



# Mitigating Academic Integrity Risks in Online Assessment

## STEPS WE CAN TAKE

### Communication and culture

1. Open and effective staff-student **communication** plays an important part in minimizing integrity breaches, so **talk to students** early and throughout your course about academic integrity and why you value it and how it relates to the value of their degree. Encourage questions.
2. Help students to understand the links between the integrity of their university assessment and their futures as **ethical professionals** who can operate with confidence in their chosen fields. Point out how cheating can leave significant **gaps in their knowledge** that impact on their progression in their degree and may put themselves and others at risk in the future. Direct students to our [Best Practice Principles](#).
3. When reflecting on why students might fail to act with integrity, it is worth asking whether we have been sufficiently clear about what is and isn't acceptable. Engage students in sharing their ideas around integrity and keep the conversation going as the course progresses. As course convenors, **be clear what your expectations are** for your students in completing their online assessment tasks, including which behaviours are sanctioned and which are not.
4. While we stress the importance of teamwork and encourage students to work in groups, we need to help them understand the difference between ethical forms of **collaboration versus collusion**. While there is considerable focus on paid cheating services, by far the most common forms of contract cheating are those involving assistance from peers and family. Be explicit about what types of assistance and peer-to-peer sharing are appropriate and what forms represent misconduct.
5. Help students find support and be explicit with them about **which forms of academic support are legitimate** (Library, Academic Skills, Studiosity etc) and which are not.
6. Our students have expressed concerns about academic integrity in online assessment so we should partner with them to **co-create messaging** for students. One of the ways in which we can be sure that our communication strategy resonates with students is to work with them on the creation of messages and around the choice of channels. Having students

partner with us on our communication strategy will do more than help to make it relevant, it will demonstrate our commitment to students as partners in the work of understanding and promoting academic integrity across ANU and help them step into the role of **peer educators**.

## Assessment and marking

7. **Never recycle assessment tasks** from previous teaching sessions – this is the single most important intervention you can make. This diminishes opportunities for students to sell or exchange questions or completed tasks, just as it limits the possibility of students sourcing answers to assessments online or from peers who have already completed those courses.
8. Review the **weighting** on assessments. Be aware of the online assessment formats that are generally lower in integrity and assign them lower weightings if used.
9. Consider your **assessment design**. While it is generally agreed that it not possible to design out cheating entirely (Bretag et al 2019), better assessment choices and [improved assessment design](#) are areas where our practice can be strengthened with likely improved outcomes for academic integrity. Importantly this is an area where every single member of our teaching staff can work proactively to improve academic integrity. In the wake of COVID remote learning, many of our current online assessments are simply paper-based examination papers translated to an online version, with no real change in examination technique. Take action and get help in designing your assessments to work better online and to minimise the opportunities for cheating.
10. Support students to **prepare for online assessments**, especially if it's an unfamiliar format for most (e.g. take-home exam). Hold practice exams so students can familiarize themselves with the style of exam, key instructions and new technologies.
11. Make sure your **students know that you are aware of cheating** and will be actively checking work submitted for assessment in your course for evidence of cheating. Explain the specific detection strategies that will be applied in a particular course. Be clear about the range of penalties that can be applied under our policies.
12. Help your **markers** to know what to look for. If they [know what to look for](#), they are more likely to identify suspected instances of cheating or plagiarism.
13. Be vigilant and **follow policy and procedures** when you suspect a breach of academic integrity. Cheating behaviour is more prevalent in environments where students believe staff don't take the issue seriously and that chances of detection and/or follow up action are low.
14. Include clear **ANU logos and copyright information** on exam papers and assessment tasks so take-down notices can be issued if these appear on 3<sup>rd</sup> party platforms.

## Build awareness and understanding

15. Students who are stressed and feel isolated or unsupported are more likely to resort to cheating. Develop an understanding of the **pressures** on students that lead to cheating and consider what steps you can take within your course to ease those pressures. Become

familiar with the different **ANU resources** that are available to support students in managing their studies, their finances, and their overall wellbeing and share that information with them. Make students aware that they can talk to you about challenges they're experiencing with their studies.

16. Get to know the high-quality **resources** (see below) that have been created to support educators and draw on them to build your understanding of strategies and tools available to minimise the risk of integrity breaches.
17. Explore and utilise the [advice](#), expertise and [tools](#) provided by ANU to **support academic staff** in the [design and delivery of assessment](#), including the design and running of online exams.
18. Keep abreast of research on **trends and evolving threats** around academic integrity. This is a rapidly evolving space and new technologies offer new possibilities to transgress (**see attachment A**). High levels of staff awareness around what is happening in this area strengthens us as an organization.

## Resources

TEQSA Academic Integrity Toolkit

<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/academic-integrity-toolkit>

Deakin University's Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE)

[Academic integrity, assessment security and digital assessment](#)

[How to detect contract cheating](#)

[Assessment design innovations](#)

International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI)

[ICAI Educational Resources](#)

[ICAI Integrity Matters Blog](#)

UNISA Exemplary Academic Integrity Project

[Resources on academic integrity](#) (for use with students)

## References

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