

## Supporting the Pivot Online: Academic Integrity Initiatives at University of Waterloo

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As the University of Waterloo (UW) transitioned to online learning during the pandemic, several challenges emerged. Instructors had to rapidly pivot their courses to online delivery, many without previous experience, and students struggled to adapt to learning online. Extra pressures related to the pandemic, such as illness, financial instability, and mental health, affected the learning experience. However, the UW campus community worked hard to develop resources to support online teaching and learning and support a culture of academic integrity in a period of instability. Academic misconduct increased at institutions across the world, but more importantly, it brought academic integrity to the forefront of conversations. At UW, it led to the development of new academic integrity resources and the leveraging of existing resources.

Instructors were keen for guidance on how to promote academic integrity in online assessments. Although UW instructors have access to e-proctoring software, it is used by a very small percentage of instructors. Instead, the Office of Academic Integrity (OAI) encouraged instructors to use alternative assessment strategies and promoted best practices that help to reduce academic misconduct. Research shows that strategies such as low-stakes, frequent assessments, authentic assessments, and engaging students to create a positive instructor-student relationship can help reduce academic misconduct (Bretag et al., 2019). To guide instructors, the OAI, Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE), and Centre for Extended Learning (CEL) created and shared a tip sheet: “Academic Integrity in Online Exams Written During a Pandemic” (OAI, 2020), which outlines several tips related to prevention and assessment. Additionally, the OAI hosted a webinar on “Navigating Academic Integrity Issues in Online Teaching and Learning” (OAI, 2020), which featured a panel of UW Associate Deans, instructors and students who shared academic integrity best practices and assessment strategies. James Skidmore, Associate Professor and Director, Waterloo Centre for German Studies, in collaboration with CTE and CEL, also hosted webinars on “Reducing Cheating Online” and “Fostering Student Engagement Online” (Skidmore, 2020; 2020) to guide instructors in creating effective assessments and rich online learning experiences.

The above resources also emphasized the importance of clarifying expectations for each assessment, such as permitted and unauthorized aids, collaboration, and citation. To aid instructors in clarifying expectations online, an Associate Dean and the CTE created infographics

indicating permitted and unauthorized aids for instructors to use on assessments (OAI, 2020). Additionally, instructors were encouraged to ask students to sign academic integrity agreements (OAI, 2020) for assignments and tests which listed the instructor's expectations for the course element. Research shows that signing an academic integrity form in a non-proctored environment can decrease instances of cheating (Ely et al., 2014). Being explicit about expectations and asking students to acknowledge those expectations aims to create a sense of accountability in an online environment.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) were also identified as an important group to support. The OAI had a long-term plan to target TAs by offering centralized academic integrity training. The shift online pushed us to prepare a workshop that supports TAs in navigating academic integrity in online courses. The OAI, the CTE, and the Student Success Office (SSO) began offering the workshop "Academic Integrity for TAs". The workshop reviewed ways in which a TA could promote academic integrity within their role, with a focus on some of the challenges they may face in the online environment. Important takeaways for TAs included proactively connecting students to campus resources, encouraging students to contact the instructor or TA for help, and appropriate responses to academic misconduct.

In addition, first-year students participated in "Waterloo Ready", a web-based initiative lead by the SSO to onboard students before they started the Fall Term, connect them to resources, and familiarize them with online learning. A module in Waterloo Ready, called "Academic Preparedness", centered on academic integrity. Students took a quiz on academic integrity to identify any knowledge gaps as they transitioned from high school to post-secondary. After completing the quiz, students reviewed "Academic Integrity for Students" (OAI, 2020), which breaks down expectations according to the six fundamental values of academic integrity from the International Center for Academic Integrity (2014). Students also completed an assignment, using resources from the OAI, the Writing and Communication Centre, and the Library, which gave students the opportunity to practice their skills before they began their studies, allowing them to identify areas for improvement and proactively connect with campus resources.

Although the pandemic has brought academic integrity to the forefront, a challenge when creating resources is ensuring they are used. The OAI has been actively identifying new ways to connect our campus community to these resources. For example, the OAI created an "Instructor Resource Repository" in our learning management system which allows instructors to easily access and implement our resources into their online courses. Additionally, the OAI has done frequent presentations online to students to bring them up to speed on academic integrity expectations and connect them with campus resources. The OAI will continue to try to link our campus community with these resources to leverage and expand the important work that has already been done.

## References

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