

# University of Wisconsin-MBA Consortium: Tips for Instructors to Deter Cheating and Plagiarism in Online Courses

## GENERAL

- 1. Get to know your students.** Have students complete a profile and answer questions about themselves. Ask about their backgrounds and any experiences that relate to the course. Use these or some additional writing activity to provide you with a writing sample that exhibits their typical writing style. You can refer to these materials later in the course if you suspect that a student is not completing his or her own work.
- 2. Engage your students in the course.** Try to engage your students in community building activities within the course so that students do not feel isolated. Have them work in groups whenever appropriate. Communicate with your students and provide feedback as often as possible using the many communication tools available in D2L.
- 3. Ensure that students understand definitions of cheating and plagiarism.** Create a short quiz for your students to take so you can identify any misconceptions about cheating and plagiarism among your students.
- 4. Provide examples of proper citation formats for your students and point your students to citation resources.**
- 5. Provide a clearly defined policy for cheating and plagiarism as well as a plan of action.** Provide clear definitions of what you consider cheating and plagiarism. Also, determine a plan of action if a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing. It's a good idea to check with your department, college, or the University to see if such a policy exists.

## TESTS

- 1. When testing students, ask questions that require students to apply concepts and material covered in the course rather than simply memorize and reiterate lists, terminology, or theoretical concepts.** Technology makes it easier than ever to ask students objective exam questions, which can usually be automatically graded by course management systems. Unfortunately, by asking objective exam questions, instructors make it easier for students to cheat. Students can often find the answers to these questions by referencing their text book or searching the Internet.
- 2. When generating objective exam questions, check the textbook to make sure the answer cannot be pulled directly from the text.** You may also want to complete an Internet search using key words and text from your exam questions to see what the search elicits. If the correct answer can easily be found on the Web, you'll need to change your question.

3. **Modify the tests you use from semester to semester so students cannot simply print a quiz or exam and pass it along to a future student.**
4. **Ask short essay questions that require the students to apply concepts or material from the course.** Although these questions are more time consuming to grade than are objective exam questions, they offer the best insurance against cheating. (TIP: Using a grading rubric can often lessen the amount of time spent grading essay questions.)
5. **If you decide to do objective tests, make the tests shorter and more frequent.** Give 5 small tests instead of 2 large ones. Students are less likely to seek out someone to help with a test if it is only 20 questions instead of 100. They are also less likely to find a willing friend to help out on exams if the friend has to be available 5 times rather than 2.
6. **Use the technology tools offered in your course management system to make cheating more difficult for your students.** Desire2Learn, our course management system, offers several tools that can be used to deter cheating in your online course.
  - Randomize answer options and questions that appear on a quiz or exam.
  - Place one question per page when administering an exam.
  - Provide time limits when administering an exam.
  - Check student progress in the course by viewing the “Progress” tool.
  - Monitor the amount of time students spend taking an exam through the “Quizzing Event Log.”
  - Check the IP address of the computer students use to complete exams.
  - Use the “Release Conditions” tool to release course content based on student progress in the course.
  - Disable printing and copying options for students when they are taking a quiz.

## OTHER ASSESSMENTS

1. **Vary the type of assessments used throughout the course.** Rather than relying entirely on tests, make discussions, group assignments, and individual assignments all part of the graded material.
2. **Require checkpoints when assigning papers and other written projects.** There are a number of sites on the Internet that provide students with the opportunity to purchase papers to turn in as their own. Instructors can make it difficult for students to use such sites by asking students to provide an initial plan, a detailed outline and/or an annotated bibliography before the final paper is due.
3. **Relate assignments to their own experience or to original research.** This is easier to do at the graduate level than the undergraduate. Ask students to write about their own place of employment (current or past). Ask them to interview employees of a particular firm or a variety of firms to gather data. Ask them to gather information from a variety of websites (citing the sites) and incorporate it into a document, drawing their own conclusions from the information. In other words, make plagiarism very difficult because they are doing unique work.

- 4. Use term paper banks and the Internet to determine if a student's work is original.** Just as the Internet can be an enemy in the war on cheating, it can also be an ally. Use term paper banks, such as Turnitin.com, to verify that a student's paper is original. You can also type in certain phrases from papers in search engines such as Google to determine if parts of a student's paper were taken from the Internet. You can also search library databases for text taken directly from library resources.

Also be aware of the many sites that students can visit and purchase already written papers. Let your students know that you are aware of these sites by using papers taken from those websites as example papers in your course.