Discouraging Academic Dishonesty When You're (Suddenly) Teaching Online

Among the questions faculty might have about moving online is how to prevent academic dishonesty. In many cases, students will have more opportunities to use outside sources for assistance on quizzes, exams, or other assignments they normally complete under supervision in an on-ground class. Moreover, in part due to uncertainty and anxiety they may be experiencing, they could be more motivated than usual to take shortcuts.

Certainly, academic integrity should be a priority no matter the platform or circumstance; however, during this stressful time, instructors might consider reevaluating the importance of, say, a perfect APA citation relative to the course or assignment learning outcomes; in short, exceptional circumstances may call for exceptions for less egregious violations.

To some extent, instructors must accept that there is no way to eliminate students' ability to cheat in an online course (also true for on-ground courses), though there are things they can do to discourage it. If students have not taken online courses before, they may need clarity on what constitutes dishonesty in online assignments like discussion board posts, so consider articulating this. If your main concern is what to do about academic dishonesty on exams, below are some ideas, considerations, and resources to help you think through options.

Online Exams

If you want to go ahead with administering the exam, there are a few things you can do in Canvas to discourage academic dishonesty.

- You can create a test bank and randomize questions. (You might be able to supplement your exam questions with those provided by your textbook publisher).
- You can use the "Lockdown Browser" function on the left side of the screen to prevent students from looking up answers online (using the device they're taking the exam on, anyway).
- You can shuffle questions and set time limits, though you are likely to need to set different limits if you have students who have accommodations.

See this overview of how to Maximize Quiz/Exam Security in Canvas.

- Using open-ended questions discourages academic dishonesty.
- If your exams include problem-solving questions (e.g., Math), ask students to show their work (they could submit a written explanation or a video of them explaining orally).

Additional ideas and considerations taken from Purdue's website:

- **Allowing exams to be open-book/source:** Assume students will use resources while taking an exam, and even encourage them to do so. Try to ask questions that probe deeper levels of knowledge and understanding, enabling students to apply, assess, and evaluate concepts and facts

in meaningful ways. Encourage students to share and cite where they get information from and what resources they use.

*[Faculty Focus article](#) that provides a rationale for going with open-book testing.

- **Use student-generated questions with explanations:** Instead of trying to ensure everyone answers your limited number of questions on their own, ask every student to create their own question with an explanation of how it would assess a certain topic or skill in a meaningful way. You can also assign students to answer each other's questions and state whether those questions actually do assess these skills in appropriate ways.
- **Ensure clarity in questions and prompts:** Especially if your test is timed, your students may not have a chance to ask a question and get a response. It is vital that questions and prompts are clear to novices so your assessment measures what you want it to. Even if not timed, you do not want to be spending your limited time answering clarifying questions.
- **Consider question formats leading to essays, videos, pictures, and other personal responses:** If your class lends itself to it, having students express their learning through essays, videos, pictures, or other personalized forms of writing/speaking/communicating means that everyone needs to create their own. You can also have students post their responses for each other and assess each other's work through peer grading. Rubrics can help guide students as they develop such work, give each other feedback, and, of course, allow your teaching assistants and you a consistent method of assessment.
- **Respect your own time:** Most of these ideas take time to grade. Try to determine what is feasible in your situation, and use feedback-based or hand-grading intensive assessments sparingly. Also, consider how much feedback students actually need/will use. Many times feedback can be created for the whole group based on common challenges or problems, as opposed to individual responses.

Alternative Assessments

You might conclude that an online exam is not the best way to observe students' knowledge/skills while maintaining academic integrity in the online classroom. Maybe a writing assignment, project, or video response to an open-ended question could work better.

- This list of [alternatives to traditional tests](#) might spark an idea for you.

"Authentic assignments" is the term often used to describe means of assessment that evaluate higher-order learning, but an added benefit is that they discourage academic dishonesty.

- [This page](#) from Indiana University is especially clear and helpful on how authentic assessments differ from traditional tests.
- You might also check out this [Authentic Assessment Toolbox](#) for more information and ideas.

Additional Support:

For questions, more resources, or individual assistance, please contact [Kristen Norwood](#) (Learning Academy), [Lindenwood Online](#), [Jeremy Keye](#) (for Accessibility Services), or [Erin Mann](#) (for academic dishonesty issues).