

Academic Honesty Considerations and Recommendations

Academic integrity remains a cornerstone of our institution. COVID-19 has led to changes in course delivery which complicate instructor design decisions as well as student understandings as to what is, and is not, acceptable. The purpose of this guidance is to help faculty navigate some of the more difficult issues and decisions which they and their students face in our present working conditions. This document primarily emphasizes concerns specific to examination and assessment, but a number of the topics discussed in the guidance and following advisory pertain to broader course design decisions as well.

During the pandemic, faculty are encouraged to consider assessment options outside of traditional exams. Due to the logistics of bringing multiple students safely onto campus as well as concerns shared by faculty and students when using online proctoring systems, consider shifting some of your course deliverables away from exams.

Recognizing, though, that there are few ideal substitutes for a timed, proctored evaluation of academic performance, exams are likely to remain an essential part of your course design. Through the duration of the pandemic, faculty should consider their options to assure the integrity of their exams and select the conditions which best satisfy their course needs.

The proctoring of exams is essential in either a face-to-face or online setting. UHCL presently provides a number of options for proctoring in online settings; the specific options available to each faculty member may be specific to their college. Information about online proctoring resources can be found at [Online Proctoring Resources](#).

1. Live+ proctoring using ProctorU (College of Business only)
2. Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor
3. ProctorU Review+ (with or without Live launch)

The proctoring of exams is merely a tool to support academic integrity, and it is an inherently faulty tool. Academic integrity ultimately might best be considered as an ongoing dialog between students and faculty. Our students benefit from an ongoing discussion of the importance of academic integrity, the benefits they gain as members of an institution built upon integrity, and the processes used to facilitate academic integrity.

Advisory

Discussing Academic Integrity

1. It can be helpful to incorporate faculty/student discussions of the importance of academic integrity throughout your course. Ideally, this should be more than a simple, “don’t cheat,” discussion. Most students don’t cheat, but some do and it helps students understand that proctoring processes (and other methods of detecting cheating) provide a fairer environment for our many honest students.

2. Students benefit from a discussion illuminating why academic integrity at an institutional level DIRECTLY benefits the student. One way to accomplish this is to point out that the value of an education involves at the very least, (a) what the student learns, (b) the contacts the student makes, and (c) the reputation of the university which credentialed them. Our academic integrity directly affects the reputation of the University. We owe it to the students who came before to maintain our standards, just as we will owe it to the students today to maintain these standards in the future.
3. Many (most) students are honest, some (few) are not. We really owe it to the many honest students to not give an unfair advantage to the few dishonest ones. A well-designed exam with effective proctoring helps to assure that the students who are fairly and honestly taking the exam are not disadvantaged in performance relative to those who might otherwise cheat on the exam. That statement (or something like it) needs to work into the faculty's dialog with students pertaining to academic honesty.
4. A discussion of proctoring is best started on day one of the course (or day 0 in the syllabus). Students are likely to experience less stress if they have been prepared for the expectation that they will likely have online exams and that those exams need to be proctored. UCT has provided Sample Syllabus Text About LockDown Browser and Monitor under Faculty Information available on their [Online Proctoring Resources](#) page.
5. When discussing online proctoring with students it is helpful to provide very early instructions as to the "what, how, and why" of the proctoring system used. Faculty might consider explaining to students early in the semester where to go on the online proctoring website to download any software, create an account, and learn to use the proctoring system.
 - a. Having this discussion with students can be challenging for faculty who are using online proctoring for the first time. To that end, it would be beneficial to setup a student account with the proctoring system and explore proctoring from the student's point of view as early as possible. The more thoroughly a faculty member understands the student experience with the proctoring model, the more accurately the faculty member can prepare the student's expectations.
6. Introduce the proctoring software giving students ample notice of how it works, what to expect from the off-site proctor, and how the proctoring report and video recording will be used. Explain what is included in the proctoring report (e.g. flags indicating concerning behaviors, full video and audio, etc.). Explain that they will be asked to scan the room, desk, table, chair, etc. with the webcam and may be asked to remove items.
7. Purpose of Proctoring – Affirm that they may see this as an infringement of their privacy, however, explaining this process safeguards the integrity of their learning, knowledge, and hard work and that of their degree.
8. Instructions - Clear, Concise, yet Thorough Instructions and Expectations – Be sure students clearly understand your on-line testing expectations. What is and is not allowed in the room with them? What web sites can and can they not access? What is considered "unauthorized

resources”? What devices may they have with them? [Tips for Successful Quiz Taking](#) has useful information for students.

