

# Academic Integrity Survey Report

UASU Perks survey, September 20-23, 2021 (n=1241)

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## Sample and Platform

UASU Perks (perks.uasu.ca) is a gamification platform. UAlberta students earn points for activities like checking in at events, participating in a donor-backed vaccination promotion contest, or taking small surveys. Students can redeem points for real-world goods (e.g. branded socks or mugs).

This survey (September 20-23, 2021) received 1241 unique responses. Most respondents were undergraduates; around 5% identified as graduate students or recent graduates.

> Convenience sample collected through UASU Perks, a gamified student engagement platform.

> Primarily undergraduate students, distributed across faculties and years of study.

## Overview

This survey was co-developed with VP Academic Abner Monteiro and the other members of the University's Academic Integrity Working Group.

The survey comprises five substantive questions (three multiple-choice and two text fields), and the Perks system automatically collects both faculty and year of study.

> Co-developed with the University's Academic Integrity Working Group.

## Obstacles to Academic Integrity

**"What kinds of factors impact your ability to follow standards of academic integrity?"**

Students provided over 3000 words of text responses to this question. Many students affirmed that they avoid compromising their academic integrity.

> Many respondents stated that they do not compromise academic integrity, out of principle and/or fear.

Other representative or noteworthy responses by year of study:

### FIRST YEAR

- Actually **understanding** [the standards].
- **Ambiguity** with instructions, pressure from **peers**.
- Being able to do actual quizzes in the same environment (online, at home) as practice quizzes. **Checking answers for practice quizzes becomes a habit** because you want to know that you are doing

> First-year students struggled with isolation and unclear standards.



the work correctly. The lack of an environment change **makes the actual quiz not feel like the real thing.**

- **Being online and unseen.**
- Fear of getting a bad grade, fear of flunking out of school and disappointing my family. To be honest, I'm **more afraid of being accused of plagiarism when I'm actually innocent** (like if I plagiarized by accident, or something).
- Freedom to use whatever **resource.**
- How the prof teaches and if it's **nothing like the exams.**
- **I don't know where the line is.**
- **Impossible standards** or too high of stakes.
- My **ADHD** inhibits my ability to conform to standard expectations of students (i.e. time expected for a student to complete a test or assignment) and I will find myself **taking loopholes to get assignments done on time.** When I see students in a similar situation as myself, **I rarely ever hesitate to offer my work** as an example or reference because I know how difficult it can be and how much that can help - even though I know there is a chance that they might plagiarize me, I'd rather have that than allow someone to feel so stressed and ultimately stupid.
- **Not knowing if something is allowed and not being able to check.**
- **Self doubt** and wanting to confirm my answers.
- **Sleep deprivation and limited time.**
- They're so strict I'm **scared of breaking the rules by accident.**

## SECOND YEAR

- **Access to teaching aids** (ex. TAs, office hours, additional resources), weight of a respective project, or perhaps time constraints.
- Being punished for **not knowing what academic integrity is right out of high school.**
- **Clearly explained expectations** surrounding assignments and assessments.

> Second-year students struggled with unclear expectations, access to appropriate resources, lack of help from instructors and TAs, burnout/fatigue, and worry that all their peers are cheating.



- **Confusion:** am I allowed to talk to friends about the concepts the questions are asking?
- Desire for top marks, lack of accountability, **exhaustion with an assignment/topic**, lack of understanding on a subject.
- **Don't copy someone unless they tell you you can.**
- Fairness, having exams test **what I actually know/learned.**
- Feeling **burnt out**; difficulty to find motivation to do schoolwork.
- Hearing other people say how easy it is to cheat, **it feels unfair that they get good grades but don't work for it.**
- I am a horrible goody-goody and doing something wrong would haunt me and make me feel unworthy and like I can't succeed for real. Also getting caught. HOWEVER when I know for a fact that the entire rest of the class is cheating (online classes...) **At what point do you let yourself fail** because the grade distribution is getting skewed?
- I'm worried about an assignment for one of my classes where there are markers specifically dedicated to search for plagiarism. **I'm worried that I will be incorrectly labelled as plagiarizing** if I accidentally incorrectly cite one of my references. I have no intention to commit academic dishonesty but I am just worried about false positives.
- **If the TA/teacher is unwilling to give help or clarify things.**
- **More days to complete due assignments** (instead of one thing due in 2 days, another in 4, and another in 5, having them all due in 5 or 6 days). Then if I have a day or two eaten up by mental illness or drama or appointments or fatigue, I'm not SOL ['shit out of luck'].
- N/A. I'm **not risking** all the time, money, and effort I put in to cheat, so I am lowkey **terrified of accidentally breaking the academic integrity standards.**
- **New to all this integrity culture.**



