

eBook

Emerging trends in academic integrity

A free guide from Turnitin



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Glossary

- **Academic integrity:** A commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage.¹
- **Academic misconduct:** Attempted or executed action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community.²
- **Assessment:** The wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition or educational needs of students.
- **Assessment with integrity:** The act of ensuring fair and accurate measurement of student learning.
- **Digital learning environments:** A term that encompasses different types of educational settings and structures, often involving technology and devices, including but not limited to: asynchronous learning, distance education, hybrid/blending learning, online/eLearning, remote learning and synchronous learning.
- **Formative assessment:** A communication loop that provides feedback to students and data to educators in order to help students further their learning and understanding of concepts. It is often considered an important part of teaching and learning.
- **Honour code:** A set of rules or ethical principles governing a learning community based on ideals that define what constitutes honourable behaviour within that community.
- **Impact factor (IF):** A measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a particular year. It is used to measure the importance or rank of a journal by calculating the times its articles are cited.³
- **Item analysis:** The act of analysing individual student responses in order to evaluate the quality of an exam. It can provide feedback to the instructor to inform future teaching and help uphold exam fairness.
- **Plagiarism:** When an individual attempts to pass off someone else's ideas or work as their own.
- **Summative assessment:** An evaluative exercise to measure progress and learning, often at the end of a unit or term.

¹ICAI, The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity (Oct. 1999). Retrieved May 22, 2020, from <https://www.academicintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Fundamental-Values-2014.pdf>.

²University of California Berkeley: Division of Student Affairs (2022). Retrieved on February 16, 2022 from <https://sa.berkeley.edu/conduct/integrity/definition>.

³University of Illinois (2016). University Library (UIC): Measuring Your Impact: Impact Factor, Citation Analysis, and other Metrics: Journal Impact Factor (IF). Retrieved on February 16, 2022, from <https://researchguides.uic.edu/if/impact>.

Introduction

As humans, we innovate and adapt. But for every beautiful and better thing we build, so, too, is there a tool invented to cut a corner. For those aware of the growing trends in academic misconduct, there is a chance to identify potential issues and mitigate them. This eBook can help students, educators and administrators take informed, preemptive steps in creating structures and safety nets to turn what may become a systemic crisis into a conversation. These resources define emerging trends in academic misconduct and determine how they manifest in work. Learn how these trends may impact students, classrooms and institutions, then use this eBook to help you take actionable steps towards mitigating them, with integrity at the core.



What are word spinners?

Word spinners go by many different names: they include text spinners, rewriting tools, article spinners or paraphrasing tools. They take existing text and make changes with the purpose of evading plagiarism detection software. Word spinners vary in the ways they offer their services; some are subscription-based while others are free internet sites.

They often market themselves as being able to “avoid detection” while taking advantage of students who aren’t knowledgeable about the nuances of plagiarism. One word spinning site leverages ambiguous phrases to claim, “Paraphrasing tools can be legit basing [sic] on how you choose to use them. Certain ways make paraphrasing tools legit. When you have little or no time to paraphrase a given work, paraphrasing tools offer the best of help.”

Struggling students may miss all the ambiguity in such qualifying statements, and so explicit instruction is crucial in mitigating this particular form of misconduct.

How do word spinners manifest in student work?

While the goal of word spinners is to retain the meaning of the original text, they don’t always succeed. And they certainly don’t replicate the student’s authentic voice. However, if a student uses word spinners throughout a course, instructors won’t have insights into the student’s authentic writing style and voice.

For example, when run through a text spinner, the previous paragraph reads:

“While the objective of word spinners is to hold the significance of the first content, they don’t generally succeed. Also, they positively don’t reproduce the understudy’s credible voice. Be that as it may, if an understudy utilises word spinners all through a course, teachers will not have the option to have bits of knowledge into the understudy’s genuine composing style and voice.”

The word replacements are inaccurate--student becomes “understudy,” for example. The introductory phrase, “Be that as it may,” is an awkward substitute. The phrase “positively don’t reproduce” doesn’t make sense. And so on.

How do word spinners impact academic integrity?

