

# Academic Integrity

## *Promoting genuine learning in courses at York University*

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<[www.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/core/issue/view/198](http://www.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/core/issue/view/198)>.

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**Academic Integrity @ York**

**<[www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity)>**

## *York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty*

York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty defines and clarifies the University's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of academic honesty. In particular, the policy:

- Recognizes the general responsibilities of all faculty members to foster acceptable standards of academic conduct and of students to be mindful and abide by such standards
- Defines the types of conduct that are regarded as academic offences, including plagiarism, cheating, impersonation, aiding and abetting and other forms of academic misconduct
- Defines the penalties that can be given to a student who is found to have committed plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct
- Outlines the procedures for dealing with students who are accused of violating the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty

The full policy can be found at:

[www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/)

### For additional information and ideas on promoting academic integrity see:

Brown, James. "Plagiarism and Student Acculturation: Strangers in the Strange Lands of our Disciplines." *Voices from the Classroom: Reflections on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Ed. Janice Newton et al. Toronto ON: Garamond Press, 2001. 166-170. Revised August 2006

Carroll, Jude and Appleton, Jon. *Plagiarism: A Good Practice Guide*. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University, 2001. 10 Jun 2007 <[www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded\\_documents/brookes.pdf](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/brookes.pdf)>.

Ehrlich, Heyward. *Plagiarism and Anti-Plagiarism*. Rutgers University-Newark, 2000. 10 Jun 2007 <[newark.rutgers.edu/~ehrich/plagiarism598.html](http://newark.rutgers.edu/~ehrich/plagiarism598.html)>.

Harris, Robert. *The Plagiarism Handbook: Strategies for Preventing, Detecting and Dealing with Plagiarism*. Los Angeles, CA: Pycrack Publishing, 2001. <[www.antiplagiarism.com](http://www.antiplagiarism.com)>.

McCabe, Don. *New CAI Research*. 2005. Centre for Academic Integrity, Duke University. 10 Jun 2007 <[www.academicintegrity.org/cai\\_research.asp](http://www.academicintegrity.org/cai_research.asp)>.

McKenzie, Jamie. "The New Plagiarism: Seven Antidotes to Prevent Highway Robbery in an Electronic Age." *From Now On: The Educational Technology Journal* 7.8 (May 1998). 10 Jun 2007 <[www.fno.org/may98/cov98may.html](http://www.fno.org/may98/cov98may.html)>.

Newton, Janice. "Plagiarism and the Challenge of Essay Writing: Learning from our Students." *Voices from the Classroom: Reflections on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Ed. Janice Newton et al. Toronto ON: Garamond Press, 2001. 171-176.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

### Promoting Genuine Learning in Your Courses

Academic integrity is an issue of increasing concern on university campuses. Motivated by worries about the behaviour of some students in their academic work – from those who inadvertently present ideas without attribution to those who intentionally download papers from the Internet – many campuses are looking for new ways to maintain and enhance academic integrity.

#### Why do students cheat?

For instructors, the process of engaging with ideas and being informed by other people's ideas is central to the academic enterprise. The tests and assignments they use are ways to give students opportunities to experience this process. For many students, however, the tests and assignments are simply tasks that need to be completed in order to move further along the path toward their degree. Values of academic integrity, genuine learning and honest effort are for instructors fundamental to this work, but to some students there may be less of a direct connection between such concepts and the work they are doing in their courses.

Students might be tempted to cheat and plagiarize for a variety of reasons, including:

**It's a big gray area** – For some students, cheating and plagiarism is a big gray area; it might be clear to them that copying a full paper from the Internet is wrong, but they might think it's okay to cut and paste small sections without attribution. Others just don't understand citation practices well enough to know when they are plagiarizing. Still others think that by cheating, they are simply making good use of available resources, or they might have heard about peers getting away with cheating and so try to do the same.

**But I just need the "B"** – Students are sometimes tempted to cheat because the characteristics of the course foster a surface rather than deep approach to learning (e.g., courses with a heavy workload, or those with assessment methods that centre on memorization). Others might perceive the instruction/course/program as being of poor quality and work to minimize the effort they put into it.

**It's no big deal** – Some students don't expect to get caught. And if they do get caught, they don't expect the penalty to be severe.

**Learning is a chore** – Some students fail to appreciate the intrinsic value of learning, researching and writing, and perceive their assignments as a burden, and academic integrity as an added burden. Students who lack effective academic skills in research, studying, note taking and time management may be tempted to cheat as way of coping with the demands of the course.