- Sometimes how specific they are. I've had profs who made a test open book but **didn't specify what is included in the "book"** so it was hard to know what is and isn't allowed in the exam.
- The **necessity of working together** to actually complete assignments.
- The pressure from professors, expecting us to memorize a whole load of information and making the exam closed-book. **How would that help students learn the content?**
- Time frame. If the test has a fairly **short time frame** then I'm more inclined to double check my answers because of the crunch.
- Timing...especially when it comes to exams. It might be hard to adhere to it when **I don't have a proper place to write exams.**
- When tests are "closed book" but not proctored, it's difficult to rationalize not cheating because you know other students will be, and **if it's curved you'll suffer for being honest.**

### THIRD YEAR

- Collaboration with homework can sometimes bring you to a **grey area.**
- **Competitiveness within the faculty**, pressure to pass a course.
- **Fairness of questions** of the instructor. **Attitude** of the instructor.
- Fear of failure, **can't afford to pay for course again.**
- How clear professors are (e.g. **some professors will literally say you don't need to cite internal sources like the textbook or lecture while others do** which is a little frustrating lol).
- **If another student is struggling**, and I am in a position to help guide them, that shouldn't be punished.
- If those standards are **appropriate and accommodating of disabilities** in the first place.
- **Lack of clarity** between working together and cheating.

> Third-year students struggled with unclear or inconsistent standards, worry that everyone else is cheating, and lack of accommodations for disabilities.



- Marks needed to **get into higher programs.**
- Not letting the students know **what is considered academic misconduct in a specific course.**
- Other people cheating would push me to cheat. Only way to **level the playing field.**
- **Stress, depression, seeing other people suffer.**
- The standards are **unclear** regarding online classes.
- Unclear on what is collaboration vs just **asking a friend how to do something** you don't know.
- Whether I am engaged in the class as a **community**, whether I **respect** the professor.

#### FOURTH YEAR

- “Closed book” virtual tests. Tests that are **supposed to be closed book** but are based on the honour system.
- Access to **appropriate resources** and **clarity** of professor expectations in assignments, rubrics.
- **Appropriate timelines for assignment** and access to academic support.
- **Bad or unfair test/project design** on the part of the instructor.
- I want to **make sure I know what I’m doing** when I graduate and work.
- In-person vs online, how much the teacher seems to **care about their students/is involved in their students' success.**
- **Lectures don’t relate to the questions.**
- Online vs In-person, amount the exam or assignment is worth, how much I enjoy the class, **if the rules don't specify what we can and can't do.**
- Profs that **don’t test what they teach** so I have to use Google or other things to answer questions fully.
- **Quick deadlines.** Assignments worth a lot, very difficult assignments.
- **Want a high grade.** Questions **make no sense** or are very difficult.
- **What the prof says about academic integrity.**
- When I am fully aware that **my peers and fellow classmates** are compromising their academic integrity.

> Fourth-year students struggled with lack of appropriate resources, unfair exams, unclear standards, and worry that everyone else is cheating.



- **Wide range of online resources.**

#### FIFTH YEAR AND ABOVE

- For me personally, sometimes the seemingly **impossibly high expectations** during a pandemic.
- Having **profs willing to help**.
- How **depressed** I am lol.
- **Lack of other resources.**
- Professors **changing from course to course** what they consider cheating.
- The fact that I know **other people are cheating**.
- When profs **recycle material**.
- When profs have **unreasonable expectations** for assignments (like 20h assignments you're not allowed to consult anyone on it, if your code doesn't work you get 0 even if you wrote most of it already).
- **Unfairness of exams, bad profs, other students.**
- **Easy citation generators.**
- I work with a lot of coding assignments, and **different professors and assignments have different expectations for what online research you can do or what conversations you can have with other students** or with other people outside of the university, and not all of them are clear about these expectations. This can be a challenge, and I feel like sometimes **I place myself at a disadvantage by erring on the side of caution and limiting my access to that kind of help even when it might be allowed.**
- The quality of teaching. I.e. are students in general **confused** about the class and the instructors are not helping vs. Are the instructors and TAs **helpful**.
- It's frustrating knowing **everyone else will do better for doing the easy route.**
- The test being difficult and **closed book/without formula sheets.**

> Fifth-year students and above struggled with inconsistent standards, lack of help from instructors, worry that everyone else is cheating, and unfair exams.

