

**T**his issue highlights the work of the Working Group on Academic Integrity. Over the past term this group has been working to develop a series of resources to promote academic integrity at York. These resources offer practical strategies for preventing and discouraging plagiarism and other forms of cheating and many are reproduced with permission in this issue. The full set of resources and links to other helpful sites can be found on York's Academic Integrity website at <[www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity)>.

## Academic Integrity

### *Promoting genuine learning in your courses*

Academic integrity has become an issue of increasing concern on university campuses across the continent and beyond. Motivated by concerns about the behaviour of some students in their academic work – from those who inadvertently present ideas without attribution to those who intentionally download papers from the Internet – many campus are looking for new ways to maintain and enhance academic integrity.

#### What's the problem?

Just how much of a problem are plagiarism and other forms of cheating? A scan of recent reports is informative:

- ◆ In one survey of over 2100 students on US campuses, more than 75% of students admitted to some cheating. One-third admitted to serious cheating on tests and half admitted to more than one instance of serious cheating on written assignments (McCabe, 2002)
- ◆ Another survey of US college students found that “some 59% admit cheating on a test (66% of men, 54% of women). And only 19% say they would report a classmate who cheated” (Merrit, 2002)
- ◆ A study of almost 2,000 essays submitted by Australian university students found that up to 14% were plagiarizing from the Internet, and 8.6% of them had plagiarized more than ¼ of their material from electronic sources (Foster, 2002)
- ◆ Twenty-nine engineering students were found guilty of plagiarism in essays they had submitted for a professional-practice course at Carleton University (Jones, 2002)
- ◆ In a physics course at the University of Virginia, 158 students were charged with plagiarism leading to the dismissal of 45 students and the retraction of the diplomas of 3 others (Young, 2002)
- ◆ An investigation of computer-science assignments at Georgia Institute of Technology turned up 187 cases of suspected copying of computer codes and prompted new policies on collaboration and crediting sources (Hoover, 2002)
- ◆ A Librarian at Coastal Carolina University maintains a list of Internet Paper Mills which currently contains links to over 250 general sites and a further 80+ sites devoted to a single author or topic – when the list was first compiled in 1999, it contained only 35 sites (Fain, 2002)

#### Why do students cheat?

For instructors, the process of engaging with ideas and being informed by other people's ideas is central to the academic enterprise, and the tests and assignments they give in

*(Continued on page 2)*

#### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Monday, February 17, 2003**  
**Teaching & Learning**  
**Symposium**

**May 5, 6 & 7, 2003**  
**Course Design Institute**

Watch for further details of these events to be announced shortly.

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their courses are ways of providing students with opportunities to do this. For many students, however, the tests and assignments are simply tasks that need to be completed in order to move further along the path to their degree. Values of academic integrity, genuine learning and honest effort are for instructors fundamental to this work, but to some students there may be less of a direct connection between these concepts and the work they are doing in their courses.

Students cite a variety of reasons for why they might be tempted to cheat and plagiarize, such as:

- All I want to do is pass this elective with minimal effort so that I can concentrate on the courses in my major
- I was desperate to keep my GPA up so I can get into a professional school
- Why is this assignment different than what goes on in the real world? ... politicians, actors, etc. have other people do their writing for them
- I thought we were supposed to collaborate?
- It's only fair since some of my friends have done it and gotten away with it
- Isn't everything on the Internet public domain?
- It was 4 a.m. before the due date and I didn't have time to go back and find the source ... I didn't make note of it earlier when I was doing my research
- My sister had the same assignment last year and gave me her permission to use it
- I just don't understand what the rules are for proper citation
- I couldn't be bothered learning all the material so that I could write about it.
- You mean you actually read my paper?
- But if I cited every source the whole paper would be in quotations!
- I just don't have any decent ideas of my own...

Discussions of these and other reasons for cheating and plagiarism can be found in Brown (2001), Harris (2001), Newton (2001), McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (1999).

**So what can we do about it?**

Looking at the above reasons and the pedagogical challenges each one presents might helpfully inform the kinds of strategies instructors might consider to address them. In dealing with cheating and plagiarism, there are four main areas in which instructors might concentrate activity: education, prevention, detection, and investigation.

**1. Education** – Help students understand what academic integrity is all about, the standards of conduct that apply to all academic work and promulgated in York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, and the kinds of referencing and citation practices that you expect students to follow. On page 5, James Brown offers a strategy for using the idea of an "honour code" to help students understand and commit to principles of academic integrity. On the back page is an announcement

about a new online tutorial for York students to help them learn about issues of plagiarism and how they can avoid it.