## What Can We Do To Promote Academic Integrity?

In dealing with cheating and plagiarism, there are four main areas of consideration: education, prevention, detection, and investigation.

**EDUCATION** Help students understand what academic integrity is all about, the standards of conduct that apply to all academic work and are promulgated in York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, and the kinds of referencing and citation practices that you expect students to follow.



**PREVENTION** Structure tests and assignments to reduce incidents of cheating and plagiarism by students. The Academic Integrity @ York web site offers a wide range of practical strategies that instructors can use – when designing courses, when teaching in the laboratory and studio environments, and when structuring examinations, tests and written assignments.



**DETECTION** Be alert for clues that indicate cheating or plagiarism (e.g., changes in writing quality, style, expression and sentence structure), check out essay services on the web for papers that might be relevant to the assignment, use Internet search engines, such as Google, to trace a suspicious phrase back to the original source, or use an online detection service, such as *Turnitin.com*.



**INVESTIGATION** In the event that a suspicion of academic dishonesty arises it is expected that it be treated as a serious offence. York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty can provide helpful guidance to instructors for investigating and dealing with cases of academic dishonesty. These procedures may be supplemented by Faculty procedures, and instructors are advised to consult the appropriate Faculty offices for further clarification.



Members of the Working Group on Academic Integrity @ York are available for advice and assistance in promoting academic integrity in courses and programs and to help you deal with any concerns that may arise. Feel free to contact any member directly: Vivienne Monty (Chair), Cherie Bova, Mora Campbell, Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt, Robert Kenedy, Kim Michasiw, Rod Webb, Paula Wilson, and Belarie Zatzman.

## Practical Strategies To Promote Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity @ York web site offers a range of ideas and strategies to help instructors promote academic integrity in their courses, such as the following:

- **Course and curriculum design:** Kim Michasiw in English urges instructors to ensure variety and change in their course by creating circumstances where instructors are seen by students to be doing new work or to be engaging with old work in new ways – by changing lectures, assignments and exams, cycling instructors in core courses, and changing key texts where possible and secondary readings.
- **Honour codes in the classroom:** James Brown, formerly at Calumet College, uses a class “honour code” as a way of helping students understand and commit to principles of academic integrity. His strategy involves introducing a discussion with students on the central values involved in the academic work they will be doing in the course, linking the values to academic honesty, and working to incorporate a commitment to these values as a class “code of conduct.”
- **Examinations:** George O'Brien, Mathematics and Statistics, offers a variety of suggestions for minimizing cheating in exams. For example, when marking exams, he suggests that drawing lines in coloured ink around the written material or along the bottom part of the students' answers so that it would be difficult for new material to be added and submitted for re-grade.
- **Laboratories:** Paula Wilson in Biology offers different strategies to reduce academic dishonesty in the lab environment, such as having students write up their lab reports in class by using “answer sheets,” changing the parameters of the lab from year to year or between groups of students in the same class, providing clear guidelines for collaborative work, having a portion of the grade come from lab quizzes and exams written in a non-collaborative setting, or having students write a post-report or “meta-learning essay.”
- **Studios:** Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt in Dance suggests a number of strategies to encourage academic integrity, such as working to evaluate the ongoing process of students in addition to the final product. To help students identify their own ideas in response to the work of others, she suggests having them create research notes for submission along with the assignment that use two columns, one headed “This scholar/peer says...”, and the other headed “I think...”

A full description of these and other strategies can be found at the Academic Integrity @ York web site <[www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/)>

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES

### Academic Integrity @ York Web Site

<[www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity)>

Academic Integrity @ York is a web site that offers a series of practical resources to promote academic integrity and prevent and discourage plagiarism and other forms of cheating. The site contains four sections:

**For Faculty** – The faculty section offers techniques and methodologies to aid in the design of courses and course materials to discourage or prevent plagiarism and other inappropriate practices

**For TAs** – The TA section provides approaches and strategies for promoting good academic practice in tutorials, labs and studios, and dealing with cheating behaviours in marking and examinations

**For Students** – This section includes resources to help students learn to avoid plagiarism, such as using proper citation methods, writing and research resources and more

**General materials** – This section offers links to general resources on academic integrity for faculty and administrators

The web site is a work in progress and suggestions for additional material or modifications are always welcome. This will ensure a helpful and vigorous site, one that is most useful for instructors and students to maintain the highest academic standards in courses.

