

Survey Overview

The UASU Department of Research and Advocacy conducted this student survey from February 24th to March 1st, 2021, using the UASU Perks platform. We took measures to minimize self-selection bias among the 637 respondents who took this survey: for example, while the survey was clearly labelled as anonymous, its focus on academic integrity was only apparent once respondents had begun the survey. We feel their candid responses are reasonably representative of undergraduate student attitudes and behaviors. Some key points emerged:

- 40% (30% a little, 10% a lot) feel more pressure to cheat now than before COVID.
- 41% (30% somewhat, 11% much) feel that the expectations, rules, lines, and standards of academic integrity are less clear than they were before COVID.
- However, despite these pressures, the percentage of students who break academic integrity in any way, even just sometimes copying someone's homework, has only increased from 5% to 11%. A few students selected 'prefer not to say,' and that percentage had an even smaller increase.
- Virtually all of the students who mentioned increased academic integrity violations faced increased pressure or urge to cheat. However, the vast majority (77%) of students who are facing the most severe pressure or urge to cheat still choose not to cheat.

Sample Composition

Respondents by year of study:

- 1: 27%
- 2: 21%
- 3: 19%
- 4: 19%
- 5+: 10%
- N/A: 4%

Respondents by faculty:

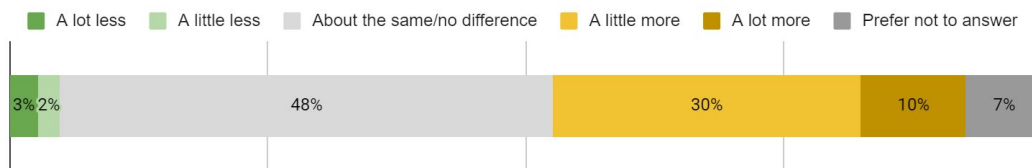
- Broadly representative, including undergraduates from all faculties as well as a small number of graduate students.
- The turnout from the Faculty of Science was especially strong (137 of 637 respondents).

To make responses as candid as possible, we asked no demographic questions.

Pressure to Cheat

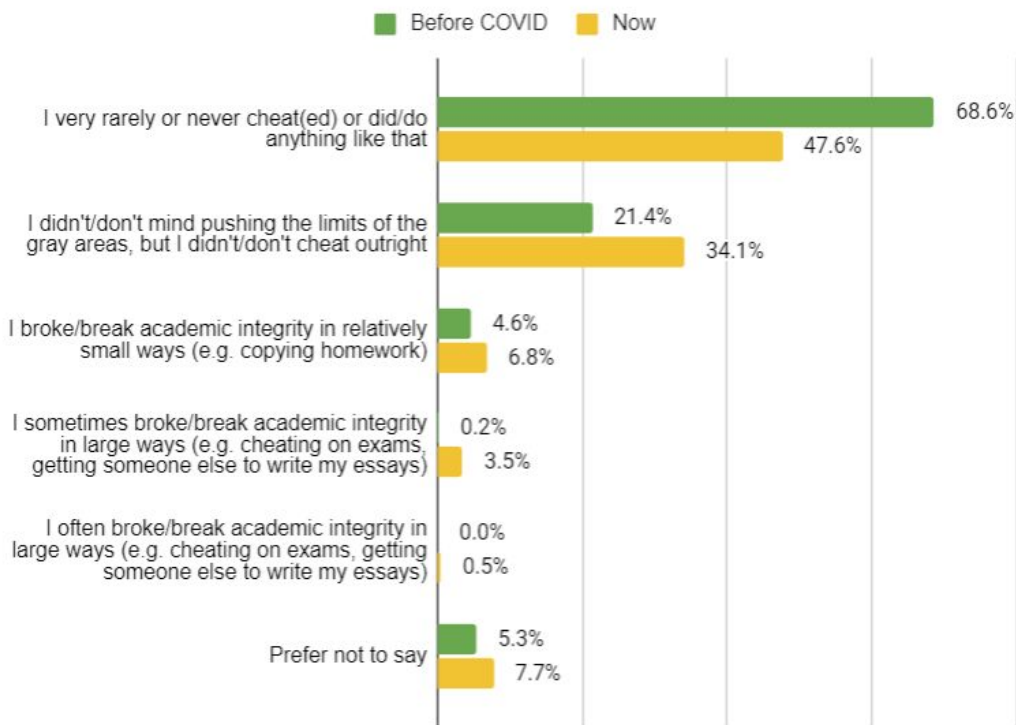
- Q1: "A lot of people say students cheat more during COVID, and we know it's more complicated, so please help us understand what's really going on. Like all Perks surveys, this one's totally anonymous. Do you feel more pressure/urge to cheat on your schoolwork than you did before COVID?"

Fully 40% of respondents feel more pressure or urge to cheat than they did before the pandemic began. However, as shown in the following questions, this huge increase in pressure translates into only a modest increase in actual cheating. Even among students who report the most pressure or urge to cheat, the vast majority do not.



