

It might be helpful to think about the virtual classroom much the same as our bricks and mortar classrooms as it is still important to spend time getting to know your students and allowing them opportunities to get to know you. There are many things you do in practice that support the building of a learning community; think about how those activities might look online. Here are three tips for you to consider as you continue to work in the online setting. Click on each one to learn more.

# 1

Take time to build community in your virtual classroom

# 2

Start & continue the discussion about academic integrity

# 3

Understand the common reasons for breaches to academic integrity (misconduct and cheating)

It is a busy time to say the least! Keep this resource nearby and use it whenever you find yourself wondering how you can support and enhance academic integrity in your virtual classroom. You've got this!

## Tip 1: Take time to build community in your virtual classroom

Building a sense of community within your virtual classroom is essential to student success and learning (Biswas, 2014). A strong sense of community within the classroom will foster and support academic integrity and allow for opportunities to model desired professional behaviours that will carry through after students graduate.

When you take the time to build connections with students while working in the virtual learning environment, you support a learner-centred approach and contribute to students “moving from passive to active learning...that has been associated with deeper integration of course material” (Biswas, 2014, p. 14).

Consider the following four strategies to support building a learning community in your virtual classroom (Berry, 2019). You don't have to use them all. Start with one or two that fits your students and your style.



### Reach out early and reach out often.

Some students may feel a sense of isolation or disconnect from their professor, classmates, and the course content when working virtually.

- Consider an initial welcoming message and emphasize how you will connect and how you want to connect.
- Try filming your message and uploading the video to your blackboard site so your words breathe life into the message.
- Build in regular communication strategies (e.g. weekly or every other week).
- Include opportunities to host synchronous sessions to allow students to ‘socialize’.
- Ensure you have clear expectations for communication and conduct online so students feel safe and included in conversations.

Remember that you are creating a learning community that builds connections between the professor and students, students with each other, and students with the course content.



Want more ideas to establish a social media presence and build a learning community within your online course? Check out the following:

[How Online Teaching is Different: A Conversation](#) [opens in Panopto]  
Humber's [online guidelines \(netiquette\)](#)

## ➤ Limit your lecture time and increase your discussion time.

It is important to be dynamic with the content. Discussions can help students understand the relevancy of the content they are learning and are an effective way to encourage community in the virtual learning community.

- Try being a facilitator rather than a lecturer to encourage different viewpoints and questions.
- In asynchronous environments, consider including discussion sessions that are live and give students the opportunity to participate in real time.
- If you are incorporating lecture with discussion, ensure you build in intentional pauses (breaks in content) so that students can ask their questions or share their ideas.



Looking for ideas to change up your virtual classroom to include more activities and fewer lectures? This document on [Online Learning Activities](#) may assist.

## ➤ Make the best use of all the technology available.

Blackboard has many different and useful functions. Not sure which ones might work for you for what you want to do? This [Blackboard 9.1 Tool Guide](#) may be a helpful resource.

It looks a bit overwhelming at first but trust the process and you will find great and useful ways to use Blackboard to engage your students. Here are a few we like:

- The **chat feature** in Blackboard Collaborate can encourage students to write their questions or comments. Consider having students assigned to curate the chats, consolidate the questions, and then direct the questions to you. This role can be rotated between students or groups of students and change from class to class.
- **Breakout groups**, also through Blackboard Collaborate, can help to create connections within smaller groups of students and give them opportunities to connect about the content in a deeper way that may be less threatening than working in a larger group.



There are lots of other technologies that can bring content to life.

If you are curious to see just what is available through Humber check out the [10 steps to building your online course](#), and click on the puzzle piece titled choose technology.



## Allow class time for informal and formal discussions.

Reaching out early and often is important and provides opportunities for you to build a relationship with students that will encourage their learning (*see “1. Reach out early and reach out often” for ideas on how to do this*).

- Allow pauses during the delivery of your content for students to ask their questions or make comments ~ this allows students the opportunity to intellectually connect with the course material and content ~ it is “important for students to see the online classroom as a social and interactive space, one where academic content was prioritized but personal sharing was encouraged” (Berry, 2014, p. 173).
- Provide sessions where students can socialize and share so students can connect as human beings.
- Start your sessions with a social connection ‘check-ins’ or offer optional online sessions where socializing is encouraged (e.g. Coffee Chats ~ once a week).

## Tip 2: Start & continue the discussion about academic integrity

The International Centre for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as the unwavering commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage even when faced with adversity (International Centre for Academic Integrity, 2014).

Start the academic integrity discussion early in your online course and understand that, like any other learning, the discussion needs to be revisited, recontextualized, and reimagined in different ways to help students understand. Get the discussion about academic integrity started early:

- Have an online conversation with students.
- Explain what you expect and encourage students' questions about those expectations.
- Include an academic integrity pledge statement on your course outline (discuss this idea with your teaching team, Program Coordinator and Associate Dean to be sure there is agreement about what will work best and support integrity of your teaching and evaluation).
- Ask students to sign the academic integrity pledge statement. A signed statement can help students commit and understand the importance of a commitment to the course or piece of evaluation you are incorporating into your online course (Miron & Fenning, 2018).

