TRUE OR FALSE: EXAMS ARE A WASTE OF TIME?

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This presentation will be divisive for some! We all know that change is difficult, so this may cause you to experience some uncomfortable emotions!!
Why Do We Rely on Exams?

- Typical reasons are based on efficiency
  - A reluctance to change: CHANGE IS WORK!
  - Growth of education: How to assess a class of 400??

![Bachelor Degrees Awarded in the US](chart.png)
Exams: What Are They Good For?

**Teachers:**
Development of thinking skills, understanding, and knowledge

**Students:**
To “get a job”

**Employers:**
Employees with foundational knowledge and practical skills that make them “job ready”

**Reality:**
Many assessments concentrate on knowledge rather than the student’s understanding of that knowledge
Evaluating Their Value

• How many of the average employee takes an exam on a regular basis?
• Exam stress is REAL for some
• Cramming leads to short-term success, long-term forgetfulness
• What about ‘soft’ skills like critical thinking, teamwork, and negotiation?
• Are we relying on a practice because it’s ‘always’ been done this way?

“Although 99% of professors consider critical thinking an ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ goal of a college education, fewer than 20% of the exam questions actually tested for this skill.”

~Derek Bok²
Former president of Harvard University
What to Do?

Get rid of exams?
Change the exams we have?
Somewhere in the middle?
To Be or Not to Be... Using Exams

There may be some classes where an exam isn’t necessary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What can you do instead?</th>
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<tr>
<td>E-portfolio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creation of something (website, song, research paper)</td>
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<td>Collaboration with others</td>
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Somewhere in the Middle

- Implement a large-scale, semester-long project
- Lower point percentage for exams
Five Ways to Improve Your Assessments

**Authentic:** Preparing the learner for what they are going to do next

**Accessible:** Designed throughout to be usable by everyone to the greatest possible extent

** Appropriately Automated:** Easing teachers’ grading and feedback workload

**Continuous:** Rich in practice opportunities and reflecting the fact that students today need to be capable of lifelong learning

**Secure:** Ensuring that the right student is taking the right assessment and that the work they are submitting is their own
Authentic

• Allow the learner to express themselves in ways which feel natural and prepares them for what they are going to do next
• Encourages the learner to integrate knowledge and skills and act on knowledge
Accessible

• Must be viewed in the very broadest sense and designed into assessment practice from the outset

• Many of us are still taking a non-accessible assessment and providing adaptations to meet the needs of students with specific disabilities

• A well-designed assessment benefits all students by allowing them to produce their best work while minimizing workarounds and adaptations
Appropriately Automated

• Designing, grading, and providing feedback all take up a large amount of time for teachers

• Technology can help by automating some aspects of assessment

• Concerns:
  • Extent to which technology might reduce student/instructor interaction
  • What extent human judgement could or should be replaced entirely
Continuous

- Students today do not absorb a body of subject knowledge that serves them for life
- It may be more effective to assess continually throughout the course instead of through a final exam
  - Be prepared to experience a small increase in workload in order to transition to a continual assessment focused approach
  - May be hindered by the procedural systems that institutions are working within
Universities need to ensure that:

- **Right** student is taking the **right** assessment
- Work they are submitting is their **own**
- Abides by the rules of the assessment

Technology can help to ensure exams are secure

- Also a need to monitor how new technology is being used to break assessment rules

Academic integrity is at the heart of this issue
The Bottom Line

• Assessment is crucial to the educational process, but it must be done properly

• It drives improvement, shapes learner behavior, and provides accountability to employers and others

• We need to look at ways to make assessment smarter, faster, fairer and more effective
Contact and Sources

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Sources

