



Representing Faculty, Librarians,  
Veterinarians & College Professors

Dear UGFA Member,

We know that UGFA members, during the pandemic period, have seen their workload increase for both delivering their courses and maintaining their research/scholarship productivity, with serious added challenges related to personal well-being and work/life balance.

Faculty members in some colleges have seen a significant increase in academic misconduct; policing and reporting this activity can be an enormous amount of work, particularly in large classes. We have heard from faculty members who made choices when designing their courses that they did not realize would result in significant additional work.

On Friday, February 12, you received from the Provost a memo on the use of Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor. Note that the Browser application can be used without using the Monitor application, and the Provost's memo applies to the use of the Browser and the Monitor together. The Provost gave the UGFA the opportunity to comment on a draft of this memo before it was finalized. Unfortunately, many of our concerns were not adequately addressed in the memo you received.

According to the memo, the expectations placed on instructors who use Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor include:

- 1. Running a practice test so that students can verify that their computer is compatible.*
- 2. Offering various technical support or helping CourseLink staff to do so.*
- 3. Receiving any human rights accommodation requests from students.*
- 4. Granting all such accommodations.*
- 5. Handling all associated administrative tasks, including scheduling and invigilation of alternative exams.*

Regarding items 1 and 2, the UGFA's suggestion that this software support and compatibility check should be handled by the staff responsible for the software elicited the response that the practice test must be run under CourseLink. We still believe that it is reasonable for the staff to create a Respondus Compatibility Check "course" and provide support to students who need it, instead of downloading these tasks onto our members.

The UGFA is aware of faculty members who use the possibility of Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor as an academic misconduct deterrent: the class is told that the first assessment will be run without using the software, but if the professor identifies a high level of academic misconduct, subsequent assessments will use it. The reputation of the software is such that

a great majority of students come together to maintain a good class culture, with integrity and a low level of academic misconduct. We suggested to the Provost's Office that the burden of having to perform items 1 and 2 may eliminate this positive way to use, while not using, the software.

Regarding items 3-5, while the Provost's memo says that SAS will assist faculty with accommodations normally made through their office, it also introduces a new category of accommodations: those based on human rights grounds. The memo says that **"instructors must accommodate students who make requests within the outlined timeframe based on human rights grounds."** The memo goes on to say that such an accommodation "includes arranging for and invigilating in another form such as face-to-face invigilation with physical distancing (when still within Public Health recommendations) or real-time observations using Zoom or Teams." In other words, any instructor who chooses to use Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor, the invigilation software selected by and paid for by the Administration, will have to have either an entirely separate exam or a separate (but synchronous) invigilation protocol for students requesting accommodation. The only support offered by the Provost's memo is possible additional TA support, which is grossly inadequate, especially for a large course.

We understand that some faculty members who want to avoid computerized invigilation have already been (i) using Respondus LockDown Browser alone, blocking students from accessing the broader internet while not recording them, and (ii) requiring students to be in an online meeting (Zoom or Teams) so that the instructor and/or TAs can invigilate. In addition, the "chat" function can be disabled or configured so that students can only type a question to the meeting host (the instructor). While there may be limitations for large classes, this approach has all students writing the exam together, avoiding the need for accommodations on human rights grounds.

The UGFA continues to defend the right of faculty to determine how to deliver their courses. We also encourage all instructors contemplating the use of Respondus Monitor to consider the implications of the Provost's memo on their courses as well as on their own work/life balance and mental health, given that the Administration has stated that they will provide only minimal assistance, in the form of possible TA support, for accommodating students who do not wish to use Respondus Monitor.

If you have any questions about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the UGFA at [facasoc@uoguelph.ca](mailto:facasoc@uoguelph.ca).

With best wishes,

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