Rationale for clarifying the make-up exam policy

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that educational opportunities be available to everyone regardless of their particular abilities and disabilities. If a student cannot, for a disability-related reason, make it to a class during which an exam is being administered, the possibility of providing a make-up exam must be considered. It is important to understand that institutions are not permitted to enforce policies in a manner that denies students with disabilities the right to seek make-up exams as an academic adjustment.

However, many instructors have adopted classroom policies that multiple graded assessments in class, often as many as a couple every week. This is a good practice, educationally, but needs to be consistent with federal law on providing appropriate accommodations.

The following wording seems to strike the balance between obeying the law, providing access to students of all abilities, and retaining academic freedom in the educational methods used.

“Make-up exams are given at the discretion of the instructor, unless federal and/or state law applies. The instructor will announce their policy on the written syllabus at the beginning of each semester.”