Academic Integrity Framework

University of Victoria
Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation

From: Laurene Sheilds, Executive Director

Last updated: November 30, 2021

Contents

The Framework

Academic integrity is foundational to scholarship within the post-secondary environment. It refers to a standard of commitment and behavior in accordance with the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage in learning, teaching and research (ICAI, 2014). As such, academic integrity is central to the mission of the university in developing new knowledge and in creating a strong academic environment that strengthens students' intellectual and moral development. Beginning in first year, students are mentored into integrous processes to recognize and attribute the contributions of others as well as ways to assure the integrity of their own intellectual work. Therefore, academic integrity is embedded in high-quality learning and teaching practices and informs the effective assessment of student learning. In its most rudimentary form, academic integrity or a sub-component sometimes referred to as assessment security, focuses on limiting or deterring cheating and plagiarism. However, a robust academic integrity strategy employs a broad framework that addresses multiple aspects of academic integrity, upholds standards and is learning focused. At a minimum, an academic integrity strategy should include: clear articulation of the academic integrity policy, student-focused academic integrity information, robust assessment practices in all courses including sufficient invigilation and/or use of a proctoring tool, a remedial education process to address initial transgressions of academic integrity as well as a laddered disciplinary process to address repeated violations.

The shift to the online teaching has raised numerous concerns from instructors and chairs/directors regarding academic integrity. While studies conducted over the past decade are inconclusive about a higher incidence of cheating in online classes as compared with face-to-face, they do identify factors that need to be addressed. Violations of academic integrity are more likely in situations where a student(s) feel(s) "distant or disconnected from others" including instructors (Burgoon, Stoner, Bonito & Dunbar, 2003; Rowe, 2004). The converse is also true, in that students who feel close to their instructors are more likely to be honest (Kelly & Bonner, 2005; Kelly, 2014). Cheating is more likely to occur in settings that lack invigilation and the opportunity for cheating is greater in un-proctored online assessments. Other factors associated with a higher likelihood of cheating in the online environment include: disconnection from the learning environment/instructor; unavailability of the instructor for answering questions; time pressure; ambient distractions and technical issues; as well as assessment related factors such as ambiguous exam questions and overly difficult or overly easy tests (Ewing, Anast &Roehling, 2016; Fask, Englander & Wang, 2014; Studber-McEwen, Wiseley & Hoggatt, 2009; Rowe, 2004). Conversely, there are numerous factors that have been identified as being effective in reducing academic dishonesty. These include: engagement in the course and materials, providing students with multiple opportunities to learn about academic integrity, clear and diverse assessment methods, requiring students to demonstrate thinking, multiple ways to demonstrate learning, to name a few (Lang, 2013).

In summary, the current literature provides compelling evidence for using a comprehensive approach to address academic integrity and assessment security in online learning. Academic Integrity should be considered separately in relation to both undergraduate and graduate programs. Further, there may be alignment between professional programs and expected ethical standards and conduct. The recommendations in this document also align closely with the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) particularly in relation to the importance of developing a strong culture for excellence in student conduct, as well as using a learning focused approach in setting standards and any remediation activities.

The following **Academic Integrity Framework** is proposed as having five elements:

1. Academic Integrity Policy
2. Student-focused Academic Integrity Strategy
3. Effective Teaching and Assessment Practices
4. Effective Invigilation and Proctoring Strategy
5. Education and Remediation Strategy

Academic Integrity Policy

- UVic currently has a well-developed [Policy on Academic Integrity](#) (undergraduate) and [Academic Regulations](#) (graduate).
- The successful implementation of academic policy requires effective communication across all segments of the academic community. Familiarity with the academic integrity policies and procedures is expected not just from students, but also from instructors, advisers, researchers, staff and other relevant members of the academic community.
- The UVic calendar also clearly articulates an [Examinations](#) policy/requirements. While some of the examination policy is clearly focused on the face-to-face environment, the Examinations policy does apply in the online environment as well. Such critical factors as student identification are outlined in this policy.
- UVic has robust academic integrity and examination policies, however, we do not currently have a broader strategy that goes beyond the description of penalties associated with academic misconduct and address other facets of a holistic academic integrity framework such as educating students on the importance of academic credibility and responsible learning. A positive approach to foster academic integrity requires educational and developmental efforts that place emphasis on prevention and education, backed up by robust and transparent procedures for detecting and addressing academic dishonesty (Park, 2004). This approach will be described in the sections below.

