Academic Honesty in Remote Instruction

Challenges & Solutions

The need to deliver instruction remotely brings up a number of key issues. A common concern is cheating (e.g., plagiarism, unsanctioned collaboration). The decisions an instructor makes will have significant course design implications and consequently, should be considered before setting up a course in Canvas and creating a syllabus.

There are three main categories of solutions to consider. While some can be quickly implemented (such as changing forms of assessment and modifying the administration of assessment) changing the culture of assessment and testing to reduce cheating takes more time. Nevertheless, all solutions can be used immediately.

Change the Form of Assessment

Modify the Administration of Assessments

Build a Culture of Academic Honesty

Change the Form of Assessment

- Use assessments that go beyond memorizing and reporting facts. Multiple-choice exams that primarily test factual knowledge and basic understanding are easier for students to cheat on because they can quickly look up answers. Instead, *design assessments that are more complex*. Have students analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and create (see revised Bloom's taxonomy), or provide written justification of their responses.
- In contrast to in-class exams, consider *timed, open book exams*. Now the only academic dishonesty to reduce is students talking to each other.
  - Students still have to know the material well to be able to complete a timed exam.
  - Consider short answer or essay exams. Gradescope can be used to make grading more efficient.
- Consider adding *more formative assessments* to supplement end of term evaluations. This approach fosters retrieval practices and highlights learning over testing. Some assessments can be scored based on completion or attempts versus accuracy.
- Consider *collaborative exam taking* where students are either allowed to collaborate on solutions or are explicitly asked to work in groups to solve problems. This is more akin to team work outside of academia.

Modify the Administration of Assessments

- Technology provides many ways to minimize cheating.
    - *Set time limits* for how long exams are available. As a general guideline, allocate no more than one minute per multiple choice question.
    - *Create a pool of questions* and set the exam to pull random questions for each student.
    - Set the exam to *randomize each question's answer options* for each student.
    - For essay or short answer questions, *use software to detect plagiarism*.
- Allow a *window of time* for students to take the exam when it is convenient for them. Lowering their stress levels lowers the likelihood of cheating.
- Consider *mastery testing*. Here the student is allowed to take the exam multiple times or even until they master the material. Easiest to do for multiple choice exams on Canvas, this method is also useful for essay exams in small classes.
- Use *different versions* of exams for different students.
- Use more *low stakes exams* or quizzes, or have each individual exam count for a smaller portion of the grade.
- *Be explicit*: State the extent of collaboration allowed (or not), and distinguish between cheating, plagiarism, and collaboration. Encourage students to be wary of websites offering services to help them study or complete assignments. And encourage them to reach out if they have a question about academic integrity.
- Use an *Honor Code*. Research suggests that a longer, formal honor code that makes consequences of cheating clear, reduces student intentions to cheat. A sample is provided in the "Resources" section below.

Build a Culture of Academic Honesty

- Universities which have an explicit honor code help create an environment of academic honesty. When remote teaching, making a strong statement in the syllabus about academic honesty can help create a culture of academic honesty.
- Making the assessments more meaningful to the students by linking them to the course learning outcomes and to your instruction, tends to make the students take the assignment more seriously and reduces the likelihood of plagiarism.
- Make your expectations clear and due dates explicit. Provide reminders and break larger assignments into smaller components. Students with poor time management skills and who procrastinate find it easier to work on clear expectations and are less likely to cheat.
- Once more, Honor codes that students sign, make clear the expectations and can reduce cheating.
- Discuss academic integrity and your policy on cheating and collaboration in the syllabus.

Resources

Davis, S., Drinan, P. F., & Gallant, T. B. (2009). Cheating in school: What we know and what we can do. Wiley-Blackwell.
Gurung, R. A. R., †Wilhelm, T., & †Filtz, T. (2012). Optimizing honor codes for online test administration. Ethics & Behavior, 22(2), 158-162. doi: 10.1080/10508422.2011.641836
Great Checklist: https://wcet.wiche.edu/sites/default/files/docs/resources/Best-Practices-Promote-Academic-Integrity-2009.pdf
Academic integrity statement: https://learn.oregonstate.edu/final-exams-during-disruptions