- 2. Prevention** – Structure tests and assignments to reduce incidents of cheating and plagiarism for students. The bulk of this issue is devoted to offering practical strategies that instructors can use – when designing courses, when teaching in the laboratory and studio environments, and when structuring examinations, tests and written assignments. On page 3, Kim Michasiw outlines the kinds of conditions that instructors can create for academic integrity to flourish. George O'Brien, on page 6, discusses the kinds of strategies instructors can use to minimize cheating on exams. Paula Wilson, Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt and Allen Koretsky discuss the kinds of strategies instructors might use to foster academic integrity in science laboratories, in Fine Arts studio courses, and in academic essays, respectively (pages 7, 9, 11). Finally, page 9 contains an announcement about a plagiarism detection program, *Turnitin.com*, that is being piloted at York to help deter plagiarism.
- 3. Detection** – Be alert for clues that indicate cheating or plagiarism (i.e., changes in writing quality, style, expression and sentence structure), check out essay services on the web for papers that might be relevant to the assignment, use Internet search engines such as Google to trace a suspicious phrase back to the original source, or use copy-detection software such as Turnitin.com (see page 9). In addition, Allen Koretsky advises that students be reminded that theoretically no submitted essay is considered complete unless they can explain and defend any part of the essay, any idea, phrase, word, or the essay as a whole (page 11).
- 4. Investigation** – Hopefully, the strategies outlined in the above three sections will render this fourth section less significant. However, in the event that a suspicion of academic dishonesty arises it behooves us as a community to "treat it with the condemnation it deserves" (Senate, 1995). Here York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty can provide helpful guidance to instructors for investigating and dealing with cases of academic dishonesty, both formally and informally (see page 11). Specifically, the Senate Policy defines and clarifies the University's commitment to principles of academic honesty, the kinds of conduct that are regarded as academic offenses, the penalties for those found "guilty" of an academic offense, and the procedures for dealing with those accused of committing an academic offense (the full Policy can be found at [www.yorku.ca/univsec/legislation/senate/acadhonesty.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/legislation/senate/acadhonesty.htm)). These procedures may be supplemented by Faculty procedures, and instructors are advised to consult the appropriate Faculty offices for further clarification.

We hope that you will find in this issue many ideas that you can modify, adapt or use as a springboard to other ideas to help promote academic integrity in your courses. As always, we invite you to contribute your own ideas and strategies to add to the vital and growing collection of materials on this topic for instructors at York.

For references see page 9.

# Creating Courses that Encourage Academic Integrity

## *A short guide for instructors*

Kim Michasiw, Department of English, Faculty of Arts

### INSTRUCTORIAL & DISCIPLINARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Although much of the focus of recent materials on academic integrity has been on the students and their responsibilities, it is our conviction that academic institutions have the responsibility to create and maintain conditions in which academic integrity may flourish.

Central to this is the process of modeling. At every level, from disciplinary organizations, through Faculties, departments, and programmes, to individual instructors, it is our responsibility to practice what we preach. If students perceive their instructors to be mere conduits for the work of others, how can they be persuaded not to act as conduits for work that is not, or not wholly, their own themselves? The paradigmatic caricature of the professor who uses the lecture hour to read aloud from the textbook represents an unhealthy teaching environment very tidily. Even if this figure is merely an urban myth, its tenacious clinging to life in the student imagination suggests that students perceive a lack of commitment to the principle of original or autonomous work in the university system.

The textbook-reading professor, myth or reality, stands also for the current state of textbook publication, in which multinational publishers are increasingly providing packaged courses. Such packages offer not only the textbook but visual aids, computer test banks, even prewritten lectures. Whether or not national and international disciplinary organizations have sufficiently addressed the damage the use of such packages can do to an atmosphere of academic integrity can only be answered by those involved in such organizations on a discipline by discipline basis.

### COURSE DESIGN

At the departmental level, let us urge the importance of variety and change both at the level of curriculum and of individual course delivery. Nothing contributes more effectually to the mechanisms of academic malpractice than courses that are offered

The point is to create circumstances in which instructors are being seen by students to be doing new work or to be engaging with old work in new ways.

unchanged for years. Unchanging course texts, lectures, assignments, exam structures create, as it were, a local database of used academic materials calling out to be recycled.

At the departmental level, varying instructors in core courses is essential. Even if the instructor uses exactly the same materials, the emphases will change at least somewhat. From a workload perspective obliging instructors to depart a large course after one iteration is cruel but cycling course directors out of large courses after two years is probably something like an essential precondition to

creating circumstances that do not encourage academic malfeasance among students.

Team-teaching is perhaps one way of addressing workload concerns and the necessity of variation simultaneously though, in a regime of constrained finances, this may not be possible.

If the instructor cannot be changed, the key textbook or books are open to variation. In some disciplines or sub-disciplines a single text may be so vastly superior to its competitors, or so completely dominates the discourse in the field, that it must be used. In most cases this is not the state of things. Even if the same text must be used year after year, the possibility of different emphases, even different order of presentation is always there. At very least, secondary readings may change from year to year, especially in those disciplines committed to addressing current circumstances. Moreover at least some components on the grade can be based upon these eccentric materials.

The point is to create circumstances in which instructors are being seen by students to be doing new work or to be engaging with old work in new ways.

When this is not possible, when there are

*(Continued on page 4)*

- What is copyright and what does it cover?
- What can I copy for private use without special permission?
- What can I copy for distribution in class?
- Can I post copied material on the Internet?



## Copying on Campus

A new brochure provides answers to these and other frequently asked questions about copying on the York campus.

*Copying on Campus* is published by the Office of the University Secretary and General Counsel, and is available at campus offices and online at: [www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/lit/index.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate/committees/lit/index.htm)

**(Creating courses ... from page 3)**

established information, axioms, theories that must be communicated, clear and overt attributions of sources will do much.