Student-focused Academic Integrity Strategy

Academic Integrity requires consistent and ongoing communication and dialogue with students. Understanding and ensuring academic integrity is an essential competency that all students need to develop and demonstrate.

- *Code of Conduct*. In many institutions academic integrity is embedded within a broader commitment to integrous engagement within the academy. This approach also ensures that students are well-informed about the expected code of conduct (academic and non-academic conduct) including respect in the classroom and the way that students provide feedback on their experience. Specifically, the code should address academic integrity expectations. The code is usually introduced upon students' entry into the institution; a commitment is made by the student usually through their signature and then reinforced in multiple contexts. Within the code it is important to set expectations for conduct reflecting respect, fairness, accountability and safety as well as refraining from any discrimination, bullying or harassment behaviors. There is evidence in the literature that honour codes are somewhat effective in supporting ethical student conduct. Note: While "honour code" is the phrase commonly used in the literature to describe this level of commitment, there may be a desire to

choose an alternative name such as Code of Conduct, UVic Commitments, Rights and Responsibilities, UVic Expectations etc. to reflect the nature of the commitment at UVic.

- *Learning Modules*. Underlying some academic misconduct is the fact that students differ in their perceptions as to what behaviors are unacceptable (Higbee and Thomas, 2002). For this reason, student-focused information as to what constitutes academic integrity and how to recognize and avoid potential violations is key. While reference to policies that offer explicit definitions of cheating and plagiarism are important, the most effective academic integrity strategies are learning-focused and utilize well-developed scenarios that require students to engage with ethical dilemmas and problem-solving as well as provide key information on how to avoid violating academic integrity policy. There is currently a well-developed and internationally recognized tool at the University of Waterloo that is available through a creative commons license. UVic has approached the University of Waterloo and now has access to this tool. A requirement to complete this academic integrity set of learning modules prior to entry in the term of course work would set the stage for students to have a solid understanding of the underlying principles and the expectations of academic integrity.

- *Syllabus Statement of Expectation for Academic Integrity*. Inclusion of a standard statement of university-level academic integrity policy in each course syllabus will ensure that all students are informed and set the stage for fair process should any violations of academic integrity occur. An example statement is: "<u>Students are required to abide by all academic regulations set as set out in the University calendar, including standards of academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity (e.g. cheating and plagiarism) are considered serious and may result in significant penalties</u>." It is also important for instructors to review the expectations related to academic integrity at the beginning of the course and alert students that they will be required to commit to an academic integrity pledge within the context of assessment processes including examinations. Involving students in the development and enforcement of a code of conduct in their programs could be another way of supporting a strong culture of integrity on campus, in which students contribute positively towards upholding ethical academic behavior (McCabe, Butterfield and Treviño, 2006).

- *Academic Integrity Pledge*. Numerous studies have demonstrated that requiring students to sign a pledge of academic integrity prior to completing assessments/examinations increases awareness of and compliance with academic integrity policy. This process can also be used to demonstrate fair process should any violations of academic integrity occur. An example academic integrity pledge is as follows:

Academic Integrity Pledge

Students must abide by [UVic academic regulations](#) and observe standards of 'scholarly integrity,' (no plagiarism or cheating). Therefore, this online exam must be taken individually and not with a friend, classmate, or group, nor can you access notes, course materials, the internet, or other resources while completing the exam. You are also prohibited from sharing any information about the exam with others. I _____type in name_____ affirm that I will not give or receive any aid on this exam or access any unauthorized resources and that all work will be my own. (Checkbox)

