Report of the Ad Hoc Taskforce on Assessment
11/14/2011

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Report of the Ad Hoc Taskforce on Assessment in Online Courses

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Bill Keller, in a *New York Times* Op Ed piece of October 3, 2011, titled "The University of Wherever," recounts how Stanford University is repositioning itself for entry into the world of online teaching and learning. Stanford's efforts include those of Sebastian Thrun, the renowned professor of robotics, who now offers his lectures, assignments and exams online and free of charge to 130,000 students. The students who are successful get a "statement of accomplishment," but not Stanford credit. Why not? Among the reasons, Thrun acknowledges, are what he calls "serious quality control problems," noting two of the most important. The first is how to keep students from cheating on exams, and the second is being able to verify who is really at the keyboard for the tests.

This report is about identifying and working toward a solution to these two problems at MSU. MSU is far ahead of Stanford in its mission of providing online courses and programs for credit and degrees. MSU's mission has for decades included important off-campus and lifelong elements. Many of these elements have evolved into a huge number of online courses, yet our ability to create solutions to Thrun's issues of cheating and identity verification has fallen behind our ability to offer compelling, online educational experiences. Thrun thinks the problems can be solved. We agree, and hope the recommendations in this paper will help us solve them at MSU.

Exactly how important and pervasive are these problems, and why should we care about them? The pages that follow trace some of the history at MSU that makes the university a leader in off-campus and online learning. The issue of *why* we should care about the problems is worth examining at the outset, however.

First, we need to care deeply about these issues because, as members of the university community, we have a professional, moral obligation to accurately assess students' knowledge and learning. Our ethical obligations in every course and program include student assessment for competency because our stakeholders expect and demand it. It is our obligation, first of all, to our students, as primary stakeholders, to provide them with credentials that testify to their intellectual development so they can explore and navigate the most useful lives, to the benefit of themselves and of their fellow citizens. Other stakeholders in how we manage student assessment are the entities that employ our students in jobs, and the citizenry at large who support the university in many ways.

Second, the university has sought accreditation of many of its programs from outside organizations, including those that certify many of MSU's professional programs. Some of these organizations, such as those in medicine, nursing, and the law, have national or state qualifying examinations for practice. But many, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) in business, accredit programs but do not qualify graduates.

Recent campus visits to MSU and elsewhere by accrediting teams show that there is increased interest and scrutiny about academic integrity issues in online courses. In 2011 the Middle States Commission on Higher Education issued a set of guidelines for online courses and programs that include a section on academic integrity. The guidelines can be accessed at http://www.msche.org/publications/Guidelines-for-the-Evaluation-of-Distance-Education.pdf. The section on academic integrity is reproduced in APPENDIX 1 of this document.

Third, there is a group of organizations that has an interest in maintaining the integrity of the assessment process, even though they are neither employers nor accreditors of the students we educate. The most obvious of these may be the NCAA, MSU's own athletic establishment, and various athletic conferences. The interest here arises out of a history of cheating scandals involving athletic programs at other universities. Regardless of one's views of the role and importance of intercollegiate athletics, the regulating authorities both inside and outside the university cannot afford to be accused to being lax in maintaining academic integrity.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force has organized its recommendations into three categories, based on what we think is a reasonable time to put each into operation.

1) Short-term – Implementation in weeks to months.
    a) The governance system should adopt the recommendations from the Provost's Office to amend the Code of Teaching Responsibility, and the Integrity of Scholarship and Grades. These recommendations will update university documents to recognize the existence of online courses, and establish guidelines for assessment, including proctoring and identity verification, when appropriate.
    b) MSU should set up a system to assist departments and schools in arranging for off-campus exams (both paper and computer-based) in online courses.
    c) MSU should promote closer ties between Study Abroad Programs and academic departments to facilitate student assessment in online courses when a student in an online course is also enrolled in a Study Abroad Program.

2) Medium-term – Implementation within a year.
    a) MSU should establish a network of testing centers or proctors throughout the State of Michigan.

3) Longer-term – Implementation in 1 to 3 years and beyond.
    a) MSU should establish a wider network of assessment affiliates, perhaps throughout the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), and nationally,
    b) MSU should establish an on-campus, large scale, online testing facility that would support secure, proctored computer assessments for all departments and schools.

HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY

A. Student Assessment at MSU, A Selective History.

Prior to the early-to-mid-90s, classes at MSU were conducted face-to-face with instructors and students in the same room at the same time. The commonplace of exams in the teaching and learning process was the classroom setting with students answering questions on paper, timed, and watched over by professors and teaching assistants. In smaller classes the faculty knew their students by name and face, while in larger classes the normal process of what has, in the intervening years, become known as identity management consisted of checking student ID cards or drivers' licenses.

