



ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

McMASTER UNIVERSITY



ETHICS

VALUES

PRINCIPLES

Office of Academic Integrity

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Manager, Academic and Research Integrity



The Office of Academic Integrity



Education



Prevention



Process cases of academic dishonesty according to the Academic Integrity Policy using procedural fairness



Academic Integrity Policy

- “The University states unequivocally that it demands scholarly integrity from all its members. Academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is ultimately destructive to the values of the University; furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to those students who pursue their studies honestly.”



Academic Integrity Policy

- “Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage”

Academic Integrity Policy, McMaster University, 2025, Page 7 .



Academic Integrity Policy: Offences

- Plagiarism
- Inappropriate Collaboration
- Cheating on Test/Exam (copy/use unauthorized aids)
- Submitting the same academic work
- Submitted academic work that is purchased/acquired
- Aid or abet another student's academic dishonesty
- Procure/distribute/receive aids in tests, exams or labs
- Remove academic work
- Steal, destroy or tamper with another student's academic work
- Prevent another student from completing academic work
- Fail to protect academic work
- Misrepresent academic credentials
- Submit false information/medical documentation
- Forge, alter or fabrication University documents or official documents
- Impersonate another student
- False signature
- Commit research misconduct
- Contract cheating, outsourcing student work to third parties
- Inappropriate use of generative artificial intelligence

PROCEDURE FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY CASES:

STEP 1: Gathering Information

- ☐ collect any information that supports your suspicion of academic dishonesty
- ☐ contact the Office of Academic Integrity (ext. 24303) with your concerns to ensure the student is unable to withdraw from the course to avoid penalty
- ☐ you are required to contact the student to inform him/her of your concerns*
- ☐ you are required to provide the student with a fair opportunity to respond - normally this should be done in person
- ☐ determine if you think the student is guilty of academic dishonesty based on your discussion(s) with the student and a review of all relevant evidence

STEP 2: Checking Prior Offences

- ☐ if you determine the student is guilty, contact the Office of Academic Integrity to find out if this is the student's 1st offence of academic dishonesty (ext. 24303)

STEP 3: Decision Making

If 1st Offence:

- ☐ there are 2 penalties a faculty member can impose:
 - a reduction of the mark on the piece of academic work
 - a mark of zero on the piece of academic work
- ☐ inform the student in writing of your decision and their right to appeal
- ☐ please use the Standard First Offence Letter which can be found at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/instructors/processdishonesty/StandLetter.htm
- ☐ if the offence is very serious, you can request the case be heard by a Faculty Adjudicator which can result in more serious sanctions

If a 2nd Offence, the student is graduate student or a serious 1st offence:

- ☐ fill out the "Reporting an Academic Dishonesty Case" form and send to the Office of Academic Integrity
- ☐ the Office of Academic Integrity sets in motion the case to be heard by a Faculty Adjudicator
- ☐ the faculty member's responsibility will be to present the evidence of academic dishonesty - in writing and/or orally*

* The Office of Academic Integrity can provide samples of letters to be sent to the student and has a manual for faculty who are presenting a case before a Faculty Adjudicator.

Additional Information:

- if you have difficulty reaching the student or receiving a response from the student - sending a letter by registered mail to the address listed with the Registrar's Office with a specific deadline by which the student must respond, is adequate notification. Usually giving the student 10 days from the date the letter is sent is adequate. After the deadline date, you can proceed without the student's information.
- **Do Not return the relevant test, assignment, essay, etc. to the student.** If you decide this is a case of academic dishonesty, the paperwork often becomes the most important part of any evidence. If you return it, the student can alter or lose it. You can provide the student with a copy if they request it.
- if you are uncomfortable meeting with the student alone, you can have another person attend the meeting - a good choice for the 2nd person is a TA
- if you plan on having another person present, you should inform the student of this in advance of the meeting and that they are able to bring a support person
- if the student brings another person to the meeting, make sure there are some guidelines set. You want to speak to the student about your concerns, not the other person. The other person can be a support person and provide advice for the student, but the student still needs to speak for themselves.
- timing - as the consequences of academic dishonesty are serious for the student, it is important to take each case seriously and devote the necessary time to process it quickly. Generally, an instructor should complete the process for a first offence within four weeks of first contacting the student.
- for a complete copy of the Academic Integrity code look on the web at: www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity
- **Questions?** - the Office of Academic Integrity is located in MUSC 211, extension 24303, email address: thyreta@mcmaster.ca

