



Cheating on University Exams: Instructor Experiences and Suggestions การทุจริตการสอบในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยจากประสบการณ์ของผู้สอนและข้อเสนอแนะ

Chomphunut Phutiketrkit¹ and Wayne Hamra²

ชุมพนุช พุฒิเกษตรกิจ¹ และ เวย์น แฮมรา²

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทำความเข้าใจกับประสบการณ์ด้านการโงงข้อสอบของนักศึกษาในห้องสอบของอาจารย์มหาวิทยาลัยและนำข้อมูลที่ได้รับในการหาแนวทางลดหรือป้องกันพฤติกรรมการทุจริต ผู้วิจัยใช้การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างสัมภาษณ์ในงานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพนี้เพื่อเก็บข้อมูลแบบการเลือกแบบเจาะจง โดยมีอาจารย์มหาวิทยาลัย 33 ท่าน จากมหาวิทยาลัยเอกชนแห่งหนึ่ง ตั้งอยู่ทางภาคกลางของประเทศไทย ที่สมัครใจเข้าร่วมแบ่งปันประสบการณ์และมุมมองต่างๆ ผ่านแอปพลิเคชัน Zoom การสัมภาษณ์แต่ละครั้งใช้เวลาประมาณ 30-40 นาที มีการถอดความจากข้อมูลที่บันทึกเสียง ผู้วิจัยใช้การวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาเชิงอนุมานเพื่อจัดรวมข้อมูลในเรื่องเดียวกันเป็นหมวดหมู่หลัก จากนั้นแยกออกเป็นหมวดหมู่ย่อย ซึ่งมีการจัดหมวดหมู่ตามประเด็นปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้น ผลการวิจัยระบุว่าอธิการทุจริตทั่วไปที่นักศึกษาใช้คือ ข้อความที่เขียนบนส่วนต่างๆ ของร่างกายและลงในกระดาษที่ลักษณะน่าเข้าไป บทางโทบสำหรับการกระทำดังกล่าวโดยทั่วไปมีตั้งแต่การหักคะแนนบางส่วนไปจนถึงการหักคะแนนทั้งหมด วิธีป้องกันหรือลดการทุจริตที่ได้รับคำแนะนำจากผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์มากที่สุดคือ การเสริมสร้างความตระหนักรู้ของนักศึกษาต่อความสำคัญของหลักจริยธรรมผ่านกิจกรรมในห้องเรียนหรือกิจกรรมนอกห้องสูตรอื่นๆ และมีการควบคุมการสอบอย่างเคร่งครัด

คำสำคัญ : การทุจริตในการสอบ ; ความไม่ซื่อสัตย์ทางวิชาการ ; นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี ; ข้อเสนอแนะของผู้สอน ; การป้องกันทุจริตในการสอบ

¹ อาจารย์ คณะศิลปศาสตร์และมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยนานาชาติเอเชีย-แปซิฟิก, Lecturer, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Asia-Pacific International University

² ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ คณะบริหารธุรกิจ มหาวิทยาลัยนานาชาติเอเชีย-แปซิฟิก, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Business Administration, Asia-Pacific International University



ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to understand university instructors' experiences with students' examination cheating and to solicit their insights as to how such behavior could be reduced or prevented. This qualitative study utilized a semi-structured interview method to collect data from a purposive sample of 33 university instructors from a private university in central Thailand who volunteered to share their experiences and perspectives through the online application Zoom. Each interview lasted for 30-40 minutes; voice recorded data were then transcribed. The data was coded, and content analysis was employed to identify sub-concepts, which were grouped and categorized into emergent themes. The findings indicated that the most common techniques used by students to cheat were notes written on body parts or concealed papers. The penalties for such conduct generally ranged from a partial to total deduction of marks. The most frequently suggested ways to reduce or prevent cheating included strengthening students' appreciation of the importance of ethical conduct through in-class or extracurricular activities, and strictly monitoring exam settings.

Keywords : Cheating on Exams ; Academic Dishonesty ; Undergraduate Students ; Instructor Suggestions ; Preventing Cheating on Exams

Introduction

Academic dishonesty has been an issue of concern in many higher educational institutions. Many universities reported increasing numbers of students involved in cheating. One factor that contributes to student cheating is that they do not view cheating in a negative way, or at least they have a neutral view of it (Salehi and Gholampour, 2021). Additionally, other motivations for cheating include a desire for better grades, to pass an exam, or not having enough time to prepare (Arab and Orfan, 2023). Moreover, some students may cheat simply because they have not been caught. Previous research findings found that 82% of students admitted to having engaged in cheating without being caught (Prihar and Wanna).