At Michigan State University the security of assessments is the joint responsibility of faculty and students. Students expect to be evaluated using instruments and techniques that are accepted as appropriate to the various disciplines. Faculty are expected to take reasonable measures to assure that students are evaluated fairly, and to use procedures in evaluation that promote academic honesty. In short, it is a normal and accepted part of the university assessment system that faculty members will take reasonable steps to assure that a student's exams and other written work are the product of that student's efforts, and not the effort of someone else. This includes systems for checking identification, and monitoring students during exams to prevent sharing answers and using materials that are not allowed during exams.

B. MSU's Tradition of Support for Distance Learning

MSU has a long commitment to promoting quality distance education. The reasons for this commitment can be gleaned from Diana Oblinger, the current president of Educause, in her commentary on "The Nature and Purpose of Distance Education." (http://technologysource.org/article/nature_and_purpose_of_distance_education/)

According to Oblinger, there are four categories of reasons for an institution to embrace distance learning: It's a way to
1. expand access (for example, to persons with disabilities, or time constraints due to job responsibilities);
2. alleviate capacity constraints (especially in physical facilities);
3. exploit market opportunities (such as educating working adults); and, finally,
4. transform the competitive nature of the institution to meet new challenges.

In addition, online classes offer an important complement to traditional classes for MSU students who might want to take advantage of both. MSU's own pitch for Summer Study says this:

"You have lots of choices - MSU Summer Study undergraduate and graduate courses are offered on MSU's campus in East Lansing, off-campus across the State of Michigan, online, and abroad! There's something for everyone! For MSU and guest undergraduate students, summer is a great time to take a course or two to help you get your degree

> *faster while living and working at home. A variety of elective courses are offered in off-campus locations close to home and near that summer job."*
> (http://www.summerstudy.msu.edu)

This latter part, enabling curricular, scheduling, and geographic flexibility is a key benefit for the students which we should try to preserve as much as possible while solving concerns about academic integrity. Online classes are an important part of MSU's Land Grant mission to provide broad access to higher education to people with varied means, interests, and ease of access.

C. Online Teaching and Learning at MSU

CAPA (for Computer Assisted Personalized Approach) was first used in Physics courses at MSU in 1992. (http://docs.moodle.org/20/en/Online_Learning_History) Developed by Professor Edwin Kashy, and others in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, and supported by a number of grants, the CAPA system consisted of a huge bank of practice questions that were cleverly randomized so that each student got to work with a different version of each question in a problem set or test. Currently, LON-CAPA, the successor to CAPA, is a full-featured course management system that can produce both online and paper-based exams that have the same randomizing features.

CAPA was first used in Physics classes for assignments, quizzes and examinations. (http://web.archive.org/web/20000915112215/capa2.nscl.msu.edu/homepage/) At the beginning the courses were not necessarily what we think of as online courses today, which can be taken by students living at great distances from East Lansing. An important point here is that LON-CAPA illustrated that course assessments in online learning situations can be paper-based, computer-based, and either proctored or unproctored. Thus, the creator of an online course has the wide range of choices about how to handle the administrative aspects of testing.

In 1996, in response to requests from some faculty and academic departments, MSU created the Virtual University Project, now known as MSU Virtual University Design and Technology, or vuDAT. (http://www.merit.edu/news/features/spotlight.php?story=msu1) VU produced a robust curriculum of online courses for the 1997-98 academic year. (http://web.archive.org/web/19980113122627/http://vu.msu.edu/)

vuDAT was originally conceived as a place where faculty could go for the design and development of learning materials to be used primarily in online course settings. During the early years of vuDAT the creation of online content required a fulsome mixture of content mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and programming skills. At vuDAT this was achieved by putting together a team of professionals, including faculty, to create an online course. It was virtually impossible, except in extremely rare cases, for a faculty member to develop, single-handed, an online course or program.

But technology advances. The establishment of vuDAT coincided with the development of early course management systems (CMSs), such as ANGEL or Blackboard, that included online tools for the presentation of content, testing and assessment, grade reporting, communication, and so forth. The universal adoption of (fairly) easy to use CMSs brought many of the aspects of building an online course within reach of a faculty member possessing only modest technology and computer skills. De-skilling the process has been further advanced by the proliferation of a set of computer tools to facilitate the creation of not only simple content such as text, but the incorporation of media and social networking tools into course content. Indeed, staff from vuDAT conduct frequent seminars of two days or less teaching faculty and others how to use these tools. It is now possible for a single faculty member, course management system in hand, and supplemented by a half-day's training on how to use Camtasia to make video lectures, to create what an academic department calls an online course in a matter of a few weeks. This feat of creation has been accomplished by faculty who have never before seen or taken an online course, and who have no specialized knowledge about the pedagogical differences between face-to-face and online learning.