9. Consider requiring students to complete the [University Maryland Global Campus Academic Integrity Tutorial](#) (free) and pass the quiz/present certificate.

Course Design Consideration

1. No exam delivery system is perfect. The modality of the exam (F2F, web-proctored, web-lockdown browser, web-recorded, and web-not proctored) determines the type of cheating most likely to occur. The risks of cheating on a face to face exam are generally well understood and these risks are similarly present in live proctored online exams. Other forms of online proctored exams introduce their own separate complications.
 - a. Web-lockdown browsers open the door to the use of multiple devices. A phone or tablet can pretty easily be brought in even after the live launch. (snap a picture of a question, text it to a friend...)
 - b. Even with web-recordings, there is enough content (x-minutes per test times n-students) that a specific incident of cheating may be lost in the data
 - c. Web not-proctored might as well just be offered as a communal, open-book test... because you are just penalizing the students who follow the honor code.
2. It is not possible to build an exam system which completely precludes cheating. One area of potential weakness in exam integrity is the source of the exam questions themselves. As CETL has previously pointed out, using a publisher’s exam bank often enables student cheating. Popular textbooks from every major textbook publisher have fully compromised test banks. These test banks are easily accessible through Chegg and other sources. If a faculty member does not solely control the exam bank, it is best to presume that the test bank is widely distributed.
 - a. If you DO control the exam bank (e.g. making your own exams) and don’t control the exam delivery, you no longer control the exam bank...
3. The use of versioning in online exams is a useful technique to reduce cheating. In Blackboard, exam banks are an effective way to create multiple exam versions. You can setup exam banks within Blackboard and you can designate how many questions a test should pull from each bank. For example, one could set up distinct exam banks for each chapter/reading assigned as well as each lecture/discussion. When building the exam in Blackboard, simply assign the banks to the exam and then select how many questions the test should pull from each bank When using exam banks, it is worth considering that:
 - a. Exams should be built using banks so that the specific questions pulled on any student’s exam differ from those pulled on any other student’s exam.
 - b. Exams should be built to randomize the order of questions so that even when the same question manifests on two or more student’s tests, the question does not occur at the same point in the exam.
 - c. Exams should be built to randomize the order of answers (and therefore avoid “all of the above” answers since they really don’t work in a scrambled answer format), so that when

- the same question does occur on two or more student's exams, the order of answers is not the same. This helps prevent a phone/chat assistance of "the answer is "A").
- d. It is possible, and sometimes ideal, to setup exams so that only one question is delivered at a time and that backtracking is prohibited (particularly for online tests without live proctors).
 4. There are other ways to assess than traditional exams. This isn't always possible (particularly in high-capacity classrooms). However, it is often desirable to have a timed, proctored assessment. Consider alternatives such as "creation activities" (write code, build a model, prepare an essay, record a five-minute oration, etc.) over standardized tests when time permits. It's very hard to cheat on a creation activity... and usually cheating is pretty obvious in a creation activity because the easily deployed cheating resources (e.g. the Internet) don't usually have answers designed for a well-prepared creation activity.
 5. The higher the stakes (of the exam) the more likely the cheating. The greater the percentage of course points allocated to an exam and the more the exam favors "all or nothing" scoring, the more pressure exists. Forensic accountants tell us that fraud (of which cheating is an example) is a function of motive ("I need to, because..."), opportunity ("I can cheat, because,...") and rationalization ("it's really okay that I cheat, because..."). Try to build your course to minimize opportunity, counter typical rationalizations, and lower the motive-stakes while preserving a grading system that allows you to identify the quality of performance (and #9 is easy to write, and hard to execute).
 6. Tests – Assign 2-3 different versions of tests. Do not share that there are different versions.
 7. Online Test Preparation Resources
 - a. [Video: Creating an Online Test \[1:41\]](#)
 - b. [Video: Preparing Test Questions for Blackboard - Understanding RESPONDUS-Ready Formatting \[21:28\]](#)