Even though some students may not have a negative view of cheating, on the other hand, Chala (2021) study showed that they perceive academic dishonesty to be a serious matter. Unfortunately, this does not deter some from continuing to engage in cheating. A study by Benzerroug and Hammoudi (2021) showed that 85 out of 100 students reported that they had cheated on exams, and 76 were ready to engage in cheating again if possible. Another recent study reported that 50,000 students were caught cheating at UK institutions (Uber Tutors, 2021). Two-thirds of students have confessed to cheating at least once during their college years, while an equal proportion have witnessed their peers cheat on exams or assignments (Blankenship, 2022).

Evidence from these studies indicates that cheating probably happens at every higher educational institution. Furthermore, many studies have focused on students' viewpoints (Gutierrez and Padagas, 2019; Chala, 2021; Garcia, 2023), but neglected to consider the perspectives of teachers or instructors. Information about measures taken to prevent or deal with cheating is not frequently shared among institutions, and so this study endeavors to fill this research gap. Gaining insights into how students have cheated on exams and how to halt such behavior may provide valuable information and stimulate thought about how to prevent such academic misconduct in the future before it occurs.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the problems with cheating that university teachers have faced during traditional exams?
2. How might cheating in exams be better prevented and/or minimized by teachers and universities?



Research Objectives

The objectives of this qualitative study were to describe instructors' experiences with cheating in college examinations, and to solicit instructor suggestions about how to prevent or minimize cheating on traditional examinations.

Literature Review

Definitions of Cheating

Cheating has been defined in similar ways by various sources. According to the Cambridge dictionary (2020), cheating is "to behave in a dishonest way in order to get what you want". It may also be defined as "fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in an academic assignment. It includes using, attempting to use, or assisting others in using materials that are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question" (Walden University, 2020). Cizek (1999) defined cheating as "any action taken before, during, or after the administration of a test or assignment, that is intended to gain an unfair advantage or produce inaccurate results."

Why Do Students Cheat?

Cheating on exams has become a common occurrence among many students (Salehi and Gholampour, 2021). Perceptions and understanding of academic cheating play a pivotal role in determining whether students choose to engage in cheating behavior (Waltzer and Dahl, 2022). Rwebiita said that people engage in exam cheating because they perceive it as a norm within their community, school, or social circle. Their justification often revolves around the belief that "I cheat because everybody else does" (Monitor, 2021). The perception of peer cheating is also recognized as one of the most influential factors associated with students' engagement in academic cheating (Zhao et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, some individuals have personal motivations for cheating. When students perceive a threat to their academic success, their survival instinct may kick in leading to exam anxiety, and they may become involved in cheating without thinking about it (Benzerroug and Hammoudi, 2021). Some of the reasons for cheating found in a study by Salehi and Gholampour's (2021) included: not being ready for a test, not having enough time, materials or motivation for study, stress at the time of an exam, the difficulty of an exam, persuasion or pressure from classmates, no severe punishment for cheating, and not liking a professor. "Not being prepared for an exam" was the most frequently mentioned reason for engaging in academic dishonesty. Moreover, Maeda (2021) found that unfair favoring of bribers over non-bribers was a significant factor that contributed to cheating practices. Arab and Orfan's (2023) study revealed similar reasons for academic dishonesty, including the desire to receive a better grade, pass an exam, or not having adequate time to prepare for an exam.

Theories of Academic Dishonesty

Numerous factors may contribute to academic misconduct by students. According to Nalisak (2014), the three main factors that lead to academic dishonesty include social values, teacher behavior, and the difficulty of examinations. The first contributing factor—social values—places students under pressure. Students feel the need to achieve high scores in order to enhance their future job prospects. Additionally, some students' express concerns about not wanting to repeat a class or have an F grade on their transcript. Another contributing factor is the role that teacher negligence plays in student cheating behavior. This occurs when teachers fail to clearly state academic integrity policies or neglect to properly supervise an exam: for example, by leaving the classroom during a test. Finally, the difficulty of examinations contributes to



academic misconduct. When students perceive that exams do not realistically assess their learning or when test instructions are unclear, these issues may also lead to cheating.

Several theoretical frameworks on academic integrity and misconduct play an important role in conceptualizing the origin of this type of wrongdoing. These theories include the Deterrence Theory, the Neutralization Theory, and the Planned Behavior Theory. The Deterrence Theory emphasizes the need to make the consequences of punishment severe enough to discourage students from cheating. Students have reported that they cheated because it seemed like everyone else in the classroom was doing so, and teacher did not deal effectively with the misbehavior (Nalisak, 2014). Second, the Neutralization Theory suggests that if students can articulate reasons for engaging in immoral acts, they may not perceive the wrongdoing as an ethical infraction. In simple terms, when they find it justifiable to cheat, they do not experience guilt for their actions. In one study, students said that if exams focused on memory rather than comprehension, or if they were academically overloaded, 90% of them were motivated to cheat (Benzerroug and Hammoudi, 2021). Waltzer and Dahl's study in 2022 also supported this theory, revealing that students cheated during exams when they perceived that it was reasonable to cheat. Finally, according to the Planned Behavior Theory, academic misconduct involves intentional cheating. Examples of such intentional acts include using crib notes or writing on body parts (Arab and Orfan, 2022).