Two further phenomena need to be mentioned to flesh out an understanding of the state of online teaching and learning at MSU. One is the almost completely hands-off policy of the university's central administration toward the process by which online courses and programs have been created. No longer having to rely on the pedagogical and technical expertise of the virtual university, departments, colleges, and even individuals, have plunged forward to create a mind boggling array of opportunities. In the beginning, online course development was not evenly distributed among colleges and departments. It usually depended on the strong commitment of one or two faculty members in a unit, or that of a knowledgeable and interested department chair or dean.

The second piece of institutional knowledge we need to complete our understanding is the huge infusion of money that subsidizes departments, schools, and colleges for their online offerings. The system worked like this: For each student registered for an online or hybrid course (now denoted by sections numbered 73x or 74x, respectively, in the Schedule of Courses) the college of the department offering the course received a payment of 75% of the lifelong tuition rate for the course for each student who was not simultaneously registered for a face-to-face course on the East Lansing campus. The current rebate scheme is no longer based on the lifelong tuition rate, but on the tuition actually paid by each student. Refer to Appendix 2 for more details about the current policy.

While the policy applies in all semesters, it has had a remarkable effect on the proliferation on online courses offered in the summer semester. (See the table below.) It is there that the payment policy has its most dramatic effect, for that is the time when enrollments by distant students is greatest, and the time when a student is most likely to be enrolled for a single course.

Departments Offering Online Courses, Online Course Sections,
and Enrollments in Online Courses, Summer 2007, 2009 and 2011

	US 2007	US 2009	US 2011
NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS	36	55	74
NUMBER OF COURSE SECTIONS	177	294	454
ENROLLMENT	6,828	10,724	17,277

Source: MSU Schedule of Courses. Totals do not include sections or enrollments when a section had no enrollment. Hybrid/blended offerings are not included.

This policy has had a second remarkable effect of providing annual payments in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and more, to individual departments, because some of MSU's colleges have chosen to transfer the income back to the departments offering the courses. Especially in times of budget stringency these payments have become a lifeline that supports the existence of graduate programs, faculty development and travel, and a host of other department services.

A third effect of the payment policy, when coupled with the administrative hands-off policy on program and course development, has been the proliferation and decentralization of the administrative models of how courses are produced, maintained, promoted, and offered to students. For example, some departments have chosen to have only the developing faculty members teach their online courses, while others have faculty create the courses and then pass the actual teaching of sections off to other faculty, or more likely, graduate assistants. In some departments, both models are followed. Some departments offer their online courses only in the summer semester (regardless of how they are staffed), while others offer some or all of their courses year-round. Some departments employ a professional staff of course developers to assist faculty, the content experts, in course design and maintenance. Some departments use fixed-term faculty to create online course content, while others simply direct graduate assistants whom they assign to summer teaching duties to "make the course you're teaching completely online" without providing training in online teaching techniques and methods, and without providing professional assistance.

Some of the most interesting variations across departments offering online courses is the variety of approaches taken to testing and assessment.

ASSESSMENT MODELS IN ONLINE AND FACE-TO-FACE COURSES

To help clarify our thinking, we divide the modes of assessment into two kinds, exams and essays-prepared-outside-class. We focus on exams, which can be either paper-based (traditional) exams, or computer-based. Essays-prepared-outside-class present an identical set of familiar problems, whether a class is being offered online or face-to-face. Each kind of exam carries with it its own problems and possibilities in terms of Thrun's issues of cheating and identity verification.

A. **Paper exams.**

Paper-based exams can be given in a traditional classroom setting, or at a distance, sometimes very far from the East Lansing campus. For face-to-face courses, paper exams are traditionally given during class time, in regular classrooms. For online courses, the options are more complicated. Students in online courses who reside in or near East Lansing may take paper exams in traditional classrooms in face-to-face proctored settings. For students residing far from East Lansing, distant paper-based exams can be proctored or not, but as a practical matter they are usually proctored because of the need to handle the paper, and transmit the answers. The proctoring for distant exams can and does vary widely in terms of the expertise and professionalism of the proctors. For example, some instructors have used testing centers operated by colleges and universities, armed forces testing centers, public libraries, and even testing centers operated by for-profit firms (Disney World, or firms' human resource units). Others have relied on faculty members in study abroad programs, or even dispatched teaching assistants to distant locations. Some testing centers may charge a fee that varies from center to center. The 11 testing centers in Michigan that are members of the National College Testing Association (including MSU) charge fees that average slightly over twenty dollars per test.