Simply put, when students use word spinners, they aren’t producing their own original work. Original work means that even when paraphrasing, students regenerate the ideas of another person into their own words and voice to express their understanding of concepts.

Word spinners impact student learning because they are a shortcut solution that prevents students from learning the skill of paraphrasing, a primary way for students to show that they understand ideas and concepts.

What are ways to mitigate word spinners?

By acknowledging their existence via explicit instruction, educators can take the first step towards mitigating the usage of word spinners. Vulnerable students often engage word spinners because the services use ambiguous language. Showing students that using paraphrasing sites is detrimental to their learning provides a foundation to prevent this form of misconduct.

Supporting students in their workflow to strengthen paraphrasing skills is another form of direct instruction to prevent this particular shortcut solution. [Paraphrasing](#) is a linguistically challenging and sophisticated skill because it involves reading the entire source, understanding main points, drawing from a deep vocabulary, and possessing an awareness of academic integrity and citation.

According to research, “The development of reading, summarising and paraphrasing skills are not the sole responsibility of learning developers. Educators need to embed academic skills in lectures and tutorials and provide feedback on student progress measured through effective assessment ([Sambell et al. 2013](#)). Clear assessment requirements and use of rubrics

indicate the importance and differences to grades for the various levels of academic skills ([Atkinson & Lim, 2013](#)) providing students with a reason to develop their skills. Effective feedback assists students in identifying where they have achieved certain levels of academic skills and which skills require further development ([Evans, 2013](#))” ([Rogerson & McCarthy, 2017](#)).

Use a formative approach and scaffold assignments to enable transparency into student work and open up opportunities for feedback loops. Make students feel seen and consider one-on-one meetings after the assignment to assess a deep conceptual understanding of the topic at hand.



Word spinners impact

student learning

What are online test banks?

Online test banks (or test files) are prepackaged online resources meant for lecturers creating tests and often provided through educational institutions. Online test banks are attractive because they are often created by the same publisher that produced the corresponding textbook for that course and thus centred around the main topics of that individual textbook. The test banks offer a diverse selection of questions and can include feedback on a specific answer given directly by students, often accompanied with exact page references to the textbook.

How do online test banks manifest in student work?

The initial use for test banks was as a time-saving resource for instructors crafting tests for their courses. They evolved into tools for students preparing for an upcoming exam, offering a curated selection of questions directly related to the topic. These days, online test banks are no longer limited to questions chosen by a textbook publisher; they now include collections of actual exams uploaded to the internet without explicit permission from publishers or instructors. Sadly, as with many trends in academic integrity, online test banks began as a legitimate resource that is now often abused.

So, how does an instructor know when/if a student has used an online test bank? They may manifest in student work in a variety of ways:

- Answers to an exam from a group of students that are all exactly alike, hinting at the shared use of an online test bank.
- Answers to an exam that are exactly the same as or highly similar to answers given by students in semesters/years past, alluding to the access of an actual test from previous terms.
- Surprisingly detailed answers to questions related to material that was only lightly covered in the course, which may show that the student(s) had a chance to look at a specific course's exams in a series, anticipating what material would be covered next.

How do online test banks impact academic integrity?

With such a focused study tool, students may feel that the time they spend preparing for the exam is not only efficient, but convenient, with everything they need in one place. Online test bank material is often marketed as "study material" and an "additional resource" for students with busy schedules.

It is also true that sometimes instructors themselves will choose to hand out previous exams as a study resource for their students. [One professor from Wichita State University stated](#): "If this is something that I want my students to learn, why won't I give them as much practice information as I can?"

Unfortunately, an online collection of previous tests blurs the line between copyright law and academic integrity. Exams or [test questions that are uploaded without an instructor's consent](#) means that they did not willingly share their course's content, nor their original exam material. Most educators are up in arms about the increased use of online test banks because it means their tests—truly, their intellectual property—are available online without their permission.

If a student or set of students simply memorises answers to a previous test, are they actually exhibiting knowledge, applying learned concepts to a new setting? Professors may not see that a student or an entire class needs additional support or coverage on a challenging topic because the exams do not accurately reflect their learning. And if exams are simply passed from one student to the next, then the deep value of attending the course, absorbing the information, engaging in class discussions and asking questions, are all lost.