Cheating Practices on Traditional Exams

Preventing cheating on traditional in-person written exams has always been a challenge for academic institutions. Different ways used by students to cheat during examinations that have been reported include orchestrating sitting arrangements so that others could see their papers or they could peek (Salehi and Gholampour, 2021), writing notes on body parts, smuggling in prohibited materials, use of communication technology to obtain outside assistance (Odongo, Agyemang, and Forkuor, 2021), peer collaboration, and student-staff collusion (Chirumamilla, Sindre, and Nguyen-Duc, 2020).

Some students have resorted to cheating by writing notes on their palms or hands, while female students may opt to write on their thighs (Odongo et al., 2021). Fontaine, Frenette, and Hébert (2020) suggested that concealing notes within one's personal belongings was one of the most effective methods of cheating during exams. Since these forms of cheating don't require collaboration with others, they were regarded as the safest methods by students (Fontaine et al., 2020 ; Odongo et al., 2021). However, another study by Daumiller, Fritz, Cruz, Rudert, and Janke (2023) showed that 75% of students admitted to participating in at least one instance of second-party cheating.

News reports furnish examples of different incidents of cheating that have recently taken place in Thailand, and such behavior sometimes has taken on sophisticated forms. During one entrance exam, it was found that exam questions were photographed and published on the "SnapAsk" application. A preliminary investigation indicated that two participants were involved in the fraudulent process: a student in the examination room, and an outside person who received the images of exam questions, and sent them on to another individual. It was assumed that the high-tech equipment used in this scam was a pair of eyeglasses with a hidden camera (Matichon Weekly, 2022). During the last day of an Academic Proficiency Test (A-Level Test) for Mathayom 6 (Grade 12) students, it was reported that a student secretly brought a mobile phone into the exam room by hiding it in her bra. On it was found a photograph of a Mathematics 1 test (Thai PBS, 2023). "During the examination at Walter Sisulu University's Mthatha campus, two students were caught engaging in academic misconduct due to an unauthorized exchange of papers." (Marriah-Maharaj, 2023).



The number of pupils who cheat continues to rise (Walker, 2023). An intricate cheating scheme involving several steps was organized in a Southeast Asian country during its annual GCE O Level examinations that are typically taken by students during their final year of high school. Guided by instructions, six students utilized skin-colored earphones and discreetly attached mobile phones and bluetooth devices to their bodies. This setup enabled them to receive answers from a co-conspirator, who pretended to be a private student taking the exam. This person, equipped with a hidden camera phone affixed to her chest, livestreamed exam questions to three tutors located at a tuition center. Subsequently, these tutors analyzed the questions and provided answers to the students in real-time (Chen, 2023). Based on the literature review, cheating on examinations has been classified as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Categories of Cheating on Examinations

Cheating on In-Person Exams (Receiving Help)	Cheating on In-Person Exams (Giving Help)
1. Using Unauthorized Notes to Cheat	1. Helping Other People to Cheat
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Notes written/concealed on parts of body- Notes concealed in clothing/writing tools/devices such as smart watch, calculator, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sharing exam answers with seatmates- Impersonating exam taker
2. Getting Help from Other People to Cheat	2. Facilitating Cheating by Another Person
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Copying someone's work without their knowledge- Receiving help from other exam takers- Using a phone/earpiece to communicate with outsider(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Distracting the invigilator

Note. Arab and Orfan, 2023 ; Chirumamilla et al., 2020 ; Odongo et al., 2021 ; Salehi and Gholampour, 2021

Conceptual Framework of Cheating in Traditional Exams

When students are unprepared for a test, they attempt to find various ways to pass it. Unfortunately, some resort to cheating Gholampour's (2021). The literature review has found that students use various methods of cheating, with 88.1% admitting to engaging in such behavior (Jamil, 2020). In this study, the literature about cheating on university exams revealed two primary categories: cheating individually, and cheating with assistance from others, as shown in Figure 1.