If a student takes a test using a professional testing center, as opposed to a public library (which traditionally will do testing for free), there is the issue of who pays, the student or department offering the course, as well as the need to settle on the mechanics of payment or reimbursement. The decentralized nature of online teaching and learning means that the responsibility for proctoring arrangements is left to individual departments, and even individual faculty members. This means not only that the details of proctoring arrangements vary widely, but also that the units and faculty members may absorb directly any costs that are incurred. These costs include the time spent arranging for proctors, and the costs of communicating with proctors about exam details, the actual mechanics of getting exams to proctors, and getting the test results back to the instructor for grading. A lack of consistent policies for arranging distant exams leads to significant and probably undesirable differences in students' costs across courses and departments. The reader should be aware of the contrast between this situation and the traditional policies for off-campus teaching and learning in which staff in the Registrar's Office arranged for rooms when they were required, whether in Grand Rapids, Bloomfield Hills, or some other in-state location.

B. **Computer-based exams**

Computer-based exams can be either proctored or unproctored. And computer-based exams can be appropriate for both traditional face-to-face courses, and for blended and online courses. Recall that the LON-CAPA course management system can be and is used in face-to-face, as well as online courses. LON-CAPA presents an ideal technology for computer-based testing, whether the courses in which it is used are online, blended, or face-to-face. So it is important to realize that computer-based testing is relevant for all instructional modes, and in instances that involve both on-campus and distant assessment.

Regrettably, the proliferation of online courses, and the increased revenue they generate, has not been accompanied by a corresponding concern for academic integrity by, for example,

checking the identities of students taking exams online. Indeed, many courses now offer online exams using ANGEL without identity checking, other than the need for a log-on ID and password, and no way for instructors to know what materials students may be accessing during the exam. Currently at MSU the numbers of students enrolled in such courses are in the thousands. In a now notorious case involving such unproctored exams, a student outside the Lansing Area advertised on Craig's List for someone to take her exams in her economics course. The case came to light only because a recent MSU alumnus saw the ad, and reported the details to the department.

More nebulous and harder to document are reports of the low quality of some online courses. Members of the taskforce report a general feeling among some students that online courses are easier than their face-to-face counterparts, and that cheating is rampant. Students in pre-professional fields report that they are discouraged from taking online classes by medical and dental school advisors. Other concerned groups include the NCAA, which is reportedly considering limiting or eliminating the opportunity for student-athletes to take online courses, and a number of accrediting agencies, especially the agencies with responsibility for certifying and accrediting professional programs. Assessment systems that fail to check IDs face-to-face and use proctors expose the university to a variety of risks and grounds for criticism.

At present, instructors wanting to use proctored computer-based exams face formidable obstacles, especially if they are teaching large-enrollment courses. The options available for creating proctored testing venues are to use existing microcomputer labs, microcomputer labs supplemented by allowing students to bring their own laptop computers, or using a combination of microlabs and regular classrooms with sufficient wireless access points. It is not currently feasible to require students to bring their own laptops for testing because MSU does not have a laptop requirement. Even if it did, instructors' experiences show that even giving the students the option of bringing their own laptops is fraught with problems, such as malfunctioning Ethernet cards, students not having required software such as browsers installed, and other mechanical problems.

In large-enrollment classes, instructors wanting to use proctored, computer-based testing face a special set of problems, in addition to those mentioned above. For example, the largest microcomputer lab on campus has only about 50 seats, and the average computer lab has only about 25 to 30 seats. For a class of 250 students, the logistics are daunting – approximately 10 microcomputer labs would be needed, scattered among several buildings, and each room would require at least one proctor. As there is no central support for mass scheduling of computer labs, every exam in a course using this system requires substantial faculty and/or unit resources.

Virginia Tech solved this problem back in the 1990s with its well-known Math Emporium. They converted a nearby, out-of-business K-Mart to a testing facility. More recently Penn State has created a testing center dedicated to providing computer-based, proctored testing for all face-to-face, blended, and online courses. More information on the Penn State center appears in the recommendations section below.

Using computer-based exams in online courses, because those courses often have at least some students who do not reside in the East Lansing area, presents another difficulty, that of

finding a distant testing facility that can handle the demands of secure, online testing. While finding proctoring for tests using paper exams can be relatively easy, using computer-based exams presents complications of additional cost and equipment, making it possible a distant student could not find appropriate testing facilities at a reasonable cost and distance from home.

The lack of central support for computer-based testing facilities with proctoring support has created a significant incentive to forego the proctoring part of the problem. This, in turn, has led to widespread use in online courses of computer-based exams of various kinds. Indeed it is current practice in some online courses to conduct all testing online in non-proctored settings.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The *ad hoc* committee believes strongly in the efficacy of face-to-face proctoring for exams for online courses. Indeed, we have concluded it is the only way to deal with Thrun's issues of cheating and identity verification. The problems of cheating, and identity verification are documented, large in scale, and urgent, and we owe it to ourselves and our stakeholders to solve them.