#### OTHER RESPONDENTS, NO YEAR SPECIFIED

- Amount of help and practise resources available, **if I have a practise test to work on with friends I won't work on the real one collaboratively.**

- Being **overworked and stressed** make it very challenging to stay academically honest.
- How much they **enforce** it when I enter university, **attitude** of seniors.
- With the internet being such a broad opportunity for research, I feel like it's **impossible to say something that hasn't been said before**.

## Foundational Values

“The six foundational values of academic citizenship are honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage. How often do you encounter questions of these principles (honesty/trust/fairness/respect/responsibility/courage) in the University environment?”

Around 30-40% of respondents often or constantly encounter questions of these principles, regardless of year of study.

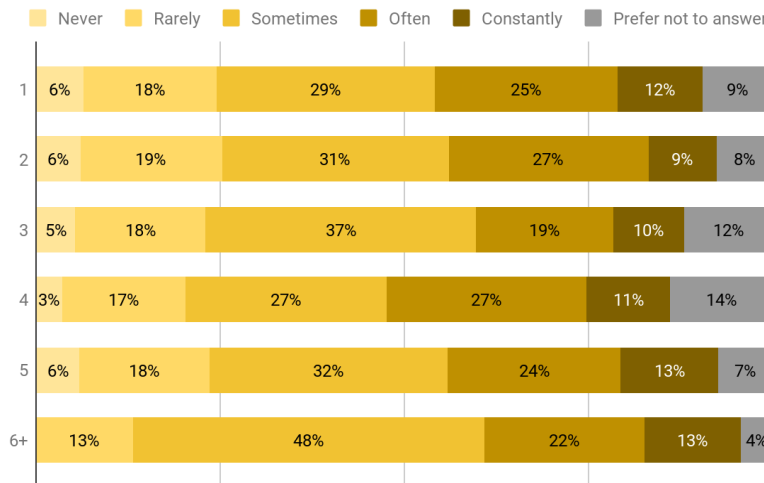
> 30-40% often or constantly encounter questions of key principles.

> Faculties of concern:

>> Business (43%)

>> Campus Saint-Jean (52%)

>> Medicine and Dentistry (48%)





“Thinking about these values (honesty/trust/fairness/respect/responsibility/courage), can you tell us about a time when you or others faced challenges to these values at the U of A?”

Students provided over 5000 words of responses to this question. Some notable or representative responses, broken down by faculty:

ALES:

- Courage - everyone is always **afraid to speak up to a professor** (especially the strict ones) when they assign too much workload or have unreasonable deadlines.
- "During online classes, it's really **hard to explain \*how\* to solve a problem to someone else** without showing them work. But usually that ends up as you showing them most of your work even if you're just explaining the steps you took which technically goes against conduct.
- Fairness has been challenged, especially with online classes. Either things were **made too hard** to “make sure we knew the material” without cheating or other people were cheating and **made it unfair** for everyone else.
- I don't feel respected with **mandatory fees I won't have anything to do with**. I don't feel respected when I'm **packed into a classroom full of strangers during a pandemic**.
- I was an admin for many discord servers last semester so I was **constantly having to tell people to quit talking about questions or tests before we were allowed to**.
- With the constant switch back and forth between online and in person some of my professors haven't been the most accommodating with assignments. **They kept material on the assignments even though we wouldn't be covering it in class and said that we should just learn it online**. I noticed a lot of students using **less than acceptable methods** of trying to figure out this information.

#### ALBERTA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

- I am never sure if I cite things correctly. I felt very **targeted by SEM** and would often look at the camera and say "I swear I'm not cheating I'm just doing my math equations on the paper."
- I think fairness and honesty come to mind more just in general from **seeing others get ahead from not following the rules** to a T, writing exams earlier or later etc.
- I'm worried about an assignment for one of my classes where there are **markers specifically dedicated to search for plagiarism**. I'm worried that I will be incorrectly labelled as plagiarizing if I **accidentally incorrectly cite one of my references**. I have no intention to commit academic dishonesty but I am just worried about false positives. Incorrectly being **accused of committing academic dishonesty for an unintentional & trivial mistake**.
- **Sometimes the teacher says it is okay to work together but the TAs marking the paper aren't aware of that.**
- Working on **no collaboration assignments** in an **online class**.

