Talking to Your Students About Academic Integrity

Setting Expectations

We believe one of the most important steps in ensuring academic integrity is to be upfront and very clear with students about what is and isn't acceptable conduct in the course. Because online learning is new to so many students, it's important to address the online-specific factors.

Course Purpose

For courses in distance-education programs, communicating the purpose, value, and relevance of the course to the larger program curriculum and future work in the field will help students see the greater value of their efforts in the course. This could be done through a short course introduction video or as a short paragraph in the syllabus.

Syllabus Quiz

One technique for ensuring that students have read the syllabus (and academic integrity policies) is to give a required syllabus quiz at the beginning of the course. You can make release of the rest of the course content contingent on receiving a passing (or perfect) score on the quiz. You might even consider including an acknowledgement of and agreement to the Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity policies as part of the syllabus quiz.

Assignment Instruction

Ensuring that your assignment instructions are clear about how resources should be used, what type of collaboration is acceptable, how previous work can be repurposed, etc. will go a long way in helping students understand academic integrity in your course.

Syllabus Language

For courses in distance-education programs, we provide the following information in the syllabus under the heading "Integrity in This Online Course" (boilerplate, to be customized by the instructor to suit his or her situation):

Collaboration & Informal Peer Reviews

The course includes many opportunities for formal collaboration with your classmates. While study groups and peer-review of major written projects is encouraged, remember that comparing answers on a quiz or assignment is not permitted. If you're unsure about a particular situation, please feel free just to ask ahead of time.

Written Assignments

Your written assignments, including discussion posts, should be your own original work. In formal assignments, you should follow [MLA/APA/?] style to cite the ideas and words of your research sources. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your assignments before you turn them in--but no one else should revise or rewrite your work.

Reusing Past Work

In general, you are prohibited in university courses from turning in work from a past class to your current class, even if you modify it. If you want to build on past research or revisit a topic you've explored in previous courses, please discuss the situation with the Aggie Honor Office

Quizzes & Exams

You must complete the midterm and final exams yourself, without any external help or communication. Weekly quizzes are included as self-checks without points attached.

Group Projects

This course includes group projects, which can be stressful for students when it comes to dividing work, taking credit, and receiving grades and feedback. I have attempted to make the guidelines for group work as clear as possible for each activity and assignment, but please let me know if you have any questions.

Falsifying Research or Results

All research you will conduct in this course is intended to be a learning experience; you should never feel tempted to make your results or your library research look more successful than it was.