

Discussion Guide: Promoting a Culture of Academic Integrity in Cyberspace

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic forced educational institutions around the world to quickly adopt online learning strategies, resulting in a change in the way we need to support, educate and handle student academic integrity.

Academic Integrity in Cyberspace is a collaborative project between Seneca College and Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) that addresses these challenges by gamifying complex real-world academic integrity scenarios. This tool is intended to be used as an experiential learning module for students in post-secondary education settings. It can be used as is or tailored for a specific course or institution.

Students are guided and given feedback on their actions as they progress. The game is designed to provide a risk-free way for students to engage with situations that they are likely to face in their online or hybrid courses, helping them avoid violating academic integrity in these situations.

Following simulation pedagogy, this tool is designed to provide feedback and guidance, offering a certificate of completion¹ regardless of individual performance. The purpose of this is twofold. First, it creates a risk-free environment for learning in a real-world analogous setting, allowing students of all levels and backgrounds to complete the assessment as many times as needed to gather feedback and learn to appropriately handle the various situations presented to them. Second, this completion-based assessment is easy to integrate both in the classroom and institution-wide, with the completion certificate serving as proof that the student has experienced a wide array of academic integrity situations.

¹ Pop-ups need to be enabled in the web application to generate the completion certificate.

Using This Tool

The tool is composed of 3 modules or “planets” each of which is designed to focus on a core topic relevant to the overall theme of academic integrity in online courses. The modules are structured as follows:

Module 1 (Planet: Colaborea)

Theme: Collaboration and Communication

Module Topics:

- Social media use during assessment
- Discussion board best practices
- Healthy collaboration during group projects
- Out-of-course student groups and chat scenarios
- Impersonation of others in online courses.
- Accommodations and accessibility in online learning

Module 2 (Planet: The Archive of Bosh)

Theme: Sourcing and Research

Module Topics:

- Source evaluation and comparison
- Identifying and responding to contract cheating
- Source management (note taking, citation, etc)
- Appropriate use of sources and context
- Assessing task timelines

Module 3 (Planet: Cheel)

Theme: Stress Management and Decision Making

Module Topics:

- Organizational issues causing stress
- Family / personal issues impacting coursework
- Identifying support needs and asking for help
- Managing isolation inherent to online learning
- Responding to examination stress

Course-Centered Use

In this course-centered model, individual instructors can integrate this tool directly into their course. This tool is designed to be used by students in all online and hybrid courses, either synchronously during class or as an asynchronous resource.

One common way to incorporate this tool into courses is to offer it as a small in-class assignment or workshop. Here is an example of an in-class activity:

The instructor can use the linked slide deck as a template to create a workshop with three breakout groups to collaboratively work through each of the planets in a set timeframe. Once the groups have completed the activity, the instructor can lead a discussion across the three breakout groups to share their findings and experience with the tool.

Another way to use the tool is to offer it as a small independent assignment posted to the course shell. In this case, the instructor can increase motivation for students to complete the assignment by offering bonus marks upon submission of the completion certificate. It is also possible to have students complete the tool as a part of a required assignment and submit the certificate and a written reflection on their experience.

Whether the tool is implemented synchronously or asynchronously, it is important to give students space to further enhance their learning by providing an institution-specific resource sheet of supports. (See: Adapting for Your Institution below for details.)

Institution-Wide Use

In the institution-wide use model, this tool can be deployed as a general resource that is accessible to all students and is provided by key student-support bodies within an institution. This model is geared toward asynchronous student interaction with the tool, but with the ability to host workshops as a synchronous option with dedicated support.

For the institution-wide model, it is important to make the tool available to key student resource spaces (ex. Seneca College Sandbox, TMU Student Life and Learning Support) so that they can distribute the link as part of their services.

This tool is designed to be compatible with screen readers and it features narration 1:1 character interactions.

When a student successfully finishes all three modules, a completion certificate is generated. This certificate should be considered valid across courses and departments, so that students only need to provide proof of completion once.

