

# Assessments: Minimize Cheating & Enhance Learning

NOTE: [Learning culture Deters Cheating](#)

Devising assessments that are effective, authentic, transparent, and consistent is a challenge. A bigger challenge is ensuring cheating is minimized. Yet, there are ways to manage assessments so as to limit the chances of cheating. This document covers such avenues, exploring different assessment types (research papers, exams, etc.) and different strategies that not only *enhance learning* but help *minimize cheating*.

[Assessments are categorized in different ways](#). Formative - *assessment for learning* ii) Summative- *assessment of learning* and the third most desirable that helps students become meta-cognitive is iii) *Assessment as learning* where students self-monitor their learning based on personal, peer or teacher feedback on their next learning goals. All these are not necessarily discrete approaches and may be used individually or together and formally or informally.

**Note:** With remote instruction opportunities for cheating tends to increase and virtual classrooms can be more difficult to monitor. i) Though there are online tools that can minimize cheating (e.g. online proctoring, etc.), they should not be relied upon to maintain academic integrity. Pedagogical considerations should be considered to minimize or erase motivations and opportunities to cheat. ii) It is important that you consider students' challenges of access to technology and resources, students' skills at using technology, and other stress factors related to the above and more when planning to assess our students during this crisis. We have to ensure we are not inadvertently assessing their privilege — their access to resources, the stability of their home environment, and other external factors that they have little control over — rather than their ability to learn and engage with new information and skills.

**Consider the following key points, even before you devise your assessment plan, irrespective of the mode of instruction:** (this will ensure transparent and fair assessments)

## 1. Clarity about Plagiarism and What it Entails:

Ensure that students do not have [ambiguity about what constitutes plagiarism](#). Most students are broadly aware of the practical dynamics but are fuzzy around certain specifics especially 'paraphrasing' and 'citation'. Hence a human-centric approach that clarifies clear boundaries regarding plagiarism for students is prescribed. As an instructor try to understand how students cheat and [how to Help them Avoid it](#). Make sure your students are aware of the [campus Academic Integrity Policy](#) and the [Plagiarism Policy](#).

## 2. An Honor Code:

This seemingly simple method that requires students to sign "honors pledges" to exams and assignments, is considered effective in reducing cheating. It consolidates the intrinsic will of the students to be 'good'. Talk to students about *honesty and integrity* as values for life along with the value of being *digitally responsible*. A brief video by the instructor on academic integrity policy and consequences thereof might be quite helpful to

deter some student

### 3. If Material is Copyrighted:

Mere ownership of a book, manuscript, painting, or any other copy of a copyrighted work does not automatically grant one copyright ownership. Alert students to be mindful when using such material for their use

### 4. Link to Student Learning Outcomes:

[Link your assessment activities to the student learning outcomes](#) for the course. This helps students see how each activity connects to larger assignments and helps them better understand the course goals.

**Note:** Check out CLT briefs for [writing effective student learning outcomes](#), creating [rubrics](#) for transparency and consistency of assessments, and implementing [assessment techniques](#) specifically for remote and blended modality. This [worksheet](#) will help you think through the SLOs and assessment. The worksheet can be effectively used irrespective of the mode of teaching.

### 5. Provide Regular and Prompt Feedback:

Provide students with regular feedback on their process work that is not linked to points or a grade. Students are more likely to remember your feedback and incorporate it into future work if your comments are not paired with a grade. Also, encourage students to give each other feedback and collaborate on assessments.

## Designing Assessments

To minimize cheating one will have to consider [innovative student assignments](#) and assessments that will inevitably demand the use of higher-order learning skills and problem-solving skills by students. In a way, both are implicitly intertwined with each other. Strategies will need to be considered at i) a larger context level whereby norms and consistent parameters will need to be established ii) at the level of assignment designing and iii) for assessment of these assignments specifically by the [cognitive level of the learners](#). The following points will cover the above as some practices to minimize cheating and enhance learning, irrespective of the mode of instruction.