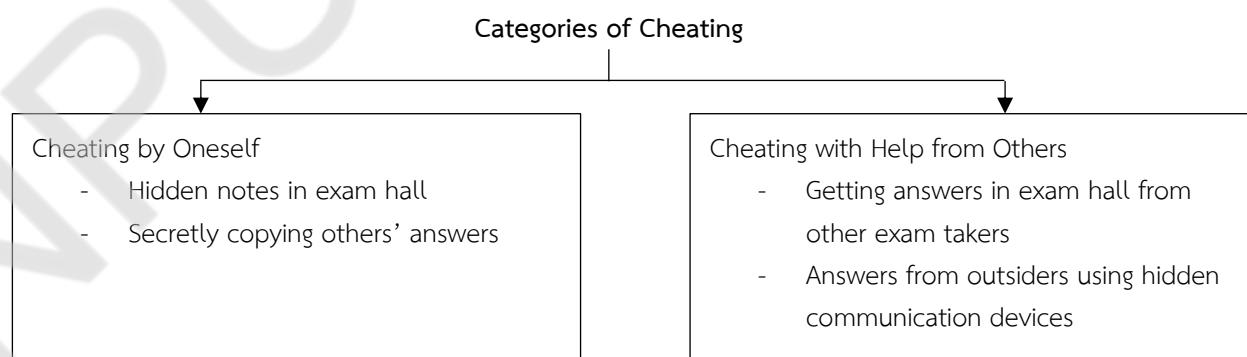


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Main Categories of Cheating



Research Methodology

Target Group and Informants

The target group for this study was 94 full-time instructors employed at the two campuses of a private international university located in central Thailand.

Instructors who had experienced attempts to cheat on midterm or final exams in bachelor degree liberal arts courses were invited to share their experiences, along with suggestions of how to reduce or prevent cheating. A total of 33 instructors representing all 7 faculties in the university voluntarily responded to this invitation, consisting of 18 female and 15 male instructors, with 26 from the main and 7 from the branch campus. These informants formed a purposive sample with first-hand experience about the topic. Since qualitative data grounded in informant experiences is used to explain complex phenomenon, this was deemed a suitable method for this topic.

Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was developed for the study; the validity of each question was first examined by an experienced qualitative researcher and modified as suggested. The University's research committee then thoroughly examined the interview guide, reviewing the validity of each question, and granted permission and ethical approval for the study (Approval# RRDC 2021-113).

Data Collection

After ethical approval for this study was granted, an announcement was posted on the University's webpage briefly describing the study, and inviting potential participants to contact the researchers if they were willing to be interviewed as part of this study. Interview appointments were made with those who responded to this announcement. Participants were given a consent form before the interviews, explaining the study's purpose, its voluntary nature, and assurance that their identity would not be disclosed. During a one-time 30 to 40-minute interview via Zoom from September to November 2021, participants were asked to describe their experiences in dealing with cheating on exams, along with their opinions and ideas about how such misbehavior could be better prevented. The interviews were recorded and notes were taken. As data collection neared completion, it became evident that saturation had been achieved, and the data in hand was adequate to answer the research questions.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were completed, the recorded data and notes were transcribed and coded. Responses to each interview question were grouped together, and a descriptive phenomenological method was employed to identify sub-concepts relevant to the topic. Content analysis was used to cluster and organize the sub-concepts into emergent themes, which were described in short dense statements. The data was also triangulated by cross-verifying information about cheating incidents with other participants from the same faculty or program, who shared insights on similar issues and incidents that had occurred, thus enhancing the data's reliability.

Results and Discussion

The results are presented according to the research questions that guided the study. The first question inquired about instructors' experiences with cheating in university midterm and final exams. The results showed that interviewees' students had used many of the methods mentioned in the literature during examinations.



1. Instructors' Experiences with Cheating on College Examinations

In Table 2, individual cheating methods on in-person exams that were mentioned by informants have been grouped and counted by category, with the ID numbers of interviewees who experienced that type of cheating listed.

Table 2 Categories of Cheating Methods Used by Individuals on In-Person Exams

<u>Notes Written on Body Parts (14 instances)</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Answers written on arms/legs (Informant 05; 08; 22; 27; 30)■ Notes written on arm (long-sleeved shirt) (04; 14; 22)■ Formula written on arm (07; 30)■ Notes written on palm (04; 15; 25; 27)
<u>Notes on Concealed Papers/Exam Desk (14 instances)</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Notes concealed in pocket (30)■ Notes concealed under shirt sleeves (22)■ Notes hidden under skirt (02)■ Notes hidden in shoes/sock (04; 14)■ Notes hidden in pen, pencil box (14)■ Notes written on eraser (14)■ Notes written on desk prior to exam (04; 15; 25; 32)■ Concealed notes read in restroom (spent long time) (25; 29; 30)
<u>Use of Mobile Phone/Device (6 instances): No Communication Observed</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Phone hidden between legs (01)■ Phone hidden under desk (07)■ Took photo or videotape the screen of exam with phone (for make-up exam) (09; 15; 21; 32)
<u>Accessed Teacher's Office (3 instances) After Exam</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Placed tape on door lock to teacher's office to facilitate later re-entry (12)■ Used a key to enter teacher's office, rewrite exam answers, replace original answer paper (02; 03)

As noted in Table 2, even when supervised by an instructor or exam invigilator, students were tempted to look for ways to cheat in exams. The interview results illustrated that the most frequently used technique to cheat in exams was writing notes on body parts, on concealed papers, or on other objects.

Notes Written on Body Parts. Students wrote answers or formulae on their arms, legs or palms. In this way, they did not need to worry about where to hide notes or foreign material in the classroom or on their persons.