This type of misconduct can also negatively affect an instructor or an institution's overall understanding of a programme, a course or an assessment's effectiveness. Educators want to trust that their summative exams are rigorous, accurate and free from misconduct.

What are ways to mitigate online test banks?

Luckily, there are several ways to reduce the negative impact of online test banks on student learning:

- Establish a policy. First and foremost, instructors and institutions should have a specific and written rule around the use of online test banks in the syllabus, the Honour Code, and/or the institution's academic integrity policy. If there is no clarity from the top level, then there is wiggle room at the student level to utilise tools unproductively or dishonestly.
- Change test questions frequently. This ensures that even if previous exams are somehow accessed and viewed, the unique questions on the upcoming exam will demand independent thought from the test-taker.
- Embrace item analysis. You can evaluate the quality of your exams with item analysis, which means analysing students' responses to individual exam questions. This process allows for a deep look at exam efficacy and keeps exams up-to-date.
- Apply thoughtful assessment design. [Assessment design](#) should provide variety in assessment formats to address different learning styles and measure different facets of learning. It can uphold integrity when done purposefully and can lessen the impact of online test banks on student learning.
- Limit time for test-taking. A good way to ensure that students are applying their own knowledge to exams and not repurposing others' answers is to offer the exact amount of time needed to complete a test. Unless discussed beforehand by the student and instructor for legitimate reasons, additional time can sometimes provide the opportunity for a student to utilise a non-approved resource.

In the end, talking to students openly about online test banks may be the perfect deterrent for the misuse of this resource. And while most situations involving study materials are likely honest endeavors, knowing the evolution of online test banks and how they are being used will help everyone to ground themselves in the importance of academics and assessment with integrity.



What are electronic cheating devices?

Cheating devices run the gamut from smartwatches to hidden earpieces also known as “spy earpieces.”

Students may use these devices to engage a third party to get answers or even play pre-recorded answers. Smartwatches may contain “cheat sheets” with notes and other critical information needed for answers on an exam.

They often market themselves as being able to “avoid detection” and be easy to use. One spy earpiece company states, “You can hide your phone in the pocket and hear your friend telling you the answers through the earpiece in your ear.” Another blatantly states, “Cheat on a test without getting caught!” And the devices are getting smaller (some advertised to be as small as a grain of rice) so as to avoid detection via proctoring solutions.

How do electronic cheating devices manifest in student work?

The key is to determine what is appropriate versus peculiar behaviour for the particular student and for the specific testing environment. In proctoring scenarios, you may see the student whispering to a third party or looking down to check their phone. They may stall in answering each question and take longer

to respond. On the other hand, this could be normal behaviour—oftentimes people do look up to ponder an idea or concept.

If the assessment offers both memorisation-based questions and higher-order thinking questions, there may be a difference between the quality of the responses. That is, the student may have a lower score on responses that require deep conceptual knowledge.

How do electronic cheating devices impact academic integrity?

This form of misconduct is purposeful and intentional. Not only is the student not learning—they're purposely trying to avoid detection and engaging in a short-cut solution.

Additionally, since there is an outlay of costs, the inequity from misconduct is greater—those who can afford to pay for these electronic devices have access to this form of misconduct.

Stressed students who are working for a grade rather than to learn are most vulnerable to using cheating devices.

What are ways to mitigate electronic cheating devices?

There are several ways in which educators can address the use and/or impact of cheating devices:

- [Item analysis](#) is useful in order to examine whether answers are similar across a group of students. It is also useful in determining whether a student struggled with deep conceptual understanding versus rote memorisation. Either way, the data can inform teaching and subsequent instruction regarding concepts as well as academic integrity issues.
- Proctoring tools can flag anomalous behaviour and ensure that students don't leave their screen during an exam or consult a third party. Additionally, academic integrity tools can mitigate plagiarism or third-party responses.
- Most importantly, assessment design is a critical way to uphold academic integrity. Offering a combination of frequent low-stakes and high-stakes assessments as well as a variety of different formats increases insights into student learning

and makes students feel seen; additionally, anomalies can be seen, too.

