Academic Integrity Guide for Hendrix Faculty

Brent Yorgey

revision 2, August 26, 2023

Contents

Quick Reference

- Questions? Unsure what to do? Don't hesitate to reach out to me (or the current chair of the committee), via whichever means you are most comfortable with:
  - Email/Teams: `yorgey@hendrix.edu`
  - Phone: x1377
  - Office: MC Reynolds 310, `http://byorgey.youcanbook.me/`
- To report an academic integrity violation, use the form found on the Hendrix webpage under Faculty/Staff > Faculty Resources > Faculty Committees > Academic Integrity.
- Academic integrity process cheat sheet!
  - Fill out form
  - Meet with student
  - Student has two days to decide whether to sign the form
  - Send the (signed or unsigned) form + supporting evidence to the chair of the academic integrity committee
    - Electronic is preferred but a physical form is OK too
  - If the student signed the form, the form is filed and a letter is sent to the student and cc'd to you, ending the process.
  - Otherwise, the chair will be in touch about scheduling a conference.

Why do students cheat?

This question is worth some serious thought, because the way we answer it—even subconsciously—has a big impact on the way we respond to incidents of cheating and design our courses. Hint: it's not a generational moral failing; studies show that students today cheat at about the same rate as students in past decades. Typically, students cheat because it is in some sense a rational response to a combination of factors, such as pressure to get good grades, low intrinsic motivation, lack of confidence in their ability to be successful, and easy access to materials or means to enable cheating. If you'd like to learn more, I highly recommend James Lang's book *Cheating Lessons*[1].

[1] J.M. Lang (2013). *Cheating Lessons: Learning from Academic Dishonesty*. Harvard University Press. ISBN: 9780674727304

Best Practices

Before you even reach the point of having to deal with academic dishonesty, it's worth considering some simple things you can do to help reduce incentives and opportunities for cheating.

- Be very clear in your syllabus and on individual assignments what is allowed and what is not. This may or may not make much difference in terms of convincing students not to cheat, but it certainly makes it much harder for them to argue that they didn't know what was expected or appropriate.
- Talk about academic integrity as a positive expectation (being generous in giving credit to others and grateful for their help; upholding community standards and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to learn and do their best), rather than just a negative ("don't cheat or else").
- If you teach first-year students, consider spending some class time explicitly going over your expectations regarding academic integrity. Do not assume it is "obvious" or that they already learned the proper standards in high school.
- Use plagiarism detection software such as turnitin.[2]
- Consider adopting assignments and grading practices that reduce incentives for cheating. In fact, **these are often the types of assignments and grading practices that lead to the best learning outcomes**.[3] Some examples include:
  - Use multiple, low-stakes assessments (*e.g.* small quizzes) in place of a single, high-stakes assessment (*e.g.* a big exam).
  - Scaffold big, high-stakes assignments with multiple required stages and checkpoints.

[2] `https://www.turnitin.com/`

[3] J.M. Lang (2013). *Cheating Lessons: Learning from Academic Dishonesty*. Harvard University Press. ISBN: 9780674727304

- Build intrinsic motivation[4] for assignments by, for example:
  - giving authentic ("real-world") assignments and assessments
  - explaining the motivation and goals behind assignments
  - offering students choices in terms of which assignments they complete, what they do to complete them, *etc.*
- Assign some formative work that is not formally assessed, *e.g.* practice problems that are not graded, ungraded drafts that can be turned in for feedback, *etc.*
- Use something like specifications grading[5] with built-in opportunities for revision

[4] L. Ferlazzo (2023). *The Student Motivation Handbook: 50 Ways to Boost an Intrinsic Desire to Learn*. Taylor & Francis. ISBN: 9781351804806. URL: https://books.google.com/books?id=bdCsEAAAQBAJ

[5] L.B. Nilson and C.J. Stanny (2014). *Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time*. Stylus Publishing. ISBN: 9781620362419

What about generative AI?

It's impossible to talk about academic integrity these days without also talking about generative artificial intelligence. If you look online you will find many more articles and discussion than anyone could ever read; this will be only a brief summary to help you understand what generative AI is, how it works, and how we might respond to it from an academic integrity perspective.

What is generative AI and how does it work?

Generative AI models, also known as "foundation models", are a form of "machine learning" which enable computers to *generate* novel, human-like content in response to prompts. Some of the most well-known generative AI systems include ChatGPT (which focuses on text generation) and DALL•E (image generation). Briefly, the way generative AI models work is as follows:

1. First, the model is "trained" with a vast amount of human-generated content, *e.g.* taken from the Web. The model "learns" what various kinds of content "looks like".
2. Once it has finished "learning", the model can be given prompts, and it can output a "likely" or "probable" response, based on the training data it has seen.

The process is kind of like a student who skims a textbook, noticing which words occur near other words, and then, when later faced with an exam question, makes up something which contains words that seem related to the words in the question (and to each other). Of course, generative AI models are much more sophisticated than this—for one thing, they certainly operate at a much higher level than just considering individual words—but the concept is the same.