**ASSIGNMENT DESIGN**

If variation and instructorial autonomy are keys to the appearance of academic integrity in the process of teaching, assignment design is the key to encouraging integrity in students' work. The key words here are clarity, embeddedness and process.

**Clarity:**

1. The more clearly defined the assignment the less likely it is that an off-the-rack essay will fit its contours.
2. That is, never ask students to write something about some book or other. Essays topics need to specify at least their starting point and that starting point ought to emerge from the specific context of the course as it is being taught.
3. The objectives of the assignment ought also to be stated clearly once again because the plagiarized paper, unless it is written to order, is far less likely to achieve those objectives than is an assignment, however feebly achieved, in which the student actually attempts to meet those objectives. One excellent way of discouraging academic dishonesty is by setting up conditions in which it is not rewarded. It is possible that students are plagiarizing in the hopes of a C but in most cases they are hoping for better. If the unprovably plagiarized paper gets a D+ because it is off topic, the plagiarist is unlikely to be encouraged to do it again. The more clearly defined the topic, the more legitimate such punitive grades become.
4. The corollary is that students must be informed clearly that papers that do not address the topic and the ends of the assignment will be graded harshly.

**Embeddedness:**

1. As above, assignments of all sorts should arise from the specific local conditions of the course as it is being offered by this instructor at this institution in this year.
2. This requires both the nurturing and the recognition of that local culture, which may be artificially created through the development of an idiolect, or by some *sui generis* medley of theoretical

presuppositions, or through the cultivation of weird juxtapositions. It may also arise 'organically' from the site-specific chemistry of the course members.

3. One corollary here is the importance, in courses with tutorials and teaching assistants, of encouraging (and making time provisions for) TAs to contribute assignments directed to their own groups. One option here is the development of course essay and problem banks from which those actually grading the assignments select on grounds of appropriateness to the concerns of the particular group.
4. Another aspect of embeddedness is in-class work, deriving immediately from the materials and discussions to hand. This does not mean more exams. Rather it means micro-essays (with

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grading allowances made for the grammatical and orthographic stress of writing at high speed), hastily improvised problem sets, brief reports, whatever can demonstrate the students' absorption of the materials in a context not permitting borrowings from elsewhere.

5. Evolve citation practices as a 'class community' to cover circumstances in the course. Students are often unsure of whether their essays should cite the ideas they gained from lectures. Some instructors ask students to cite lectures; others wish their lectures treated as 'common knowledge' and not cited. Discussion of the issue and class guidelines can be effective at integrating students' writing with course material.

Also, the idea of citing lectures can be extended to the citation of ideas originally suggested by classmates. One effect of such integration between class experience and student writing is to dissuade students from believing that essays written by other people for other

contexts might be suitable for theirs. A requirement that class discussion be integrated into students' writing, along with an expectation that such discussion be cited, also makes it very difficult (and therefore expensive) for a professional ghostwriter to create a suitable essay.

6. To the degree that the circumstances of the course (and the limits of the instructor's tolerance) allow, design writing assignments that involve modes of writing other than argument and exposition, that is the traditionally dominant modes of the academic essay.

**Process:**

1. To deploy an old slogan: process not product or perhaps both process and product.
2. Though labour intensive, the most effective way of discouraging plagiarism in essay-based disciplines is the gradual development, through a series of observed stages, of the final product. An essay that begins with a 200-word statement of project (graded and commented upon by the instructor), moves through one or more drafts (also graded with commentary), to a final essay or report, is a large challenge to the plagiarist. Even a truly habituated academic miscreant, one sufficiently organised to order the essay early, will be hard put to make the adjustments necessary to address an incremental series of criticisms, suggestions, and comments.
3. One corollary—going back to clarity as a principle—is that the instructor must be clear that a significant portion of the grade is derived from the effectiveness of the student's dealing with comments and suggestions. Which is to suggest that the paper/project is graded not just for getting better but for getting better in response to a series of site-specific stimuli.
4. As with everything else on this list, the constant oversight necessary on the instructor's part to process-centred evaluation is labour intensive. One possible easing of this burden, though one that's not without its perils, is peer evaluation at some stage(s) in the process.

# Honour Codes

## *Supporting Academic Integrity and Values*

James Brown, Calumet College

This article discusses an adaptation of the idea of an “honour code” as a way of helping students understand—and make an initial commitment to—the principles of academic integrity. As developed here, this idea of a class “honour code” is similar to discussions which already go on in lots of York classrooms around a “code of conduct” for the class; it just extends that discussion into the underlying values.

There has been considerable research (McCabe and Trevino, 1996 et. al.) on honour codes, and much of it has suggested that such codes may be effective in reducing academic dishonesty. This is principally survey research which depends on students self-reports on “one or more instances of serious cheating.” So in fact, the difference, (54% on campuses with honour codes, 71% without) may be partly a measure of willingness to disclose. However, one very encouraging finding (McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 1999) is that students at universities with honour codes tend to conceive the academic integrity issues differently and are less likely to argue a view which seeks to rationalize plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty.

The history of “full” honour codes lies in some American universities which have incorporated not only a kind of formal oath by students to uphold principles of academic integrity but also an enforcement mechanism which involves students monitoring and reporting on one another. York is not ever likely to move toward such a program and the “turn in your neighbour” aspect is particularly unattractive; however, it may help reduce instances of academic dishonesty in your classes if you incorporated a unit something like the following into an early/introductory meeting of the class—perhaps the first meeting.

