Online Proctoring FAQ

The implementation of Respondus as a tool at McMaster University has raised many questions among our campus community members. The university will endeavour to update the information on this page regularly based on new enquiries and changes in policy.

**Why is McMaster University using video and audio monitoring services for exams?**

Due to the orders and directives issued by the Government of Ontario and relying on advice of public health authorities, McMaster is unable to administer in-person assessments at this time. Video monitoring through online proctoring is considered an integral part of the transition to online learning and supports continuity in invigilating assessments. In addition, use of this software allows the university to maintain the academic integrity of its assessments, while protecting the health and safety of the McMaster community.

**How will using this service protect my work?**

Your integrity matters. And the academic integrity on McMaster campus reflects on you and your degree. McMaster University is partnering with you to ensure that the time and effort you are devoting to your academics is acknowledged and honored. The main purpose of a university is to encourage and facilitate the pursuit of knowledge and scholarship. Ethics and integrity play an integral role in that purpose and pursuit. We have elected to implement Respondus to ensure the integrity of student assessments. Faculty and the Office of Academic Integrity will follow up and address any actions or behaviour that threaten to damage McMaster University’s reputation.

**Images of student ID cards will be used to ensure compliance with McMaster’s Graduate Examinations Policy and Undergraduate Examinations Policy which requires students to present student ID cards to verify their identity at the beginning of each final examination.**

Researchers do not have access to any personally identifiable information of any student, such as the student’s name, course name, institution, grades, or student ID photos, and are bound by legal agreements that include confidentiality obligations that are at least as restrictive as the terms set out in the Respondus Privacy Policy.

**What other data will be collected while I take an exam using an online proctoring system?**

There are different levels of proctoring that may be activated through Respondus Monitor. During an assessment while the Respondus Monitor is enabled, the software collects video and audio recordings captured by your webcam and microphone, an image of your student ID, and data regarding your activity, including eye movement and the time taken by you to answer specific questions. The software also uses automated processes to help only authorized McMaster personnel to evaluate the recordings. This comes in the form of a report that is accessed by the instructor.

Respondus cannot view or access your student information on Avenue to Learn. Student identifiable information including name, grades, course name, and photos taken for identification cards is only accessible through McMaster’s Learning Management System, Avenue to Learn by authorized McMaster personnel.
Who will have access to the data collected by Respondus?

Only authorized McMaster faculty or staff have access to view video and audio recordings of your assessment along with personal information such as your name. Authorization is granted on a course-by-course basis and is restricted to the following personnel:

- Your course instructor(s) and teaching assistant(s);
- Proctor(s) authorized by your Faculty;
- Avenue to Learn administrators; and
- Staff responsible for the adjudication of allegations and appeals of academic misconduct pursuant to the Academic Integrity Policy or the Student Appeals Procedures.

How will McMaster use the information collecting by Respondus?

Information will be treated in accordance with the Ontario’s *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the privacy law that governs the university. Every employee of McMaster is subject to this law, which means that information will only by used by personnel who require the information to perform their duties, and solely for the purpose the information was collected.

Assessments conducted through Respondus are not viewed or monitored in real-time. Instead, the system is set up to generate data that flag any abnormal activity. This information is provided in the form of a spreadsheet.

Audio and video recordings, along with the additional data generated by the software’s automated processes, will be used by McMaster for the sole purposes of improving educational processes and managing the academic integrity of its assessments by: (1) allowing authorized personnel to review, assess, and analyze student performance and conduct; and (2) using the relevant recordings as evidence for the purpose of investigating and adjudicating allegations of academic misconduct. These uses are also included in McMasters Notice of Collection Statement on the university privacy office website.

How will Respondus use my information?

Respondus limits its use of information to purposes: (1) for which it has been given permission, (2) necessary to deliver the Services, or (3) as may be required or permitted for legal compliance or other lawful purposes.

Specifically, relating to the Services, information is used to:

- Improve and optimize the operation and performance of services;
- Diagnose problems with and identify any security risks, errors, or needed enhancements to the services;
- Detect and prevent fraud and abuse of services and systems;
- Collect aggregate statistics about use of the services; and
- Understand and analyze how Services are used

Your information is not shared with any other third-party, including recordings and personal information.
How long will the data collected from my exam experience be retained by Respondus?

Your personal information will be retained by Respondus and McMaster for one year after it is collected. This is consistent with Ontario privacy law. This time frame supports students who wish to appeal their exam mark or if a hearing is being held under the Academic Integrity Policy.

How can I protect my privacy when taking an assessment online?

During the assessment it is recommended that you situate yourself in a quiet and unoccupied space, where other individuals inside your dwelling are less likely to be observed, and remove or conceal personal property bearing images or names (e.g. family photographs or signs) to further maintain your privacy.

Respondus does not access or view any other files or data stored on your computer. All files and data on your computer are secured by the Lockdown Browser.

How does the Respondus Lockdown Browser work?

To support the academic integrity of university assessment and academic fairness, the Respondus Lockdown Browser has several features:

- Assessments are displayed full-screen and cannot be minimized;
- Browser menu and toolbar options are temporarily removed, except for Back, Forward, Refresh and Stop;
- Temporarily prevents access to other applications including messaging, screen-sharing, virtual machines, and remote desktops;
- Printing and screen capture functions are disabled during the assessment;
- Copying and pasting anything to or from an assessment is prevented;
- Right-click menu options, function keys, keyboard shortcuts and task switching are disabled.

Prior to taking an assessment, students may review these features in a short video demonstrating how the Respondus Lockdown Browser works from the test-taker perspective.

How is my information and exam experience secured?

Respondus Monitor uses industry standard SSL (Secure Socket Layer) or TLS (Transport Layer Security) encryption to transfer information. Respondus uses independent, third-party security firms to perform "penetration testing” of the Respondus Monitor system. This includes a review of the Respondus Monitor architecture and the testing for vulnerabilities and exploits. However, no data transmission over the Internet is 100% secure for any service or system.

Within Avenue to Learn, your information including name, grade, course name, and photos that show identification cards can only be accessed by authorized McMaster personnel.

Only users with instructor credentials for your courses on Avenue to Learn (e.g., instructors, teaching assistants, proctors, LMS administrators) are able to access and view video sessions of student examinations recorded by Respondus. Access to video recordings are provided using video links, which are "one-time use" and do not function if copied.
Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?

If you have further concerns, please contact your course instructor about the use of Respondus. Specific concerns may also be addressed to:

How online proctoring supports student Integrity  acinteg@mcmaster.ca
Privacy-related concerns  privacy@mcmaster.ca
Data storage, computer systems, file corruption  UTS helpdesk
Exam Related Anxiety  Student Wellness Centre