

Introduction

Digital curriculum enables new models of instruction and individualization to better meet the needs of each student. The integration of technology and instruction provides opportunities to build in safeguards and features that promote academic integrity. In addition to built-in supports, policies and procedures like those used in the traditional classroom further ensure academic integrity.

Concerns about academic integrity — such as ensuring the work a student submits is his or her own and that the final grade awarded is based on that student's completion of required course material — are not new, nor are such concerns unique to digital curriculum.

This document describes standard and optional features of the Apex Learning instructional management system and relates best practices for educators that promote academic integrity.

Apex Learning Digital Curriculum Supports Academic Integrity

The Apex LMS contains many features to promote academic integrity.

Student Code of Conduct

On initial sign-in, students must accept the [student code of conduct](#)¹ before beginning a course, which governs accountability, password use, netiquette, plagiarism, and alerts students of potential consequences should the code be violated. The Apex Learning student code of conduct easily integrates with existing district Acceptable Use policies.

Secure Access

Apex Learning is committed to ensuring that data is protected from unauthorized access and available to the right users at the right times. The online learning platform features a role-based security infrastructure that provides separate levels of access to student information based on predetermined roles: student, mentor, coach, teacher, and site coordinator. Restricting data by role ensures students and educators have access only to the information for which they are authorized.

When a new user account is created a temporary password is generated and the user is prompted to change the password upon sign in. Temporary passwords expire after 15 days. Users may update passwords at any time and are required to change passwords every 90 days to ensure security.

Assessment Security

The following integrated security features ensure a high level of academic integrity during assessments.

- **Disallowed Concurrent Access:** Students may not sign in to more than one computer at a time, reducing the opportunity for unauthorized test-taking assistance.
- **Randomized Questions:** Computer-scored assessments are designed so that no two students take the same assessment and any retakes are original to the student. Randomization occurs in three distinct ways:
 - Questions are **randomly selected** from question banks for each learning objective.
 - The **order of questions** is randomized within each assessment.
 - **Answer options** are randomized within each question.
- **Disabled Copy/Paste Functionality:** Students are prevented from copying answers from another web browser or document while an assessment is active.

¹ <https://www.apexlearning.com/student-code-of-conduct>

- **Assessment Management:** Optional features are built into the learning management system to increase academic integrity during assessment.
 - **Proctoring** restricts student access to scored activities. Proctoring can be applied to any scored activity: quizzes, practices, discussions, journals, logs, explorations, computer-scored tests, teacher-scored tests, diagnostics, and exams.
 - **Auto-Proctoring:** Once a proctored computer-scored assessment is unlocked, students must complete the assessment within the same session. Once the session has ended, regardless of completion, subsequent access to the activity will require a staff member to unlock. In addition, assessments will automatically re-lock after 30 minutes of inactivity and after 90 minutes if the student has not begun.
 - **Closed-book Assessments** will prevent students from accessing course content while a computer-scored assessment is in progress.
 - **Suppress Answer Review** is used to prevent student review of completed computer scored assessments including each question and answer option and if the submitted answer is correct or incorrect.
 - **Suppress Question Feedback** controls the display of feedback after each answer is submitted during computer-scored assessments. Feedback informs the student if the submitted answer is correct or incorrect. When the answer is incorrect, the feedback may provide additional prompts for answering the question or display the correct answer.

Academic Integrity Best Practices

Promote academic integrity by implementing the following best practices.

1. Set and Communicate Clear Expectations

Student Acceptable Use contracts and staff policies are an effective way to set and communicate academic expectations. Student contracts should define how suspected dishonesty is handled and the consequences for confirmed dishonesty. Staff policies should hold instructors accountable for taking immediate disciplinary action when dishonesty is suspected or confirmed.

2. Prevent Unauthorized Access to Staff Accounts

Methods for preventing unauthorized access to staff accounts include:

- Distribute sign in information discreetly.
- Avoid writing sign in information down; never keep this information next to your computer.
- Sign out of Apex Learning each time you are away from your computer.
- Change your password frequently via My Profile. Apex Learning Support will not distribute passwords.

3. Configure Course Settings

The following course settings support teachers and administrators in ensuring academic integrity:

- **Enable Mastery-Based Learning** to ensure sequential access to course content.