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Proactive Approach to Integrity

- Encourage conversations about academic integrity in your courses at the beginning of the term and at strategic points throughout the term
- Include information about Academic Integrity in your course syllabus
- Incorporate prevention techniques into your course and assessment design



Why Do Students Cheat?

- Grades, grades, grades
- Seeing others cheat
- Motivation is the grade as opposed to learning
- Stress
- Poor time management

* Gregory J Cizek, *Cheating on Tests: How to Do It, Detect It and Prevent It* (1999)



How to Prevent: Plagiarism

- Assign specific research topics and change them frequently (i.e. each term)
- Do not permit last minute changes of topics for assignments
- Use Turnitin.com for written assignments and advertise its use in your course syllabus
- Divide large assignments into multiple marked sections or milestones
- Require drafts to be submitted for any final papers/assignments
- Use a consistent style of marking papers/assignments so that if a student alters your grading you will notice



How to Prevent: Inappropriate Collaboration

- Inform students about the default expectation
 - “unless otherwise specified in the assignment instructions all academic work in this course is to be completed individually”
- Educate students about what constitutes inappropriate collaboration
- Be very clear about what level of collaboration you will accept in assignment instructions
- Make small changes to assignments each term/year
- Consider building ‘in-class’ assignments to be completed and handed in by the end of a tutorial/lab/class.



How to Prevent: Cheating on Tests/Exams

- Book an appropriate room for a test
- Personal belongings under chair or at front of room (including cell phones)
- Robust test bank
- Randomized assigned seating plan and students sign in on the seating plan
- Place TAs/invigilators in different places throughout the room, and have them circulate around a designated area frequently
- When marking draw a line through blank spaces and use a distinct pen colour
- Utilize the features available via D2L.
- Watch for posted questions



Contract Cheating

Awareness

- Chegg.com, Course Hero, etc
- Social media, discord
- Ghost writer

Prevention

- Assessments (mix assignment question style, randomized test questions, scaffold progress/multiple drafts)
- Voice expectations and throughout term
- Follow through on AI charges



Academic Integrity in the Digital Learning Environment

What is contract cheating?

- Purchasing an assignment online.
- Participating in unauthorized discussion groups or sharing answers for assessed work (such as online quizzes).
- Paying or arranging for an assignment or test to be completed by others.
- Using online services such as chegg.com or coursehero to help source answers to a test or assignment for assessment.
- Engaging with a company or person to solicit assistance on an assignment that is to be completed individually.

Unauthorized collaboration, **according to McCabe (2005)**, is the most common cheating behaviour. This might include working with others on an assessment that was meant to be done individually, potentially copying or contributing to responses. This is often not perceived as "cheating".

Why do students cheat?

According to Gregory J. Cizek in *Cheating on Tests: How to Do It, Detect It, and Prevent It* (1989):

- "Cheating is about grades, grades, grades." (Pages 32 - 36).
- "The strongest predictor for cheating is previous cheating or seeing others cheat or seeing cheating go unpunished." (page 123).
- "Students whose motivation for performance is to earn a grade (as opposed to learning) are significantly more likely to report engaging in cheating to accomplish that goal." (page 105).
- Increased stress levels or poor time management skills can lead to a heightened probability of cheating.

"I have used student numbers to generate unique test questions and answers. This way students can and still will discuss the test questions, but they cannot compare their answers."

