Proctoring Options for Online Programs

Approved Local Proctor
This approach allows students to nominate a suitable proctor in their area. The proctor is approved by the institution and authorized to distribute the exam. Different mechanisms may be put in place to ensure the proctor's involvement in distributing the exam, such as generating an access code, requiring the proctor to submit the exam on the student's behalf, or distributing the exam directly to the proctor.

The qualifications of a proctor are the prerogative of the university but typically include local educators or civic leaders. An example of these criteria can be found here:
http://student.worldcampus.psu.edu/a-z-index/acceptable-persons-to-serve-as-proctor

The requirements of a proctored exam are also left up to the institution and should be clearly communicated to the proctor. Some considerations would be monitoring expectations (continuous or periodic), exam setting, and allowable materials.

The primary drawback of this approach is its reliance on people outside of the university's control (i.e. neither an employee nor vendor).

Testing Center(Campus, Partner Campus, or Private)
There are different types of testing centers at which students might take proctored exam. Some of these services are without cost while others charge a nominal fee.

The university would likely provide access to its own testing center. This option would be useable to students who are willing to come to campus periodically. Periodic on-campus requirements does not negate a program's classification.[1] This option would also be sensible for students who are taking online courses for flexibility but live within a reasonable driving distance or if the program coordinated any residency requirements with testing dates.

Other universities may also provide proctoring services. Some universities offer these services for a fee (paid by the student), while others may be willing to enter into a partnership with VCU to offer reciprocal proctoring services to their students. Local libraries or educational services may also offer proctoring services. If any fee is associated with these options, they would be paid by the student.

An additional option is to work with a testing center such as Pearson or Prometric to administer proctored exams. These companies have large networks of testing centers that may make them

---

[1] Per IPEDS' distance education definition, "Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education." This is a generally accepted standard.

accessible to many students. The financial implications of contracting these services is unclear, though initial research indicates there would be a cost to both students and the institution. A quote would have to be obtained to know more specifics.

Cost and access are the primary concerns for this approach. Some students in remote areas may struggle to find a local solution, although they may diminish their travel time or cost. Proctoring fees represent a modest cost to students but should be considered in the context of overall educational costs.

<u>Electronic Proctoring</u>
Electronic proctoring may refer to different approaches, but generally speaking, the options for electronic proctoring consist of one or more of the following components: identify verification, browser lockdown, continuous monitoring, and recording.

Identity verification can take different forms, some options include personalized challenge questions (drawn from public records), keystroke analysis, biometric approaches (e.g. signature analysis), or a visual confirmation by a trained proctor (often including showing government or university ID).

Browser lockdown is an approach where a student installs a program on his or her computer which prevents opening new browser windows or tabs, as well as external programs. Many of these programs integrate with the university's learning management system to initiate (or prompt install) when a student begins an exam or assignment hosted in the learning management system.

Continuous monitoring requires students be observed by a proctor using a webcam. Depending on the service or approach, students may use their own webcam or must purchase a proprietary webcam. Proctors typically have remote control over the user's computer and so they are able to view the student's screen and use the test computer's mouse and keyboard if needed. When using a pay service, proctors are typically trained to identify suspicious activity and may either halt the exam or simply flag it for instructor review.

Recording is an option for both actively proctored exams and those which rely on a recorded session which may be reviewed later (in the event of suspicious activity or randomly as a quality check). Using the user's webcam, the session is recorded and uploaded into a secure place. Recording may also be initiated by a proctor in some services in the event they become suspicious.

Some challenges for using electronic proctoring options are cost, perceptions about security and data privacy, and compatibility. Typically, these approaches present a cost both to the institution and to students. Coordinating with other units and existing infrastructure can diminish this cost; presently, the university supports Respondus, a browser lockdown but only on PC

machines. Compatibility concerns include hardware requirements but also how these products integrate with accessibility accommodations like screen readers. Finally, students sometimes voice concern about being monitored by outside vendors who may retain the data, security of student data falls outside of direct university control (although many vendors have submitted to FERPA audits), or students find the use of certain metrics unnecessarily invasive.