Institutions can also consider incorporating this module as part of the orientation process for certain programs to provide a low-stress option for students to learn key academic integrity fundamentals. Alternatively, they can make this module a course-agnostic required module for students to complete as part of their curriculum or have it serve as a required component for student leadership roles such as peer tutors or mentors.

Evaluating Student Performance

This tool was designed to provide a risk-free practice environment for students, and as such there is no formal performance evaluation built in. However, you can provide the discussion questions below for students to reflect on and self-evaluate their understanding of the material. Alternatively these questions can be used in a facilitated discussion group where multiple students are able to share their thoughts and experiences collaboratively.

Each of the discussion questions draws on scenarios that students will have experienced with characters throughout the modules as they progressed. Students are encouraged to relate their answers to their responses and experience completing those scenarios.

Module 1: Collaboration and Communication

Discussion / Evaluation Points

- What are some ways you can make engaging with discussion board activities more appealing?
- Creating a healthy collaborative environment during a group project is important, as some members may over-share work, and some members may contribute less effort. How do you manage group projects to ensure that the workload is balanced and appropriately credited while maintaining a supportive collaborative environment?
- Out-of-class support tools—like social media sites or group chats—can be great for providing social support, but can also become places for unethical collaboration. How can you work with classmates and get to know them in ways that protect your academic integrity?
- Level- or goal-setting conversations are important at the start of collaborative projects. If you have an accommodation that affects the group, how would you go about sharing it? (Bear in mind, you are not required to disclose reasons or any personal information.)

Module 2: Sourcing and Research

Discussion / Evaluation Points

- What are some organizational techniques you can apply to help you stay on top of your assignment schedule?
- What are some ways to evaluate the quality of a source and determine if you've integrated it into your assignment appropriately?
- Why do instructors (in most cases) prefer that students paraphrase their sources? What makes paraphrasing challenging?
- Given that there is a lot of discussion about how important it is in academic writing to incorporate research and cite all your sources, where does your voice come in?
- Note-taking often takes the form of noting or copying important points from your sources onto a separate document. What types of note-taking strategies might be more productive while also protecting your academic integrity?

Module 3: Stress Management and Decision-Making

Discussion Examples

- How are you able to balance empathy and understanding with maintaining academic integrity for yourself and others?
- Encouraging others to seek support requires high levels of emotional intelligence and empathy. What are some ways you can demonstrate this when encouraging someone to seek support?
- Not everyone wants to engage with classmates through dedicated course tools like groups or discussion boards. How can we balance creating social space for our digital classes without encouraging unhealthy collaboration in 3rd-party apps? (Such as that seen in *Module 1*.)
- Mindfulness exercises, in-depth studying, and getting plenty of rest are common recommendations for dealing with exam/test stress, but require dedicated time commitments. How can you balance competing concerns?

After completing the modules and having a debrief/discussion using these questions, students should have a better understanding of their performance in the modules, and the tools to help them move forward and adopt a mutually supportive approach to dealing with academic integrity issues in their online school environments.

Adapting for Your Institution

This tool was designed as open source, and all files can be found hosted on GitHub at this link: <https://github.com/SenecaTeachingLearning/AIOgame>. You can freely adapt this tool to your institution by altering the provided files. Installation instructions can be found in the README file on GitHub.

Here are a number of key changes to consider when adapting this tool for your institution:

1. Create a resource document file with contact information for various student supports (e.g., writing centre, personal counselling, library)
 - a. Once you have created an appropriate document, save it with the file name [Resources.pdf] and replace the default [Resources.pdf] file in the Files section. Users will be able to access the file from within the game.
2. You can alter dialogue by entering the JSON files for the scenario you want to update and locating the dialogue you wish to alter. We encourage you to focus on altering dialog so that characters can mention institution specific supports or resources.
 - a. Note, however, that if audio files are associated with the revised scenario, you may need to revise or remove them.

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The logo for Seneca College, consisting of the word "Seneca" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

The logo for Toronto Metropolitan University, featuring the words "Toronto Metropolitan University" in a white, sans-serif font stacked vertically on a blue rectangular background with a yellow square to its right.

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