### **Class Discussion of Purposes & Values of Education**

Introduce a discussion of the central values involved in the academic work which will be done by students in your course. In general, the goal would be to make clear what it is that we are

#### **Supporting Academic Integrity in the Libraries**

Librarians work in partnership with faculty to support student learning, teach proper research skills, and help in preventing potential instances of plagiarism, including:

- Consultation with librarians when creating student assignments
- Bibliographic instruction seminars for students on library research and the importance of academic integrity
- Online tutorial for student on library research - the Library Research Roadmap
- Online “Ask a Reference Librarian” program

For further information see: [www.library.yorku.ca/](http://www.library.yorku.ca/)

defending with the rules and procedures around citing sources and not engaging in practices which are academically dishonest.

You could start with an open question to students like: “What purposes does the university serve in society?” and lead through that to discussion of “What values do you think the university needs to uphold to achieve these purposes?”.

Alternatively—and at the other end of the spectrum—you could start with a short presentation on values you think are central to a university. In fact, I would do the former and hope to lead the discussion, but in either case, I’d want to end up with a list on the board of some of the values which a university must uphold.

### **Develop a List of Values on the Board**

In leading the discussion or making the presentation, you will develop a list of values. Your lists will vary, of course, according to what comes up in discussion from students and makes sense to you, so the following is just illustrative.

In order to achieve its social purposes, York, and we in this class, must govern ourselves so as to uphold the values of:

Education	Scholarship
Citizenship	Fairness

At this point, you might encourage discussion of how these values translate into your students’ lives or how they are understood according to their cultures and backgrounds.

### **Develop Statements Connecting Values and Practices of Academic Honesty**

You would next develop some links between the values and academic honesty. Again, this could be done in discussion with students, or you could be more directive and presentational.

For sample ideas about how these values and academic honesty can be related, please refer to York’s academic integrity website.

### **Incorporate a Commitment to these Values**

Incorporate a commitment to these values into your class by:

- a. Making it part of the classes “code of conduct,” and/or
- b. Having each student sign some such statement of commitment, and/or
- c. Having students commit to it verbally in discussion or other form.

*Sample ideas for linking values and academic honesty, as well as class “codes of conduct” and “honour codes” can be found on York’s Academic Integrity website <[www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/honourcode1.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/honourcode1.htm)>.*

## Insider's Guide to Cheating on Exams

### Get exam questions & answers ahead of time:

Get tests from previous years • Attend earlier section's exam, get the exam & leave or write exam & put false name on it • Use false excuse to write early or late & get questions • Steal from instructor's or dept office

### Copy from each other:

Use communication devices • Pencil signals, coughing, talking • Trade exam papers halfway through • Tiered classrooms make viewing easy • Collaborate on online tests • Talk while exams are being distributed and collected

### Use unauthorized material:

Write on self or clothing • Write on objects brought in - water bottles, calculators, pencil cases, tissue, gum wrappers, post-it notes • Write on desk prior to exam • Hide notes in washroom • Bring in written materials

### Other ways to cheat:

Impersonate another student • Resubmit an altered exam for re-grade • Take extra copy of exam or exam booklet, write in correct answers, and resubmit for a re-grade • Don't hand in exam and claim you weren't present or that instructor lost it • Steal another student's graded exam from return box, change name, and resubmit as own for re-grade.

Adapted with permission from J. Christensen Hughes (2002). *Insider's Guide to Cheating. Fostering Academic Integrity: 15th Annual Teaching & Learning Innovations Conference, University of Guelph.*

# Minimizing Cheating on Examinations

*George O'Brien, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Faculty of Arts*

One type of cheating takes place before the test or exam. It involves getting illegal access to information about the exam. This can for the most part be prevented by making sure that copies of the exam and its drafts are not made accessible to people who should not have access to the material. To ensure this, material related to the exam should not be left on office desks or in wastebaskets. Aside from locking up exam material, making the material hard to find can be a useful extra precaution.

A second type of cheating is just plain copying from the work of neighbouring students in the examination room. This can be hard to avoid and hard to detect in crowded examination halls, particularly in sloping lecture halls, where students may be able to see the work of several other students without being obvious about it. This kind of cheating is particularly easy in the case of multiple-choice questions or questions for which the answer is a number, a formula or a diagram. It is less likely to be a problem in exams requiring essay answers. Sometimes a student will deliberately permit another student to see his or her work. Students who consciously provide information to other students are also being academically dishonest.

There are some ways to minimize copying. Students should be seated as far apart as the room allows. Also, it is better to have student directly behind one another than a bit to the side. In sloping lecture halls, an invigilator standing at the front of the room and looking towards the students can see whether the eyes of the students are looking in an appropriate direction. It helps to require students to remove hats that might hide wandering eyes. Another useful technique is to have two or more versions of the exam distributed in alternate seats, so that students cannot easily see other copies of their version of the exam. For example, different versions of a multiple-choice question could be obtained by rearranging the order of the questions, or of the answers for each question. In the interests of prevention, it would be appropriate to indicate in advance that there are several versions of the exam.

During an exam, if there is reason to suspect that a student is copying from another student, but the invigilator is not be completely sure, it may be appropriate to ask the student to move to another seat where copying is not possible. This should be done in a way that does not cause disruption for other students. It also can be useful to have another invigilator assess the situation.