### Develop anti-cheating norms- also stated above:

- For every assignment, include information about academic integrity and the consequences of cheating. Students can be required to sign a contract or honor code agreement on this.
  - It is important to clearly state (frequently) to your class that you are aware that cheating is likely to (or currently is) take place, and that you will take strict action against those caught.
  - Before assessments, you can post a reminder video about academic integrity. Hearing and seeing teachers going over this may deter students from cheating.
- Maintain a good relationship with students so they feel guilty of cheating - frequent communication and prompt feedback on assignments.
- Boost test-taking confidence to lower students' motivation to cheat:
  - Provide practice questions for students to understand their strengths and weaknesses
  - Take low stake tests or one-minute paper questions in almost every class to help students monitor their progress
  - Offer students the opportunity to [self-correct their answers](#) after the quiz

- Provide alternative assessments (not quizzes and tests) where the concern of cheating is off the table. High-impact strategies engage students and lead to deeper learning than traditional assessments, such as
  - Service-learning
  - Project-based learning
  - Collaborative projects
  - Research projects

### Design assessments to minimize chances of cheating:

- Make assignments manageable.
- Have frequent assessments and ungraded self-assessments.
- Allow open notes or [open books exams/tests](#)
- Allow choice in assessments by letting students decide how they will demonstrate their learning, what technology they will use, and when they will submit (within guidelines):
  - Trailer video ([iMovie](#))
  - Infographic ([Canva](#))
  - Interactive presentation ([VoiceThread](#))
  - Roleplay/vignette/story ([Adobe Spark](#))
  - Project-based learning and service-learning
    - For project-based learning and service learning, choose the focus of the project/service being undertaken in the class.
- Create a large bank of test questions and mix them up on exams, so that each student receives a different set of questions.
- Design [authentic assessments](#) in a way that they are meaningful and require students to apply knowledge. This helps **build intrinsic motivation**.
  - Design assessments that are related to the real world and require critical thinking are best -- involve tasks that students would be required to do if they were working in that respective field. This increases the value of completing the task for the students.
  - Use **Stackable Assessments** (are projects that can be broken down into smaller assignments that lead up to the final assessment) to help students begin working on their final assessment in the first week of their course. The smaller assignments that are due in-between can serve as *formative assessments* and ways to check for learning.
  - Explain the relevance/importance of doing assignments (e.g. skills gained etc.)
  - Offer students options/alternatives, in terms of content (different topics or questions to choose from) and design (give some freedom in how they present their answers, e.g. speech, poem, video, etc.).
  - Inform students beforehand that their grade depends on the uniqueness of their answers, this will motivate them to not copy one another
  - Start with assessments that [develop lower-level skills and work the way up to higher-level skills](#) through a series of projects, assignments, etc.
  - Use a **variety of assessments** rather combine 2 or more types for the same SLO:
    - Projects: Interactive/collaborative projects (e.g. for a social media class, students can be required to cook with their family and post that video online, etc.)
    - Problem-solving
    - Presentations
    - Case studies

- Portfolios
- Research and
- [Group work](#) and peer assessment
- Viva

Please note that many of the above can be termed assignments like projects, research papers, presentations, group work, etc. [Designing Assignments](#) with specific considerations can promote transparency and minimize cheating. [Journal Assignments](#) are another category of assessment that encourages the student to reflect on the learned content and has its own merit.

## For Research Writing

As an instructor you can ensure the following to minimize plagiarism by students:

- Provide very specific guidelines on how to write the paper.
- Provide clear guidelines for citations.
- Require an annotated bibliography
- Give students a bibliography to use/choose from for their sources.
- Don't allow last-minute changes in topic
- Ask students to choose a research topic that is personally relevant.
- Pick unusual or unique topics and ask students to choose amongst these for their papers.
- Use [Turnitin](#).
- Use discussion groups to familiarize yourself with each student's style of writing (as a way to tell if someone else is doing their work).