“It was in math exam. A student sat at the corner and kept looking at his arm. The student was wearing a jacket so I was not able to see. But from time to time the student kept pulling the sleeves. So, I requested to see the arm. And I saw the math formula was written on his arm”. (07)

“The exam was taken in the hall. I was suspicious of one student. So, I called her to go to the toilet. And I found out she wrote some notes on her arm, which she used her long sleeves to cover and when she pulled up her skirt, some notes were written on her lap as well”. (27)



Notes on Concealed Papers/Exam Desk. Another common way students have cheated in exams was to bring some notes in the exam room. Some of them hid notes in their pockets, under skirts, in shoes, socks, pencil boxes, or even written on erasers or the exam desk. Some even brought notes to the toilet, read them there, and then returned to the exam room.

“Some of them put the paper in their pocket and when the teacher didn’t see them, they would take the notes out and look at it [sic]”. (30)

“Student hid a note inside the dictionary book for theory part. Some wrote a note on their hand or wrote on the desk before taking exam”. (04)

“I used to catch a student who hid a small note and put it in a pen or pencil case”. (14)

“A student requested to use toilet after half an hour of the exam. Teacher assistant went to monitor her. Afterward, the student went back to the exam hall. Teacher assistant noticed something went wrong because he heard only the flush of the water. So, she decided to search from the bin and saw a scratch note which was covered with clean toilet paper. She brought to a teacher and it was a note related to her exam”. (29)

“A student brought a note in the exam room and copying some answers from her note. The teacher could not catch her during the exam because she trusted her students. However, a friend reported to the teacher and the teacher called the suspicious student for an interview and the advisor was invited to be a witness”. (29)

Use of Mobile Phone/Device and Accessed Teacher’s Office after Exam. Mobile phones are one possible tool that can be used for storing information or class materials to look at during exams. Students may also use mobile phones to communicate with another person who is not in the exam room to help them answer questions or look for answers.

“A student hid a phone between her legs. She took the picture of the test paper and sent the exam to her friend who used to take this translation course at the dorm to translate the passages for her and sent it back to her”. (01)

Accessed Teacher’s Office. Some offenses were more serious; in one case, a student sneaked into a teacher’s office to change some answers on his exam.

“A student sneaked into a teacher’s room to steal the exam paper. He repeated this behavior several times before he was caught”. (03)

In Table 3, cheating methods on in-person exams that involved assistance from others are listed by category.



Table 3 Categories of Cheating Methods Involving Assistance from Others on In-Person Exams

<u>Cheating Within Exam Room: Voluntary Assistance (8 instances)</u>
▪ Whispering among test takers ((Informant 09; 14; 22)
▪ Holding up answer sheet so student(s) sitting behind can see (14; 22; 27)
▪ Sharing answer sheet so weak student can copy (03)
▪ Giving USB with answers to weak student in computer lab (03)
<u>Cheating Within Exam Room: Involuntary Assistance (11 instances)</u>
▪ Student attempts to see answers on others' papers (09; 18; 19; 20)
▪ Student looks at/copies answers on others' papers (13; 15; 22; 22; 27)
▪ Student walks to friend's desk, looks at answers, writes on own paper (ignores exam invigilator) (22)
▪ Student threatens friend in advance to share answers during exam (28)
<u>Use of Mobile Phone/Device: Communication with Others (1 instance)</u>
▪ Phone used to send exam questions to other test taker, receive answers (01)

Aside from methods used by individuals on in-person exams that were mentioned in Table 3, other ways that students have cheated involved receiving assistance from others. This required cooperation from another person who was willing to share the answers. However, not all test takers would voluntarily assist a friend in this wrong way. Therefore, a cheater might try to look at other test takers' papers without the other person's knowledge. In addition, some took more serious actions by forcing or threatening friends to share answers with them.

Cheating Within Exam Room. Some students cooperatively help each other in the exam room; some help those who are weaker to pass the exam.

“Students were whispering to each other, and one of them was holding up an answer sheet pretending to read, and leaning so the friend who sat behind could see the answer.” (14)

“Students exchanged their answer sheets to check for [sic] the answers are correct” (32)

“She would stand from her seat, and she would go to her classmate in front of her. Look at the answers and go back to her seat and copy the answers. And she never even looked at me to see if I was checking.” (22)

“Three friends threatened a friend to show and share his answers to them during exam. That friend did not want to show them. But since he got threatened, he shared his answers with them”. (28)

The findings from the study revealed that instructors have encountered situations where student cheated or attempted to cheat on exams in different ways. Notes written on body parts- arms, legs, or palms-are not new ways of cheating (Odongo et al., 2021). Some students brought notes and hid them under skirts, sleeves, and in pockets or pencil boxes. These findings were similar to those of a study by Salehi and Gholampour (2021), who found that students hid written answers in erasers or on a piece of paper rolled and hidden in a pencil or pen. However, since some may find this method difficult, an alternative way was to use a mobile phone to store more information or to communicate with outsiders who could help with the exam (Matthews, 2021; Salehi and Gholampour, 2021). After all, these different ways of cheating have been practiced by students for decades. As Tricia Bertram Gallant, director of the academic integrity office and academic affairs at University of California, San Diego said, “Cheating is cheating,” she says. “It hasn’t really changed in a hundred years. People have always cheated by going to sources that they weren’t supposed to go to” (Subin, 2021).



