

Excellence *with* Integrity

University of California, San Diego

A Preferred Practice Series for Faculty

Ensuring Integrity in Testing

Honestly and fairly assessing student learning is one of the key roles of faculty. Without this fair and honest assessment, the University cannot fulfill its promise to society to provide meaningful and useful certifications of graduates' knowledge and abilities. Learning assessment is the bedrock upon which the

cover what faculty can do to help ensure integrity in the testing process. The philosophy behind these preferred practices is that people under stress and pressure (like in testing situations) can make bad ethical decisions. By implementing these practices, a faculty member can help create an ethical

"The best way to prevent a student from undermining integrity during an exam is to assess higher order thinking that cannot be easily and quickly accessed via technology"

knowledge economy is built.

Testing in the form of quizzes and exams continues to be the standard method for assessing student learning across the University. This could be why test cheating also continues to be one of the most highly occurring forms of academic integrity violations.

In this first edition of our Preferred Practice Series, we

classroom as well as minimize the risk and opportunity for bad ethical decision-making.

Preferred Practice #1: *Test Higher Order Thinking*

I posited in 2008 that academic integrity is not a conduct issue, but a teaching and learning issue because technology (primarily the internet) has changed our

The Preferred Practice Series



At UC San Diego, we do not simply want students to "excel" (an achievement often measured by GPAs, time to degree completion, awards, and honors). We want them to excel *with* their integrity intact.

The Excellence with Integrity Preferred Practice Series for Faculty is an initiative of the UC San Diego Academic Integrity Office to help faculty implement practices and strategies that will help UCSD students excel *with* integrity.

If you have ideas for a future Preferred Practice article, please send it along to integrity@ucsd.edu

relationship with information and knowledge, yet we still predominantly teach as we did in the pre-internet era. In other words, why do we continue to insist on testing memorization and regurgitation, when we can look up answers in 5 seconds or less on our cell phones?

The number one method for ensuring excellence with integrity in our testing process is to test higher order thinking skills – applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. These higher order skills can be tested in all types of exams (from multiple-choice to essay) and they can instantly reduce the likelihood of cheating because the students cannot easily and quickly look up the answers on their cell phones. The good news is that student test scores can even increase!

For more help on writing test questions that assess higher order thinking, see the resources section.

[Preferred Practice #2:](#) *Make Exam Standards Clear*

You can save yourself a lot of work if you are simply clear about what is, and isn't allowed, during your exams. And be clear on the consequences of violating

those standards. Put these standards and consequences in writing and distribute to students before the exam as well as in the exam room itself. For example, what are the authorized aids (e.g., formula sheet, calculator) allowed?

If there are any behaviors that threaten integrity but cannot always be considered cheating (e.g., talking during an exam when you cannot determine what is being discussed; using a cell phone when you can't determine the purpose of use), state that these behaviors are not allowed and anyone engaging in them will receive a 0 on the exam. As a professor, you are in your rights to establish classroom rules to which you can hold students accountable, without a report to a central administrative office (like the AI Office).

[Preferred Practice #3:](#) *Use Assigned Seating*

At UC San Diego, we have the tools to help you assign your students to seats, thereby preventing students from arranging to cheat off each other and enabling you to easily identify when there might be an exam proxy in your room.

Join the Academic Integrity Community in TritonED or find the links at our website.

[Preferred Practice #4:](#) *Check Student IDs*

It is an unfortunate truth that some of our students will arrange to have someone else take their quizzes or exams for them. These "exam proxies" normally have a fake UCSD ID that will present the enrolled student's name and PID, along with the photo of the test taker. Any faculty checking this ID against a name roster will thus not detect the exam fraud.

To help ensure integrity in the testing process, faculty should check student IDs against the photos on file with the Registrar's Office. To do this you'll need to pull up the pictures associated with your class list. You can print these or just have them on your computer at the exam for comparison with the ID.

If the test taker's photo does not match that on file, we suggest asking for an alternate form of ID (i.e., driver's license), calling the police (to indicate that there is a trespasser in your exam) and/or notating the fraudulent exam so that you can at least

report the enrolled student to the AI Office.

[Preferred Practice #5:](#)
Book a Sufficiently Sized Room

It is much easier to maintain exam integrity if your room is sufficiently sized to space students with one empty seat between them. This is much more difficult to do, however, during midterm time. If you plan ahead, you can book your midterm outside of normal class time and ask for a larger room (you need to do this before the class schedules are posted for registration purposes). You can also ask for a second room and divide the class into two rooms (make sure you have sufficient proctors to do this).