Self-Reported Academic Integrity

- Q2: "Before COVID, what was your approach to academic integrity? (Pick the answer that comes closest.)"
- Q3: "Right now, what's your approach to academic integrity? (Pick the answer that comes closest.)"



Comparing Academic Integrity to Pressure Levels

We took a closer look at the small cohort of respondents who self-reported as breaking academic integrity more under COVID.

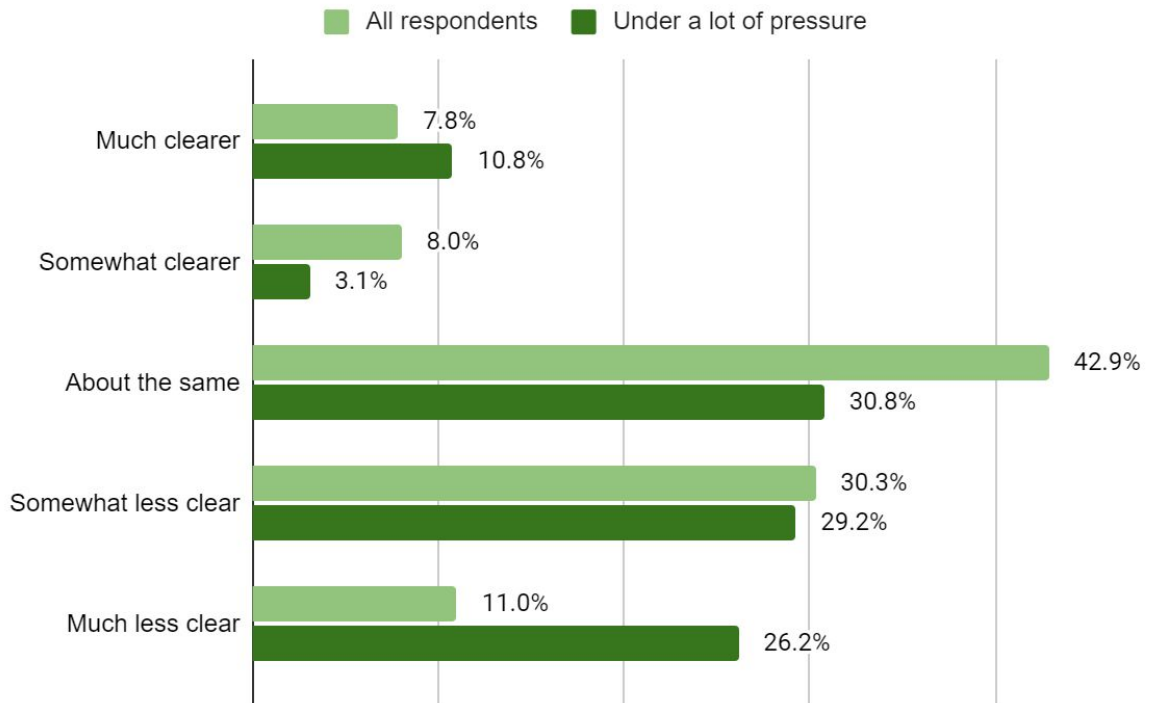
- 29 respondents said they break academic integrity in relatively small ways (e.g. copying homework) but did not say the same before COVID. Among these respondents, 89.7% faced increased pressure/urge to cheat, compared to 40% of the sample.
- 22 respondents said they sometimes break academic integrity in larger ways (e.g. cheating on exams, getting others to write their papers), but did not say the same before COVID. Among these respondents, 90.9% faced increased pressure/urge to cheat.
- A very small number of respondents said they frequently break academic integrity in larger ways, and none said the same before COVID. All of these respondents faced increased pressure/urge to cheat.

These numbers would encompass some students looking to justify their choices to themselves. However, the numbers strongly suggest that those students who are now choosing to cheat are under significant pressure to do so.

For an alternative angle, we took a close look at the 65 students who said they now faced a lot more pressure/urge to cheat. Of these students, only 15 (23.1%) said they sometimes or (in very few cases) frequently cheat in major ways. While this is a significant increase from the ~4% of the sample who sometimes or frequently cheat in major ways, it conclusively demonstrates that students retain their freedom of choice. The vast majority of students who are facing severe pressure choose not to cheat.

Clarity of Expectations

- Q4: "Compared to before COVID, are the expectations/rules/standards/lines of academic integrity CLEARER now, or LESS CLEAR?"



41% of respondents said the expectations are somewhat or much less clear. Looking specifically at the 65 students who face the most pressure or urge to cheat, that number rises to 55%. While the direction of causality is not clear, it is concerning that the students under the most pressure to cheat are also the least clear on where the line actually is. This suggests that efforts to improve awareness of academic integrity could potentially have a disproportionate impact under COVID, and even reduce student stress levels for those who need it most.