Effective Teaching and Assessment Practices

All assessment practices are not created equal, some discourage violations; others create contexts where violations of academic integrity are more likely to occur. Teaching strategies and methodologies that are more focused on learning process/outcomes (rather than solely content focused) are less likely to aggravate cases of plagiarism amongst students (Koul et al., 2008). Students respond best when they have clear guidance regarding the learning that they are expected to demonstrate and believe that they have been provided with a fair opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Course design as well as assignment design are integral to creating a learning environment that promotes academic integrity. Further, research consistently demonstrates that student connection with the learning environment, instructor and TA are important to ameliorating academic integrity violations (Kelly, 2014; Lang 2013). In relation to assessment practices, current learning and teaching literature provides a set of practices to support academic integrity. These include:

- Clear descriptions of learning that is expected to be demonstrated through the assessment (learning outcomes and scope of the exam)
- Good articulation of the assessment requirements (e.g. exam, type of exam, examples of the kinds of questions that will be used; inclusion of practice questions). Familiarity with online and electronic exams over time is likely to reduce students stress levels, and thus, may also reduce the likelihood of cheating.
- Assessment strategies that require either a) individualized responses demonstrating higher level thinking or b) exam formats that vary the exam between students (different sequencing of questions).
- Using multiple versions of exams sends a message that the professor cares about integrity in the classroom.
- Assessment strategies where students are required to demonstrate how they came to the answer as well as their final answer.
- A range of assessment strategies within a course where students have a variety of means to demonstrate their learning.
- Access to an instructor in preparation for the assessment and, in the case of exams, during the exam period to respond to questions of clarification.
- Marking strategies that are consistent across questions and ideally across sections of a course.
- Marking strategies that provide "marks for evidence of thinking" as well as credit for final answers.
- Assessment strategies that provide ample time for taking an exam. Instructors, concerned about academic integrity, often use "time" as a deterrent for violations of academic integrity or time as a pseudo-measure of student learning. Time, used in this way, in fact, increases the likelihood of academic integrity violations.
- Online final assessments that integrate authentic assessment principles, such as the incorporation of real-life learning process and unstructured problems that require the application of relevant skills and knowledge have been found to be effective not only deterring students from cheating, but also leading to higher quality learning outcomes.
- Assessment strategies that incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles are helpful as they attend to accommodation requirements (e.g. length of time of exam) and provide options for all students to demonstrate learning.

- Violations of academic integrity are more likely to occur in learning and teaching contexts where instructors do not address the above factors. In addition:
    - While there is no consistent evidence in the teaching literature that violations are more likely to occur in the online environment (mixed findings in the literature), the online environment creates both different opportunities for violations and in many instances more evidence that instructors can use to identify potential violations.
    - Further, high risk/jeopardy situations where students perceive that they have little control or little opportunity to demonstrate learning (e.g. repeated timed exams) have been shown to elicit much higher levels of academic integrity violations.
- Finally and importantly, the literature does indicate that students appear more likely to cheat when instructors do not enforce academic integrity policies. It is therefore important to have assessment security strategies in place to identify potential violations.

Effective Invigilation and Proctoring Strategy

- Raising awareness and managing expectations about academic integrity are no substitutes for systematic detection and vigilant enforcement (Jocoy and DiBiase, 2006). Effective invigilation/proctoring strategies are integral to ensuring compliance with academic integrity policy. These are often undertaken through a controlled setting with requisite invigilation in the physical classroom-based environment. This is true for students taking exams within the usual classroom setting as well as for students with academic accommodations taking exams through such units as the Centre for Accessible Learning.
- In the online environment, technology-enabled invigilation and proctoring tools are important. These tools however, have numerous security and privacy issues as well as pedagogical considerations. Proctoring tools affect the educational experience of students and their capacity to demonstrate learning and therefore the risk and benefits need to be carefully considered (Milone et al, 2017). Selection of a proctoring tool is best considered when all of the other requisite components of the Academic Integrity Strategy are also being enacted. For a full discussion of the different proctoring tools including types, pros and cons as well as pedagogical considerations see attached Briefing Note.