There are a couple of important takeaways:

- The "training" step is very expensive (in time, computational power, and hence money) and only happens once, to create the model in the first place. After the initial training, the model *does not continue learning*, and it *does not have any "memory"*.
  - Some models, such as ChatGPT, use previous interactions as part of the input "prompt", hence giving the impression of "learning" as a conversation unfolds, but it is not really continuing to learn in any meaningful sense, and it will not remember anything between conversations.

  - This means you cannot ask a generative AI such as ChatGPT whether it wrote some text, since it does not have any memory and therefore has no idea what text it has generated in the past.
  - If a generative AI makes an error and you "explain" to it what it got wrong, it can still make exactly the same error in the future.
- Generative AI models *have no concept of "true" or "false"*; they simply make up things that sound *likely*, and there are many false things that sound very plausible.
  - For example, if you ask ChatGPT to answer a question and cite its sources, it sometimes returns real citations, but it can also happily *invent* citations to reasonable-sounding, but fake, sources!
  - As another relevant example, if you ask ChatGPT whether it generated some particular text, it will sometimes happily and confidently tell you that yes, it did generate the text, even though it did not.

Can students use generative AI to cheat?

Yes, of course. It is quite easy for students to use generative AI to cheat—especially on writing assignments, but also programming assignments and other types of work.

In some ways, the situation is not all that different from "essay mills" or other online schemes that allow students to pay other people to do their work for them. However, many generative AI models are (for now, and probably for the forseeable future) free, and work almost instantly, both of which drastically lower barriers to student use.

Is there any way to detect the use of generative AI?

Unfortunately, and despite what many companies selling their services would like you to believe, the answer is essentially "no". There is no way to *reliably* and *automatically* detect the use of generative AI.

However, there are various red flags you can look for when evaluating student work:

- Vocabulary, sentence structure, *etc.* which is correct yet "bland" or "generic"
- Erroneous (yet plausible-sounding) facts
- References to ideas, texts, *etc.* which were not discussed in class

Such features of a student submission do not prove that the student did not write it (students are pefectly capable of doing the above on their own) but can constitute evidence pointing in that direction, especially if the submission is very different in tone, style, or level of sophistication from previous submissions from the same student.

Keep in mind that when accusing a student of academic dishonesty, it is only necessary to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that the student did not generate the submitted work themselves. It is not necessary to specifically prove that it was generated by AI; whether the work was generated by AI, purchased from an essay mill, or done by a friend is ultimately irrelevant.

How can I talk about generative AI with my students?

Generative AI can be a powerful tool when used correctly, and some faculty may even choose to create assignments where students are instructed to use generative AI as part of the process. Students should understand what this technology can and can't do, and in what ways and circumstances it is acceptable for them to use it (and how you expect them to cite it if they do). They should also understand the social and ethical issues surrounding this technology. For example:

- Generative AI models are exactly as biased as the data from which they learn. Companies have gone to great lengths to try to filter out bias such as racism and sexism from the output of their AI models, but the bias is still there and can emerge in unexpected ways.
- In many cases, generative AI models have been built using a large amount of unpaid or underpaid human labor—from the large amount of training content taken from the Web, to Kenyan workers paid to help label and filter toxic content.

Dealing with Academic Dishonesty

"I think some students cheated. Now what?"

It's important to first consider what the goal of the process is, and what it is not. In particular, the goal is **not retribution or punishment**. This sounds obvious when stated plainly, but academic integrity issues can be emotionally fraught. Feelings of betrayal and anger are normal, and with them a subconscious desire to inflict on the student the same suffering they have inflicted on us. It's important to be able to recognize and validate those emotions but not allow them to dictate the way we respond to students who have violated standards of academic integrity.

Rather, in my opinion, the goals of the academic integrity process should be to form students as whole persons, uphold community standards, and maintain the integrity of the educational environment.

Decide whether to formally pursue the violation

At some institutions, faculty are *required* to report any suspected academic integrity violations; at Hendrix, faculty are encouraged but not required to do so.

- For example, if a violation is very small and clearly unintentional, you may choose to simply give the student a (verbal or written) warning rather than go through the formal process.
- Or, if you are suspicious that a student may have plagiarized some part of an assignment but evidence is scant (because you are unable to identify the source, the plagiarized portions are very small, and/or your suspicions are also informed by your previous interactions with the student) you may opt to simply share your suspicions with the student (so they at least know you are paying attention and aren't led to think they "got away with it") rather than go through a formal process in which it could be difficult to convince the committee that an academic integrity violation had in fact taken place.

However, even in the above situations (especially the latter) you are welcome to go through the formal process if you wish.

In any case, you **must go through the formal process if you intend to impose some kind of sanction on the student**—even if the student agrees. For example, you cannot simply inform a student they will receive a zero on a plagiarized assignment and then neglect to report it to the Academic Integrity Committee.

