

Dealing with Academic Dishonesty in the 21st Century

While some research shows that students are not more likely to cheat in online courses (Watson & Sottile, 2010), the 21st century has seen a rise in student acceptability of “cut & paste” behavior that is considered academic dishonesty by most faculty (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2012). According to Olt (2002), there are three approaches faculty can take toward cheating either in the face-to-face or online environment:

- the “virtues” approach (honor codes, discussion, tutorials, etc.)
- the “prevention” approach through creating assignments and assessments that make dishonesty less likely
- the “policing” approach using software (Turnitin, Safe Assign, Google, etc.) to “catch” dishonest students.

No matter what approach you decide to use, the best way to promote academic integrity in your courses is to help students learn what behaviors are considered dishonest and how they can avoid such behaviors. Ways to do this include:

- communicate to students why academic integrity is valuable (in the syllabus and in face-to-face or online communications)
- assist students with proper citation rules
- model academic integrity when designing your course (for example, make sure you get permission to use materials and acknowledge copyrighted materials)

Other best practice strategies include:

- utilize three or more short assessments rather than only a midterm and final lowering the stakes for each assessment
- require coordination and cooperation among students for assessments so that they are also accountable to peers; get to know students so that you are able to recognize extreme aberrations from their typical work
- be clear about if and how much students are allowed to collaborate on assignments
- change assignments frequently and tailor specifically to course materials
- draw from a large bank of questions and randomize when the test is administered
- design assignments to be completed in stages.

Resources:

McCabe, D.L., Butterfield, K.D., and Trevino, L.K. (2012) *Cheating in College: Why Students Do It and What Educators Can do About It*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Olt, M.R. (2002) Ethics and Distance Education: Strategies for Minimizing Academic Dishonesty in Online Assessment. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, Volume V, Number III* available at:
<http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/fall53/olt53.html>

Watson, G & Sottile, J. (2010) Cheating in the Digital Age: Do Students Cheat More in Online Courses? *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, Volume XIII, Number I* available at:
<http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/spring131/watson131.html>

Submitted by:

Christopher Price, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)

The College at Brockport, State University of New York

www.brockport.edu/celt