Education and Remediation Strategy

- Identification of potential violations of academic integrity, investigation, and application of UVic policy is critical to addressing violations in a clear, consistent, timely and effective manner. At the same time, it is imperative that an education/remediation process is available to ensure that students move forward effectively.
- Education/Remediation is integral to an effective academic integrity policy (Ewing, Anast, and Roehling, 2016). Once students have been identified as having committed a violation of academic integrity, students may be required or recommended to undertake a remediation process depending on the type and level of violation. Remediation is most often enacted through an education module that may utilize some of the initial training module (ie. University of Waterloo learning modules described above); and/or a more focused remediation program to address specific issues related to

academic integrity (e.g. appropriate citations, paraphrasing etc.). Ideally, successful completion of the required remediation module would be undertaken prior to proceeding in coursework.

- The education/remediation module provides students with basic information and also ensures students are well informed about the academic integrity policy and consequences of repeated violations. In this way, it completes the framework and ensures that students are provided with a fair and transparent process through which to continue their studies.
- In the situation of repeated violations of academic integrity, education/remediation strategies provide evidence that students have been notified, given the opportunity to learn about and address the problem and therefore must also accept the serious consequences.
- Note: UVic policy currently does not include an education/remediation process therefore policy development as well as development of an education/remediation strategy would need to be undertaken.

In closing, the five components of the academic integrity strategy provide an effective framework within which students can be expected to respect and maintain academic integrity. These skills are integral to their progression within the University and also form a strong foundation to ethical, integrous engagement as students transition beyond the academy.

References

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Harvard University Press.

Bennett, S., Dawson, P., Bearman, M., Molloy, E., & Boud, D. (2017). How technology shapes assessment design: findings from a study of university teachers. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 48*, 672-682.

Bretag, T. (2013). Short-cut students: Fostering academic integrity in students. In Sweeney, G., Despota, K., & Lindner, S. (Eds.), *Transparency international global corruption report: Education*. New York: Routlegde.

Bertram Gallant, T., & Kalichman, M. (2011). Academic ethics: A systems approach to understanding misconduct and empowering change in the academy. In T. Bertram Gallant (Ed.), Creating the ethical academy: A systems approach to understanding misconduct and empowering change in higher education (pp. 27–44). New York: Routledge.

Boitshwarelo, B., Reedy, A.K., & Billany, T. (2017). Envisioning the use of online tests in assessing twenty-first century learning: A literature review. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning, 12*(16).

Burgoon, J., Stoner, M., Bonita, J., & Dunbar, N. (2003, January). **Trust and deception in mediated communication**. 36th Hawaii International Conference on Systems Sciences, 44a

Council for the Advancement of **Standards** in Higher Education. (2019). *CAS professional **standards** for higher education* (10th Ed.). Washington, DC: Author

Davis, A. B., Rand, R., & Seay, R. (2016). Remote proctoring: The effect of proctoring on grades. *Advances in Accounting Education: Teaching and Curriculum Innovations*, 23-50.

Dogherty, J. (2012). *Avoiding Plagiarism Exercise*. Educ 300: Education Reform, Past and Present. Trinity College. Accessed May 3, 2020   https://commons.trincoll.edu/edreform/2012/02/avoiding-plagiarism-exercise/

Fask, A., Englander, F., & Wang, Z. (2014). Do online exams facilitate cheating? An experiment designed to separate possible cheating from the effect of the online test taking environment. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *12*(2), 101-112.

Gibbons, A., Mize, C. D., & Rogers, K. L. (2002). *That's my story and I'm sticking to it: Promoting academic integrity in the online environment*. (ERIC No. ED 477016).

Gooblar, D. (2014). Why Students Cheat—and 3 Ways to Stop Them. *Chronicle Vitae*. Accessed May 3, 2020 https://chroniclevitae.com/news/341-why-students-cheat-and-3-ways-to-stop-them

Grijalva, T., Nowell, C., & Kerkvliet, J. (2006). Academic honesty and online course**s. College Student Journal, 40(1)**, 180-185.

Grijalva, T., Kerkvliet, J., & Nowell, C. (2003). **Academic honesty in online courses.** Retrieved on May 1, 2020 from: http://www.oregonstate.edu/dept/econ/pdf/cheat.online.pap6.pdf/.