- **Limit Assessment Attempts** to prevent students from attempting to preview all assessment items in the question bank. In addition, communicate your policy for the maximum number of teacher resets.
- **Enable Closed-book assessments** to restrict students from accessing course content during an assessment.
- **Do Not Show Question Feedback** to prevent students from being shown the correct answers during a computer-scored quiz.
- **Proctor Summative Assessments and enable Auto-Proctoring** to prevent students from accessing assessments until they are unlocked and supervised by a teacher or mentor.
- **Do Not Allow Course Review** to prevent students from accessing and/or sharing access with other students to completed courses.

4. Block Question and Answer Web Sites

Question and answer sites are searchable message boards where users post questions and answers. These sites pose a significant threat to academic integrity, especially if students have unsupervised and unrestricted access to the Internet during assessment.

While it is legal for question and answer sites to exist, all Apex Learning content is copyrighted. This means that it is illegal and a clear violation of the Apex Learning Terms of Use to post course content on the Internet. However, because Apex Learning does not control users' Internet access, it is impossible to prevent copyrighted information from being posted on the web. Should you discover illegally-posted content, [Support²](#) can facilitate its removal from external web sites.

Districts must carefully consider when and how students will be permitted to access the Internet.

5. Configure Firewalls and Content Filters

Many organizations leverage network firewalls and content filters to help restrict student access to undesirable web content. The two methods for using these technologies are:

- **Approved External Links:** Allow access to specific sites and restrict access to all other content
- **Filtering:** Block access to specific sites and allow access to all other content

Many implementations use a combination of these two methods to restrict internet access.

The first method is to block all Internet access except to specified web sites, is the most efficient and effective over time. This is because there are exponentially more sites that will require blocking than there are sites that will be allowed, and because of the rate at which new sites are created. Apex Learning courses contain links to external sites as a part of the instructional design. Contact [Support²](#) for a list of the web sites that should be added to your approved external links list.

The second method is to block specific sites. Your school's IT department may be able to use network infrastructures to block students' in-school access to undesirable web sites — such as Answers.com. Combined with proctoring, content filtering can help significantly reduce dishonesty.

² support@apexlearning.com

6. Protect and Proctor Summative Assessments

Use web conference screen sharing to view student desktops or parent proctors to proctor summative assessment when learning is at a distance.

In addition to locking summative assessments in the Grade Book until they can be proctored by a teacher or mentor, collect all completed teacher scored tests in a locked file cabinet.

- Keep teacher-scored tests locked; teachers may print tests and collect upon completion
- If students can print tests, always use auto-proctoring or manually lock the test in the Grade Book upon completion

7. Investigate Suspected Dishonesty

Characteristics of dishonesty include:

- Disproportionate time spent on assessment vs. instruction
- Unusually short assessment durations
- Large numbers of teacher-entered scores for computer-scored assessments
- Low scores on first and second attempts combined with high scores on a subsequent attempt
- Sudden increase in scores
- Large amounts of perfect scores
- Score entries by unexpected users

The following reports can help identify these characteristics:

- Student Session Report (Site Coordinators)
- Course Activity Scores Report (Teachers)
- Weekly Activity Report (Teachers)
- Student Activity Details Report (Teachers)

Student Activity Details				
Activity Details for Abby Abbott				
Activity 1.1.3 : Quiz : Understand the Shape of a Story				
Due Date:	N/A			
Points Possible:	20			
Minimum Mastery Score:	14			
Student Performance				
This Student's Current Score:	18 (90%)			
Class Average:	15.8 (79%)			
Number Students Complete:	8 (89%)			
Number Mastered:	7 (78%)			
Activity History				
Date Recorded	Score	Action	Updated By	Time Taken
13 Jul 2018 8:43:54 AM	18	Student Earned	Abby Abbott	4.85 minutes

8. Adjust Classroom Layout

The following strategies will assist teachers in maintaining an effective learning environment:

- Position student computers so that monitors are visible to the teacher.
- In cases where classroom management software and a projector are available, display student computer screens using the projector when the teacher is away from their desk.
- Move students taking assessments to computers within proximity to the teacher.
- Identify students taking assessments by placing a red cup or other object on their desk.
- Walk around the room as frequently as possible.

9. Require Student Portfolios

In addition to monitoring daily progress online, require students to maintain a student portfolio.

- Use the Activity Scores Report, which lists graded assignments and corresponding due dates to track student work in the portfolio.
- Keep all written work, including notes, study sheets, lab reports, journals, essays, and study guides in the portfolio.

Review student portfolios during weekly check-ins. Track progress, identify students who are falling behind and provide early intervention, identify students who are on track and provide positive feedback.

Getting Support

- Monday – Friday. 5:00 AM – 7:00 PM Pacific Time
- 1-800-453-1454 option 2
- support@apexlearning.com