These [academic integrity statements](#) may give you some ideas as to how a statement might look.

Remember there is a need to revisit academic integrity in different ways throughout the semester. Ongoing engagement of students with the values of academic integrity (honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, courage) can happen through different activities:

- Establish your virtual class expectations with students and provide them with [Humber's expectations](#).
- Hold virtual hours so students can connect with you one on one.
- Set clear expectations and instructions for all assignments (revisit as you get closer to the submission dates).
- Post your expectations with easy access to links so students can click and review whenever they need to.
- Encourage students to sign [integrity pledges](#) with all submitted work.
- Create a formal opportunity for students to navigate the [Humber College Regulation for Academic Misconduct—regulation 17](#) with you to clarify their understanding of the regulation and its impact on their journey as students.
- Create a formal opportunity to review the expectations about the [exam and test process for the Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellness](#) before you conduct any tests or exams ~ be clear about your expectations for students when they are completing these evaluations online.



This [Kwantlen Polytechnic University video](#) provides more ideas on academic integrity strategies.

## Tip 3: Understand the reasons for breaches to academic integrity

It is important to approach academic integrity with trust. In other words, believe that your students want to do the right thing because the literature tells us that the majority of students who admit to academic dishonesty do so for a variety of reasons.

As faculty we can work to understand what places students at risk for making choices that result in breaches to academic integrity. Consider these risk factors and some of the strategies to reduce them for students so that we support their commitment to behaving within the values of academic integrity while studying and working online. The following list and strategies are some of the more common ones noted in the literature and research but consider what you have seen in your own teaching practice and think about ways to mitigate them.

### Lack of knowledge.

Students may lack knowledge about what is expected and what is consistent with academic integrity.

- Discuss academic integrity and your expectations at the start of your course and weave it throughout the semester, focusing on times when you are nearing evaluations.
- Be clear, be consistent, and be honest with students about what is required for academic integrity. It is advisable to have these conversations in a positive way rather than in a manner where it may feel like the penalties are being emphasized in a threatening way.
- Provide examples of integrity and breaches of integrity as they relate to the content and evaluations you are working through in your course so that students see the relevance and understand the context.
- Be open to students' questions about policies, behaviours, and integrity as they relate to your course content during your class, through virtual discussions, and through your virtual office hours.
- Discuss the relevance of the content and help students translate why it is important for them to complete evaluations honestly (e.g. what does it mean for their content knowledge and entering a specific profession or trade).
- Recognize that you will have to repeat messages to students in a variety of different ways.
- Consider using your technology to deliver your messages in multiple ways and at multiple times (e.g. in print, with videos, using blogs, using vlogs, games, animations).

## Time management.

While we include information about due dates for various evaluations for our courses on our course outlines, blackboard sites, and critical paths, time management continues to be one reason why students feel pressured to make choices that lead to breaches in academic integrity. Telling them when things are due is not enough.

- Talk to students and post the resource information that may help them to complete assignments. Include links that will take them directly to online information about the resources (e.g. library resources, writing centre, math centre, student success and engagement).
- Build in checkpoints for assignments. Talk about assignments in your online classes. Offer separate times for students to meet virtually with you, in groups, or individually to talk about questions related to assignments.
- Scaffold bigger assignments through a series of smaller assignments. This can be one way to help students stay on task. Assigning marks for each piece that they complete can be an incentive to help them complete the work. Encourage honesty with students and check in with students about deadlines. Encourage them to reach out to you if they can't make a deadline or need further guidance around a specific assignment.

## Dissatisfaction with the learning experience.

We know from the research that if a student feels disconnected or dissatisfied with content or their program, their relationship with other students or the teacher, they are more likely to breach integrity. Robinson and Glanzer (2017) noted that dissatisfaction in the learning environment may occur if students perceive faculty or leaders in the organization as the “integrity police” (p. 212). Students value a holistic approach to their studies and to academic integrity (Robinson & Glanzer, 2017). Additionally, faculty enthusiasm for the content and to the virtual world can help build trust and promote integrity within the online learning environment (Orosz, et al., 2015).

- Consider a question and answer section if you are teaching asynchronously. Answer questions regularly.
- If you are teaching synchronously allow times for a question and answer sessions. These can help support students in their understanding of content and of upcoming evaluations.
- Model and demonstrate the behaviour you want to see (e.g. cite your resources when using a deck slide).
- Think about how your student learns best. No matter where our classroom is located, we do need to consider engaging as many of the students’ senses into their learning experience. A multimedia approach to how we present content in the online environment can positively affect a student’s learning experience (Najjar, 2016).
- The Teaching and Learning team has many different media platforms and opportunities for faculty. If you are unsure or need more information about all that is available, you can contact your Instructional Design Experts.



Would you like to know a little more about how students learn in the online environment? Check out this Kwantlen Polytechnic University video on the topic of [slide design](#).

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