- Use a formative approach and scaffold assignments to enable transparency into student work and open up opportunities for feedback loops. Make students feel seen (figuratively via feedback loops and literally via proctoring solutions) and consider one-on-one meetings after the assignment to assess a deep conceptual understanding of the topic.
- Make exams and assessments open-book and/or open-note so that the answers aren't dependent on rote responses but focused on original ideas and deep conceptual knowledge.
- Limit time for students to complete assessments. Time allotted should be comfortable enough for students who know the material but not so generous that stressed students resort to electronic devices.

The goal is that students feel supported and engaged in learning and that bringing awareness to this form of misconduct helps educators everywhere uphold academic integrity.

What is source code plagiarism?

Source code plagiarism—otherwise known as programming plagiarism—is, simply put, using (aka [copying or adapting](#)) [another person's source code](#) and claiming it as your own without attribution.

How does source code plagiarism manifest in student work?

In the software development industry, work is often done collaboratively in groups with the end goal of building a piece of software meant for sale and consumption. Because of the collaborative nature of software development, open-source code (code that is allowed for reuse by other programmers) is very accessible for sharing. Such code is available on online code repositories like [Github](#).

Such industry collaboration contrasts with classwork, where work is meant for individual assessment to measure student learning. What is meant to be

a resource for professional developers may be a temptation for students struggling with coursework.

Source code plagiarism also manifests through the usage of question and answer sites and other resources that provide access to code that isn't the student's original work.

Bottom line: stressed and struggling students may feel compelled to take short-cut solutions on class assignments. Furthermore, the proximity to resources inherent in learning to program can be tempting. According to research, "Students tend to plagiarise if solutions to assignment [sic] can be easily obtained from Internet [sic] or similar sources" ([Ngo, 2016, p. 873](#)).



How does source code plagiarism impact academic integrity?

As with many other instances of academic misconduct, source code plagiarism results in loss of learning.

Since past academic dishonesty is likely an indicator of future workplace dishonesty—it is also a concern to help correct students who have engaged in source code plagiarism so that they fare better in their career. According to research, “There appears to be a strong relationship between self-reported involvement in prior academic dishonesty (high school) and self-reported involvement in present dishonest behaviour (college and workplace) of engineering students. This finding supports our second hypothesis that past deviant behaviour is an indicator of future deviant behaviour” ([Harding, et al., 2004](#)). Even if students’ future career tracks will involve collaboration and sharing of code, understanding principles of integrity will serve them well in their future careers and prevent future workplace misconduct.

What are ways to mitigate source code plagiarism?

Programming or source code plagiarism may be hard to distinguish despite the existence of detection software like [MOSS \(Measure of Software Similarity\)](#).

Assessment design and explicit instruction are the best holistic approaches to mitigate source code plagiarism. Explain the difference between collaboration and collusion to students and state clear rules on academic integrity.

Provide explicit directions on when and how to use outside code, including [source code attribution](#), which is a best practice in the software development industry.

Nurture feedback loops and strengthen student-instructor relationships with frequent, low-stakes assessments that provide data insights into student learning. Students who feel supported and seen are less likely to engage in academic misconduct.

These and [other pedagogical approaches](#) can support original work and uphold student learning outcomes.



Holistic approaches to

mitigate source code plagiarism



What is self-plagiarism?

Self-plagiarism—sometimes known as “[duplicate plagiarism](#)”—is a term for when a writer recycles work for a different assignment or publication and represents it as new.

For students, this may involve recycling an essay or large portions of text written for a prior course and resubmitting it to fulfill a different assignment in a different course. [For researchers, this involves recycling prior published work](#) and submitting it for publication to another journal without quotes or citation or acknowledgment of the prior work. Duplicate plagiarism, or “Submitting the same manuscript to multiple journals is widely considered unethical and would also likely constitute copyright infringement and violate the author-publisher contract of most journals” ([Moskowitz, 2021](#)).

The broader act of recycling one’s own work in some areas like scientific research, which the [Text Recycling Project](#) expands upon, is more nuanced. In research, work is often cumulative and builds on prior research. In those cases, researchers may engage in developmental recycling, generative recycling or adaptive publication to publish later work or revise the writing for a broader audience—all while citing prior publication ([Moskowitz, 2019](#)).