The findings of this study revealed that the most common ways of cheating used during in-person exams were notes written on body parts or on concealed papers. Another method that students used was attempting to obtain involuntary assistance, such as student efforts to see and copy answers on other test takers' papers. Research findings from Chirumamilla et al. (2020) supported the notion that students and teachers considered peeking and the use of forbidden aids as the two most common ways of cheating used by students. Use of forbidden aids was considered to have the lowest likelihood of getting caught (Chirumamilla et al., 2020) because it did not involve other parties, and students did not consider the use of notes or PowerPoint files as violations of academic integrity (Burgason et al., 2019).

However, some students voluntarily assisted their friends in cheating during examinations; this was another frequent way of cheating (Chirumamilla et al., 2020). A study by Zanetti and Butera (2022) showed that when students socialize in groups, they are more likely to be involved in collaborative cheating than to use individual methods. This may be related to cultural orientation because students from high power-distance cultures often prioritize peer relationships, and thus may adopt similar behaviors as their peers, including engaging in cheating (Zhao et al., 2022). In addition, "letting others looking at their papers while taking exams" was the most common way of cheating practiced among students in one study and this was another reason why they were not prepared for their exams (Salehi and Gholampour, 2021).

In spite of all the excuses or reasons that students gave for cheating, they acknowledged that it was wrong. They did not consider some dishonest behaviors as violations of academic integrity (Burgason, Sefiha, and Briggs 2019), or else they did not see cheating as something serious (Salehi et al., 2021). Therefore, they tried to find dishonest ways to pass the course or to get better grades (Odongo et al., 2021).

2. Instructor Suggestions to Prevent or Minimize Cheating in Examinations

In Table 4, methods that teachers have used to deal with cheating or suspected cheating are listed by category.

Table 4 Teacher Methods of Dealing with Cheating/Suspected Cheating on In-Person Exams

<p>Allowed to Continue in Course <u>Warning (9 instances)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Warn so that suspicious behavior will not continue ((Informant 08; 09; 18; 23; 32) ■ Warn, but no punishment, because of insufficient evidence of cheating (02) ■ Take notes away, warn student, but allow to continue writing exam (08; 14) ■ Warning only, because formula was not related to exam questions (07) <p>Partial Deduction of Marks (9 instances)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduce points for specific questions (08; 10; 23; 24) ■ Equal point deductions for both parties (cheater and assister) (32) ■ Deduct points and lower course grade (04; 13; 16; 26) <p>Total Deduction of Marks (20 instances)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Give 0 for that particular test (05; 06; 07; 09; 13; 15; 20; 21; 22; 28) ■ Report matters to Dean/ Advisor (02; 03; 28; 29; 30; 31) ■ Receive 0 for midterm, confess mistake and write apology letter, report to Dean (02; 03; 05; 15) <p>Required to Retake Course</p> <p>Total Deduction of Marks (13 instances)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Required student to withdraw/retake course (01; 05; 22) ■ Failed student (01; 07; 11; 14; 17; 18; 19; 26; 29; 32)
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Table 4 reveals that teachers used different methods to deal with cheating or suspected cheating on in-person exams. The severity of the response depends on the seriousness of the offense. The results revealed two different major methods in dealing with offenses; students were either allowed to continue in the course, or required to retake the course.

Allowed to Continue in Course. This approach involved warnings, a partial deduction of marks, or total deduction of all marks for the exam in which cheating had occurred.

Warning. If some offenses were not severe, students only received a warning from the teacher that they should not engage in that behavior again.

“A student wrote math formula on his arm. However, it was not related to that particular exam questions. So, I did not give any punishment but just gave a warning”. (07)

“If a student is caught cheating, the teacher should document and should give a written letter to the registrar, to the Dean or the advisor. So, if another instance happens, you have a record, you have a record on this date, this subject, this student did like this”. (02)

“From the very first offense, students will receive 0 points for both parties (cheater and assister). Both will receive the same penalty”. (32)

“Getting zero for the whole test, but not failing student from the course”. (13)

“If student is caught cheating, fail them in that particular exam. Student will be asked to leave the exam room, and he/she is not eligible to continue writing the exam anymore”. (19)

“If the student is caught cheating, the offense will be reported to the chair and the department dean, and the dean will inform student’s parents”. (29)

“Give warning and deduct the points instead of failing them” (23)

