

The Institute for Learning and Teaching

Academic Integrity Task Force



Key Question: What do we want instructors to understand about academic integrity?

Knowledge of Academic Integrity. Instructors should understand that

1. They are responsible for knowing University policies on academic integrity and the consequences of violating these.
2. It is not a waste of time to understand in detail University policy regarding academic integrity.
3. It is highly likely that students will need to be educated regarding what might constitute academic dishonesty within in the context of the class and its assignments.
4. Cheating and plagiarism are seldom black and white issues, and are best understood along a continuum from pedagogical issues to clear violations of academic integrity policies (e.g., from unintentional plagiarism to paying for a custom-written doctoral thesis).
5. A lack of academic integrity in the classroom has a negative impact on the learning environment.
6. There are dangers associated with adopting a laissez-faire attitude toward cheating and plagiarism.
7. How to develop policies that are fair and reasonable.
8. The importance of clear definitions of cheating and plagiarism.
9. That we can view “creating a culture of integrity” as a set of skills that can be learned by students.

Productive Behaviors Faculty Can Adopt to Reduce Opportunities and Incentives to Cheat and Plagiarize. Instructors should be aware that cheating is largely the result of a series of choices made by both students and faculty. They can reduce academic dishonesty by:

10. Considering the impact of their approaches to addressing academic dishonesty.
11. Adopting a consistent attitude that expects and demands academic integrity.
12. Developing assignments and assessments that reduce the likelihood that students will cheat or plagiarize.
13. Stating, in writing (in course syllabi, policy statements, and course Web sites), course policies regarding academic integrity.
14. Taking every opportunity to reduce temptations to cheat or plagiarize through actions such as reducing access to examinations, developing appropriate seating arrangements during exams, and so on.
15. Addressing the temptation to cheat or plagiarize by students who ordinarily would not do so, but who might resort to it out of panic, desperation, or a major skill deficit.
16. Applying academic integrity policies fairly and consistently.
17. Reporting violations of policy and developing a system of enforcement that is consistent with department and university policy.
18. Working with course TAs to enhance TAs’ understanding of academic integrity policies.
19. Serving as models of academic integrity.

Comment: It seems to me that what we, as faculty, really need to understand is the fundamental role we can and should play in creating and fostering an environment that promotes academic integrity. This includes concrete things – developing curricular strategies that aid students in

completing and succeeding at challenging assignments, exams, and projects; creating clearly-written, course-specific assignments appropriate to the level of the class; and perhaps implementing these assignments through a series of smaller steps obviating that last-minute panic, which would help develop time-management skills and head off that dangerous last-minute scramble or cramming session.

Awareness of the Impact of Instructor Attitudes on Academic Integrity. Instructors should examine the attitudes we bring into the classroom about our students, such that suspicious, even adversarial attitudes may, in the end, foster a climate of fear and a breakdown in communication that works against everyone's best interests.

Comment: Prior to our meeting, I had never really examined closely my own attitudes and assumptions about when and why students in that 60% cheat. It does seem clearer to me now that establishing a system that emphasizes consequences and punishment does little to help those students who are struggling with material or assignments. Rather, openness, trust, and clarity about expectations are key to fostering academic integrity.

Awareness of the Role of Technology in Cheating and Plagiarism. Instructors should understand that some problems with cheating and plagiarism can be addressed through an understanding of commonly used technologies. In some cases, policy statements in a syllabus can head off misunderstandings associated with the use of technology.