



Supporting Academic Integrity

Practice Guide



What is our approach to academic integrity at Notre Dame?

Ensuring high standards of academic integrity at any institution rests on two pillars. The first is a values-led approach to educating our students in what constitutes ethical academic behaviour ([Sefcik, Striepe and Yorke, 2019](#)). The second is having robust detection measures and sanctions. Our [Staff Academic Integrity Policy](#) and [Procedures](#) cover both of these pillars.

The other important piece of the puzzle is that academic integrity is everyone's business, and that means that it is the business of the University, Faculty and staff, to teach and ensure students meet academic standards.

What can I do to encourage academic integrity in my students?

1. Communicate with your students

Students are more likely to breach academic integrity if they are dissatisfied with their teaching and learning environment ([Bretag, et al., 2019](#)).

- Make your expectations clear.
- Talk about the importance of academic integrity.
- If you are delivering a first year course, explicitly teach academic integrity.
- Make sure that students understand the assessment tasks.
- Make sure students have all the skills and tools that they need to complete assessment tasks in the time given.

- Consider notifying students that you may request drafts of their work, or ask them to be ready to answer questions on their assessment if you are not satisfied that the work was completed by them.
- Make it easy for students to seek support from within Notre Dame rather than from outside sources if they run into difficulties. Students are inundated on social media with offers of ‘editing help’ (often essay mills), so give them plenty of opportunities to ‘knock on your door’ instead.

2. Consider your assessment design

We now know that there is no assessment design that is fool proof against breaches of academic integrity (Bretag et al., 2019 B). The five types of assessment tasks **least likely** to be outsourced are:

- Reflection on practicum/work integrated learning.
- Viva Voce (verbal).
- Personalised and unique.
- In class.
- Authentic.

(Adopted from Figure 1 in [Bretag et al, 2019 B, p680](#))

Most likely to be outsourced are tasks with a short turnaround time, or tasks that are heavily weighted.

It’s worth noting that exams do not ensure academic integrity. If you need some extra help, consider the following:

- If you’d like some guidance on re-designing your assessment tasks, please [get in touch with the LTO](#).
- If you are a coordinator of a first year foundation and/or gateway course use the Academic Integrity Rubric that uses a growth model approach to teach academic integrity (guidelines on its use are available [here](#). You’ll find it in the course outline template.
- Consider using the Academic Integrity Rubric even if you don’t teach a foundation course.

3. Model ethical behaviour

In preparing your course content, always correctly reference your sources for all content (including images) and use the library’s [Copyright Guides](#) to make sure you are sticking to the rules, and being a good role model.

How do I recognise a breach in academic integrity?

1. Use the procedure

Notre Dame’s new [Procedure for Managing Breaches of Academic Integrity](#) outlines what constitutes different levels of a breaches in academic integrity. Make yourself familiar with it.

2. Understand contract cheating

An emerging threat to academic integrity is contract cheating. Contract cheating occurs when a student submits work that is not theirs, but instead they have had the work produced by someone else (not necessarily with payment involved).

You can teach assessors by outsourcing one of your assessments and have the assessors mark a mixed batch of student authored assessments and contracted assessments, and workshopping the indicators by which assessors identified the fake samples ([Dawson, Sutherland-Smith, 2019](#)).

A less labour intensive way is to look for irregularities, such as misrepresented or inappropriate bibliographic data, very general text that does not address the assessment criteria, or irrelevant material ([Rogerson, 2017](#)).

3. Turnitin

A Turnitin similarity report can give you an indication of what sources your students have used in putting together a text-based assessment task. A high score is not necessarily cause for concern. The [guide for students](#) on interpreting the originality report is a useful place to start understanding this tool.

How do I use Turnitin to educate my students about academic integrity?

Turnitin is text matching software that is available through your Blackboard course. You can set up a Turnitin assignment so that students may submit a draft of their assessment. This allows students to see the similarity report giving them immediate feedback on their referencing and paraphrasing. Students can then improve their work by the time they submit the final version of their assessment. [Click here](#) for a video on using Turnitin for formative assessment in this way. You can also give students a [guide for students](#) on interpreting the originality report.

Further information

The LTO has developed a [micro module](#) which provides more in-depth information regarding academic integrity including theory and practical activities and strategies.

References

Bretag, T., Harper, R., Burton, M., Ellis, C., Newton, P., Rozenberg, P., Saddiqui, S., and van Haeringen, K. (2019). Contract cheating: A survey of Australian university students Routledge. doi:10.1080/03075079.2018.1462788

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Dawson, P., and Sutherland-Smith, W. (2019). Can training improve marker accuracy at detecting contract cheating? A multi-disciplinary pre-post study Routledge. doi:10.1080/02602938.2018.1531109

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Sefcik, L., Striepe, M., and Yorke, J. (2020). Mapping the landscape of academic integrity education programs: What approaches are effective? Routledge. doi:10.1080/02602938.2019.1604942