The findings showed that teacher methods of dealing with cheating may be categorized into two groups: 1) allow students to continue in course, perhaps with penalties or conditions, and 2) require students to retake the course. For the first category, the teacher would usually warn the student if any suspicious behavior was seen. However, if there was insufficient evidence, or if the notes brought into the exam room were not used or were unrelated to the exam, the notes would be taken away and no punishment would be meted out for that incident. Another way that teachers dealt with cheating was partial deduction of marks. When one or more students were caught cheating, points were deducted for those particular questions for both the cheater and the assister, or lower course grades were given. However, the most frequently used measure, which was suggested by more than 50% of informants, was total deduction of marks: that is, giving a zero for that particular exam, and in some cases reporting the matter to the Faculty Dean. However, students might still pass the course; if their scores for other assessments were high, they could pass the course in spite of this deduction of marks.

Another solution in dealing with cheating was to require the violator to retake the course. Some teachers viewed cheating as a very serious offense and reported it to higher authorities, in which case students were required to withdraw and retake the course.

Cheating is a phenomenon that has occurred from the past until the present day; some students continue to look for different techniques to cheat. It is essential for academic institutions to find appropriate approaches for dealing with cheating. Each type of cheating may have to be dealt with in a different way, and the penalties for cheating on examinations may be varied. Mechanisms for preventing cheating are important because good mechanisms can help to reduce cheating on examinations.



In Table 5, Suggested ways to prevent/reduce cheating on in-person exams by teachers are listed by category.

Table 5 Suggested Ways to Prevent/Reduce Cheating on In-Person Exams

Exam Site Arrangements to Prevent/Reduce Cheating (Academic Bulletin, pp. 39-44)

- Final exams usually administered in large auditorium; multiple invigilators positioned throughout exam hall
 - Invigilators to abstain from other activities (reading, marking exams, etc.) while monitoring exams
- Adequate spacing between desks; students from alternate courses in each row
- No mobile phones or backpacks permitted in exam hall
- Student ID cards displayed on desks
- Silence and movement restrictions maintained in exam hall throughout duration of exam
- Limited restroom breaks (no breaks for first 1.5 hours; one student at a time; break monitored by invigilator)
 - Restrooms checked for illicit materials at beginning of exam period
- Site regulations meticulously enforced by invigilators
 - Strict inspection when entering exam hall: no phones/bags, inspect hands, no sweaters (21; 25)

Build Culture of Honesty/Integrity (10 informants)

- Frequently stress importance of honesty/integrity in all activities ((Informant 05; 09; 13; 14; 18; 24; 29; 30; 32; 33)
 - Organize annual training/activities in chapel/classrooms that promote honesty (09; 30)
 - Cultivate proper attitude towards grades; grades ≠ success; fail exam better than cheating (24; 29)
 - Pray that God will protect students from temptation to cheat (29)

Establish/Regularly Publicize Clear Rules and Penalties for Cheating (10 informants)

- Explain exam policies to freshmen at orientation/beginning of semester in each course (09; 29; 30; 33)
- Regular verbal reminders of exam rules/cheating penalties, especially before exams (05; 06; 14; 18; 29; 30; 31)
- Provide written explanations of exam rules/cheating penalties (06; 09; 32)
 - In course outlines (09)
 - On exam cover pages (06)
 - On PowerPoint screens (32)

Effective Exam Design to Prevent/Reduce Cheating (6 informants)

- Prepare 2 sets of exam papers, so all students don't have the same exam (29; 30)
 - Create different sections for exams, so that questions are not asked in the same order (04; 09)
- Use questions that test critical thinking skills rather than recall (04; 13; 17; 29; 30)
 - Construct exams with more creative (04), practical (13), or subjective (17), essay questions (30)

Exam regulations are clearly stated in the university's academic bulletin (Academic Bulletin, 2023, pp. 39-44). Most exams are administered in a large auditorium. Students must be in the exam room 15 minutes before the start of an exam for inspection before entering the exam hall; this includes inspecting their writing utensils and hands. Students are permitted not to bring mobile phones or bags inside the hall, and are required to place their ID card on the desk during exams. Students must keep silent, and movement restrictions are maintained throughout the exam. No restroom breaks are permitted for the first 1.5 hours, and after that, only one student may leave at a time and is monitored by an invigilator. During exams,



teachers must abstain from engaging in other activities because student cheating is positively related to the expected benefits that can be obtained because of negligent invigilators (Feng and Ouyang, 2021); thus, when strict invigilation practices are followed, the temptation for students to cheat is significantly reduced. Several practices to reduce cheating in examination have been suggested by Teaching and Learning Conestoga (2023). These include using large examination rooms so that adequate spacing between students may be maintained, checking that students do not have prohibited materials when entering the exam hall, requiring them to sign attendance registers, and requiring invigilators to be in the examination room at all times during the examination.