Another type of cheating involves bringing information into the exam room before or during an exam. This could involve smuggling in notes, either at the start of the exam or in connection with a trip to the washroom. It also could involve using a cell phone or other communication device. It is clear that such devices should not be allowed. To minimize the possibility of a student bringing in exam booklets containing information, one could mark the official booklets for the exam in some way.

Some students cheat by arranging for another person to write an exam in their place. The main preventative measure here is to check identification and signatures carefully. If all the students are known to the instructor, such cheating is less likely to occur, but for big classes, this sort of cheating may be hard to prevent. Photographs are not always clear, especially if the hairstyle or the glasses of the person has changed. As in the case of copying from another student, it would be appropriate to ask students to remove hats that hide their faces.

Another type of cheating takes place after the exam. A student might attempt to change the answer on a graded question and then, without acknowledging the changes, ask the instructor to grade the exam again. The alteration may involve changing an answer or adding additional material. The former problem can be minimized by asking students to write their answers in ink. The problem of added material can be minimized by drawing lines with red ink around the written material or just under the bottom part of an answer, so that it would be hard to add much material without crossing the line or curve. If there is reason to suspect that an answer has been altered after having been returned to the student, it could be appropriate to make a copy of later tests written by the same student, so that hard evidence can be obtained.

It is obviously important for invigilators to take their invigilation responsibilities seriously, and to watch for activities that suggest cheating. In the interest of prevention, it is important for students to know in advance that cheating of any type is not acceptable, and that confirmed cases of cheating will result in penalties. It is also very important that students know exactly what constitutes cheating. The rules should be clearly defined. The best way to do this is to include information with the material handed out at the beginning of the course.

# Fostering Academic Integrity in Science Laboratories

Paula Wilson, Department of Biology, Faculty of Pure and Applied Science

The following is excerpted from a longer article that is posted on York's Academic Integrity website <[www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/sciencelabsabs.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/sciencelabsabs.htm)>. The full article not only offers strategies to reduce academic dishonesty in the laboratories, but it also outlines how one might develop guidelines for students on acceptable practices for research, collaboration and reporting, and how to detect and deal with breaches of academic honesty in this setting.

Fostering academic integrity within any course should include strategies to avoid or reduce academic dishonesty, together with strategies for detecting dishonesty and procedures for dealing with it. Below are a number of practical strategies to help reduce plagiarism and data falsification in undergraduate science laboratories. It is expected that not all strategies will work for all courses and subject areas, but rather it is hoped that all instructors will find at least some of the strategies helpful in designing or improving their particular courses.

## Approaches to Avoiding Problems inside the Laboratory

1. If possible, have more laboratory exercises than needed for one year (for example have 15-20 for a 12 laboratory course) and rotate them from year to year.
2. For some laboratories, have students write up the report in class. The simplest way to use this approach is to have "answer sheets" that the student fill in. The sheets can have the general format of a formal report but provide more structure, or they can simply be questions to answer, or tables to complete. If you use this approach each year, be clear in your "policy" to state that students cannot bring reports from previous years to class and state clearly to what degree students may collaborate with one another during this type of exercise.

Note: Paul Delaney [2] points out that these types of reports have the bonus of encouraging students to work hard and concentrate during the laboratory period and to always come prepared. The McGill website on plagiarism [1] adds that these less formal reports usually cut down on marking time for the TA.

3. If you are using answer sheets that ask students to answer specific questions, change some of the questions from year to year. Even small changes are helpful.
4. Within a given laboratory, change some of the parameters from year to year. How easy it is to do so will vary with the laboratory or with the level of the course, but with a little thought and creativity, it should be possible for at least some laboratories. For example, if you are studying the effect of hypertonic solutions on cells one year, make it hypotonic the next year, or change the molarity of the solutions being used.

Even small changes can give students the sense that last year's results are not going to be useful this year.

5. For some laboratories, it may be possible to give each group a slightly different experiment. Using the example in 4. above, each student could be testing the effects of solutions with different molarities and/or different solutes. In the case of experiments involving unknowns, give each group a different unknown. In this way all results have the potential to be different, and students may actually learn more by examining the data set from the entire class.
6. A nice approach for courses with 12 different laboratories is to have a mix of in-class and out-of-class (sometimes called informal and formal) reports. In such cases you can change which laboratories require out-of-class or formal reports each year in order to decrease the use of reports from previous years. If you are incorporating new or changed laboratories, make sure they are the ones that require the out-of-class report.
7. For reports that are completed outside of class time, you might have students sign and include a statement claiming that the report they are handing in has been completed within the course guidelines for academic integrity. [The McGill website [1] provides helpful suggestions for preparing this type of statement.]

Within a given laboratory, change some of the parameters from year to year. How easy it is to do so will vary with the laboratory or with the level of the course, but with a little thought and creativity, it should be possible for at least some laboratories.

