**Best Practices for Online Testing Recommendations**

**On12/2/2013, the Psychology Department faculty members voted to endorse the recommendations below:**

1. Consider specifically covering the Texas State Honor Pledge with students and requiring a contract with students that they will respect the Honor Code on all assignments.
   1. This should be done prior to completion of any assignments. Professors may also consider incorporating agreement to abide by the Honor Code (which is possible in TRACS) into all assignments.
2. Clearly define academic dishonesty in all forms and clearly define what level of working together is acceptable (and, conversely, what is unacceptable group work) for each assignment.
   1. This may include a specific policy statement or reference to websites defining plagiarism and cheating, the consequences of academic dishonesty, and/or specific written guidelines for each assignment. It is also wise to be very clear about expectations (noted below) for completing examinations within acceptable parameters (e.g., time allowed, whether the student can return to the exam at a later time).
3. Use a greater number of low-stakes (i.e., low value as a percentage of the total course grade) assessments, including discussion groups and frequent, short quizzes.
   1. Use of such assessment types may discourage cheating either as a function of the assignment (e.g., discussion) or the relatively low assigned value for the assessment (e.g., short quizzes).
4. Consider use of written assignments such as position papers, case studies or evaluations of research that allow for outside validation of academic integrity.
   1. Such assignments tend to discourage plagiarism and cheating by allowing for use of integrity checks like the turnitin.com service, provided students are aware that the professor will use such tools. For instructor support on turnitin.com, see: http://www.its.txstate.edu/departments/etc/turnitin/turnitinsupport.html
5. When possible, use face-to-face or online proctoring services for higher-stakes (i.e., high value in terms of total grade) examinations.
   1. Use of such proctoring services can act as a direct countermeasure against cheating by assuring that no outside materials are used and that the time limit for the examination is respected.
   2. Exam proctoring service is available to students at Texas State for a fee. Keep in mind that processing time required for proctored exams can be 1-2 weeks, which can pose a problem for posting grade in the case of final exams. For details, see: http://www.txstate.edu/trec/studentTesting/proctoredExamService.html
6. If outside proctoring is not possible or advisable, we recommend the following procedures for higher-stakes online tests:
   1. Use a test bank with a much larger number of potential items than will be used on the exam, as this discourages copying and dissemination of items. In TRACS, this can be accomplished using Question Pools.
   2. Randomly order both items used and the answer choices given, eliminating the likelihood that exam takers will encounter the same questions in the same order.
   3. Require that the student complete the examination in one sitting. This can present problems for students with inconsistent internet connections, as a lost connection appears as an attempt to leave the exam and will prevent reentry to the exam at a later time. If tests must be completed in one sitting, encourage students to take examinations in environments where the internet connection is expected to be secure and consistent (e.g., at this or another university, a library)
   4. A similar but less restrictive measure is to allow for reentry to the test but to restrict availability to the examination to a set, relatively short time period (e.g., 24 hours).
   5. Consider requiring that the individual’s web browser be “locked down” during test access to prevent use of the internet to answer test questions.
   6. Change the questions used from semester to semester to prevent groups of students from cataloging the test questions used and passing them onto future students or posting them in an online forum.
   7. Consider using items that rely less of rote knowledge, such as definitions, and more on integration or application of learned material. Questions based on rote knowledge provide easier opportunities for academic dishonesty than questions with more open ended questions. Furthermore, questions with multiple potential correct answers (depending on correct application of the material learned) are also harder to circumvent dishonestly.
7. Avoid providing specific feedback on quizzes or examinations (whether proctored or not) until all students have completed the assignment.
   1. Choosing to give feedback only when the assignment has been completed by all students limits the likelihood that students will provide correct answers and/or “coaching” to other students in the class.