How does self-plagiarism manifest in student work?

Students who aren't as familiar with this form of academic misconduct often don't have a deeper understanding of academic integrity. Because they are reusing their own work, they may feel that this isn't plagiarism or misconduct at all.

They may be stunned to find that they have, for instance, a higher similarity score when submitting to Turnitin, as it will match against a prior submission (their own). Students may then ask for that older paper to be deleted, not knowing they have engaged in duplicate plagiarism. In many cases, this is an opportunity to increase student understanding of academic integrity.

How does self-plagiarism impact academic integrity?

Academic integrity entails honesty and original work. But it also includes a deep understanding of the importance of citation and academic respect. Even if the paper is the student's own, the work ought to be original for that particular assignment; duplicate plagiarism is a short-cut solution that hampers learning.

If a student's work is previously published or has been turned in for a grade, then the approach should be that the language is reworded/paraphrased and cited. If the student's work has not been published, it may create a gray space for what is acceptable. Self-plagiarism is a more widely seen and discussed trend in the research and graduate field, but even in secondary education and undergraduate work, instructors and institutions should make the expectation clear in their Honour Code and syllabi.

For researchers, duplicate plagiarism (wholesale republication of entire papers without citation) violates copyright and can affect the [impact factor of both journals and researchers](#). A decrease in the impact factor detrimentally affects academic reputation and future publication possibilities.





What are ways to mitigate self-plagiarism?

While there are many instances of intentional duplicate plagiarism, most cases of self-plagiarism are unintentional and can be remedied with explicit instruction on the core principles of academic integrity, citation and the prioritisation of original work.

Many similarity check tools like [iThenticate](#) and [Feedback Studio](#) curtail self-plagiarism and also present learning opportunities to [transform instances of plagiarism into teachable moments](#).

A more sophisticated understanding of academic integrity will help reduce self-plagiarism for both students and researchers. Researchers can mitigate the consequences of duplicate plagiarism by citing their previously published work. Having a deeper understanding of academic integrity avoids embarrassment and upholds learning as well as academic reputations.

Furthermore, designing assessments specific to your classroom can help decrease self-plagiarism—when essay prompts are tailored to your classroom discussion, prior student work will likely not be relevant and be avoided. No matter what, defining self-plagiarism and addressing it when it arises helps to raise awareness around this emerging trend.

What is self-citation?

When it comes to a researcher's own work, attribution is necessary to avoid self-plagiarism or duplicate plagiarism. Such attribution is called [self-citation](#). Self-citation is an act of academic integrity when expanding on previous research or referring to previously published work. There are legitimate reasons to self-cite; work is largely, especially in scientific research, cumulative and it's important to attribute prior foundational work.

But when the calculation of impact factor becomes a primary driver, [self-citation may venture into the murky territory of self-promotion](#). This behaviour has become a burgeoning concern within the research community.

For many researchers and research journals, a critical indicator for academic reputation is impact factor, a score based on the number of citations an article garners.

Excessive self-citation with the intention of raising one's impact factor is considered unethical and falls under the subset of [citation manipulation](#). In a 2019 study, COPE explicitly states, "When any of the above parties, editors, board members, reviewers or authors add or request to add citations where the motivations are merely self-promotional this aim violates publication ethics and is unethical. Additionally, whether or not they are requested, citations to the editor's work should not be added in the belief that this will increase the likelihood of the publication being accepted" ([2019](#)).



How does self-citation manifest in work?

The scientific community has called out egregious examples of excessive self-citation. According to [a study in *PLoS Biology*](#), *Nature* stated one example of a computer scientist who “received 94% of his citations from himself or his co-authors up to 2017.” He is not alone. [The data set, which lists around 100,000 researchers](#), shows that at least 250 scientists have amassed more than 50% of their citations from themselves or their co-authors, while the median self-citation rate is 12.7%” ([Van Noorden & Chawla, 2019](#)).

Excessive self-citation, simply put, is very easy to spot. On the part of the researcher, self-citation may be motivated by a desire for publication and an increase in impact factor, which in turn, expands future opportunities for publication. And it may be motivated, on the part of the journal, to raise its journal impact factor (JIF)—or it may be that the journal is highly specific in its topic choices ([Sanfilippo et al., 2021](#)).

