

Creating and Administering Examinations

Best Practices in Support of Academic Honesty

If we ignore academic dishonesty, we signal to students that we don't believe integrity is important. If we do believe it's important, the actions of all members of our community should express that value.

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Preventing student academic dishonesty begins before students lift their pens to answer the first test question. Statements in syllabi affirming the value of academic honesty and communicating the penalties for dishonesty lay crucial groundwork, as do class discussions. But careful exam creation, management, and proctoring are also essential. Here are some best practices to consider from several sources, including colleagues at Baruch.

Writing the Exam

- ▶ For multiple sections of the same course, create different exams for each section.
- ▶ Do not recycle exams from previous semesters. (Student groups often maintain files of old exams.)
- ▶ Keep exams safe. Destroy extra copies.
- ▶ For exams in rooms in which students cannot be seated apart, create multiple versions. Different versions on different colored paper discourage copying and allow easier monitoring.
- ▶ To prevent use of bluebooks prepared in advance, mark yours inconspicuously with a series of numbers that allow you to keep track of them. (You can mark them on the back, perhaps with an unusual ink color.)

Multiple Versions of Exams

When creating multiple versions—for single or multiple sections—try to ensure that they reflect similar levels of difficulty.

In Classes Leading Up to Exams

- ▶ Discuss exams with students in advance, indicating the importance of personal and academic integrity.
- ▶ Inform students of the rules in your classroom. *Examples:* No notes of any kind; writing on the desk is considered cheating; all electronic devices must be turned off and stowed; only approved calculators/dictionaries; students may not wear baseball caps, visors, or sunglasses (each is sometimes used for notes).
- ▶ Let students know that any suspected cheating will be reported to the dean of students, possibly resulting in course failure or College dismissal. (These consequences should also be mentioned in your syllabus.)
- ▶ Beware of e-mailed requests for copies of the exam from “colleagues.”

What We Do Makes a Difference

The literature on academic integrity clearly indicates that the number of students who cheat can be drastically reduced if faculty members clearly announce the rules in advance and monitor exams.

Before the Exam Begins

- ▶ Have students use restrooms *before* the exam begins.
- ▶ Seat students apart (when possible).
- ▶ Assign seats at random or separate students who usually sit together.
- ▶ In large classes, require students (when feasible) to show ID before seating them.

- ▶ Have students place personal belongings on the floor rather than on empty seats.
- ▶ Repeat the rules and walk around the room making sure that no notes, etc., are visible.
- ▶ Have students use pens, not pencils.
- ▶ Hand out only as many bluebooks and/or question sheets as needed (code as suggested above) and collect extras. To ensure that students do not substitute their own bluebooks, require them to write on only the lefthand pages or ask them to leave a certain number of pages blank at the beginning of their bluebooks.
- ▶ Supply—and later collect—all scratch paper.
- ▶ Have students sign a statement on each exam attesting to their honesty and recognition of the consequences of dishonesty.

A Sample Honesty Statement

By my signature below, I affirm that during this exam I will neither give assistance to nor receive assistance from anyone and that I will not use any unauthorized notes or other aids. I am fully aware of the consequences of my behavior with respect to academic dishonesty.

Print Your Name

Signature

During the Exam

- ▶ Circulate around the room; linger in the back.
- ▶ Make sure any other proctor knows what to look for and decide who will cover which part of the room.
- ▶ Count those present and make certain that the number matches the number of exams.

“I Trust My Students (and Hate Proctoring).”

Students are clear about this: Not proctoring suggests that the instructor doesn't care about cheating. Some students feel encouraged to cheat, and honest students feel punished for not cheating. Although proctoring can be awkward, helping to ensure that our assessments of learning are as valid as possible is a vital part of our mission.

If You Suspect Cheating

- ▶ If another proctor is present, confirm the suspicion.
- ▶ If a student seems to be getting information from another's exam, discreetly reseal the student. Note the time and circumstances of your observation(s) and the student's location in the classroom (helpful when comparing exams).
- ▶ If a student attempts to use unauthorized materials, remove the materials as inconspicuously as possible.
- ▶ Allow the student to complete the exam.
- ▶ Remember, your suspicions may be mistaken. Talk privately with the student afterward. Do not conclude anything without hearing the student's side.
- ▶ Follow these guidelines and report any incident to the Office of the Dean of Students within 7 business days by calling the office or by filing the “report form” available in *The Faculty Handbook*. (Not reporting such incidents encourages students to repeat them in other classes. When the College is aware of multiple offenses, sanctions can be severe.)

“Whom Do I Call?”

You may report incidents of suspected cheating to the Office of the Dean of Students by calling Ron Aaron (646-312-4577) or Carl Kirschner (646-312-4578).

When the Exam Is Over

- ▶ Require students to hand in their exams and question sheets in an orderly fashion. The question sheet can state that if it is not signed and returned the student will lose partial (or full) credit. Require students to sign an attendance sheet when they return their materials. (These procedures help ensure that exam copies aren't circulated.)
- ▶ Each question sheet and booklet can be numbered. If the exam is multiple choice, each student may be asked to enter this number onto the Scantron form (if used).

“I’m Not a Policeman!”

These suggestions can be handled with sensitivity and good humor; they need not create a tense, suspicious atmosphere. The goal is fairness.

With comments about this brochure or suggestions for improvements, please contact Associate Provost Dennis Slavin (212-802-2805 or dennis_slavin@baruch.cuny.edu).