#### ARTS

- **I know a lot of people take exams/tests together as groups.**
- Getting **misgendered** by profs despite having my pronouns listed (i.e. on Zoom) sucks. **No respect :(**
- I've totally seen people cheat but **I didn't want to report it because I saw what they were sharing** even though I didn't intend to see the material (they shared it publicly in a class Discord) and didn't use it. **I thought I might get in trouble for it too.**
- Many profs don't seem to let students know of changes. **Changing dates on the syllabus** (missed first lab because the schedule they gave out was an old one, and didn't inform until after lab).



- Profs didn't trust us during online classes. **Proctoring was hell.**
- **Racism and racist profs.**
- The biggest ones would be honesty, fairness and responsibility. These occur when dealing with group projects where someone will not **pull their own weight** but expect the same grade and it's up to you to explain the situation to the Professor, after it has become more than apparent after multiple attempts to contact a partner or partners that they are not willing to do any work.
- The entirety of last year was a challenge with these. **I think that the university has a lot of work to do if these are their values considering that most students don't feel like they can express if something goes wrong.**
- When everyone around you is most likely cheating so it **tips the grading scale** against those who are honest.

#### AUGUSTANA

- Having anxiety and **needed to take responsibility and courage being on campus.**
- Not really. I guess I have **lied when writing essays** to make for a better story

#### CAMPUS SAINT-JEAN

- Can't always have responsibilities when your **mental and physical illness** are taking most of your time.
- **Fighting for CSJ funding lmao.**
- Honesty - especially when everything was online.
- **Others tried to convince them to cheat** or take work from the internet.

#### EDUCATION

- **Copying useless assignments to save time for actual important ones.**
- I've had profs do unproctored exams that are closed books and I felt that I was at a **disadvantage against people who may have cheated.**



- Responsibility when students were committing **suicide** at Lister and it was shushed.
- Sometimes friends or classmates will say collaborating on a quiz isn't a big deal and it's **tempting to agree** but the consequences are severe.

#### ENGINEERING

- During the pandemic **everyone basically collaborated.**
- Faking lab results for chemistry back in first year because no one cared and **the consequences of not getting it right the first time were too high** (immediate 0 and it would affect the lab report, no chances to redo the lab). **For tests, it was always easiest to stay honest**, even when it moved online.
- I feel like the University **assumes guilty until proven innocent** with their accusations and investigations.
- **I've known many students who have participated** in academic dishonesty. I have also had some **instructors and TAs who failed to act with fairness and/or respect.**
- In first year of engineering, the course load was so heavy, and the math 100 assignments were so hard, it was **tempting to copy answers sometimes.**
- My friend was accused of cheating by a professor who had nothing but **speculative** evidence. It caused much stress and worry for my friend. Thankfully the faculty dean agreed with him, but he **still had to wait months for the verdict.**
- Online schooling seemingly opened the door to possibilities for challenging these values by **feeling disconnected.**
- The fairness thing. A lot of times people were **graded unfairly.** Also sometimes people in a group project get good grades even if they **don't contribute.**
- When an examination has an **average of about 20%.**
- When I see other students ignoring these values and being **rewarded for it** with high marks.

#### KINESIOLOGY, SPORT, AND RECREATION

- Literally had a teacher **reject my doctor's note** when I had scarlet fever lol.
- When you know your peers are cheating, but **don't want to say anything because it'll ruin their future** but also feeling upset because they get an **unfair advantage**.

#### LAW

- Recently I had an assignment where my discord channel for the class had been cheating together, they were caught which resulted in **a new rule of strict monitoring which is annoying for someone like me who didn't cheat**. The class average was also very high because of the cheating while **my score was mediocre and so I feel cheated a bit**.

#### MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY

- **I never know how much I can discuss answers with classmates** without it being against the values and code.
- Last year in the **online environment**.
- There's a lot of **disrespect and unfairness among classmates**.
- When TAing, sometimes it's **hard to tell if students are copying from each other or are just coming to similar phrasing**, and I don't want to get anyone in trouble or the prof doesn't want to go through the effort unless it's abundantly clear it's plagiarism.

