CHEAT-PROOF YOUR COURSE

Preventing cheating involves more than simply using plagiarism detectors or anti-cheating test software, although they certainly can play a role in helping monitor academic integrity. Even more importantly, all teaching faculty members should help their students recognize the value of authentic academic work, highlight the consequences of cheating, and create lower incentives for cheating. Below are multiple ideas that you can employ, as relevant for your discipline and course objectives, to make it unpalatable and more difficult for students to cheat.

1 Employ low-stakes assessments to gauge development of learning over time.

Explain that this approach prioritizes student learning and a growth mindset, offering opportunities for identifying areas for improvement and gaps in learning throughout the semester. Limiting the use of high stakes testing (typically a midterm or final exam) reduces the incentive to cheat.

2 Add alternative assessments in addition to or instead of closed-question or essay tests.

Imagining different ways to assess student learning allows for personalization of learning and requires engagement. Consider presentations, portfolios, collaborative learning assignments, infographics, videos or other multi-media output, digital posters, or critical reflections.

3 Use assessments that align with what students will need to do with the information learned.

Authentic, performance-based assessments versus assessments that measure factual knowledge are more motivating.

4 Align your assessments with the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning.

Activities that ask students to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create can be harder to falsify. However, since generative AI (Artificial Intelligence) can replicate certain tasks even at these higher levels of learning, make sure that you are writing your assessments to require the types of thinking that a human brain does best.

5 Customize tests.

Do not use the same tests repeatedly. If you employ closed questions in your tests, use item banks. Sharing standardized test answers is one of the oldest forms of cheating, so if you are going to use multiple-choice tests, engage in the practice of varying the questions and format.

6 Avoid assessments that merely require remembering information unless that information is vital for a student's career path.

Today's students do not find memorizing information motivating because so much information is available to them electronically. For example, instead of giving a pop quiz asking for information that they should have acquired in their assigned class preparation, ask them to use the information to do something instead.

7 Set clear academic integrity expectations with each assessment.

Consider having students revalidate a position of commitment to integrity for each assignment and assessment.

For further exploration, attend the CTL workshops "Global Awareness - Helping Students Avoid Plagiarism" and "Teaching Effectiveness -Cheat-proof your Course: Incentivizing Investment in Authentic Work."
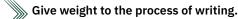
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CHEAT-PROOFING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

While most everyone agrees that submitting a paper written by someone else is cheating, plagiarism itself is a broad concept with multiple facets that are often challenging to master. Consequently, some students make mistakes with plagiarism intentionally, while others do so unintentionally. In addition, some of our students have little experience with presenting an original argument and benefit from coaching on how to build a position supported by research.

Moving from merely policing to also actively teaching correct source use is one possibility for helping by lowering the number of academic integrity violations in our courses. Suggestions include the following:

Give weight to the process of writing.
Receiving grades for the thinking, planning, and revising processes helps students prioritize them as much as the final product. It is easier to fake one final, graded draft than a portfolio of the process.

Lead discussion on "original" ideas.
How do students figure out ways to add new knowledge or their own voice?

Be explicit about the use of AI.
Provide guidance on how it can or should not be employed in writing for your class.

Create assignments specific to course content, and be very explicit.
Find out if AI can produce a passable version of the assignment. If so, you need to create a tighter, more specific expectation.

Provide examples of correct and incorrect source use.
Discipline-specific examples will provide models for less experienced research writers.

Demonstrate how authors use research to scaffold arguments.
Literature reviews are written to forward a position, not only to summarize.

Require submitting work in manageable chunks.
It helps students with time management and allows you to see the development of ideas over time, increasing accountability.

Make sure students know where to find help, both on campus and online.
Point them to assistance with citing conventions, paraphrasing skills, and credible versus non-credible sources.

A Deeper Look...

Today's students increasingly do not find relevance in course content that only requires memorization and a foundational level of understanding. Think of it like this: Can a student find that information online? If so, why do they need to come to your class for that information?

Instead, students find more meaning in classes that prioritize interaction with others (you and peers), and in coursework that requires higher levels of thinking. Consider how to present information needed for class outside of class, especially in multiple formats, then use class time for engagement in a variety of activities that promote active learning, critical thinking, and human interaction. Incentivize this model by including the output of during-class engagement in your overall course assessment structure.

Students invested in their own learning. It is what all teachers want, and it solves two perennial problems at once: getting students to attend class and motivating them to demonstrate mastery of material with integrity.

For more information about cheat-proofing your courses, motivating students to learn, alternative assessments, incorporating active learning into your courses, and helping students avoid plagiarism, plan to attend UAB Center for Teaching and Learning workshops.

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