8. Reduce the need to "police" collaboration by allowing collaboration between partners for some or all reports. [1] Obviously any intention to vary levels of collaboration from one report to the next must be accompanied by very clear guidelines.
9. Have a portion of the laboratory grade come from laboratory quizzes and exams, written in a non-collaborative setting.
10. Oral reports and presentations are common in smaller more specialized laboratory courses where larger projects are undertaken that require several laboratory periods or even the entire course to complete. A thesis course is an obvious example. However, it might be possible to incorporate oral reporting or interviews into more laboratory courses [1,4]. An oral report would require the student to discuss and justify his/her data and interpretation, making it more

(continued on page 8)

**(Academic Integrity in the Labs ... from page 7)**

difficult to hide dishonesty. Harris [4] suggests asking specific questions about the written work, such as “What exactly do you mean here by ... ?”

A similar useful technique would be a post-report interview or even a written report or “meta-learning essay” [4], where students are asked the following types of questions:

- ◆ What problems did you encounter as you completed your experiments, and how did you solve them?
- ◆ How do you feel these difficulties affected your results?
- ◆ Were your results what you expected? Why or why not?
- ◆ What have you learned about science and about how scientific information is gathered as the result of this work?
- ◆ What future experiments would you perform in order to extend or improve your data?
- ◆ What were the general conclusions you were able to draw from your data?

11. Reduce “hand-me-down” laboratory reports from previous years by collecting and destroying used laboratory books at the end of the year [3] and by returning reports directly to students in the laboratory rather than setting them outside someone’s door and therefore open to theft [1].
12. Paul Delaney [2] emphasizes the important role of the TA in any effort to ensure that academic integrity is maintained in the laboratory. TAs must have a strong presence in the

### FYI - University Policy Prohibiting On-Campus Activity by Essay-Writing Services

#### -- Excerpts --

1. York University regards as reprehensible so-called "essay services" which seek to provide students, almost always in return for some fee, with some course work done by others.
2. Accordingly, the University will not tolerate the use of its premises, facilities or activities by agents, representatives and users of such services. It is the policy of the University vigorously to employ all lawful means at its disposal to prevent such activity from occurring on campus and to prosecute individuals, groups, organizations and companies which engage in it.
3. Access to all University premises, facilities, activities and services is therefore denied to providers of such commercial essay services, including the promotion and advertising of such services.
4. Students who employ such services for their academic coursework are subject to sanctions in accordance with the policies and procedures on academic dishonesty of the Senate, the Faculties and other academic units.

The full policy can be found at:

[www.yorku.ca/univsec/legislation/u\\_pol/essaywriting.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/legislation/u_pol/essaywriting.htm)

undergraduate laboratory, visiting each student group regularly, interacting with them and forging a positive relationship with each student. They should be looking at their data, asking students if they have any questions, if they understand the data that they are gathering. Students who know that their TA is aware of their data and their progress are less likely to feel that they can successfully “fool” the TA with a dishonest write-up. Students who respect their TA and are enjoying their laboratory experience are also less likely to want to try.

### Suggestions to Decrease Falsification of Data:

13. Put less emphasis on the importance of obtaining expected or “correct” results and more emphasis on a student’s ability to interpret and understand whatever results they obtain. Emphasize that students will not be penalized by presenting aberrant data, if the data are properly reported and if they include a careful discussion about why the results may be aberrant/abnormal. Reflect this change in the marking scheme and make it available to students.
14. Give marks for good laboratory practice, for following procedures and carefully recording results, not just for getting “good” results.
15. Have a policy that requires students to obtain the TA’s signature on all pages of their original laboratory notes and data, and to submit those notes with their laboratory report. TAs, in turn, should keep careful records of attendance and of whose laboratory notes they have signed, in order to prevent forgeries or other problems.
16. Have students write all of their original laboratory observations in a hard-cover laboratory book with numbered pages. TAs can then initial the relevant pages and make note of the page numbers for each student, in case they see something suspicious when marking. Laboratory books would have to be submitted with laboratory reports.
17. In courses where the integrity of the primary data is of great importance, laboratory books are available that create carbon copies of each page. The carbon copy may then be ripped out and handed to the TA before the student leaves the class.

### References

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## Turnitin.com A Pilot Project for York

*Turnitin.com* is a commercial Internet-based search service designed to detect incidents of plagiarism in written work. The program compares the submitted text with material that can be accessed on public websites, academic journals, papers purchased from essay mills, and essays and assignments concurrently or previously submitted to *Turnitin.com*. It was developed by academics at the University of California at Berkeley and is currently in wide use across Canada, Australia, Britain, US, and in over 50 countries around the world.

York's Office of the AVP Academic has arranged to subscribe to *Turnitin.com* as a pilot project and it is available to all full and part-time York faculty for their use on a voluntary basis. If the service is used and the experience of instructors is positive, then the University may continue with *Turnitin.com* as part of a larger strategy to enhance academic integrity in courses at York.

### How it works:

1. Students submit their papers into a 'drop box' at the *Turnitin.com* website
2. *Turnitin.com* creates a 'digital fingerprint' of the document
3. The 'fingerprint' is then cross-referenced against *Turnitin.com*'s local database containing hundreds of thousands of papers
4. At the same time, automated web crawlers are released to search the Internet for possible matches
5. A custom, colour-coded 'originality report', complete with source links, is created for each paper and saved in the instructor's *Turnitin* account
6. The instructor can then review the "originality report" and independently determine if the submitted work constitutes a violation of York's *Senate Policy on Academic Honesty*, and whether to proceed with a charge.