## Strategies Specifically for Online Exams/Assessment Strategies

Online examinations can be quite challenging in the absence of proctoring apps that carry a hefty cost for their use. Some possibilities are

- Plan for 'technical issues':
  - send tester exams so students cannot come up with excuses about the exam not working right.
- Present one question per page.
  - When multiple questions are on a page, students can easily take screenshots and share the questions with cheating partners/groups. By only showing 1 question per page of the online exam, it will take more time for students to do this and so can deter them (though methods around this also exist, e.g. copying each question onto a separate doc, etc.).
- Restrict Testing window:
  - Try to set specific times for exams (not a 24-48 hour window to respond etc.) so students have less time to cheat. It is best to offer a longer time for test availability but once the test starts, students have only a set time (15-20 min) to respond to the test.
- Prohibit backtracking:
  - You can prohibit students from going to previous questions for review.
- Rather than doing online exams of high weightage for assessments, using a series of low-stakes quizzes (lower weightage) -- reduces the incentive to cheat but still helps in achieving student learning outcomes.
- Allow for taking the test once only:
  - Avoid allowing multiple attempts -- or you may allow multiple attempts for assessments of lower weightage (quizzes etc.) and then single attempts for assessments of higher weightage (e.g. midterm or final exams)
- When allowing multiple attempts delay score availabilities ie:

- After assessments, (by the online exam system) the kind of automatic feedback given is limited. It is better to provide overall test scores rather than show if the answer is correct or incorrect
- Best to give it after the window of the exam is over.
- Avoid take-home / open book exams unless you can assure the following.
  - Make sure the **questions are unique, meaningful, and require higher-level critical thinking**. MCQs (if used) should also be of this nature -- so students cannot find the answers by googling them.
  - Use short-answer or essay questions that are based on a case study or a reading.
- Avoid using the same exam/assessments every semester / and or for every class
  - Build up a test bank with questions of varying types (MCQs, True/False, short answer, long answer, etc.) and varying levels of difficulty for all the topics of the course. Then when designing assignments you can choose from these.
  - A second step to this would be using the bank to design different exams for the same class -- i.e. each student can have a different set of questions/ different versions of the same test).
  - To aid this, multiple types of banks can be designed. For example, topic-specific banks can be made which include multiple versions of the same question.
- Avoid using publisher test banks.
- Open-ended questions are best (compared to MCQs, True/False, etc.) where students have to explain their responses using specific details (less chance of copying answers).
- Randomize exam questions and answer choices i.e change test sequence

For searching ghostwriters in the classroom, see [fifty ways to detect a ghostwriter](#).

For Invigilating Exams: (options for [proctoring tools](#) exist but are not yet an option at FCCU)

- **Online Proctoring**
  - Online proctoring can be done using proctoring software (usually requiring payment) or by the instructor using video conferencing tools like Zoom (webcams are on for all students so instructor/TAs can monitor students as they take an exam).
  - For the software: Screens can be shared with a proctor -- the proctor can view everything that happens on the student's screen and so chances of cheating can be limited.
    - Such software can also detect if students are using mobile phones or other devices during the assessment (either via webcam or detection technologies).
    - They also involve identification techniques to ensure that students are taking their own exams (no impersonations).
- **Lockdown browsers**
  - Require your students to use the [lockdown browser](#) (and [Honorlock](#)) for online exams -- when this browser is enabled, the students will be unable to leave the screen of the exam (avoid students searching up answers online, etc.)
    - Faculty can also use secure browsers to conduct online exams as a way to avoid screen-sharing/mirroring amongst students during assessments.

Developed by CLT, FCC, 2020 from

[Strategies to reduce cheating](#)

[Deterring cheating in an online course](#)

[Instructional Continuity: Strategies to assess cheating in online courses](#)

[\*Fifty Ways to Detect a Ghostwriter\*](#)

[\*Fourteen Simple Strategies to Reduce Cheating on Online Exams\*](#)

[\*Shively - Assessments to Minimize Cheating PPT\*](#)

[\*Student Equity: Discouraging Cheating in Online Courses\*](#)

[\*Innovative Strategies to Prevent Cheating and Enhance Learning....\*](#)

[\*Are Your Assessments Helping Students Learn?\*](#)

**Updated:** Oct. 2022

**Please see:**

[An integrated approach to academic integrity](#)

[Inspiring Your Students to Write, Cite, and Avoid Plagiarism](#)

[Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education, Version 2.0](#)

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