



# Strategies for Designing Online and Blended Courses that Promote Academic Integrity

## What is Academic Misconduct?

Texas A&M University's [Code of Student Conduct](#) defines academic misconduct as *misconduct in research or scholarship includes fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data.*

In blended or online classes, this can look much the same as on-the-ground courses and can include behaviors like violating course rules, using unauthorized materials during an exam, collaborating with classmates without authorization, falsifying identity, using another student's work, and much more. In an online environment, however, carefully strategizing to encourage academic integrity, mitigate academic misconduct, and report suspicions of misconduct is particularly critical as most (if not all) work is completed without live instructor oversight.

Instructors and faculty members can take specific actions to mitigate academic misconduct, particularly in online or blended courses. Some of these actions include:

## 1 Designing Online and Blended Course Environments That Promote Academic Integrity:

- Use professionally relevant assignments with strategies for efficient grading and feedback, such as creating rubrics.
- Minimize high-stakes exams, or lessen their overall grade weight by supplementing with other types of summative assessments. Including multiple assessment types will help provide a well-rounded picture of students' progress and create opportunities to identify inconsistencies in student achievement.
- Create opportunities for instructor-student interaction and feedback, as well as activities and assessments appropriate to the class size.
- Conduct all quizzes, assignments, and discussions in Canvas (and other university tools) so that student activity information is logged and can be consulted if questions arise.
- Be explicit about academic integrity expectations at the beginning of the course and on all assignments, including clarity and resources for avoiding plagiarism. The guide [Talking To Your Students About Academic Integrity](#) may be helpful for example language.
- Ensure your course has a manageable workload for students and aligns with basic credit hour estimation.

## 2 Creating Assignments and Assessments with Academic Integrity in Mind:

Include in the assignment instructions your explicit expectations for collaboration, use of prior work for the course, and use of course examples.

### For projects and papers:

- Be transparent to students about how the work they are doing in the course is professionally relevant so that they see the big picture application and value of the work.
- Integrate direct links to student support services like the Writing Center, Academic Success Center, and the Evans library.
- Use the [Turnitin originality check](#) to identify possible cases of plagiarism.
- Use low-stakes exams and self-checks to give students practice for final exams, reducing anxiety and potential inclination to cheat.
- Utilize proctoring solutions and originality check systems.

### For quizzes and exams:

- Create quizzes in Canvas using settings that deter casual cheating:
- Set the quiz to draw groups of questions randomly from question banks
- Have the quiz open for a limited window of time and set a reasonable time limit
- Randomize the order of quiz-response options
- Limit students to viewing one question at a time
- Lock questions after students have answered them (if appropriate)

## 3 Creating assignments and assessments that avoid plagiarism:

- Design essay prompts that are not generic, but reflect the specifics of your class as much as possible. This will make it more difficult for students to use the many generic essays available online.
- Require drafts. This helps by not only making students show the developments of their ideas, but also by encouraging them to work earlier on their papers. Plagiarism becomes an option for students when they have done no work on the assignment that is due the next day and feel they cannot complete the assignment without cheating.
- Explicitly and repeatedly tell students that you use Turnitin or other plagiarism-detecting software.