

Creating a Climate of Academic Integrity:

Tips to Prevent Cheating

UC Davis has a tradition of honor and integrity extending over the past 95 years. Our first student Honor Council was established in 1911, and the campus had a student-run honor system until 1976, when our Code of Academic Conduct was adopted. Under the Code, students, faculty, and administration share responsibility for maintaining academic integrity and upholding this tradition. UC Davis students are expected to be honest and fair, and to treat others with respect. In turn, faculty maintain high academic standards by encouraging honest work, setting and communicating clear standards, using assignments and test formats that discourage cheating, and reporting violations to Student Judicial Affairs. (SJA). The following suggestions can help you promote academic integrity.

Promoting Academic Integrity

- **Stress the importance of integrity to the learning process.** Honest work builds self-esteem, knowledge, and skills. In contrast, cheaters don't learn, they undermine the quality of the education UC Davis provides, and they devalue our reputation and the degrees we confer.
- **Highlight our Code of Academic Conduct** and the importance of honesty (e.g., in class and in your syllabus); remind students of the Code before exams; link your website to the Code; and refer suspected violations to SJA. Encourage students to tell you immediately if they see cheating.
- **Set clear standards** for assignments and grading; stress rules for proper citation. Tell students if they may collaborate and, if so, how much. Refer in your syllabus to SJA handouts (or distribute them to students) such as *Avoiding Plagiarism: Mastering the Art of Scholarship* and *Collaboration: When You Can and When You Can't Work with Others*.
- **Enlist students' help in creating a climate of integrity in your class.** Tell them you know that most students don't cheat, and that you appreciate honest students who want to learn.
- **Discuss ethical standards for your class/subject**, especially those relevant to the course and to students' future careers. Give criteria for the "hard choices" in your field, with examples of how ethical issues can and should be resolved.
- **Inspire, encourage, and model integrity.** You don't have to threaten or scold. Positive reinforcement works better than scare tactics, and internal constraints (morals, ethics, character) are the most effective. As educators, faculty influence students' attitudes and development and reinforce student integrity by helping them to make the right choices.

For more information, see McCabe, D. and Pavela, G., "Ten Principles of Academic Integrity," <http://www.collegepubs.com/ref/10PrinAcaInteg.shtml>

SJA offers the following suggestions based on faculty experiences here at UC Davis and elsewhere; we hope that they are helpful to you.

General preventative steps

- * Have students sign an honor statement on exams/papers attesting that all the work they submit is their own & that they have not taken any unfair or dishonest advantage.
- * Monitor exams to help students maintain academic integrity, and promptly confront any suspicious conduct.
- * Prohibit talking or other communication during exams. If there are questions about the test, have them talk to you.
- * Require students to turn off cell phones and put away notes, books, and all electronic devices inside their backpacks.
- * Number exams (on front and on each page); use sign-in sheets for each row, by exam numbers, to record where students sit.
- * Have students sign each page of the exam in ink and/or complete the entire exam in ink.
- * Tell students to cover their work, and encourage them to sit apart from friends or study partners during exams.
- * Require & check written excuses for make-ups and extensions.
- * Don't allow students to leave exam room without permission.

How to deter copying and collaborating during exams

- * Use test formats requiring short-answers, essays, or problem-solving. These are difficult to copy and require analysis and thought to derive the correct answer – guessing won't work.
- * Use two or more exam versions, scrambling the order of questions or answers, or changing key variables or terms; use different colored paper for each version, so you can see whether adjacent students have the same test.
- * Give no credit for correct answers unless all work is shown, and the work leads to the answer.
- * Use alternate seating. If no extra rooms, mix classes & alternately seat students from different classes (e.g., Math, Economics, French).
- * Put multiple choice or true-false sections at bottom of page (harder to copy); have students turn in Scantrons AND tests.
- * Have students remove and put away hats/dark glasses.

Watch for: (during exam) wandering eyes; passing notes; talking; showing paper to others; using devices (e.g., cell phones, PDAs) to transmit information by voice, e-mail, text messaging, camera, data transfer, IM, or code); (**in grading**) answers with no work shown or work that doesn't support answer; unique, identical wrong answers; "signals" written on exam; erroneous transcriptions of another's answer (e.g. "buck red" instead of "brick red").