### Online Tutorial for Students on Academic Integrity

<[www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic\\_integrity/](http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/)>

York's Academic Integrity Tutorial is an online module designed to promote the skills that support academic integrity and to help students understand how it applies in their school work. In approximately 30 minutes, students can navigate their way through the site to explore issues of plagiarism and how it is detected and dealt with through the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. The tutorial features several case studies, each of which is accompanied by positive strategies students can use to improve their academic efforts and avoid committing an academic offense.



The tutorial includes an online quiz where students can gauge how well they understand issues related to plagiarism and academic integrity at York. Students can print off the results of their quiz and hand it in to their instructor to verify their completion of the module.

This tutorial is available for instructors to use in their courses to supplement the instruction that they already provide on the subject of plagiarism and cheating. It is not imagined that this tutorial will replace what instructors are doing now to educate students in this area; rather, it is hoped that the tutorial will complement these activities and promote a deeper understanding of the issues.

### Library Support for Academic Integrity

Librarians work in partnership with instructors to support student learning, teach proper research skills, and help in preventing potential instances of plagiarism. Services include:

- Library assignment consultation
- Orientations and specialized workshops for courses on library research and the importance of academic integrity
- Library research seminars for undergraduate and graduate students
- Online help for students on library research, including the online tutorial, "Library Research Roadmap"
- Ask a Librarian, live chat reference service

For further information see <[www.library.yorku.ca/](http://www.library.yorku.ca/)>

### Turnitin.com - A Plagiarism Detection Service

<[www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/faculty/TurnitinFaculty.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity/faculty/TurnitinFaculty.htm)>.

York subscribes to *Turnitin.com*, a commercial Internet-based search service designed to detect incidents of plagiarism in written work. This service is available to all full and part-time York faculty as part of a larger strategy to enhance academic integrity in courses at York. Instructors can obtain *Turnitin* accounts through <[accounts@yorku.ca](mailto:accounts@yorku.ca)>.

#### How *Turnitin* works:

1. Students submit their papers into a "drop box" at the *Turnitin.com* web site
2. *Turnitin.com* creates a "digital fingerprint" of the document
3. The "fingerprint" is then cross-referenced against *Turnitin.com*'s local database
4. At the same time, automated web crawlers search the Internet for possible matches on public web sites, academic web sites, online paper mills and various proprietary databases
5. A custom, colour-coded "originality report," complete with source links, is created for each paper and saved in the instructor's *Turnitin* account
6. The instructor can then review the "originality report" and independently determine if the submitted work constitutes a violation of York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty, and whether to proceed with a charge

Information about *Turnitin* can be found at <[www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)>.

Information along with detailed questions and answers about using *Turnitin.com* at York can be found at the Academic Integrity @ York web site.

## Discouraging Plagiarism in Assignment Design

Below are some ideas for discouraging plagiarism in assignment design:

- In general, make assignments specific and unique so that students are less likely to find and submit something already written
- Use assignment topics that have a narrow slant or unusual angle
- Require work to be submitted first in draft form
- Have students prepare an annotated bibliography
- Have students prepare their papers for an audience other than yourself: classmates, a decision-making body, etc.
- Require the use of specific sources for your assignments, e.g., a certain number of recent sources, web sites, journal articles, surveys, interviews, etc. (Harris 54)
- Ask students to incorporate material from your lecture or a class discussion into their assignments
- On the assignment due date, have students write an in-class essay about what they learned from the assignment (Harris, 2001)
- Assess the process, how the student worked through the assignment, as well as the product (Carroll & Appleton, 2001)
- Design assignments that draw on the specific local conditions of the course or a current issue or event
- Design assignments that involve modes of writing other than argument and exposition, such as explanations, problem-solving, choices and decision-making (McKenzie, 1998)
- Ask students to study a topic and present information leading to a decision or recommendation (McKenzie, 1998)
- Ask students to explain why something didn't happen, rather than why something did (McKenzie, 1998)
- Ask students to assess or compare more than one idea, outcome or application (Carroll & Jude, 2001)
- Provide students with good resources and guidelines on essay writing and citation practices for referencing electronic and print sources

Further details on these and many other ideas can be found in the reference list on page 2 and on the Academic Integrity @ York web site.

Allen Koretsky in English advises his students that theoretically he does not consider any submitted essay to be complete unless his students can explain and defend any part of their essay: an idea, phrase, word, or the essay as a whole. (See Academic Essays on the Academic Integrity @ York web site)