



DESIGNING ASSIGNMENTS TO SAFEGUARD ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

York University Teaching Commons
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Angelica is a high achieving student, who is taking 5 courses on top of working part-time and caring for her family. She has learned to be very organized and schedule her time wisely, ensuring she manages her workload. However, there is an assignment in one of her courses that she is struggling with. The guidelines are not clear to her because the criteria is very wide open. She has started multiple drafts, but as the deadline looms, her toddler and herself become ill. She weighs her options and ends up searching for papers already written about the text and submits one she finds online. How could Angelica's professor design assignments to prevent students from committing academic dishonesty?

1. **Provide clear instructions and expectations for the assignment** – This will ensure the students feel the assignment is doable. Identify and make clear to students the purpose of the assignment and how it aligns with the course learning outcomes, enforcing that it will be assessed in this way.
2. **Design assignments that are specific** - Instead of asking students to write about some book or other, provide a starting point, which ought to emerge from the specific context of the course. Include a twist or different perspective on the assignment that is not typically written about or found online. For ideas, see the Teaching Commons website on Academic Integrity (link below).
3. **Design unique assignments each year** – This will ensure students can't simply "buy" a classmate's assignment who took the course in previous years.
4. **Design assignments that require the students to relate to and apply their own experiences to the concepts and content being studied in the course** - Linking assignments with specific coursework makes students use what they learned in the course.
5. **Focus on the process as well as the product** – For example, include information gathering or a reflective component as part of the assessment.
6. **Require the assignment to be prepared and submitted in stages** – For example ask students to submit a 200 word proposal, a rough draft, peer feedback and reflections and a final draft.
7. **Require students to share their assignments more publicly** - If students know that their work will be on display for either their classmates or others to see, they are less likely to take the risk because others will know. Assignment ideas include podcasts, videos, posting or publishing work online, read or present work in class, etc.

If you would like to explore this topic further consider these events at the TC :

- Workshops on Course and Curriculum Design, see: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/for-cds/workshops-and-courses-for-cds/workshops/course-design-york/>

Further reading on this topic:

- Carroll, J., & Appleton, J. (May 2001). *Plagiarism: A Good Practice Guide*. Oxford Brookes University.

Resources on this topic:

- Academic Integrity resources, see: <http://teachingcommons.yorku.ca/resources-2/teaching-strategies/academic-integrity>