

Academic Integrity:

Tips for Faculty in an Online Environment



Shifting to an online learning environment has been a challenge for both instructors and students. We are all facing extra stressors in conjunction to navigating new platforms. In addition, the online environment has the potential to allow for increased incidents of academic honesty. The responsibility for academic honesty lies with instructors and students. We encourage you to read the strategies outlined below to help you communicate with your students, prepare assignments and exams that discourage cheating, and handle suspected breaches.

On the Education of Students

- Remind students that the rules and expectations are the same when in person or within an online setting
- Talk about the importance of integrity in your class. Explain what is and is not acceptable, expectations for assessments/group work/tests/labs, etc.
- Include the Lassonde Academic Honesty statement to be acknowledged and signed at the start of every assignment, test, or exam
- Play the Academic Honesty informational video for the class, followed by a discussion
- Refer to the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty in your course syllabus. Highlight key sections relevant to your course (e.g. Collaboration, citations, exams)
- Provide clear instructions on assignments, tests, etc.
 - what is expected and required of students:
 - If work is to be done independently or can be completed in collaboration
 - What does acceptable collaboration look like?
 - If study aids are allowed, which ones
- Explain why Academic Integrity is important to you, to them, and to the University
- Identify resources for student support such as Library, Learning Skills/Writing Centre, Student Counselling and Development, Student Clubs/Activities, Fitness Centre/Gym/Intramurals, etc.

Remember that the responsibility for Academic Integrity rests with both instructors and students.

Online Course & Assessment Design

- Use low-stakes assignments as building blocks towards larger assessments/projects or in-class work that derives from materials and discussions
- Avoid creating heavy weighted assignments – higher stakes result in higher risk decisions
- Create multiple assignment versions if possible (This could include minor changes to questions)
- Change assignment, essay, and lab report topics from year to year, and make topics specific rather than general. Topics that have been frequently recycled or that are too general keep the essay mills and “tutoring” services in business
- Design assignments that ask students to explain why something did not happen rather than why something did, this will lead students beyond mere summary or replication of sources
- Let students know that you utilize plagiarism software such as MOSS & Turn- it - in
- Incorporate structured group work into your course to encourage collaboration in an appropriate form. Clearly define what contributions are expected from individual members in a group project
- Ask real questions in your discipline, and let students know that you expect engaged critical thinking rather than “correct” answers
- Encourage speculation based on evidence and reasoning, not just compilation of existing information or expression of unsupported personal opinion
- Design assignments that involve multiple modes of writing or that ask students to integrate multiple ideas and that involve creativity, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis

Preventing Cheating in an Exam Setting

- Prepare 2-3 versions of the exam if possible. You can use the same questions and alter the order, or vary the order of the multiple-choice answers or modify the values in calculation questions – do not reuse past exams
- Remind students that cheating is not tolerated before beginning the exam, and give examples of what that looks like online (No WhatsApp chatting, no online resources etc.)
- Remind students that if they have any questions during the exam, they are free to reach out to you or your TA - this encourages appropriate communication rather than encouraging them to reach out to each other
- Include the Lassonde Academic Honesty Statement at the start of the exam. Require students to read and sign before having access to the exam.
- Remind students that online exams are no different than in person exams – outline expectations of what materials they can use during the exam (Is it open book? What does that mean. Can they use their previous assignments? No cell phones, no googling, etc.)
- Remind students that any form of communication amongst each other during the exam time can be considered an attempt to cheat
- Ensure that the exam time allotted is reasonable
- Create a test that is fair to your students. “Fair” means that the exam covers the material you said it would cover and that students have enough time to complete the exam and instructions are clear on what is or is not acceptable
- Remind students that exam materials such as answers, pictures, screen shots, etc. must not be shared even after the exam has been concluded - explain why

What to do if you Suspect Cheating Has Occurred

For many, the idea of confronting cheating can cause a great deal of anxiety. We have a process in place that ensures cases are handled respectfully and fairly.

If you suspect cheating has occurred in an assignment or an exam, please refrain from confronting students directly or imposing your own penalty. Instead please follow these steps:

- 1) Gather all evidence (documents, meta data, screen shots, e-mails etc.) Make notes about the incident if applicable, including as much detail as possible.
- 2) Submit report to the Academic Honesty team via Machform (<https://lassonde.yorku.ca/resources-faculty>). Please include information about the student(s) involved, a summary of the incident/what happened, and copies of evidence, and a copy of the assessment. Please include details of any witness(es) of the incident (if someone emailed you the evidence etc.), the weight of the assessment and any other pertinent details. *(If handling multiple cases – i.e., 15 students communicating during an exam, upload as one report, include all student names and student numbers as well as all evidence. If possible, label evidence in accordance with each student)*
- 3) Familiarize yourself with the Academic Honesty Policy, including considerations for penalty and the penalties themselves as well as the Academic Honesty overall process.
- 4) You do not need to mark the exam(s)/assessment in question. The policy allows you to refrain from marking the assessment(s) until the end of the process. Do not enter a final grade for the student(s) until the process is complete.
- 5) The Academic Honesty Office will be in touch with you to set up the initial exploratory meetings (This is held over Zoom). Please note that each exploratory meeting is scheduled to take 30 minutes. If you have more than one case, we kindly ask that you prepare several time blocks options of 1 to 2 hours to dedicate to the meetings. This ensures a smoother process in scheduling you and the student for the meeting.

It is normal to have moments of frustration, unease, or feeling uncomfortable. If you need support, please reach out to your Program Director, Chair, or the Manager, Academic Honesty to discuss in detail. Report up, not out, as much as possible, as confidentiality does need to be maintained as much as possible throughout the process.

YorkU Guide for Teaching Remotely:

<https://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/YorkU-Guide-to-Teaching-Remotely.pdf>

YorkU Teaching Commons Going Remote Website:

<https://bold.info.yorku.ca/>



Questions?

Email Academic Honesty: honesty@lassonde.yorku.ca

Sources:

- <https://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/YorkU-Guide-to-Teaching-Remotely.pdf>
- <https://www.daytonastate.edu/onlinecourses/files/Academic%20Integrity%20in%20Online%20Education.pdf>
- https://www.purdue.edu/innovativelearning/supporting-instruction/portal/files/14_Strategies_for_Online_Academic_Integrity.pdf
- <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/planning-courses/course-design/encouraging-academic-integrity-online>
- <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/resources-2/teaching-strategies/academic-integrity/designing-assignments-that-foster-academic-integrity/>
- <https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/integrity-waterloo-faculty>
- <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/instructors-and-staff/information-for-instructors>
- <https://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity/resources/managingexamstips.html>
- <https://internationalservices.georgetown.edu/academic-integrity-tips>