Heberling, M. (2002). Maintaining academic integrity in on-line education. **Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 5**(2). Retrieved on May 1, 2020, from: https://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/spring51/heberling51.html.

Higbee, J. L., & Thomas, P. V. (2002). Student and faculty perceptions of behaviors that constitute cheating. *NASPA, 40,* 39-52.

Hollister, K., & Berenson, M. (2009). Proctored versus unproctored online exams: studying the impact of exam environment on student performance. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education, 7*(1), 271–294.

International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) (2014). Fundamental values of academic integrity (2nd ed.). Retrieved on 5/6/2020 from: https://www.academicintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Fundamental-Values-2014.pdf

Jocoy, C. L., & DiBiase, D. (2006). Plagiarism by adult learners online: A case study in detection and remediation. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 7*(1), 1-15.

Kelley, K., & Bonner, K. (2005). Digital text. Distance education and academic dishonesty: Faculty and administrator perception and responses. **Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network**, **9**, 43-52.

Kelly, R. (2014). Creating a Sense of Instructor Presence in the Online Classroom. Faculty Focus (January 7). Retrieved on May 1, 2020 from: https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/creating-a-sense-of-instructor-presence-in-the-online-classroom/

Kennedy, K., Nowak, S., Raghuraman, R., Thomas, J., & Davis, S. F. (2000). Academic dishonesty and distance learning: Student and faculty views. **College Student Journal, 34**, 309-314.

King, C., Guyette, R., and Piotrowski, C. (2009). Online exams and cheating: An empirical analysis of business students' views. **The Journal of Educators Online, 6**(1), 1-11.

Koul, R., Clariana, R., Jitgarun, K., & Songsriwittaya, A. (2008). The influence of achievement goal orientation on plagiarism. *Learning and Individual Differences, 19*(4), 506–512.

Lang, J. (2013). *Cheating lessons: Learning from academic dishonesty*. Harvard University Press.

McCabe, D., L., Butterfield, K. D., & Treviño, L. K. (2006). Academic dishonesty in graduate business programs: Prevalence, causes, and proposed action. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 5*(3), 294-305.

McCabe, D. L., & Pavela, G (1997). Ten principles of academic integrity. *Journal of College and University Law,, 24(*1), 117-118.

McCabe, D., L., & Treviño, L. K. (1993). Academic dishonesty: Honor codes and other contextual influences. *The Journal of Higher Education, 64*(5), 522-538.

Milone, A. S., Cortese, A. M., Balestrieri, R. L., & Pittenger, A. L. (2017). The impact of proctored online exams on the educational experience. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning, 9*(1), 108-114.

Park, C. (2004). Rebels without a clause: Towards an institutional framework for dealing with plagiarism by students. *Journal of Further and Higher education, 28*(3), 291-306.

Rowe, N. (2004). Cheating in online student assessment: Beyond plagiarism*. Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 7*(2). Retrieved on 5-1-2020 from: https://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/summer72/rowe72.html

Scanlan, C. L. (2006). Strategies to promote a climate of academic integrity and minimize student cheating and plagiarism. *Journal of Allied Health, 35*(3), 179-185.

Scanlon, P. M., & Neumann, D. R. (2002). Internet plagiarism among college students. Journal of College Student Development, 43(3), 374-385.

Simkin, M. G., & McLeod, A. (2010). Why do college students cheat? *Journal of Business Ethics*, *94*(3), 441-453.

Stuber-McEwen D. Wiseley P. Hoggatt, S. (2009) Point, click, and cheat: Frequency and type of academic dishonesty in the virtual classroom. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, 12*(3).

Tsai, N. (2016). Assessment of students' learning behavior and academic misconduct in a student-pulled online learning and student-governed testing environment: A case study. *Journal of Education for Business*, *91*(7), 387-392.

Williams, J. B., & Wong, A. (2009). The efficacy of final examinations: A comparative study of closed‑book, invigilated exams and open‑book, open‑web exams. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 40*(2), 227-236.