This doesn't mean that all assessment must take place in face-to-face proctored situations – after all, we have a long and successful history of assessment using problems and essays prepared outside of the classroom. What it does suggest is that, in those disciplines and courses that use proctored exams as the best assessment option in traditional instruction, proctoring should be used in online versions of those courses as well. We see this as the intention of the Provost's recommended changes to the Code of Teaching Responsibility, and the Integrity of Scholarship and Grades. (See the attachments to the letter of 11/11/10 from the Provost to the Executive Committee of Academic Council in APPENDIX 3).

We divide our recommendations into three parts, which vary in how long we believe they would take to implement.

Short-term Recommendations – Implementation in weeks to months

1) The *ad hoc* committee urges the governance system to adopt the recommendations put forth by the Provost's Office to amend the Code of Teaching Responsibility, and the Integrity of Scholarship and Grades.
2) MSU should establish a central office that departments and individual faculty could call upon to make arrangements for students to take proctored exams in online courses at distant locations. We envision this office being similar to the Registrar's Office current services for providing classrooms at distant locations for off-campus courses. The costs of these services should be paid for by a small reduction (sufficient to pay the costs) in the tuition rebates provided to colleges under the current system. Students should not have to pay any costs associated with the proctoring arrangements, such as proctoring fees charged by existing testing centers at distant locations.

3) It should be part of the normal duties of MSU faculty on Study Abroad Programs to administer proctored exams for students in online courses who are also part of a Study Abroad program.

Medium-term Recommendations – Implementation within a year

4) MSU should work to establish a network of testing centers and/or proctors *throughout the State of Michigan* that would provide proctoring services for students in online courses. This network could consist of existing testing centers that are members of the National College Testing Association, as well as other colleges and universities, community colleges, intermediate school districts, and others. As in recommendation 2) above, the committee recommends that any testing fees be paid by MSU, and not as an additional charge to the student.

Longer-term Recommendations – Implementation in 1 to 3 years and beyond

5) In the spirit of wider application of recommendation 4), MSU should establish a network of more testing partners throughout the CIC, and nationally.

6) MSU should establish an online, large scale online testing facility that would support secure, proctored computer assessments for all departments and schools. The center should be on a large scale that could handle both large and small class sections, and operate with generous hours that would correspond to at least the existing meeting times for classes, roughly 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on days the university is open.

Precedents for setting up such computer labs exist on other university campuses. Virginia Tech has for many years supported the "Math Emporium," a converted K-Mart adjacent to their campus that handles exams for online math courses. See http://www.emporium.vt.edu/. The Emporium is open to students 24/7 while the semester is in session. While the Math Emporium was designed as both a laboratory space and an assessment space, the space we propose for MSU would be solely an assessment facility.

Our sister Land Grant university, Penn State, has recently set up a testing center for the administration of online exams for online, blended, and face-to-face classes. The Penn State Testing Center, a dedicated facility, provides 161 seats. More information can be found at these two web sites: http://testing.psu.edu/Faculty/Faculty_FAQs
                        http://testing.psu.edu/Testimonials/

We see the establishment of a large scale facility to support online assessments as an important complement to face-to-face course offerings, and not only a facility to support online instruction. Many face-to-face course instructors in larger course sections would benefit greatly from the ability to give proctored online exams in secure settings. For example, it is increasingly difficult for faculty who teach large courses to schedule rooms during their examination times (rooms are simply not available). This dictates that students sit next to each other (no empty seat between students) during exams for more than 500 students.

APPENDIX 1

Statement on Academic Integrity from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education,
"Distance Education Programs: Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance
Education (Online Learning)."

9. The institution assures the integrity of its online offerings*.

Analysis/Evidence:

➤ The institution has in place effective procedures through which to ensure that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The institution makes clear in writing that these processes protect student privacy and notifies students at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional costs associated with the verification procedures. **(Note: This is a federal requirement. All institutions that offer distance education programs *must* demonstrate compliance with this requirement.)**;

➤ The institution's policies on academic integrity include explicit references to online learning;

➤ Issues of academic integrity are discussed during the orientation for online students;

➤ Training for faculty members engaged in online learning includes consideration of issues of academic integrity, including ways to reduce cheating.

*Institutions are encouraged to consult *Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education*, prepared by WCET and available at http://www.wcet.info/2.0/

APPENDIX 2

Current MSU Policy on Tuition Rebates to Colleges
for Enrollments in Online and Hybrid Courses

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

November 2, 2011

MEMORANDUM

To: College Budget Staff

From: Dave Byelich, Assistant Vice President and Director of Planning & Budgets

Subject: Online Course Section Credit-Hour Support

Listed below are the current practices for online and hybrid/blended course support.

This clarification is intended to answer questions received in the Office of Planning and Budgets. I would appreciate any comments or suggestions as we work toward improving the process for subsequent years.

Online Course Section (730-739) Credit-Hour Support
- For each student who is taking an online course and is not concurrently enrolled in on-campus courses, his/her SCH's will be eligible for support. Eligible students will be examined for residency and their SCH's will be multiplied by the tuition fee rate paid by each eligible student in the course times 0.75

- This methodology applies to all terms (Fall semester, Spring semester, Summer session).

