

Focus Lock

E-SESS | Feature Guide

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Overview

Focus Lock is an advanced proprietary feature integrated within the E-SESS assessment engine, designed to uphold the integrity and fairness of the testing process. This innovative browser detection tool is specifically developed to alert users in real-time if they navigate away from their test window, ensuring that the attention remains solely on the assessment at hand.

How Focus Lock Works

Real-Time Monitoring: Focus Lock continuously monitors the active window status of the user's browser to detect any attempts to navigate away from the test environment. This includes switching tabs, opening new browsers, or accessing other applications during the test.

Full Screen Mode: Upon clicking Begin on an assessment, Focus Lock will automatically expand the assessment to a full screen view. Students will no longer have to manually adjust their screens to do so. Focus Lock will operate a step further than before, which will activate if a user leaves full screen mode. An additional benefit of full screen mode, is that it reduces the impact of some of the common triggers, meaning less test submissions due to inadvertent background applications, such as notifications. This exciting feature further enhances our proprietary Focus Lock feature!

User Alerts: Upon detecting a deviation from the test window, Focus Lock instantly triggers an alert to the user, indicating that a navigation away from the test has been detected. This system is designed to provide immediate feedback, reminding users to maintain focus on the test.

Warning System: To reinforce the importance of test integrity, Focus Lock employs a structured warning system comprising three alerts if a user navigates away from the test:

Warning	Response Window
1st Warning	10 seconds to acknowledge and return to the test
2nd Warning	5 seconds to acknowledge and return to the test
3rd Warning	5 seconds to acknowledge and return to the test

After the third warning, or if any warning is not acknowledged within the allotted time, Focus Lock will automatically submit the user's test as is. This action serves as a deterrent against any attempt to compromise the test's integrity and ensures fairness for all participants.

Benefits of Focus Lock

Integrity Assurance: Focus Lock plays a crucial role in maintaining the integrity and credibility of the E-SESS assessment process by preventing unauthorized information access or distractions during tests.

Fairness and Equality: By enforcing strict adherence to test protocols, Focus Lock ensures a level playing field for all test takers, contributing to the overall fairness of the assessment.

Real-Time Intervention: The immediate feedback mechanism of Focus Lock assists users in correcting their course of action promptly, reducing the likelihood of inadvertent rule violations.

Automated Test Submission: The automatic submission feature acts as a strong deterrent against repeated distractions or attempts to navigate away, preserving the test's validity.

Common Unintentional Triggers

Trigger	What Happens
Automatic Updates	Software updates that initiate automatically in the background can cause the test window to lose focus, inadvertently triggering a Focus Lock alert.
Email Applications	Email clients running in the background that produce pop-up notifications or take focus for new messages can unintentionally cause Focus Lock to activate.
Music and Streaming Services	Applications for music or video streaming that generate notifications or interface pop-ups might inadvertently shift focus away from the test environment.

Calculator Apps	Utilizing calculator apps or other assistive tools, if permitted during the test, may sometimes be misinterpreted by Focus Lock as navigating away from the test.
Full Screen Permission Blocked	If the browser is not set to allow the assessment window to enter full screen mode, E-SESS will be unable to launch Focus Lock, and the test will not proceed once Begin is pressed. Participants should confirm their browser permits full screen access before starting the assessment.

Processing: The “Processing” screen typically means the device has lost its internet connection. To get things back on track, please try the following steps:

- Ensure the device has reconnected to the internet.
- Refresh the browser screen.
- Continue the test as usual.

The good news is that the test remains unlocked, so students can pick up where they left off. If any time was lost due to this issue, Pitsco, CTECS, or a CTECS-approved administrator can adjust the test duration as needed.

Other: A few less common causes have also been reported:

- The users are explicitly acknowledging notifications of some sort.
- An app is stealing focus in the background.
- An unusual OS configuration is causing problems.

Mitigation Strategies

To minimize the impact of these unintentional triggers, several strategies can be employed:

Pre-Test Checklist: Encourage users to complete a pre-test checklist that includes disabling automatic updates, closing unnecessary applications, and turning off notifications that might interfere with the test.

Enable Do Not Disturb Mode: This keeps the active app front and center and suppresses on-screen notifications. Use the links below to enable this setting. If using a Chromebook, enabling Kiosk Mode is highly encouraged.

- [Microsoft's instructions for Windows](#)
- [Apple's instructions for macOS](#)

User Guidelines: Provide clear guidelines for users on how to prepare their testing environment, including which applications should be closed and how to manage necessary ones to prevent unintended Focus Lock activations.

Technical Support: Technical support is available during the assessments to assist users who encounter unintended Focus Lock activations, helping them to quickly resolve the issue without affecting their test performance.

Feature Roadmap

E-SESS is continuously refined based on feedback from our partners, administrators, and participants to deliver an even better testing experience.

In response to that feedback, we've added the following enhancements to our development roadmap. While a confirmed release timeline isn't yet available, our team is prioritizing these updates given the clear value they bring to the assessment experience.

Planned Enhancement	What It Delivers
Event Logging	Administrators with appropriate permissions will be able to view a detailed log of Focus Lock events as they occur.
Real-Time Adjustment Permissions	Select administrators approved by CTECS will be able to make real-time adjustments to reopen participant tests, bringing exam administration closer to participants rather than relying on Pitsco or CTECS technical support.
Enhanced Reporting	Expanded reporting capabilities will provide clearer, more comprehensive insight into Focus Lock events.