#### SCIENCE

- All assignments and contributions in class require the consultation of the foundational values. Even outside of the classroom, I have become **more reflective** regarding my actions and how they may impact someone else and their ideas/thoughts/intellectual property.
- Completing assignments that are "open book" sometimes makes it **hard to differentiate** between what is acceptable and unacceptable.



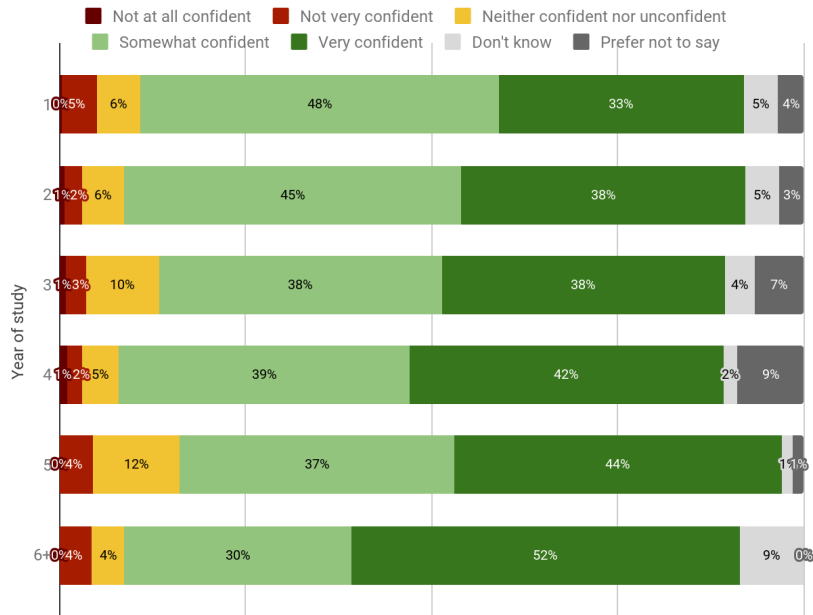
- During last school year, a friend of mine was **struggling with mental health** due to schooling online and coping with the isolation. Her family was experiencing **financial pressures** from covid so she felt pressured to cheat in her exams rather than fail. She got caught and was suspended from the university. **She is no longer in Canada and will not be returning.**
- If I think someone is being dishonest, do I report them and **let them face dramatic consequences** for what is a pretty minor thing?
- It can be **difficult to speak up to professors** when they are being less than responsible.
- **It's hard seeing a friend not acknowledging academic integrity** and reporting it to a professor or TA.
- **SEM has been stressful**, and it's discouraging to hear about all the cheating that's gone on during covid.
- Some men have shown a **lack of respect towards women** when working in groups.
- When students feel that **instructions on online exams aren't clear.**

#### OTHER FACULTIES, OR NO FACULTY SPECIFIED

- I think fairness is an issue. As an international student, I think there are a few instructors who have some form of **bias.**
- **Declaring your vaccination status.** I think it's extremely important to be 100% percent honest about it to help protect everyone though some weren't entirely forthcoming. I do not think that is honest, fair, respectful or responsible in any way whatsoever.
- People cheating on exams, **not following university policies on masking** at hospital clinical sites, carpooling etc.
- Last year in a quiz, **the questions were outta the powerpoint** so we compared answers there before answering.
- **Working as a group** or reaching out to a classmate for help on an assignment.

## Avoiding Misconduct

“How confident are you that you can avoid making a mistake with plagiarism or other kinds of academic misconduct?”



> The vast majority of students feel confident that they can avoid making a mistake with academic misconduct.

> ‘Very confident’ responses increased steadily by year of study.

> Around 4% were not confident. This did not improve by year of study.

>> Faculty of concern: KSR (8%)

The proportion of respondents who were very confident grew steadily by year of study.

However, the proportion of respondents who were not at all or not very confident stayed stable (around 4%).

## Awareness of Student Conduct and Accountability Website

“The Office of the Dean of Students has a website dedicated to Student Conduct and Accountability. Were you aware of the site?” [Yes/No/Prefer not to say]

Awareness of the website stayed stable by year of study, around 41-43%. Those not aware stayed stable as well (~48-55%).

> ~40% aware of the website, ~50% not aware, stable by year of study.

> Faculties of concern:

>> Business (60% not aware)

>> MedDent (66% not aware)

>> CSJ (60% not aware)