How does self-citation impact academic integrity?

The link between self-citation and academic integrity is explicit: citations, and thus self-citations, raise the academic reputation of a researcher or journal in the form of the impact factor score, which is a very visible indicator.

But excessive self-citation can backfire, as many community members become more aware of this form of abuse—because the number of citations is also a very visible indication of whether or not self-promotion occurs.

What isn’t as transparent is the motivation behind self-citation that defines self-promotion. And what number—if any—of citations then accurately correlates between legitimate self-citation and self-promotion.

Researchers are working to define what the threshold for excessive self-citation may be. The line between legitimate and excessive self-citation can vary, even according to academic disciplines. But researchers are now examining the balance between building on prior work and recognising others’ influence ([Szomszor, Pendelbury, & Adams 2020](#)).

What are ways to mitigate self-citation?

There have been multiple proposed solutions to unethical and excessive self-citation. [Justin Flatt proposed publishing a self-citation index](#) to raise transparency into such behaviour ([2017](#)). He expanded with 2020 research that further urged tracking of self-citation with defined goals, clarifying, “Instead of curation, we should adopt methods that utilise all the citation data, but in a way that carefully accounts for factors such as self-citation, collaboration and ‘citation farms.’ Only then can we begin to fully appreciate authors’ behaviour and performance in relation to citation records” ([Kacem, Flatt, & Mayr, 2020](#)).

“But the idea of publicly listing individuals’ self-citation rates, or evaluating them on the basis of metrics corrected for self-citation, is highly contentious,” according to an article in [Nature](#). “COPE argued against excluding self-citations from metrics because, it said, this ‘doesn’t permit a nuanced understanding of when self-citation makes good scholarly sense’” ([Van Noorden & Chawla 2019](#)). That said, [Switzerland expanded its Code of Conduct to include “citation-farming,” or excessive self-citation](#) as scientific misconduct with sanctions in May 2021.

Rising awareness of self-citation abuse is part of the solution—just as with many academic integrity concerns, awareness is the fundamental driver for mitigating misconduct. Today, the world of research is working on policies as well as objective measurements to mitigate excessive self-citation and uphold academic integrity.

What is contract cheating?

Contract cheating occurs when students engage a third party to complete an assignment, which they then represent as their own work ([Lancaster & Clarke, 2016](#)). It can occur when someone other than the student—whether an essay mill, friend or even a family member—completes an assignment on their behalf. Downloading a paper from a “free” essay site is also contract cheating.

Contract cheating can be done as a “favour” with no exchange of money. Or it can involve trade-in-kind, like when a student swaps papers with another student.

Contract cheating is generally defined as a more purposeful act of academic misconduct, because, most egregiously, students can contact [essay mills](#) to write an essay on their behalf in exchange for money.

How does contract cheating manifest in student work?

Like many forms of academic misconduct, stressed students without a deep understanding of academic integrity are vulnerable to contract cheating. When students fall behind in school work, they may ask for help from a friend or family member who, with the intention of helping, may write the paper for the student. While powered by good intentions, this is a form of academic misconduct.

[Essay mills market themselves](#) to students on social media and other venues via “bots” by offering “help” at the eleventh hour. Essay mill marketing tactics leverage such ambiguity in ostentatious ways. “Our essays are plagiarism-free,” they often tout. While technically true (they are, after all, often written from scratch and not plagiarised), the mills don’t make clear that even if the essay is void of plagiarism, contract cheating itself is academic dishonesty.

Essays written by essay mills likely do not “sound” like the student’s work, or may show a marked difference

in tone or voice. They may also contain florid language without much in the way of deep content or analysis. Additionally, they may not even answer the provided question or prompt.

How does contract cheating impact academic integrity?

When students aren’t doing their own work and instead have someone else complete their assignments, they’re not learning the material. Students who turn to contract cheating because they’re struggling and stressed aren’t closing learning gaps; in turn, educators aren’t enabling accurate feedback loops to support learning outcomes.