More information about the service can also be found at the <[www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)>. As well, if you would like to receive information or review the software, please contact the CST (ext. 55754 or [cst@yorku.ca](mailto:cst@yorku.ca)). In addition, further information along with detailed questions and answers about using *Turnitin.com* can be found at <[vpacademic.yorku.ca/announcements/turnitin.html](http://vpacademic.yorku.ca/announcements/turnitin.html)>.

## Studio Courses and Academic Honesty

Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt, Department of Dance, Faculty of Fine Arts

Studio courses present different challenges that often can be overcome by employing relatively simple strategies.

- ◆ Process grading is preferred over product grading. Rather than evaluating only the final product, evaluate the ongoing process of the students. If the goal is a completed work, in-class showings with regular critiquing encourage the submission of original work. Regular attendance expectations ensure that the development of a student's idea is observed. Their progress can then be acknowledged in the grading scheme.
- ◆ In courses focusing on creative work or the acquisition of technical skills, journals and process reports can be used as a means through which to learn about an individual's personal experience and perceived progress throughout a course. To circumvent the possibility of students writing a full term of journal entries the night before a single due date, a series of dates throughout the term can be identified as due dates, with random collection of journals occurring on each date.
- ◆ When collaboration is desired, request individual submissions to supplement any group report that is required. Individuals in the group can be asked to report on various aspects of the project. Alternatively, each group member can be asked to report on their personal experience within the project.
- ◆ In discussions preceding assignments that involve quantitative data, remind students that using someone else's numbers is no different from using someone else's words. If the source of the numbers is not properly acknowledged, then plagiarism has occurred.
- ◆ In any course, when students are expected to comment on the work of others, they can be asked to submit their working research notes. The strategy of using two columns, one headed with "this scholar/professor/peer says" and the other with "I think", can help students to identify their own ideas in response to the work of others.
- ◆ Asking students to attach the ticket stub to their submission of a performance review will encourage the desired attendance. Identifying specific works/ performances to be seen helps by restricting the options and therefore the opportunities to engage in practices of academic dishonesty.

### From page 2 ... References on Academic Integrity

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*The following is a sampling of strategies that can be used to discourage plagiarism when designing assignments. If you have assignments that have effectively discouraged plagiarism in your courses, we invite you to send them to the Centre for the Support of Teaching to add to its collection of sample assignments that promote academic integrity.*

## **Discouraging Plagiarism in Assignment Design**

In general, make assignments specific and unique so that students are not easily tempted to find and submit something already written

Explicitly link course work and exams so that they crosscheck and reinforce each other [2]

Use assignment topics that are unusual or have a narrow twist [4]

Re-write or modify assignments topics and tasks from term to term

Provide clearly defined topics and objectives

Require work to be submitted first in draft form

Have students prepare an annotated bibliography

Have students prepare their papers for an audience other than yourself classmates, a decision-making body, etc.

Require the use of specific sources for your assignments, i.e. a certain number of recent sources, websites, journal articles, surveys, interviews, etc. [4]

Ask students to include material learned from the lectures in their assignments

Have students ask their classmates to read their paper for feedback [4]

On the assignment due date, have students write an in-class, meta-learning essay about what they learned from the assignment [4]

Assess the process, how the student worked through the assignment, as well as the product [2]

Have students sign a statement declaring that they are the true author of their paper [4]

Use plagiarism detection software, such as turnitin.com [1]

Use in-class micro-essays, problem sets, summary reports, etc. so that student can demonstrate their understanding of the material [1]

Design assignments that draw on the specific local conditions of the course [1]

Provide a progressive context for students to develop their assignments, such as completing worksheets essay proposals, shorter papers, specific portions of the paper in advance, oral reports, etc. [3]

Design assignments that involve modes of writing other than argument and exposition, such as explanations, problem-solving, choices and decision-making [5]

Ask students to study a topic and present information leading to a decision or recommendation [5]

Ask students to explain why something didn't happen, rather than why something did [5]

Require that a class discussion be integrated into the assignment

Design assignments that ask students to make an inquiry or investigation [6]

Design assignments that involve creativity, analysis, evaluation and synthesis [2]

Ask students to assess or compare more than one idea, outcome or application [2]

Design assignments that ask students to integrate more than one specific idea (i.e. explain how a certain local situation or current event relates to a theory studied in the course) [2]

Work with your class to develop an honour code (see page 5)

Encourage the submission of good quality papers by providing students with resources and guidelines on essay writing, citation practices for referencing electronic and text source, and bibliographic formatting

Include statements in your course outline and in course kits that explain the policy procedures on academic dishonesty and plagiarism

Help students understand what plagiarism is and what are acceptable citation practices in your courses

### *References:*

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# Preventing Plagiarism in Academic Essays

Allen Koretsky, Department of English, Faculty of Arts

The best way to deal with plagiarism is to prevent it rather than to play cop and catch and punish the culprits. The latter role is a nasty one. Few of us, I suspect, have much relish for it. It is far more rewarding to be, as we say nowadays, pro-active, and prevent the practice of plagiarism. But how?

An effective method for doing this comes from following one of our most basic principles about academic writing. Many of us profoundly believe, teach, and preach that writing good academic essays is a *recursive process*. That is to say, essays are written in stages, and our minds are always going back and forth among these stages in the messy business of creating an essay. If we simply follow through on the implications of this idea in our own classroom and tutorial work with students, we can cut down the very temptation to plagiarize and thus go a long way to eliminating the odious practice itself.