Universities around the world found that, even with proctoring, academic integrity has been compromised for online courses. Professors have to believe instructors have to minimize cheating. We do, students will discuss the exams. I have used to do dishonesty is a constant day. Student will still discuss they can be using the

Assessment types most vulnerable to cheating:

- Traditional assessments: Multiple choice question (MCQ) assessments, true/false, and matching questions are most vulnerable to student cheating, especially if re-used from previous courses, quizzes, or shared by colleagues.
- Strictly timed & high-stakes assessments: Assessments with short completion time frames (i.e. between receiving the assessment and submitting) and worth a considerable portion of the final grade **often raise student stress, and with it, the likelihood of cheating.**
- Research papers or long-form written work: These raise the likelihood of plagiarized sources and improper citation.

Strategies to reduce cheating

Broad **strategies to consider** when designing assessments that may help reduce cheating:

- Create questions that involve higher order thinking (eg. getting students to analyse, infer, or explain things).
- Create different question types (eg. a mix between multiple choice, true/false, short answer, etc.).
- Create different **versions of the same test** that are randomly assigned to students at test time to reduce inappropriate collaboration.
- Design assignments that scaffold progress/contain multiple drafts, spreading out assessments into multiple low-stakes components.
- Set flexible deadlines to curb desperation/stress-fueled cheating.

Examples of specific **alternative assessments**:

- Find the error/flow: Students identify an error in a formula/calculation and explain how/why it is incorrect.
- Critical reflection: Students summarize and critically reflect on a theory, argument, and/or how a theory might be applied to current issues.
- Case studies: Present dilemmas and require students to apply higher order thinking skills in order to evaluate, apply knowledge and/or analyse a problem.

"The main change in both of my courses was to use current events, data and focus more on student reflection/opinions/ideas rather than calculations."

When we transitioned to online, I went teaching GEN/TECH 40M0 (Operations Management). A typical exam for this course had been partly multiple choice and short answer, which included a prescribed signature requiring a single calculation approach to solve.

For Winter 2020, I scrapped these types of questions and decided to make use of the flood of media coverage about operations and Supply Chain during the pandemic, and to have the students engage in a more inquiry-based activity. I felt it was a rich opportunity to really have the students connect to the world around them and to affirm that what we teach is of immediate value.

I created scenarios taken directly from news coverage and gave a list of content areas that were relevant. These scenarios were given in advance of the exam for students to do research, work together and prepare responses. On the evening of the exam, students used a prepared Submission Sheet individualized for each scenario that included "drip-down" questions to further guide and direct their responses.

Students had to state why they chose the scenario, why and how the content areas were relevant, and provide evidence/abstracts. Responses included comprehension, relevance, effort. The preparation for this exam was extensive but I had no issues of plagiarism nor duplicate responses.

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Question Guide for Suspected Academic Misconduct

Please only ask questions relevant to the assignment in question.				
Please score student answers on the following range:				
Student demonstrated excellent knowledge of the question.				
Student could answer the question satisfactorily.				
Student demonstrated very limited knowledge of the question.				
Student could not answer the question.				
1. Can you please tell me what your assignment is about? Follow up questions: What is the main topic? What did you enjoy/discuss/highlight? What was the focus of the assignment?	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. What was your favourite part of the assignment? What were some of the challenging parts of the assignment?	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Tell me about your process for writing this assignment: did you complete it in stages? What kind of timeline?	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. If there is a reoccurring term or phrase, ask the student to explain what it means. Eg. You use the term "distillation" throughout your assignment, please explain what this term means. For coding/programming assignments, ask the student to explain particular functions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Provide the student with their reference list, select a source, and ask why they chose that source. (If applicable)	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Did you make use of technological tools in writing this assignment? (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Bard, Microsoft Bing) (If applicable)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Probability of Misconduct (Given the score, is it more likely than not the student submitted work completed by someone else?)	If most answers fall within these two columns, it is more likely the work was not completed by the student. Contact the Office of Academic Integrity. acinteg@mcmaster.ca		If most answers fall within these two columns, it is more likely it is the student's original work.	



Guidelines on the Use of Generative AI

Generative Artificial Intelligence - Academic Excellence
- Office of the Provost
(<https://provost.mcmaster.ca/generative-artificial-intelligence-2/>)



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