Contract cheating is, simply put, a dismissal of the learning process. Not only does it undermine learning, contract cheating erodes learning environments, damages student-teacher relationships, [jeopardises the academic reputations of students, faculty and institutions, and indicates future workplace dishonesty](#) (ICAI, 2021).

What are ways to mitigate contract cheating?

Institutions and faculty can play a critical role in [preventing contract cheating from occurring](#).

Build awareness and an understanding of contract cheating. When there is silence around contract cheating, the cost of contract cheating may appear low to students. Research has shown that “more than 50% of students would outsource their work if the reward, perhaps in the form of higher marks or passing an assessment they would otherwise have failed, was relatively high and the cost relatively low” ([Lancaster, 2020](#)).

Bottom line: building a deep understanding of academic integrity and helping students understand contract cheating as a form of dishonesty prevents future misconduct

When students have a sophisticated understanding of academic integrity, plagiarism, and contract cheating and how they relate to each other, they are also less apt to fall prey to [essay mills that normalise contract cheating](#) and position their services as “help.”

Assign formative low-stakes assessments and enable feedback loops, so students feel seen and supported throughout the learning process. In-class assignments provide a baseline assessment against which to compare future assessments. Additionally, making the writing process more transparent mitigates third-party interference—or makes it more obvious. Accelerate feedback loops with [Feedback Studio](#) and [Gradescope](#) to allow for more visibility and data insights throughout the student learning process.

What about detection when prevention tactics fail? [Turnitin Originality](#) surfaces contract cheating insights and evidence for instructors and administrators. Forensics linguistics, too, can be utilised by individual instructors to check for contract cheating. “Training and decision support are key to determining contract cheating,” [according to Olumide Popoola](#) in his International Centre for Academic Integrity

panel entitled [Detecting Contract Cheating Using Investigative Linguistics](#).

Popoola showed that forensic linguistics can help identify contract cheating, but concluded by saying that [assessment design](#) is the best way to mitigate contract cheating and enable later detection. Assessments that focus on unique classroom discussion and course content deter contract cheating because third parties do not have access to that information.

Contract cheating is real and occurring throughout the world and in many classrooms of many institutions; to that end, countries are enacting legislation to ban essay mills and make contract cheating illegal.

For instance, contract cheating scandalised sixteen Australian universities in 2014 when it became known that up to one thousand students utilised [MyMaster to ghostwrite essays](#). As a result, [Australia passed legislation to make contract cheating illegal in 2019](#). [Contract cheating in New Zealand is illegal](#), too.

After [more than 20,000 UK university students were found buying essays in 2017](#), the House of Lords called for a ban on contract cheating. [Essay mills are now outlawed in the UK](#).

The United States has yet to enact a federal law “[forbidding] the purchase or sale of academic papers,” according to a [2019 New York Times article on contract cheating](#) that further states, “Contract cheating is illegal in 17 states.”

There is a lot of work to be done and also being done—within classrooms and in government. The first step, as always, is building awareness.

Delivering remote assessments with integrity infographic

Designing and delivering assessments is an important part of student learning and teaching efficacy. In any environment, academic integrity is key to an accurate assessment of student knowledge.

Feedback is more important than ever. Face-to-face settings give teachers the ability to observe student confusion or comprehension; online learning environments diminish this. As a result, learning in online environments relies even more heavily on student-teacher feedback loops.

It is important to design assessments that uphold academic integrity—providing multiple versions of the same test can mitigate collusion and other forms of misconduct that may take place.

Promoting academic integrity begins with building awareness of the various forms of academic misconduct. For instance, to mitigate instances of plagiarism, it is important to teach students what constitutes plagiarism and how to prevent doing so with proper citations. The same goes for contract cheating; understanding that their instructor is aware of this form of academic dishonesty mitigates these shortcut solutions.

At Turnitin, we keep abreast of emerging trends and want to share them with you.

- **Use varied and comprehensive assessment types.** By varying assessment formats, educators can gain insight into higher-order thinking and be inclusive of different learning styles. Additionally, different assessment formats can assess breadth (multiple-choice) as well as depth (long answer) of knowledge. Item analysis, the practice of analysing student responses to individual exam questions, can also provide further insight into student learning.
- **Be aware of emerging forms of misconduct in remote learning.** The nature of online learning environments makes certain forms of misconduct readily accessible. In addition to copy-paste plagiarism, AI text generators, smart devices and essay mills are a button-click away in online learning.
- **Take advantage of tools that uphold academic integrity.** Similarity checking, proctoring and browser lockdown tools can support academic integrity.

