

Test Security: Deter, Detect, Defend



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During your tenure, you will undoubtedly see collusion in the classroom. However, as educators, it's our job to stop this behavior before it becomes normalized and habitual. The following are steps, strategies, and ideas you can use to deter, detect, and defend against collusion before students enter the workplace.

Deterring Behavior

- 1 Promote Virtue**
 - Encourage students to strive for excellence and integrity.
 - Discuss the honesty and integrity required in the field as a practicing health care provider.
 - Use peer mentors for modeling behavior and encouraging personal accountability.
- 2 Set the Stage**
 - Let students know what to expect and what will be expected of them (*i.e., supply explicit etiquette information and provide guidelines on behavior, material, and technology that is and is not allowed before, during, and after testing*).
 - Use trained proctors who take their proctoring responsibilities seriously (*For more information on proctoring, see Best Practices in Proctoring HESI Tests white paper [here.](#)*)
 - Limit pressure to cheat by making exams count for part of a grade, but not too much.
- 3 Squelch the Opportunity**
 - Enforce a clean desk policy (*i.e., require that students not have anything on or around their desk, even watches, keys, or a water bottle during testing*).
 - Proctor exams by casually walking along the aisles and keeping a close eye on students. Being passive does not convey the message "I trust you," rather it says, "I don't care."
 - Have a testing policy and plan that includes details like order of versions, time between tests, and what to do if a student misses an exam.

Detecting Behavior

- 1 Use a longitudinal line graph that shows students throughout matriculation**
 - Graph all students and all exam scores.
 - Unexpected student performance (*i.e., like a low-ability student who gets a near perfect score*) can indicate that more information is needed before scores can be considered valid.
 - Unexpected student performance (*i.e., like a group of students whose scores are dramatically higher than classroom performance indicates*) can indicate that more information is needed before scores can be considered valid.

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- 2 **Use a histogram of students' scores on an exam (compared to national performance)**
 - Graph average student scores on categories within an exam (or multiple exam scores).
 - Unexpected performance (*i.e., like average scores near the national mean for a struggling cohort*) can indicate that more information is needed before scores can be considered valid.
- 3 **Use a control chart to compare the current cohort to a past cohort or national performance**
 - Graph the individual student scores from the current cohort on the exam in question on top of performance by a comparison group. Use mean and +/- one, two, and three standard deviations from the mean to set-up the comparison.
 - Using the normal bell curve and intelligence testing as an example, a student who scores two standard deviations above the mean might be considered gifted (definitions vary). Similarly, in an average classroom, with a variety of different ability students, expect most students to perform within +/- two standard deviations of the mean, particularly since the mean and standard deviation were computed from a comparison sample. So, scores from average or poor students that are two or more standard deviations above the mean are aberrant and require additional information to validate.

Defending Behavior

- 1 **Create policies that are clear, concise, and define specific consequences.**
- 2 **Circulate & socialize policies to administrators, faculty, and students.**
- 3 **Punish violators consistently, quickly, and according to policies.**

Conclusion

Using tips and strategies like these, faculty can assess policies and practices and find ways to encourage integrity and discourage collusion and other improper behavior in the classroom and after graduation.

Additionally, by having administrators, staff, faculty, and students talk about integrity and academic honesty, these topics are brought to the forefront - becoming part of the culture. Another idea for integrating these ideas into practice is to offer incentives such as rewarding good behavior with a leadership role like peer mentoring which has the added benefit of helping to encourage integrity and academic honesty. Programs where administrators, staff, faculty, and students are all on the same page and invested in academic honesty will thrive and cultivate excellent nurses.