14 Ways to Reduce Cheating in Online Courses

The issue of cheating in online classes has become such an issue, that even in courses that are free (ex. MOOC’s), using the internet to copy and paste answers is still prevalent. What can faculty do to reduce the opportunities for students to cheat in their courses? Best practices, as well as technology, can help! Here are 14 ways (we’re sure there are more!) to reduce cheating in online courses:

1. **Increase your question pool** — 2x the questions asked means that half of any 2 randomly chosen tests will be the same. Increase that to 5x the questions asked, and the percentage that is the same drops to 4%.
   - If you can’t do this immediately, work on adding 5-10 new questions to your question pools every semester... anything helps in the fight against cheating, and you will eventually get to the 5x benchmark.

2. **Randomize the answer order** for any questions that do not have “All of the above” as an option.

3. **Get away from using multiple-choice tests.** It is much more difficult to cheat on essay questions.

4. **Use alternate forms of assessment,** such as presentations through Blackboard Collaborate, Letters to the Editor, portfolios, or other means to show synthesis of the ideas taught.

5. **Avoid questions that** merely require a student find something rather than to create something.

6. **Control the testing environment** as much as possible—use tools like Respondus Lockdown Browser or have students use tools like Turnitin and SafeAssign as a preventative measure to plagiarism.

7. **Reduce the amount of time** that students have to finish the test, and even the time they have between questions.

8. **Ask questions on your test non-sequentially** — don’t go chapter by chapter on your tests.

9. **Use several, shorter tests,** rather than one or two high stakes tests—the more tests there are, the less likely your students’ friends are to want to take the tests for them.
10. **Periodically retire questions** from your question pool in case they have gone viral.

11. **Engage with your students** and get them engaged—students who are interested in what they are learning are less likely to cheat, just as they are less likely to cheat against professors that they have gotten to know.

12. **Research about honor codes** in online courses are mixed—it doesn’t increase cheating, but it doesn’t necessarily lower it either. They work best in either face-to-face or blended courses.

13. **Follow UTEP’s policy about cheating** by reporting your students to the Office of the Dean of Students.

   - This protects you and documents the incidence so that chronic cheaters can be monitored.
   - When students know that their professor doesn’t follow the university policy, they are more likely to cheat in that class.

14. **Use multiple assessment strategies** so that students can be tested in several ways—it helps those that suffer from test anxiety, AND it gives a more accurate measure of how much the student has learned.