How to deliver remote assessments with integrity

Assessments are a critical intersection for measuring student understanding. Delivering assessments with integrity starts with identifying common academic integrity challenges and assessment delivery best practices.



Student collusion

Create multiple versions of the same assessment or change the question sequence each time an exam is administered to encourage appropriate collaboration. Proctoring tools help ensure that students are working individually on an exam, and [grading software like Gradescope](#) can help detect patterns in responses that may highlight potential collusion.



Impersonation

Validate that the student earning credit for an assessment is the same as the student doing the work. Identity verification tools check the authenticity of identification documents and use biometric information to continuously confirm the identity of the test taker.



Cheat sheets

Design an [open book exam](#). Assess students' ability to critically use the information in their reference materials. Browser lockdown tools, which inhibit navigating to other websites during a testing session, can check that students are only accessing permitted resources.



Test banks

If using publisher test banks or exam questions from previous years when designing your assessments, make unique edits so questions don't appear verbatim. Less-than-reputable websites make test banks readily available to students. Encourage original answers by including higher order thinking questions on exams.



Electronic devices

[Limit the time students have to take an exam](#) with an [assessment platform like Gradescope](#). The time allotted should be comfortable for students who know the material but not so generous that stressed students resort to electronic devices, like [smart watches and hidden earbuds](#), to find answers. Proctoring tools can flag anomalous behaviours and devices and [item analysis](#) can help detect patterns of misconduct.



Search engines and online applications

Create assessment questions that require students to explain their thinking — showing their work or attaching a brief video of their thought process using [Gradescope's](#) file upload or free response field. Further deter students from using search engines, AI-text generators or computational applications with browser lockdown tools.



Plagiarism

Uphold the originality of writing and computer code assessments by providing formative feedback and support. [Turnitin Draft Coach](#) utilises a [formative approach](#) and an [advanced integrity tool like Turnitin Originality](#) can check for text and code similarity and address contract cheating and deliberate text manipulations designed to bypass plagiarism checkers.



Stolen exams

Practice [good cyber hygiene](#)—set strong passwords, change them regularly, and store your assessments behind your institution's secure firewall—to safeguard your course and assessment materials. [Hacking into email accounts](#) or school servers is a drastic measure and the remote equivalent to obtaining paper exams via [questionable means](#) from a professor's desk.

Conclusion

Integrity is not just about preventing plagiarism or academic misconduct but also about upholding best pedagogical practices to enhance learning and teaching efficacy and to assure accurate measurement of student progress. These resources are a meaningful element of the prevention and mitigation of new and emerging trends in order to keep integrity at the core of our education journey.

The information from this eBook was adapted from the following blog posts and websites:

- [Why you need to know about emerging trends in academic integrity](#) (Audrey Campbell, 2022)
- [What are word spinners and what do they have to do with academic integrity?](#) (Christine Lee, 2021)
- [What are online test banks and what do they have to do with academic integrity?](#) (Audrey Campbell, 2021)
- [What are electronic cheating devices and what do they have to do with academic integrity?](#) (Christine Lee, 2021)
- [What is source code plagiarism and what does it have to do with academic integrity?](#) (Christine Lee, 2021)
- [What is self-plagiarism and what does it have to do with academic integrity?](#) (Christine Lee, 2021)
- [What is self-citation and what does it have to do with academic integrity?](#) (Christine Lee, 2021)
- [What is contract cheating? What does it have to do with academic integrity?](#) (Christine Lee, 2021)
- [Delivering remote assessments with integrity](#) (Turnitin, 2021)



The new standard in academic integrity



Originality

Turnitin Originality rises above basic text similarity checking to provide every institution a new standard in academic integrity. With a solution designed to constantly address emerging trends in misconduct and help students, instructors and administrators keep integrity at the core of the work they do, institutions can help ensure that students stay on a positive and successful academic path.

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