

Faculty Development and Academic Integrity During Pandemic Times

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Since COVID-19 turned academia on its head in the spring of 2020, we were forced to take a step back and reflect on our current teaching practices, including course content, teaching strategies, and practice-based experiences. Some instructors focused on the use of technology, others debated the merits of synchronous versus asynchronous delivery, and many talked about the impact on students academically and personally. Although all of these were also a concern for us, academic integrity was at the forefront, igniting us to brainstorm what types of academic integrity conversations we would need to have with instructors in the upcoming months.

We noticed that instructors often defaulted to ‘how students will cheat in this environment’ or ‘how students will take advantage of this situation’ as common comments in conversations. Some of these conversations were no different than the ones we previously had with instructors about assessments. However, what we have seen has become a concern as authentic assessments are being passed over for multiple-choice exams to try and curtail any academic dishonesty resulting from students completing these exams at home. Applications, such as e-proctoring software, have been used by some instructors to try to stop any academic dishonesty from occurring. We have seen a significant increase in student stress levels related to being recorded in their homes on top of the uncertain COVID environment. Students have identified that their exams online have become taxing due to the use of e-proctoring software, limited time to write the exam (to prevent opportunities for cheating), and the sheer number of multiple-choice exams they are writing. Although academic integrity is a significant issue and should be considered in the context of all course assessments, we must not forget that our students are already under a considerable amount of stress, and further adding to this to control academic dishonesty may not be the best tactic for student success.

More than ever, instructors require professional development around formal assessments and how to continue to implement authentic assessments in an online environment in a way that minimizes the potential for cheating. However, trying to create professional development around academic integrity has also become a challenge in the ever-changing COVID environment. Instructors are feverishly trying to transition their courses online, looking for alternative

practice-based experiences, and creating new online assessments, all the while concerned about the integrity of their exams. We hear that instructors are exhausted and have admittedly noted that it is impossible to shift their existing evaluations online and consider switching to assessments that have a decreased chance of academic integrity violations, such as multiple-choice exams using an online proctoring application. Although numerous conversations have occurred at all levels within our institution around preventing academic dishonesty within the online environment, more questions than answers arise. There is more work to do for the foreseeable future as we continue to learn how to uphold academic integrity in online environments. As academic integrity researchers delve into this topic, we must also ask which types of authentic assessments best support student learning versus the capabilities of these assessments to cultivate a culture of academic integrity online.