities and knowledge individually, because we want to ensure academic integrity, and because they assess cumulative knowledge across the course.

To assess cumulative knowledge across the course, alternative assignments may be just as effective as a final exam, some examples include essays, posters and portfolios that allow students to demonstrate they have met the course learning outcomes. In large courses, the scope of these assignments may need to be considered to ensure grading is possible in a timely manner. We have another resource that is accessible through the Resources link on the slide for other assignment ideas. Take-home exams or open-book, timed online exams may be the form that is required to ensure grading is possible in a timely manner. Other concerns you may have include assessment of individuals’ abilities and academic integrity. In what follows, we will offer possibilities and what you can consider in order to create an assessment that you and your students can live with.

For take-home assignments or exams, you may be wondering how to design them so they assess individuals’ abilities and uphold academic integrity.

- Instead of multiple standard questions possible in a particular time period as a closed-book exam, offer fewer, more high level questions which require more application, analysis, evaluation, and/or original thought. Students will have more time to complete the take-home exam so higher level questions are possible, which are meant to challenge students so they cannot simply look up the answer or consult with classmates.

How will you know that students are submitting their own work?

- Consider process questions that require students to demonstrate how they arrived at their answer.
- Consider how to make questions more individualized. Essays are often take-home summative assessments because they require students’ original thought. If essay questions are not appropriate for your course/discipline, or you need to assess more process or procedural type questions (problem solving etc.) which may have a right answer, and/or a particular process, consider accompanying this question with an individual reflective question that asks students to describe in their own words, what they learned from this question or the course, or to demonstrate to you their individual
understanding of the process/procedural question they answered.

- You can require students to submit through Turnitin, a text-matching software available in Moodle.

You may choose to offer a timed, open-book online exam or assignment submission for logistical reasons. This could include the time you and your students have to complete the assessment, the time you and your graders have to do the grading, and/or for academic integrity reasons.

- For timed, open-book, online exams a balance is needed for students in terms of time limit and open-book - the time limit may restrict how complex or high level the questions can be or need to be, but since the exam will be open-book (because we can’t monitor students while they write) the questions have to be involved enough or designed in a way to ensure we are assessing students’ knowledge (unless you are only assessing their ability to find information, which you may be!)

- Moodle can randomize questions in an online exam so students have “unique” exams

Finally, for feasibility, consider

- How many questions are necessary? For large classes especially, grading time needs to be considered. Is it possible to have only one or two large, high level questions? We often offer a variety of questions, with varying levels of difficulty on an exam because students have limited time and no resources to answer these questions on a timed, in-person exam, and we are designing exams for a variety of student abilities. If we replace this exam with a take-home exam, the students can have more time and resources to complete the exam, which means not as much variety may be needed.

- Even if essay questions are appropriate in your course/discipline, your class size may make an essay seem impossible to grade. Can you consider alternative writing assignments that are shorter, but still require the student to apply critical thinking skills and communicate their original thoughts? See the resource “alternatives to the essay” by using the link on the slide:

Thank you for joining in this short tutorial. For additional support please see the Course Continuity page on the Teaching Commons website, which is linked on this slide. This site houses information and access to technical and teaching support. In particular, the Teaching Commons offers virtual drop-in hours daily, Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm, which can be accessed using the link in the slide. We are here to support you, your teaching, and your students. Please do not hesitate to reach out.