

Teaching Strategies to Support Academic Integrity Online

As online instructors, we promote & enforce academic integrity through teaching practices, assessment strategies, and institutional policies (e.g., Mason Honor Code). In this newsletter issue, we recommend that you:

- Consider reasons why students might be tempted or led to cheat (“[The Cheating Trifecta](#)”).
- Use [teaching strategies](#) that support academic integrity, right from the start of your course, and throughout the semester.
- Check the [Office of Academic Integrity \(OAI\) website](#) for information about Mason’s policies for academic integrity and additional resources.

“The Cheating Trifecta”

Adapted from Burlington, C., 2015. *Cheating in Online Courses: The Problem and What to Do About It*.

Why Are Students Tempted or Led to Cheat?

Three elements are associated with likelihood of student cheating:
Opportunity, Need, and Rationalization.

Reflecting on students’ reasons why they cheat may provide you with ideas for teaching strategies for how to reduce cheating in your online course.

Opportunity

Do students have **opportunity** to cheat from past assignments that may be available to them (e.g., from previous students, on internet from online “study sites”)?

Possible Strategies: Update and refresh curriculum and assignments each semester. Consider making changes to questions, exercises, and problem sets every semester.

Need

Do students feel they just **need** to get their work done however they can? Do students lack time, understanding and/or motivation to do their own work?

Possible Strategies: Scaffold assignments, having students complete their work in stages, and providing them timely feedback for how they are doing.

Rationalization

Do students **rationalize** cheating is OK, since they feel that you (instructor) are not available to help them, and that you don’t care about their learning?

Possible Strategies: Be present in your online course! Let your students know that you care about their learning. Respond to their questions promptly, within 24-48 hours.

View [“The Cheating Trifecta” Infographic Online](#)”

More Strategies to Support Academic Integrity in Your Online Course

Here are some practices to support academic integrity for right from the start of your online course and throughout the semester. Find more tips at [Stearns Center website](#).

- **Make Academic Integrity Clear in Your Syllabus.** Include information in your syllabus about the importance of academic integrity. See [Office of Academic Integrity's suggested language](#) to include in your syllabus. Make sure to inform your students of Mason Academic Integrity policies and also any department, program or course-specific rules for integrity that must be followed.
- **Prepare Students to Use Online Proctoring Tools.** If online proctoring tools are required in your course, include directions in your syllabus to let students know how to install and use [Respondus Monitor Lockdown Browser](#). Then use these tools early in the course for low-stakes quizzes, so that students become comfortable and get some practice with these online proctoring tools **prior** to major exams.
- **Break Up Large Assignments or Projects into Stages.** Use [scaffolding](#) as a framework to guide and support student learning. An example of scaffolding is breaking up a complex project or assignment into manageable steps, stressing the process toward the final product. Connect students' knowledge through each step to help pace their work & reflect on feedback throughout the project.
- **Reinforce Importance of Academic Honesty for Each Assignment.** Revisit [the Honor Code](#) and reinforce the importance of Academic Integrity for each assignment throughout the course. Provide students with the information, skills, and tools that they will need to be successful for each assignment. Discuss common areas of difficulty in the assignments; include tutorials and resources to help students; and direct students to the [Writing Center](#), [University Libraries](#), [Learning Services](#), and other Mason resources.

Institutional Policies for Academic Integrity at Mason

Mason's [Office of Academic Integrity \(OAI\)](#) provides you with detailed information about the Mason Honor Code, as well as resources & strategies to promote academic integrity.

- **Read OAI's [Teachable Moments: When to Submit an Academic Integrity Referral](#)**
- **Review** the full text of the [2021-2022 Honor Code](#)
- **Questions?** Please contact Office of Academic Integrity at oai@gmu.edu
- **Check** with Your Department, Program, College or School. Please consult your Department, Program, College or School to see if there is additional guidance to handle suspected cases of academic dishonesty, e.g., a department or program-specific matrix of sanctions for academic dishonesty.

Contact Us!

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