Advice to Instructors for handling technical problems related to examinations

To the instructor:

Although we strongly encourage instructors to find alternate means of assessing student learning during this challenging time, we recognize that some instructors need to administer large-scale (and sometimes timed) digital assessments in a secured system. However, there have been cases in which technical difficulties and/or internet bandwidth issues make it impossible for students to access or submit assessments, causing serious distress for students and putting them at risk of being unable to demonstrate the knowledge they have acquired. We also know that some students may lose access due to internet connectivity challenges while in the midst of an assessment.

We cannot put our students at risk of a negative evaluation due to technical challenges. Thus, for those faculty members giving assessments in a secure digital medium, we strongly suggest that you:

- Include on your syllabus, and on all assessment sign-in messages, information about what to do in the case of a technical glitch that prevents students from logging in to the assessment.
- Encourage students also to reach out to ITS by both emailing 4HELP@umich.edu and calling 734-764-HELP (4357).
- List emergency contacts on every exam document and in an easily accessible area of your CANVAS site. Specifically, we suggest that you include the email address and phone number of an emergency contact, together with a reminder to email you if the student has any difficulties logging into the designated system.
- Identify a back-up plan if students encounter technical problems, and communicate those back-up plans to your students. For example:
  - Can students create a pdf and email it to you if submission methods don't work?
  - Can they send screenshots or photos of the screen to verify the problem?
  - Is there an alternate day or make-up exam process?
  - Are you willing to let students mail a paper exam by snail mail and have it returned through mail?
- Block the exam time so that you can be on stand-by should a student need your assistance.

Please keep in mind that exams are typically stressful for the people taking them, and what might seem like an obvious action to address an emergency may not seem as obvious to a person whose computer has just crashed or who can’t figure out how to get into the testing system. Providing routine reminders and easy access to contact information will help reduce stress for our students and allow them to do their best work.

Suggested syllabus language: We strongly encourage all instructors using technology-based examinations to include some version of this language on your syllabus, your CANVAS site, and in exam login instructions:

If you experience technical difficulties with signing in, accessing, completing, or submitting the assessment or should you lose internet connectivity during the exam time, then you should immediately call [name of instructor] at [phone number] for assistance. Please also send a back-up email message to [name of contact/email address/CANVAS site] to register the difficulty you are having with the system. Finally, document your need for assistance by emailing 4HELP@umich.edu and calling 734.764.HELP (4357).

I [and any teaching assistants, preferably listed by name] will be on stand-by during examination time periods to ensure that we receive your call and can provide you with immediate assistance. In the case of a timed assessment, your testing time will be counted from the time you are able to log in (or re-enter the system) to ensure that you have the full time allotted for all assessments.

Finally, it’s always a good idea to have a back-up plan! If you encounter technical problems, you can:

- Create a pdf and email that, if submission methods don't work;
- Send screenshots or photos of the screen to verify the problem;
- Take a make-up exam, once you have verified the issues you’re having with the technology.