FOSTERING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education courses, whether they are fully online or blended, pose new challenges in maintaining academic integrity for both faculty and students. Specifically, the ease of access provides a persistent temptation for students to access the work of others without providing appropriate attribution, or to search for an exam answer during a closed-book assessment. It is thus our shared responsibility to provide students with clear, unambiguous guidelines regarding the academic unit and university expectations for ethical behavior in the digital environment.

This document contains information and strategies to foster ethical behavior and academic integrity within online and blended courses. It is divided into two sections. The first section lists unique scenarios that a faculty member teaching an online class may encounter. The second section includes various strategies for effective online content delivery. As you evaluate each section you are encouraged to incorporate relevant suggestions drawn from the experiences of previous instructors and incorporate their solutions into your course materials.

**Section 1: Scenarios Faculty Teaching Online May Encounter**

Some issues of academic integrity are straightforward and can be easily recognized as personal or systemic areas in need of improvement. Others are grey areas which must be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Blatant violations of academic integrity such as the following are typically easy to identify. Consider the following scenarios:

* Posting an assignment or paper in public chat rooms, classrooms, or websites
* Cutting and inserting materials from the Internet, other sources, or other individuals into assignments without proper citations
* Selling papers or assignments to other students
* Obtaining term papers from others or having others write assignments
* Reusing work completed for another course and submitting it as an original contribution
* Using unauthorized technology during a test, exam, or assessment
* Forging a note from a medical office or state agency, or otherwise creating a document to receive an excused absence from class
* Facilitating or promoting the sale of course materials such as lecture notes, PowerPoints, exam prep materials and the like through an online vendor such as *StudySoup*.
* Paying web services or individuals in the home or community to complete all course assignments for students.

**Section 2: Strategies To Foster Academic Integrity**

Strategy #1: Define Academic Integrity for your Students.

Define the term Academic Integrity and why it is important in your class. Consider a letter to your students.

Course Title

Course Number

Date

Dear Students,

Each semester students struggle to understand their role in maintaining academic integrity. This struggle likely occurs because academic integrity means different things to different people. Discussions of integrity generally focus on plagiarism or cheating, but there is more. Academic integrity includes the character traits of respect, truth, fairness, and honesty: Respecting your own learning and that of others, being truthful and fair in your practices, and being honest with your peers and yourself. These behaviors are expected both from faculty members in their academic endeavors and from students in all their academic pursuits in and out of class.

Academic Integrity involves taking pride in your individual learning. While there are specific University policies on Academic Honesty (located in the ECU Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs) and in the class syllabus, it is your individual responsibility to make a conscious decision to incorporate the core values and behaviors fostering academic integrity into your university experience. In the same way that successful plagiarism and cheating on assignments and exams take practice, so too does the development of your personal academic integrity. Your daily practice of completing your assignments according to the course instructions, using resources appropriately, providing appropriate attribution, and working independently on tests and exams requires discipline and effort. These daily practices will increase your academic skill, your self-confidence and ultimately your own academic integrity.

To nurture the growth of ethical values and to develop professional integrity, we must incorporate them into our daily activities. As your instructor, I am prepared to help you fully develop your academic integrity by respecting your thoughts and ideas, giving you every opportunity to ask questions, and helping you prepare for assignments and exams. I will treat you fairly and give you honest, timely feedback to help you master the learning objectives defined for the course. In turn, you must participate in the course with an open mind and be prepared to make the most of these learning opportunities by doing your own work. You should read and evaluate the assigned course materials and develop well-reasoned opinions on the topic of the day, think critically about the upcoming assignments, and be prepared to share your unique perspectives and ideas in the course discussions. Such practices will promote your academic growth and foster the development of your academic integrity because these behaviors will demonstrate your respect for learning, your ability to uphold truthful and fair academic practices, and your desire to promote honest discussion of the course material. As a result, you will not feel pressured to violate the course guidelines when discussions roll around to cheating and plagiarism because you will have practiced and nurtured your academic integrity.

Sincerely,

Professor’s Name

<http://www.ecu.edu/osrr/faculty_staff-process.cfm>(Academic Integrity process)

<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/manual.pdf>(Faculty Manual)

Suggestions for use:

Feel free to personalize this letter and email it to your students. You may want to include the letter in your syllabus and post it in the Course Information area of Blackboard. You can even set an Adaptive Release requirement in Blackboard so that your students must click to indicate that they reviewed the letter before opening the course for the semester.

Strategy #2: Include Citation Specifics in your Course Syllabus.

The following statements can be included in your syllabus to provide guidance to students regarding plagiarism:

How do you cite sources?

There are many different citation styles. In this course we use [indicate citation style]. Joyner Library provides links to citation style guides, examples of how to cite various types of materials, and online citation generators in the [Citation Guide](http://libguides.ecu.edu/citation) found in ECU Libraries’ [Research Guides](http://libguides.ecu.edu/). One of the best citation generators is the [KnightCite Citation Service.](http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/index.php)Choose a resource type, complete a brief online form with the citation information and the Citation Service will create the citation. You can then copy and paste the citation into your document

What is plagiarism and how can you avoid it?

The ECU Student Handbook defines plagiarism as "copying the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing same as one’s original work." Become familiar with the “[How Do I Avoid Plagiarism](http://www.slideshare.net/refstud/plagiarism-4902902)” web page on the Joyner Library website. The tips include placing quotation marks around direct quotes, paraphrasing your source information, and always citing your sources. Work through one of the plagiarism tutorials listed on the “How Do I Avoid Plagiarism” page to make sure you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

Strategy #3: Make Use of Library Resources on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism.

