

# Collaborative Two-Stage Testing: A “less sad and intimidating” way to test

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## Teaching Practice & the Need it Addresses

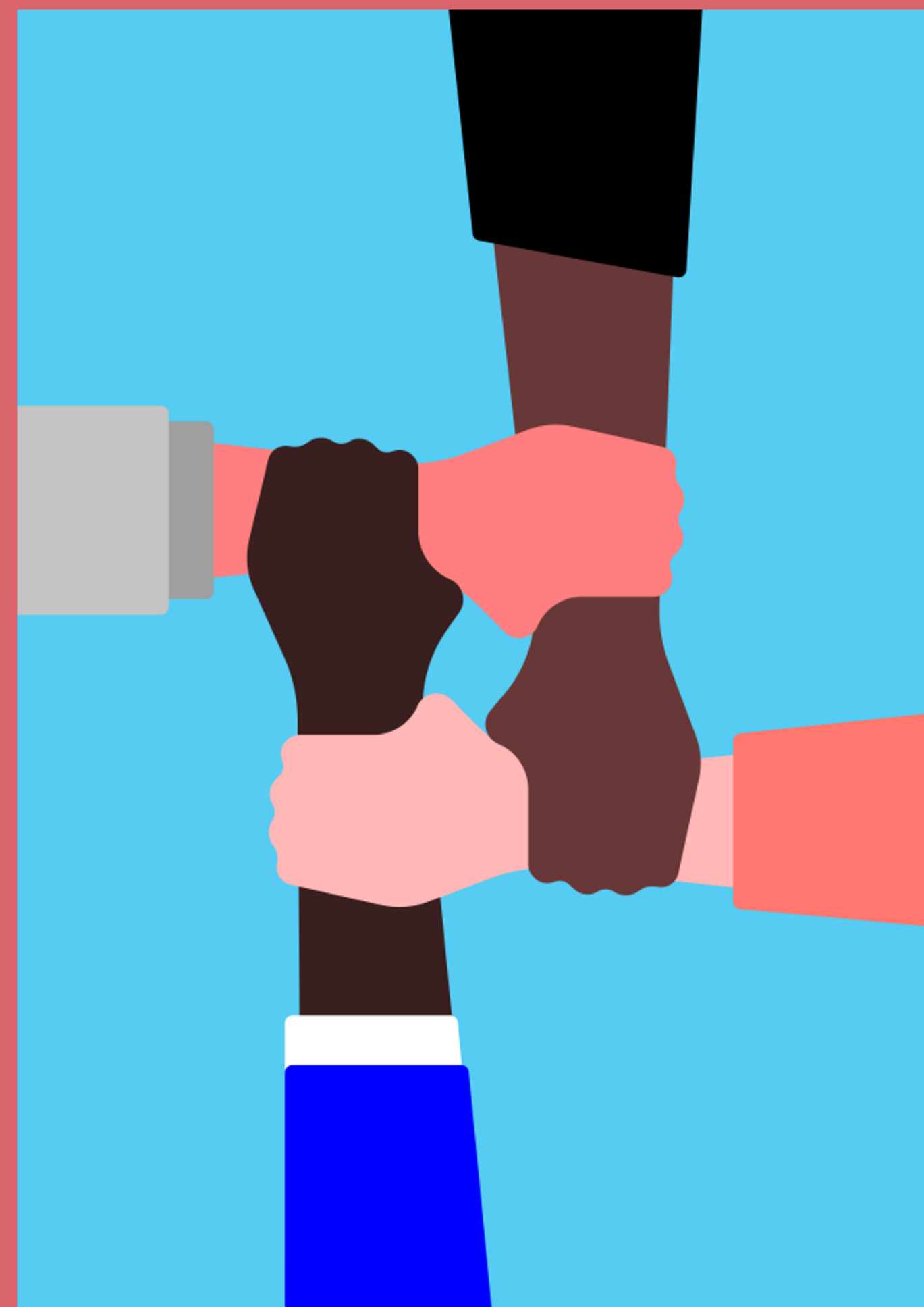
- Traditional individual testing discourages collaboration, increases student anxiety, and does not provide timely and useful feedback. Two-stage tests are an alternative method of assessment that deepens learning while also promoting higher-order thinking skills, such as collaboration, communication, and peer instruction. In a two-stage test, students first complete and turn in the test individually and then, working in pre-assigned groups of 3 to 4, answer the same test questions again. The individual part of the test is weighted at 85%, while the group part is weighted at 15%. To encourage total participation and address concerns about fairness, students are told that their individual test score will not go down due to the group part. This teaching practice transforms traditional testing into a valuable collaborative learning experience that fully utilizes UNLV's 75-minute class session and improves student perception of the course.

## How Others Can Adopt This Practice

Two-stage tests are relatively easy to implement in any type of course.

1. Explain to students on the first day of class the learning benefits of conducting tests this way.
2. Design the test so that the individual part will take up 45-50 minutes of class time.
3. During the individual part, students complete the test alone. Remind students of the time remaining.
4. Allow 2-3 minutes for students to get in their pre-assigned groups and greet one another.
5. During the group part, students retake the test as a group. They must come to a consensus on the answers and turn in one copy with their names on it. I typically do not require groups to complete the essay question(s).
6. The final grade is a combination of the individual and group portion, with the individual part weighted at 80-85%, and 15-20% for the group part.

# Promoting Collaboration and Peer Instruction through Two-Stage Tests



## Evidence it Benefits Students

- Informal class surveys, midterm feedback, and end-of-course evaluations in my classes have shown that students have an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward two-stage tests. The main benefits of two-stage testing include:
  - Students have found the timely and targeted feedback of the two-stage test to be particularly beneficial, as the “instant feedback” helped them to see “what [they] got wrong.”
  - Fosters collaboration and peer instruction, which builds community and improves learning. Higher-achieving students benefit from teaching their peers, while lower-achieving students benefit from their peers’ explanation and learn from their mistakes (Chen, 2018).
  - During the group portion of the test, the classroom is transformed into an energetic and supportive learning environment, which in turn helps to reduce test anxiety. One student remarked that the two-stage test technique made testing a “less sad and intimidating” experience.

## Resources & Where to Find Them

There are a number of excellent online resources that outline the research-based benefits of two-stage testing and provide step-by-step instructions on how to implement this practice in any type of classroom. In addition to the references cited below, here are some other helpful resources:

1. A two-minute video on how to facilitate a two-stage test: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVFWQzIVFy0>
2. A short video on the benefits of two-stage testing: [https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_Btfnas1A0](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8_Btfnas1A0)

## References

- Y. Chen. (2018). “Collaborative Learning Through Group Testing.” Kent State University Center for Teaching and Learning. Retrieved on December 24, 2022 from <http://www.kent.edu/ctl/group-testing>.
- G. Rieger & C. Heiner. (2014). “Examinations That Support Collaborative Learning: The Students’ Perspective.” *Journal of College Science Teaching* 43, no. 4, 41-47.
- “Two Stage Exams.” (2014). The University of British Columbia: Carl Wieman Education Initiative. Retrieved on December 24, 2022 from [https://cwsei.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/cwsei/resources/instructor/Two-stage\\_Exams.pdf](https://cwsei.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/cwsei/resources/instructor/Two-stage_Exams.pdf).

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