Essays are written in stages, and our minds are always going back and forth among these stages in the messy business of creating an essay. If we simply follow through on the implications of this idea in our own classroom and tutorial work with students, we can cut down the very temptation to plagiarize and thus go a long way to eliminating the odious practice itself.

The major steps in the writing of an academic essay are these:

1. Prewriting: may include brainstorming, clustering, free writing.
2. Note-taking
3. Outline
4. First Draft
5. Revisions

Asking students to hand in the various stages of the essay while they are working on it works. Part of a faculty members

job is to comment on the work in progress, to get back to students with suggestions about these various stages. Sleazy commercial essay providers will not be interested in selling the early stages of the essays. Nor can there be much of a buyer's market here. It is a simple matter for us to look for

some connection between the earlier stages of the essay and the finished product that is handed in for marking and grading. More significantly, it should be satisfying to us to help students learn to go through the process of writing. And it should be very useful to them to acquire the habit of working through such a process.

A variant of this technique that a colleague has used is the instruction to hand in with the final essay, all of the rough work that preceded the final copy.

Finally, students must be reminded that theoretically we do not consider any essay that is

handed complete unless the student can come to the professor's office and explain and defend any part of the essay, any idea, phrase, word, or the essay as a whole. Hopefully, this is a last resort and won't have to be used often if ever. On very rare occasions, however, when it was necessary to do so, there is the usual expected unpleasant result. The chief value of the idea is as a deterrent. This threat is a negative technique; and it is preferable to use the positive approach: working with students in the stages of their essays, as a way of encouraging and helping them to become more effective writers.

## *York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty*

York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty defines and clarifies York's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of academic honesty. In particular, the policy:

- Explains why academic honesty is a fundamental value that is important for all students to maintain
- Observes that a breach of academic honesty is considered one of the most serious offenses at York
- Defines the types of conduct that are regarded as academic offenses, including plagiarism, cheating, impersonation, and other forms of academic misconduct
- Defines the penalties that can be given to a student who is found to have committed plagiarism or any other form of academic offense
- Outlines the procedures for dealing with students who are accused of committing an academic offense.

The full policy can be found at: [www.yorku.ca/univsec/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm)

# Introducing ....

## *An Online Tutorial for Students on Academic Integrity*

Students at York will soon be able to learn about issues of plagiarism and how they can avoid it on York's website. As a collaborative project between the CST and the Computer Assisted Writing Centre, a web-based, interactive tutorial was developed by Olivia Petrie and Cheryl Dickie and is currently being pilot-tested among students and faculty for feedback and commentary.



The primary emphasis of the Academic Integrity Tutorial is to promote the skills that support academic integrity and to help students understand how it applies in their school work. In approximately 30 minutes, students are able to navigate their way through the site to explore issues of plagiarism and how it is detected and dealt with. The tutorial features three case studies, each of which is accompanied by positive strategies students can use to improve their academic efforts and avoid committing an academic offense as outlined in the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. York's Policy is also outlined in detail to help students understand the types of conduct that constitute an academic offense, along with the procedures and penalties that apply to any breach of the Policy.

The tutorial also includes an online quiz where students can gauge how well they understand issues related to plagiarism and academic integrity. Students can elect to receive formal notification of their completion of the test.

This tutorial is available for instructors to use in their courses to supplement the instruction that they already provide on the topic of plagiarism and cheating. Portions of the tutorial might be displayed in class or the tutorial might serve as an ungraded assignment for students to complete. It is not envisioned that this tutorial would replace what instructors are doing now to educate students in this area, rather it is hoped that the tutorial will complement these activities and promote a deeper understanding of the issues.

The tutorial was inspired by a similar site "Plagiarism and Honor" developed by Cheryl Ruggerio, at the Department of English, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University <see [www.english.vt.edu/%7EIDLE/plagiarism/plagiarism1.html](http://www.english.vt.edu/%7EIDLE/plagiarism/plagiarism1.html)>. Rather than trying to address a range of concerns, the content of the site is limited and focussed on one particular issue, plagiarism. Over the longer term, the CST plans to work with other units on campus to highlight existing modules, such as the Library Research Roadmap, and to develop new resources to promote the development of successful academic skills (i.e. using sources).

The tutorial is still in the pilot stage and feedback from the York community is most welcome. It can be found at <[www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic\\_integrity/](http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/)>.

## The Academic Integrity Tutorial

### Contents

#### 1. Introduction

- ◆ About this site
- ◆ What is academic integrity?

#### 2. What is Plagiarism?

- ◆ Plagiarism defined
- ◆ The impact of plagiarism
- ◆ When do instructors suspect plagiarism?
- ◆ How can instructors prove plagiarism?
- ◆ What about other forms of cheating?

#### 3. Case Studies

- ◆ What to look for
- ◆ 1 - Modern retail trends
- ◆ 2 - Films of Billy Wilder
- ◆ 3 - Canadian families

#### 4. York's Policy on Academic Honesty

- ◆ The key points
- ◆ Avoiding an offense

#### 5. Test Yourself

- ◆ Overview
- ◆ Try the quiz

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