

Recommended Techniques for Assuring Online Student Authentication and Integrity

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) legislation, as it currently stands, requires institutions that offer courses or programs through distance education to have processes in place that verify or authenticate that the student who registers in such a course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and who receives the academic credit.

Below are methods for CCCC faculty to help ensure that our online courses meet and exceed the basic accreditation standard while offering best practices to address the broader issues of cheating, plagiarism, and other course authentication / integrity concerns.

The Pedagogy and Technology Committee recommends that online faculty select and incorporate some combination of the following strategies to meet the needs of their specific online or hybrid courses. These recommendations will help assure the authentication of a student in one's course, and will also help minimize cheating and plagiarism. In addition, incorporation of these techniques will demonstrate to the accreditation review board that CCCC incorporates best practices in our online course / hybrid course environments.

1) Use multiple assessment techniques

- a) Design assessments to be frequent, varied, and authentic to the application of learning.
- b) Rely on interactive discussions, writing assignments, quizzes, capstone projects, and group work in place of high-stakes exams.
- c) Provide rubrics, or detailed grading criteria, for all assignments at the beginning of the course so that learners can know and understand how they will be scored.
- d) Provide assessments early in the course to allow students an accurate gauge of their progress and/or preparedness for the course.

2) Become familiar with students' writing style

- a) Compare student writing on the discussion board with that on assignments and papers.
- b) Compare writing at the beginning and end of a paper with that of in the middle of the paper – language, sentence length and reading level.
- c) Be wary of student writing that reads like an encyclopedia, newspaper article or expert in the field.
- d) Provide and foster a discussion environment that promotes an open, honest, and positive communication experience for students that make them less likely to engage in academic dishonesty.

3) Use anti-plagiarism techniques

- a) Use proctors for tests
- b) Use a tool like Turnitin to prevent plagiarism.
- c) Read all papers on the same topic together.
- d) Do not allow last minute changes in assignment topics
- e) Employ a lockdown browser system to prevent students from exiting the exam and surfing the web for answers.
- f) Modify assessments often when possible.

4) **Use test banks and timed test delivery.**

- a) Design test questions to be randomly drawn from banks of questions and shuffled, so each student gets a different set of questions.
- b) Design tests to be open-book but with a limited amount of time to complete.
- c) Require forced completion on exams so students cannot re-enter a test.
- d) Set a short window for testing completion, i.e. one or two days to take an exam rather than a whole week.
- e) Show questions one at a time rather than all at once.
- f) Use Moodle's "Full Screen Popup w/some Java Script Security" tool which is a browser lock down system that can be used to minimize a students' ability to print the screen, cut and paste,& exit the browser or the test.
- g) Create a password to enter exams and email it to students.

5) **Raise awareness among students about what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate academic behavior in an online course.**

- a) Include the college's academic integrity statement and a link to campus policies in the course syllabus.
- b) Provide a description of academic dishonesty and information on repercussions in the syllabus or in the course site.
- c) Provide links to plagiarism information as well as acceptable sources, and descriptions of permissible and non-permissible collaboration.
- d) Ask students to reflect on the academic integrity policy and how to create a community of integrity in the discussion board.

References

WCET: Briefing Paper February 2008; Are Your Online Student Really the Ones Registered for the Course..."

WCET: Best Practices to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education, Version 2.0 June 2009.

MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching Vol 5, No.2., June 2009, "Communities of Integrity in Online Courses: Faculty Member Beliefs and Strategies."

Per State Distance Education Guidelines

55211. Instructor Contact.

In addition to the requirements of section 55009 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district-governing boards shall ensure that: (a) All approved courses offered as distance education include regular effective contact between instructor and students, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, correspondence, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities.

The Pedagogy and Technology Committee recommends that all course syllabi contain the following sections pertaining to Instructor Contact.

Contact Hours and Methods. Include office hours (not required for adjunct instructors), contact information (email address, telephone number, voice, Instant Messaging, etc.). The committee recommends use of all appropriate contact hours and methods.

Response Time Expectations. Describe the turnaround time for communication between students and instructor's response. The committee recommends 48 hours or less, and that the instructor includes information about exceptions (holidays, weekends, etc.).

Interaction Format. Describe the methods of regular, effective, faculty-initiated contact between the instructor and students. The committee recommends that instructors regularly (at least twice a week) initiate contact with students in the online classroom to determine that they are accessing and comprehending course materials, and that they are participating regularly in the activities of the course. In addition, the committee recommends that instructors should concurrently monitor student-to-student interaction. Types of interaction may include the following:

- Email
- Threaded discussion pages
- Chat room
- Skype
- Telephone/Voicemail
- Early alert
- CCC Confer
- Adobe Connect
- Instant messaging
- Moodle Announcements/News
- Assignment and assessment feedback
- iTV classroom discussion
- Traditional classroom discussion

Grading Turnaround Expectations. Describe the turnaround timeframe for students to expect feedback, grades, and current grade status. The committee recommends that assessments are graded, posted, and available no later than two weeks after the due dates and that exceptions are fully described. The committee recommends that students be able to view or determine their current grade.