Integrity by Design: Improving Academic Integrity through Assessment Design

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For the past couple of years, the term “academic integrity” has gained momentum and there is great interest in better understanding why and how students cheat. Much of the conversation has centred around policy, sanctions, educating students, and what technology is available for the detection of cheating. However, a clear understanding of how assessment design can be used to reduce academic integrity infractions has not yet been brought to the forefront.

Assessment design can be used to promote academic integrity. Here are a few considerations in your assessment design that can reduce cheating.

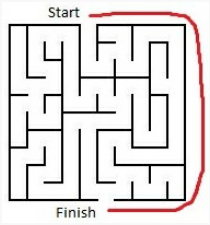
1. Use assessments that are designed to provide your students with the opportunity to practice writing and to properly cite. It is important to give them feedback on what they have tried and to let them know explicitly whether they have plagiarised and what they need to do to avoid making the same mistake in future assessments. These assessments should be low-stakes or have no grade value. The important part of these assessments is providing the feedback and can include “best answer” examples of writing that avoids plagiarism.



2. Students will be motivated to learn when the assignments or tasks are relevant and have personal meaning. Students can write about their own subjects, incorporate their own personal experiences and reflections, and be engaged with the content which is less boring to them and reduces the tendency to cheat (Scott, 2017). “Canned” assignments and prompts often provided by textbook publishers may be easier to grade, but should be avoided. Instead, contextualize coursework and assignments to students’ interests and goals. An advantage to changing and building a pool of personalised assessments is having

a bank of assessments that can be used for the subsequent times you run the course (Dick et al., 2002). Personalised assignments will reduce source and person-to-person copying.

3. Consider open book and/or open note format for tests and exams. Help students prepare for these exams throughout the course. This will reduce cheating and increase engagement with the content.
4. Build in and require multiple drafts of an assessment. It is more difficult and less likely a student will pay someone to write multiple iterations of an assignment. It is also more likely that you will be able to detect any change in voice or writing style.
5. Engage your students as partners in designing assessments. Giving students more ownership in the learning and assessment process will reduce the likelihood of cheating. Students can co-create criteria and see first-hand how the assessment is relevant to their future lives and where they are in their learning journey. Try to integrate activities in the curriculum that will allow students to discuss and apply assessment criteria so they are clear on what is expected of them, what active participation means, individual vs group work, how to prepare for assessments, and the process of formative feedback.
6. Building relationships with your students will minimise cheating and promote student engagement. It will also help detect cheating when it occurs. When designing assessments, it is important to always include clear and complete instructions. However, students should also feel comfortable with asking questions, making mistakes, and taking risks.



7. Assignments with short turnaround times are reported to be the most likely to be outsourced (Bretag et al., 2018). Short timeframes make it difficult for students to understand assessment requirements and can increase pressures. As well, students cheating on invigilated exams is more common than outsourcing assignments, but is detected less often by staff. Students report that the reason for cheating on high stakes tasks and exams is that they were perceived to be less relevant to them, more about memorisation and recall of facts rather than learning what they would be using in their future jobs.

These recommendations are calling on educators to consider how they approach assessment design so that students are engaged in authentic, relevant, and personalised assessments. Assessment design that supports creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and metacognition enhance academic integrity which will also support students in their development of workplace skills and competencies – a place where integrity and problem-solving are required.

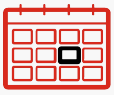
References:

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Save the Dates!



International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating: Wednesday, October 16, 2019

Academic Integrity Week: October 16 to 18, 2019

Stay tuned and get involved! More information on these events will be posted on the website and in SeneNews. There will be activities for both students and faculty all week.

For more academic integrity information before October:

✔ Get reacquainted with the Academic Integrity Policy.

✔ View the resources available to students and faculty on the website.

✔ Complete the Academic Integrity Policy Module for faculty and instructors. This is a self-paced online training module. You'll learn about the academic integrity resources available to students and faculty, you'll explore how a culture of academic integrity is being implemented at Seneca to raise awareness to students and help them avoid violations, and you'll apply the academic integrity policy to specific scenarios. Upon completion, you'll be eligible to claim a Teaching & Learning Centre micro-credential (Micro-credentials at Seneca).

✔ Participate in the ***Promoting a Culture of Academic Integrity*** course this semester.

You'll learn strategies to make cheating/plagiarism less worthwhile to students as well as improve student learning. This course discusses creating class environments that support ethical choices, activities that promote awareness of what is and isn't an academic integrity offence, and assignments designed to reduce academic integrity offences. It begins on September 18 and is open for registration in MyPD.

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