For finals, you can ask registrarscheduling@ucsd.edu for your exam to be held in the REC GYM or a bigger classroom. The benefits of the REC GYM is that you can easily check IDs while the exam is going on (because of the spacing of the tables and the chairs), and students are naturally spaced apart with sufficient desk space to be more comfortable while taking the exam.

[Preferred Practice #6:](#)
Use Alternate Versions of Exams

If you cannot book a larger or second room for your exams, you should create alternate versions of the exam to reduce the temptation and success of a student copying from a neighbor. These exams should be comparable, so it may just be changing the order of the exam questions or changing values within the exam questions (the options really depend on your discipline).

Eric Michelson, Physics, created a program to make it easy to create multiple versions of the exam. You can find more information about that at http://physics.ucsd.edu/~emic_hels/instructor_notes.pdf

We recommend printing the exams on different color paper so you can easily see that alternate versions are spread out as you intended (because some students will try to get the same version as their neighbor). Alternatively, if you use assigned seating, you can know which student is to receive which version and so you could have a rule that if the student submits an incorrect version, it won't be graded

[Preferred Practice #7:](#)
Distribute Blue Books & Scantrons

Consider asking students to submit, during the second week of the quarter, the number of blue books and/or scantrons they'll need for the entire quarter. You can then distribute these with the exams. This prevents students from hiding notes within their exam materials.

[Preferred Practice #8:](#)
Manage Bathroom Breaks

If you are still concerned about cheating during your testing process, then you might want to manage when and how students are excused for "bathroom breaks".

Our first preferred practice for longer exams (i.e., finals) is to divide the exam into 45 minute "chunks", providing a 15 minute break in between each chunk. Students would submit that portion of the exam before getting a break, so any talking or cell phone access in the bathroom wouldn't matter.

If breaking your test into sections isn't possible, then we prefer that you:

1. Allow only one student to the bathroom at a time
2. Require the student to sign in and out of the exam room

3. Require the student to leave his/her exam and personal belongings (including cell phone) in the exam room

Final Thoughts

It is important to remember that the testing environment is a naturally stress and pressure inducing situation. And, we know from years of social science research, that even “good people” can make bad ethical decisions when under stress and pressure. So, although we do not want to create a “police state” in which our students do not

cheat because they couldn't (both because we want to be educators and not police officers, but also because we need to prepare our students to make good ethical decisions even when they are under stress and pressure), we do want to create healthy ethical environments in which students feel that the integrity of their exams is protected against unfair practices.

If you implement the preferred practices, you will help to make cheating the exception and integrity the norm, but you will still likely detect a few cheating

incidents every year. When you do, it is critical that you identify the people who have violated our integrity standards and report them to the Academic Integrity Office so that we can follow-up in a way that leverages the unethical moment for learning and allows us to help contain cheating so that no one is able to graduate from UCSD by having cheated their way through.

You can easily report any integrity infractions you see by going to:

academicintegrity.ucsd.edu

If you have questions, please feel free to contact us at integrity@ucsd.edu or 858-822-2163 or in person in 301 University Center.

Resources & Useful Readings

Bertram Gallant, T. (2008). *Academic Integrity in the Twenty-First Century: A Teaching & Learning Imperative*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cheesman, K.L. (2009). Writing/using multiple-choice questions to assess higher order thinking. In T.R. Lord, D.P. French, & L.W. Crow's (EDs) *College Science Teachers Guide to Assessment* (pp. 35-42). Arlington, VA: National Science Teachers Association. Retrieved July 20th 2015 from <http://static.nsta.org/files/PB231Xweb.pdf>

Morrison, S., & Walsh Free, K. (2001). Writing multiple-choice test items that promote and measure critical thinking. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 40 (1), 17-24. Retrieved July 20th 2015 from <http://textos.pucp.edu.pe/pdf/3729.pdf>

Malamed, C. (n.d.) Writing multiple choice questions for higher order thinking. Retrieved July 20th 2015 from http://thelearningcoach.com/elearning_design/multiple-choice-questions/

Teaching & Learning Center, University of Oregon (n.d.) Writing multiple-choice questions that demand critical thinking. Retrieved July 20th, 2015 from <http://tep.uoregon.edu/resources/assessment/multiplechoicequestions/mc4critthink.html>