Visit [Tutorials Page](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-lib/research/Tutorials.cfm): [Academic Integrity](http://media.lib.ecu.edu/libguides/tutorial/academicintegrity/story_html5.html) & [Plagiarism](http://media.lib.ecu.edu/libguides/tutorial/plagiarism/story.html) or [Library 101: Introduction to Research](http://libguides.ecu.edu/c.php?g=17365&p=1016388) guide for undergraduate students. Browse [subject specific research guides](http://libguides.ecu.edu/) pertaining to your discipline (see the “Citation” tab). Example: [Film Research Guide](http://libguides.ecu.edu/c.php?g=17499&p=98366).

Other resources:

The ECU Writing Program: [Student resources – plagiarism](http://libguides.ecu.edu/c.php?g=543684&p=5213435) also [Faculty resources - plagiarism](http://libguides.ecu.edu/c.php?g=550846&p=4640924)

Faculty can request to embed into their course sites a module on both academic integrity and plagiarism from Joyner’s [Instructional Services web page](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-lib/reference/instruction.cfm).  The module includes a pre-test and post-test, brief activities on academic integrity, plagiarism and citations, and brief quizzes to check for understanding (cc. 30 minutes).

Strategy #4: Use Course Management Strategies: Safe Assign Blackboard Tool at ECU / Plagiarism Software.

SafeAssign is an educational tool integrated with the Assignment tool in Blackboard. A deterrent from plagiarism, SafeAssign can help students identify how to properly attribute sources. For more information, visit the [Blackboard site.](http://blog.ecu.edu/sites/blackboard/faculty-support/) SafeAssign is most effective when it is used for written assignment to prevent students from copying from other sources or reusing work completed in other classes.

Respondus LockDown Browser (LDB) is a secure custom browser that locks down the online testing environment within Blackboard. Instructors have the option to require that LDB be used for any quizzes or exams to be taken online. LockDown Browser is a secure browser that students download to access their quizzes via LDB on their local computers. While taking a test, students lose the ability to take screenshots, access email, open a new window, access the Internet, etc.

Click [here](https://www.respondus.com/products/lockdown-browser/demos.shtml) to learn more about LDB from the instructor’s point of view.

Click [here](https://www.respondus.com/products/lockdown-browser/demos.shtml) to learn more about LDB from the students’ point of view.

If you copy your course from one semester to another, please follow the instructions below to synchronize your course with the SafeAssign database:

Go to the Control Panel

Click Course Tools, then SafeAssign

Click SafeAssignments Items

Click Synchronize this course

Click [Here](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_14/Instructor/100_Assignments/040_SafeAssign) for Instructor's Information about SafeAssign

Click [Here](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_14/Student/060_Assignments/040_SafeAssign) for Student's Information about SafeAssign

Strategy #5: Share a Distance Education Pledge with your Students.

FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THE STANDARDS OF EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY’S ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY MAY RESULT IN A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF EXPULSION FROM EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY.

* I will use only my own assigned/selected username and password when participating in online activities such as exams or assignments.
* I will use only materials permitted by my instructor while taking online exams.
* I will discuss only appropriate course materials and not exam content with other students.
* I will do my own work and will not share individual assignments with others according to my instructor’s requirements.
* I will footnote and cite materials according to my instructor’s citation preference. (Example APA, MLA)
* I will do my own work when taking exams and completing assignments.
* I will not share answers with other students during an exam (e.g. using an online communication tool to send/receive answers).
* I will not copy and or provide another student with test questions accessed during an exam.
* I will not purchase any academic papers and submit them as my own work.

Suggestions for use:

Post the Distance Education Student Pledge in your syllabus and the Course Information area in Blackboard. From time to time you may want to use the pledge as a Blackboard Announcement. The pledge is also a great resource to refer your students back to if you suspect an academic integrity issue.

Strategy #6: Institute a Test Policy for Online Test Takers.

Consider including a statement such as this:

Course Title

Course Number

Dear Student,

In order for all students to be assessed in the same manner, it is important that you use only materials allowed by your professor while completing this exam. Do not communicate with others (in person or by using instant messenger, email or any other type of communication devices and/or software) while taking this exam. Adhere to the Distance Education Student Pledge in Academic Integrity for Distance Education Students which states:

* I will do my own work when taking exams and completing assignments.
* I will not share answers with other students during an exam (e.g. using an online communication tool to send/receive answers).

By opening and submitting this exam, you are agreeing to adhere to these pledge statements. By opening and submitting this exam, you are also acknowledging that you understand and observe the Academic Integrity for Distance Education Students policy by not communicating with anyone or using prohibited materials while completing this exam. Violations of this policy will be strictly enforced.

FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THE STANDARDS OF EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY’S ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY MAY RESULT IN A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF EXPULSION FROM EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY.

Suggestions for use:

Include the test policy in your syllabus and Course Information area in Blackboard. You may also want to include the test policy as part of the test instructions. In Blackboard you can set the Review feature and require that your students click the Mark Review button to acknowledge that they have read and agree to adhere to your test policy.

Note on Proctoring:

For online graduate courses, it is recommended that you provide all exams through the UNC Proctoring Network (<http://online.northcarolina.edu/exams/overview.htm>). The Network promotes academic integrity by allowing for the completion of online exams via online (via ProctorU) or face-to-face proctoring. Most proctors charge a small fee for their services.

(Approved by the University Distance Education and Learning Technology Committee March 2018 to be linked in the *ECU Faculty Manual*, Part VI, [Section III. Distance Education Policies](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/part6section3.pdf).)