How to deter use of unauthorized notes or devices

- * Give clear oral and written instructions regarding what materials can or cannot be used on the test.
- * Before distributing test, remind students put away books, notes, and other study materials & store them out of sight.
- * Do not permit students to use computers, calculators, etc. in completing exams.
- * Instruct students to turn off and put away all electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, iPods, headphones, calculators, computers, Blackberries) during exams; inform students that unauthorized equipment found on or out during exams will be confiscated and reported to SJA.
- * Change exam questions often, ideally every quarter/section.
- * If you provide sample questions or study sheets, do not use the exact same questions on the exam.
- * Have students turn in blank blue books to you at the class period before the test, mark to indicate you've seen them, and redistribute at random, or have students exchange blank blue books (e.g., pass down a row and to the left).
- * Tell students to begin writing on a certain page, to turn bluebook upside down, or to leave specified pages blank.

Watch for: use of information stored in electronic devices (see above); crib notes up sleeve, in lap, on top of backpack, on floor, or written on hand, on desk, chair, clipboard, binder; notes or answers pre-written in blue-books, or hidden in bathroom or nearby classroom; students photographing or text messaging questions or smuggling an extra copy of the test to others outside the room who will take the test later; students leaving the room without submitting their tests (e.g., to use notes or answer key outside class); attempts to sneak finished exam back into the room at the end of exam, or into faculty office; or having an accomplice "find" and turn in a "lost" exam later.

How to prevent loss/theft of tests

- * Count the # of exams distributed, the # of students taking the test, and the # of exams turned in – before you leave the exam room; make sure the numbers match; use numbered exams and sign-in sheets.
- * Collect exams from students while they are still seated rather than have a chaotic rush to the front.
- * Have a consistent, secure method of transporting tests between class, office, and home; ensure security of computers & copy facilities; keep office & desk locked when you are out.

Watch for: theft of ungraded exams from front of room or from faculty office; theft of graded exams from return bin (thief erases owner's name, writes his own name, and submits as his work, or may copy/alter test and submit as own- may destroy original paper to avoid detection, so that student who did the work appears not to have submitted paper); student may come to test (or to earlier section), remove a copy of the exam (or have friend get a copy) then study before own section's test or the scheduled make-up. Rarely, exam questions or answer key may be taken from faculty office or computer. Student may fail to submit paper or exam, then claim faculty error caused the work to be lost, with the goal of getting an extension or taking a make-up.

How to prevent fraudulent requests for re-grading

- * Mark wrong answers/blank space with an "X" or slash mark; Circle wrong, empty and/or correct answers on Scantrons. Draw a red line connecting each Scantron answer selected by a student to the next answer ("connect the dots").
- * Photocopy graded tests/Scantrons before returning to students.
- * If you accept tests for re-grading, require original exams to be submitted by the end of the class period in which the tests are returned with a written statement of which questions they want re-graded and why they think there has been a grading error. Make a list of all students who submit exams for re-grading.
- * If you keep electronic copies, let students review on-line copies using class website and password-protected access rather than returning originals of exams. This prevents theft or unauthorized access to exams, & alterations to graded exams.
- * Don't return tests--allow students to see exams during office hours only. Or return test papers but not Scantrons (tell students to keep track of their answers on their test papers as well as marking their Scantrons).
- * If you re-grade an exam, keep a record of the original score in gradebook & database, including page totals, problem scores, and total exam score.
- * Have one person review all re-grade requests and grade changes.

Watch for: Erased/changed Scantron answers; new, correct answers in place of previously blank or incomplete responses; tests that have been photocopied or photographed, with original answers blanked out & redone with correct answers, forged grading marks; entire exams or inserted pages with higher scores stolen from return bin, names changed, then submitted for credit under the thief's name. **Red flags:** poor-quality "second generation" copy inconsistent with original exam; copies of staple holes; entire pages erased and re-written (to avoid detection of different handwriting); suspicious discrepancies with grade book (resubmitted test has score of 90, grade book shows 40). Students sneaking extra blank exam from room to be completed after test and returned for "re-grading."

How to keep a "ringer" from taking a test for another

- * Take periodic attendance during the quarter so that you recognize who is in your class and who is not.
- * Make sure you collect an exam from everyone; require students to turn in tests to their own TA from discussion section.
- * Require students to have their UC Davis ID on their desks during exams and to show ID as they turn in their exams.

Watch for: Ringer taking test for enrolled student (who may be present or not during the exam) – ringer may do own test, then copy Scantron for friend. Ringer may do real exam while student does a fake exam; when done, they switch papers, the enrolled student writes own name and submits test, while student's exam is discarded or turned in with false name (**red flag:** exam with a phony name).



For assistance, please call SJA at (530) 752-1128 or see our website at <http://sja.ucdavis.edu>.