However, these regulations may not be strictly implemented in all examinations. Some cases of cheating seem to occur each year, and the rules may not effectively prevent some forms or methods of cheating. This reveals some limitations in the inspections, such as when students wrote notes on their thighs or arms and covered them with a skirt or jacket, or hid notes under skirts or inside shirts. On some occasions, invigilators may not carefully inspect or monitor students, and might do other work during exam hours. This opens the way for students to whisper to friends or look for answers on other papers.

Therefore, even strict rules and supervision of exam sites have proved insufficient to stop students from attempting to engage in academic misconduct. The study's findings revealed that prevention methods can be divided into three categories: 1) building a culture of honesty/integrity, 2) establishing and regularly publicizing clear rules and penalties for cheating, and 3) effective exam design.

Students are aware that cheating is wrong; however, they may be tempted to cheat to pass a course or get better grades, and they may also be pressured by peers to share answers. Many teachers therefore suggested that more efforts be made to build a culture of honesty by organizing annual training programs or seminars to promote honesty. Fontaine et al. (2020) also suggested that universities should demonstrate that they value learning and integrity among all students. It is crucial for education students to recognize the importance of actually acquiring essential real-world skills in order to perform their roles effectively. Therefore, organizing educational campaigns and workshops while emphasizing mastery of content over scores, grades, or certificates may help students to cultivate a proper attitude towards grades, and encourage them to have a change of heart so that they will be able to successfully overcome the temptation to cheat.

A study by Waltzer and Dahl (2022), mentioned that some students did not recognize their actions as cheating. Therefore, periodic reminders about academic dishonesty policies would reduce cheating in actual exams (Zhao et al., 2023). Aside from this, regulations and penalties for cheating should be stated clearly at the beginning of semester during orientation day and before every exam, with regular reminders of exam rules/cheating penalties. In addition, such explanations should be included on course outlines, exam cover pages, and PowerPoint screens when a teacher makes announcements and gives instructions before exams.

Lastly, exam paper design itself is another method to reduce cheating. For multiple choice questions, two sets of exam papers or exams with different answer sequences (Harper, Satchell, Fido, and Latzman 2020) may be prepared so that students find it more difficult to cheat or ask their friends for help. In addition, exams can be constructed with more creative, practical, subjective, or essay questions, or with cases/questions that evaluate critical thinking skills.



Conclusions

In conclusion, this study investigated instructors' experiences with cheating on examinations and explored their suggestions to prevent or minimize such behavior. Its findings accentuate the serious need for further investigation and initiatives to address the complex challenges associated with academic misbehavior in higher education institutions.

1. The findings showed that the most common cheating methods used by individuals on in-person exams were notes written on body parts or on concealed papers. For cheating methods involving assistance from others, looking at/copying answers from a classmate's paper was the most frequently reported form of dishonesty.

2. The most commonly assessed and "fairest" penalty for such dishonest behavior in the view of instructors was a total deduction of marks on that assessment. However, students were allowed to continue in the class if their total scores met the requirement for a passing grade. Lastly, cheating behavior can be prevented by nurturing values such as honesty and integrity in the classroom throughout the semester, regularly publicizing clear rules and penalties for cheating, composing effective exams, making proper arrangements for and maintaining suitable distances between students at exam sites, and strict monitoring throughout the administration of exams.

Contribution

These findings imply that instructors need to clearly inform students of rules and penalties or consequences for cheating before exams. Carefully inspect students before they enter the exam site. During exam hours, teachers should abstain from other activities and vigilantly monitor students. The procedures for dealing with cheating and penalties for academic dishonesty should be clearly stated and easy to apply so all teachers can deal with each cheating case consistently and appropriately. While protecting student privacy, it may be helpful for lecturers to periodically discuss recent cheating cases in their departments, how they were handled, and how their future reoccurrence might be prevented. Moreover, one informant suggested one effective method used in her class was praying that students would overcome the temptation to cheat (29). Aside from these measures, academic administrators should consider providing training on how to create more effective exam questions (07).

Suggestion for Future Studies

It is recommended that future studies explore academic dishonesty in multiple higher educational institutions in Thailand to gain a deeper understanding of its root causes and potential solutions. A gap may exist between knowledge and practice in preventing academic misconduct; further studies could examine how to better apply what is known about cheating to create environments that promote integrity in Thai contexts, including practical guidelines for managing and preventing misconduct. Future studies might also focus on cheating in online exams because regulations to prevent academic dishonesty in such settings are not yet well developed at some universities. Such studies could investigate the ways in which students have cheated, and how such behavior might be minimized or prevented in the future.

Limitations

This study was conducted at only one institution, so the findings cannot be generalized. Some instructors may not have had much experience in dealing with cases of cheating in exams. Therefore, the contribution regarding methods in dealing with cheating on examinations may be limited. Finally, the study focused on traditional in-person written exams, and did not include cheating on online examinations.



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