Decide on a recommended sanction

Faculty have wide latitude in choosing recommended sanctions for academic integrity violations. The Academic Integrity Committee serves as a check on this latitude, with the power to hand down a different sanction if they deem the recommended one too harsh or too lenient; in practice, however, this power is rarely exercised.

If you have no idea what might be an appropriate sanction, there are some standard options:

- A zero on the assignment.
- A reduction of the final course grade by one letter grade.
- An F in the course is typically the sanction for cheating on a final or cumulative assessment such as a final exam, paper, or project.

However, given the latitude faculty enjoy, you are encouraged to use your judgment and be creative. Consider whether the violation seems intentional or just uninformed, and keep in mind that harsh penalties don't necessarily help students learn better or serve as effective deterrents. The goal is to pick a sanction which is commensurate with the violation and which will create a learning opportunity for the student. Here are a few alternative ideas to spark your creativity:

- Remember that disappointing you, having to go throuh the academic integrity process, and having an academic integrity violation on record are already sanctions in and of themselves. For relatively small and/or unintentional violations you might consider simply requiring the student to redo the assignment.
- Receiving a zero on an assignment means the student doesn't have to do the assignment any longer, and thus misses a learning opportunity. Consider sanctions where the student is still required to do the assignment. For example:
  - the student might still be able to get full credit for an assignment if they redo it appropriately, but in any case have their final course grade lowered by one letter grade;
  - or, the student might be able to redo an assignment, but only for partial credit.
- If the academic integrity violation affected certain community members in particular, the student might be required to write them an apology.

Fill out violation report form and collect evidence

The form to fill out can be found on the Hendrix webpage under *Faculty/Staff* > *Faculty Resources* > *Faculty Committees* > *Academic Integrity*. Filling out the form itself should not take long.

You should also spend at least a bit of time collecting evidence. This could consist of, for example, the instructions or prompt for the assignment in question, the student's work, any source material that may have been plagiarized (perhaps with plagiarized portions highlighted), the course syllabus, or any email exchanges with student.

Collected evidence may be helpful to show to the student; in my experience, students are more likely to cooperate when you explain your reasoning and show them your evidence (since it is often much stronger and clear-cut than the student would like to imagine). The collected evidence will also be sent to the committee in the case that a conference needs to be held. **However**, collecting evidence can take a lot of time, and you shouldn't worry about doing a thorough job for routine cases, or cases where the student readily confesses and agrees to the proposed sanction.

Meet with the student

This is often a difficult part of the process, but it's also critical. At some institutions, the academic integrity committee handles everything once there has been an accusation of academic dishonesty, including contacting the student. At Hendrix, however, faculty play a more active role in the process. This is more work for faculty, of course—both in time and emotional energy—but it fits with our institutional mission. For students to be formed as whole persons, and to best understand how their actions affect the Hendrix community, it's important that the process takes place in the context of existing relationships, rather than through an impersonal bureaucracy.

Here are some suggested dos and don'ts for meeting with a student about an accusation of academic dishonesty.

DO

- Be straightforward and transparent.
- Explain what you suspect happened and present your evidence.
- Although you should try not to let your emotional reaction dictate the way you handle the case, it can absolutely be appropriate to express your emotional reaction to the student (*e.g.* "I'm disappointed because I really thought you would make better choices

than this," or "I feel hurt because I trusted you with this assignment but you lied to me about it.")

- Listen to the student's response.
- Give the student the form to consider and explain the process.
  - They have two days to consider whether to sign the form, and are welcome to consult with their advisor, trusted mentors and friends, *etc.*
  - Valid reasons for them to not sign the form are either (1) they claim that they didn't do what you accuse them of; (2) they don't agree what they did was a violation of academic integrity; or (3) they think the proposed sanction is unreasonably harsh.
  - If they don't sign, they have the right to an Academic Integrity Committee conference, where an impartial panel of faculty and their peers will decide the case.

DON'T

- Force them to sign the form in front of you. They should have time to consider and discuss with trusted friends and mentors.
- Try to manipulate them into confessing or signing the form, *e.g.* by playing coy or using the committee as a "bad cop":
  - "Why do you think I wanted to meet with you today?"
  - "Is there anything you'd like to tell me about this assignment?"
  - "If this goes to the Academic Integrity Committee, the penalty might be even worse."
- Be unduly swayed in the moment by their arguments or emotional reaction.
  - Unfortunately, some students are excellent liars and manipulators.
  - You should give yourself time to consider and discuss with friends and mentors, just as they have.

Communicate with the committee chair

At this point you should communicate with the committee chair.

- In an ideal world, the contrite student has signed the form and returned it to you. In that case, just forward the form to the committee chair. You may optionally forward any evidence you have collected but it's not as important in this case. You are now done!

- If the student has not signed the form after two days, simply forward the un-signed form to the committee chair along with any collected evidence. The chair will then be in touch about scheduling a conference.
- If you have any questions about the process, or want advice, you are welcome to contact the committee chair at any point.