- For summer semester only, units offering online courses may not receive both Summer School funding and revenue from the Off Campus Credit Instruction pass-through process received annually on allocation letters. Beginning in summer 2011 units will need to select which type of funding they would like to be eligible for.

Hybrid/Blended Course Section (740-749)
- Hybrid/blended courses are subject to the rules outlined above for online courses.

- Methodology applies to all terms (Fall semester, Spring semester, Summer session)

- For summer semester only, units offering online courses may not receive both Summer School funding Office and revenue from the Off Campus Credit Instruction pass-through process received annually on allocation letters. Beginning in summer 2011 units will need to select which type of funding they would like to be eligible for.

Courses that are part of an online degree program approved for special tuition rates are subject to conditions established at the outset of the respective program.
- For these special rates, visit:
  http://www.ctlr.msu.edu/COStudentAccounts/Tuition_Fees.aspx

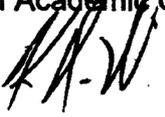C: Linda O. Stanford, Associate Provost for Academic Services

APPENDIX 3
Provost's Proposal to Amend the Code of Teaching Responsibility and Integrity of Scholarship
and Grades – Proctoring
November 11, 2010

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

November 11, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Committee of Academic Council

FROM: Kim A. Wilcox, Provost

RE: Proposal to Amend the Code of Teaching Responsibility
and Integrity of Scholarship and Grades - Proctoring

I forward to ECAC a request to amend the Code of Teaching
Responsibility and Integrity of Scholarship and Grades - Proctoring. The
request is prompted by a growing need, particularly with the expansion of
online and hybrid instruction, to be explicit about arrangements for
proctoring student work. Issues related to when, how, and whom is
responsible for proctoring student work require serious consideration by
the faculty, and clear communication to students.

I ask for referral to appropriate standing committees for consideration of
this proposal.

Attachments

**OFFICE OF THE
PROVOST**

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

November 5, 2010

To: Kim A. Wilcox, Provost

Fr: Linda O. Stanford, Associate Provost for Academic Services

Re: Request for Policy Changes to the Code of Teaching Responsibility and Integrity of
        Scholarship and Grades - **Proctoring**.

REQUEST:

In fairness to students, there is a need to be explicit if proctoring is required. In certain
instances assessment of student performance cannot occur with accuracy unless the instructor
requires proctoring. If proctoring is required, it should be stated in the syllabus.

The following three changes to current policy are proposed for all instruction and delivery
models.

1. Code of Teaching Responsibility:

   2. Course Syllabi section - **add**: "any required proctoring arrangements."
      This does not infer proctoring is required but if proctoring is required, then it
      must be listed on the syllabus.

2. Code of Teaching Responsibility:

   3. Student Assessment and Final Grades section - **add**: "Assessment methods should
      be appropriate to the learning objectives of the course. In that context,
      instructors are expected to take reasonable steps to create an assessment
      environment that promotes academic integrity. If proctoring or other security
      measures are necessary to ensure integrity of assessments, then such
      measures should be administered consistently in all course delivery methods,
      e.g. face-to-face or online."

3. Integrity of Scholarship and Grades:

   Item 1. - **add**: "proctoring" to the third sentence in item 1. to read: "Practices that
   maintain the integrity of scholarship and grades include providing accurate
   information for academic and admission records, adherence to unit-approved
   proféssional standards and honor codes, proctoring, and completion of original
   academic work by the student to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any
   kind."

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1 of 2

BACKGROUND:

With ongoing changes in delivery methods (online, hybrid, face-to-face) including expansion of the number of online courses, how to proctor a course has become increasingly important. The most salient reasons to propose policy changes relate to the need for refined ways to assess student performance, detect student surrogates, and support pedagogical innovation.

Assessment of Student Performance.

It is difficult to assess the performance of a student in a course if the instructor cannot authenticate who the student is.

Student Surrogates.

If the examination setting is not proctored, then the possibility of a surrogate taking the examination is enhanced. Inadvertent condoning of this situation is unfair to honest students. Making it easy for surrogacy to thrive fosters an environment that renders the university in violation of best practices and the spirit of the Code of Teaching Responsibility, http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/facacadhandbooks/facultyhandbook/codeofteaching.htm.

> The key phrase in item 3 is: "Instructors shall be responsible for assessing a student's performance based on announced criteria and on standards of academic achievement."
>
> The phrase, "student's performance based on standards of academic achievement," places responsibility for examination security squarely on the instructor. Instructors already take reasonable measures to assure that academic dishonestly does not occur. Being clear, a priori, that proctoring may be or is required in a course is an important part of effective communication.

Pedagogical Innovation.

Faculty perceive pedagogical limitations with online delivery models and may employ hybrid models rather than totally online models simply because there is difficulty with accurate authentication for interactive assessment including performance on examinations.

Attachment: draft Academic Programs catalog text

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V. INSTRUCTION *(Cont.)*

This policy was approved by the Academic Council on November 4, 1969 and the Academic Senate on November 19, 1969; it was subsequently revised by Academic Council on May 19, 1976, February 27, 1996, and April 19, 2005 (effective Fall semester 2005).

Satisfaction of teaching responsibilities by instructional staff members (herein referred to as instructors) is essential to the successful functioning of a university. This University conceives these responsibilities to be so important that performance by instructors in meeting the provisions of this Code shall be taken into consideration in determining salary increases, tenure, and promotion.

1. **Course content:** Instructors shall be responsible for ensuring that the content of the courses they teach is consistent with the course descriptions approved by the University Committee on Curriculum and the Academic Council. Instructors shall direct class activities toward the fulfillment of course objectives and shall evaluate student performance in a manner consistent with these objectives.
2. **Course syllabi:** Instructors shall be responsible for distributing a course syllabus (either in print or electronic form) at the beginning of the semester. The syllabus shall minimally include:
   o instructional objectives;
   o instructor contact information and office hours;
   o grading criteria and methods used to determine final course grades;
   o date of the final examination and tentative dates of required assignments, quizzes, and tests, if applicable;
   o attendance policy, if different from the University attendance policy and especially when that attendance policy affects student grades; and
   o required and recommended course materials to be purchased, including textbooks and supplies.
   o any required proctoring arrangements.
3. **Student Assessment and Final Grades:** Instructors shall be responsible for informing students, in a timely manner so as to enhance learning, of the grading criteria and methods used to determine grades on individual assignments. Instructors shall be responsible for assessing a student's performance based on announced criteria and on standards of academic achievement. Instructors shall submit final course grades in accordance with University deadlines. Assessment methods should be appropriate to the learning objectives of a course. In that context, instructors are expected to take reasonable steps to create an assessment environment that promotes academic integrity. If proctoring or other security measures are necessary to ensure integrity of assessments, then such measures should be administered consistently in all course delivery methods, e.g. face-to-face or online.
4. **Testing Documents:** Instructors shall be responsible for returning to students student answers to quizzes, tests, and examinations with such promptness to enhance the learning experience. Instructors shall retain final examination answers for at least one semester to allow students to review or to retrieve them. All testing questions (whether on quizzes, tests, or mid-semester or final examinations) are an integral part of course materials, and the decision whether to allow students to retain them is left to the discretion of the instructor.

5. **Term Papers and Comparable Projects:** Instructors shall be responsible for returning to students student term papers and other comparable projects with sufficient promptness to enhance the learning experience. Term papers and other comparable projects are the property of students who prepare them. Instructors shall retain such unclaimed course work for at least one semester to allow students to retrieve such work. Instructors have a right to retain a copy of student course work for their own files.
6. **Class Meetings:** Instructors shall be responsible for meeting their classes regularly and at scheduled times. To allow units to take appropriate action, instructors shall notify their units if they are to be absent and have not made suitable arrangements regarding their classes.
7. **Applicability of the Code of Teaching Responsibility to Student Assistants:** Instructors of courses in which assistants are authorized to perform teaching, grading, or other instructional functions shall be responsible for acquainting such individuals with the provisions of this Code and for monitoring their compliance.
8. **Instructor Accessibility to Students:** Instructors shall be responsible for being accessible to students outside of class time and therefore shall schedule and keep office hours for student conferences. Office hours should be scheduled at times convenient to both students and instructors with the additional option of mutually convenient prearranged appointments for students whose schedules conflict with announced office hours. Each teaching unit shall determine the minimum number of office hours for instructors in that unit. Instructors who serve as academic advisors also shall be responsible for maintaining appropriate office hours before and during enrollment periods. In addition to office hours, instructor accessibility through e-mail and other means is encouraged.
9. **Commercialization of Course Notes and Materials:** The University prohibits students from commercializing their notes of lectures and University-provided class materials *without the written consent of the instructor.* Instructors may allow commercialization by including permission in the course syllabus or other written statement distributed to all students in the class.

Hearing Procedures

1. Students may register complaints regarding an instructor's failure to comply with the provisions of the *Code of Teaching Responsibility* directly with that instructor.
2. Students may also take complaints directly to teaching units' chief administrators or their designates. If those persons are unable to resolve matters to the student's satisfaction, they are obligated to transmit written complaints to unit committees charged with hearing such complaints. A copy of any complaint transmitted shall be sent to the instructor. A written report of the action or recommendation of such groups will be forwarded to the student and to the instructor, normally within ten working days of the receipt of the complaint.
3. Complaints coming to the University Ombudsman will be reported, in writing, to chief administrators of the teaching units involved when in the Ombudsman's opinion a hearing appears necessary. It will be the responsibility of chief administrators or their designates to inform the instructor and to refer such unresolved complaints to the unit committees charged with hearing such complaints. A written report of the action or recommendation of such groups will be forwarded to the University Ombudsman, to the student, and to the instructor, normally within ten working days of the receipt of the complaint.
4. Students wishing to appeal a teaching unit action or recommendation may do so as outlined in *Academic Freedom Report for Students at Michigan State University,*

Such complaints must normally be initiated no later than the middle of the semester following the one wherein alleged violations occurred. Exceptions shall be made in cases where the involved instructor or student is absent from the University during the semester following the one wherein alleged violations occurred.

Integrity of Scholarship and Grades

The following statement of university policy addresses principles and procedures to be used in instances of academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records, herein after referred to as academic misconduct. [See General Student Regulation 1.00, Protection of Scholarship and Grades.]

1. The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of scholars. The university expects both instructors and students to honor these principles and, in so doing, to protect the validity of university education and grades. Practices that maintain the integrity of scholarship and grades include providing accurate information for academic and admission records, adherence to unit-approved professional standards and honor codes, proctoring, and completion of original academic work by the student to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. To encourage adherence to the principles of truth and honesty, instructors should exercise care in planning and supervising academic work.

2. If an instructor alleges a student has committed an act of academic misconduct, the instructor is responsible for taking appropriate action. Depending on the instructor's judgment of a specific instance, the instructor may give the student a penalty grade. A penalty grade may be a reduced score or grade for the assignment or a reduced grade for the course. [For a definition of "penalty grade", see Academic Freedom Report (AFR) 8.1.15 and Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR) 8.1.15.]

3. When an instructor gives an undergraduate or graduate student a penalty grade for academic misconduct, the instructor must provide a written description of the details of the academic misconduct to the student and to the student's academic dean. The student's academic dean will add the written description to the student's academic record, where it will remain, unless the student successfully grieves the allegation.

4. In notifying the student's academic dean of the student's act of academic misconduct, the instructor may request the student's academic dean to initiate an academic disciplinary hearing to impose sanctions in addition to, or other than, a penalty grade.

5. When in the judgment of the student's academic dean, a sanction in addition to, or other than, a penalty grade is warranted (e.g., dismissal from a unit or program), the dean may call for an academic disciplinary hearing. In calling for an academic disciplinary hearing, the student's academic dean may act independently or in response to a request by the instructor. [See AFR 4.3.1.1, GSRR 5.5.2, and Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities (MSRR) 5.1.3.1.]

6. A student accused of academic misconduct may request an academic grievance hearing to contest the allegation before the appropriate hearing board of the department, school, or college in which the alleged academic dishonesty occurred. In

cases involving academic misconduct, no student may be dismissed from a course or program of study without an academic disciplinary hearing.

7. On the first offense of academic misconduct, the student must attend an educational program on academic integrity and academic misconduct provided by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Undergraduate Studies for undergraduate students and the Dean of The Graduate School for graduate students.

8. In cases involving undergraduate students in which the student's academic dean, or designee, calls for an academic disciplinary hearing, the student's academic dean will refer the case to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education. The Associate Provost will notify the student in writing of the call for a disciplinary hearing and will invite the student to a meeting to determine the appropriate judiciary for the hearing. [See AFR 4.3.1.1.]

9. In cases involving graduate students in which the student's academic dean, or designee, calls for an academic disciplinary hearing, the student's academic dean will refer the case to the Dean of The Graduate School. The Dean of The Graduate School will notify the student in writing of the call for a disciplinary hearing and will invite the student to a meeting to determine the appropriate judiciary for the hearing. At this meeting, the student will be asked to select either an administrative disciplinary hearing conducted by the Dean of The Graduate School or a disciplinary hearing conducted by the college hearing board within the student's college. In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction involving graduate students, the Dean of The Graduate School will select the appropriate judiciary. [See GSRR 5.5.2.]

10. Either party may appeal a decision of an administrative disciplinary hearing or a disciplinary hearing board to the appropriate appellate board. [See AFR 2.4.7.1, GSRR 5.5.2.1, and MSRR 5.8.1.]

Examinations

In keeping with university practice, entry into, and participation in, course examinations is controlled through electronic and visual means and by proctored examination site procedures.

In certain courses, such as those offered online, an individual student may be required to arrange to take examinations in a proctored environment away from campus. Any costs associated with taking such proctored examinations are the responsibility of the student. The Michigan State University Testing Office is a proctored-testing site for distance learning, www.testingoffice.msu.edu/. It is a member of the Consortium of College Testing Centers which is a free referral service provided by the National College Testing Association to facilitate distance learning, www.ncta-testing.org.

Current – no proposed changes