

2006 Student and Faculty Academic Integrity Assessment Report

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2005-06 Academic Integrity Committee

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INTRODUCTION

A survey was conducted during the Winter Semester of 2006 to determine current attitudes, observations, and perceptions of academic integrity among students and faculty at the University of Windsor. The survey was initiated by the Academic Integrity Office, under the direction of the Vice-Provost, Students and Registrar and the University of Windsor Academic Integrity Committee.

The survey and its results are intended to be read as a “snapshot” in time of the culture of academic integrity at the University of Windsor. Future surveys will attempt to conduct a more detailed analysis by comparing this data with new data. The main goals of the current survey were to:

- objectively assess the environment at the University of Windsor regarding the importance of, and practices related to, academic integrity on campus;
- compare student and faculty attitudes about the academic environment and the seriousness of specific behaviours;
- gather information for a more in-depth analysis of how awareness and understanding of academic integrity on campus may be promoted and improved among both students and faculty.

The two surveys, one aimed at students and the other at faculty, were sent to all University of Windsor students and faculty with an active University Webmail account. Of the surveys that were distributed, 1228 students responded and 98 faculty responded, translating into an approximate 7.5% and 11% response rate respectively.¹ Survey respondents answered anonymously and voluntarily. While it cannot be said that the data garnered from the survey represents the views of all students and faculty on campus, the response rate is sufficient to reveal general perceptions about academic integrity at the University of Windsor and serve as

¹ In a comparable 2002-03 study involving 11 Canadian higher education institutions, response rates ranged from approximately 5-25 percent. Julia Christensen Hughes & Donald L. McCabe, “Academic Misconduct within Higher Education in Canada,” (2006) *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 1 at 5 (“the Hughes-McCabe study”).

benchmark data. In future surveys, more could be done, beyond email reminders, to encourage greater response to the survey.

Nonetheless, a number of limitations in the study must be kept in mind when interpreting the results. Like in most studies of this nature,

[t]he data are self-reported and therefore reflect people's perceptions; the survey was accessible to anyone who had the appropriate web address (although there was no indication of any abuse . . .); there was no automated control to prevent duplicate entries . . . ; and participant concerns about confidentiality and social desirability effects may have caused some respondents to understate their engagement in various activities [cheating behaviours]. In addition, the survey treated all respondents equally and therefore the results do not take into account the opportunity to engage in various behaviours that would be influenced by such factors as the number of courses taken or the number of times a student was asked to engage in a particular form of assessment.²

Information on graduate students could not properly be taken into consideration because of the survey set up whereby it was possible for many students in the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Education to list themselves as graduate students when the University of Windsor considers them to be undergraduate students. Furthermore, a separate assessment of graduate students' years of study should be inserted into future surveys so that undergraduate year 1 and year 2 data are not skewed in any way.

Therefore, this report, like other academic integrity survey reports, "should not be used to make definitive claims about the state of academic integrity"³ at the University of Windsor. It should instead be used as benchmark data and as an indicator of "potential areas of concern and action."⁴

Finally, throughout this report, where the information is available, the University of Windsor's 2006 data will be compared to the 2002-03 national data from the Hughes-McCabe study, with the understanding that Windsor's survey instruments did not mirror completely those used in the national study, as they were modified for our purposes.

A. ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

1. Competition and Pressure for Grades and Chances of Getting Caught for Cheating

In order to assess the perceptions of both students and faculty about the difficulties students face in pursuing a university degree and how these difficulties possibly correlate into cheating behaviour, respondents were asked to rate student competitiveness for grades at the university,

² *Ibid.* at 5, 7.

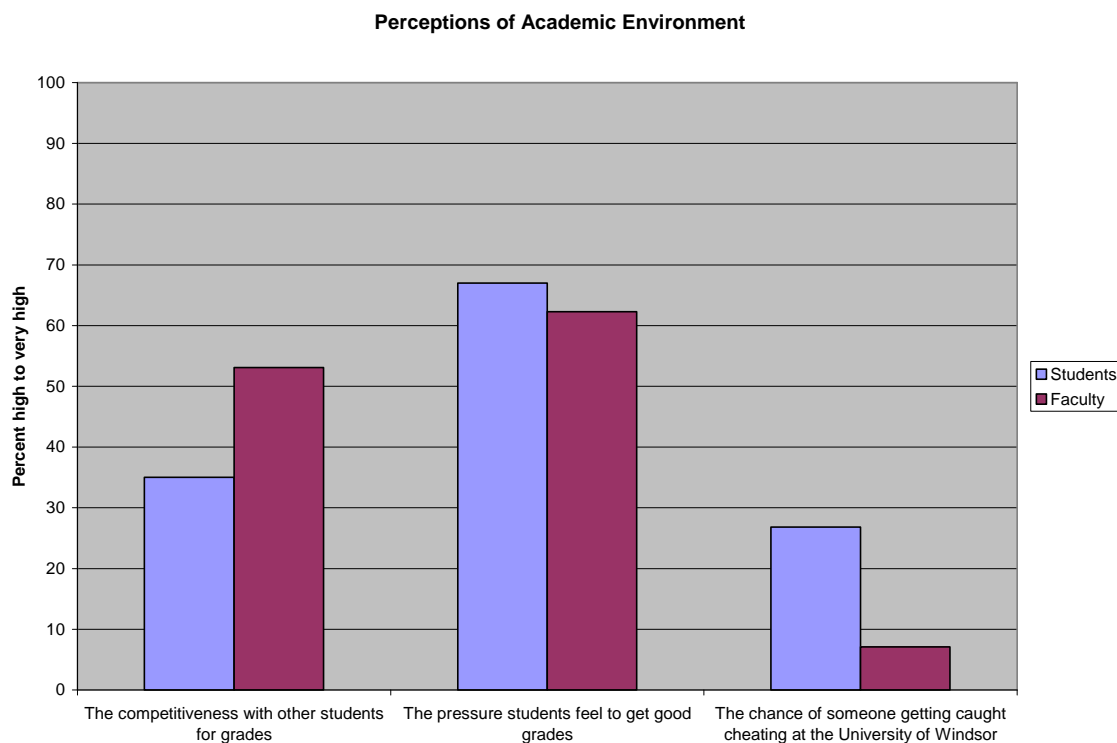
³ *Ibid.* at 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

the pressure students are under to receive good grades, and their views on the chance of someone getting caught cheating at the university.

Of the respondents who answered in the high to very high range, the data indicate that faculty respondents had a much higher perception of competition among university students than the students themselves (faculty: 53.1%, students: 35%). However, both categories of respondents believe that students are under a high amount of pressure to receive good grades (students: 67%, faculty: 62.3%). And while there are more students than faculty who believe that the chance of someone getting caught cheating at the university is high or very high, less than 30% of *all* respondents felt that there is a high chance of someone getting caught cheating.

If the majority of students do not feel that there is a high chance of someone getting caught cheating then it is possible that students are more likely to cheat. To curtail this perception focus might be placed on increasing student awareness of the possible penalties for cheating, increasing student awareness of the consequences that those who have cheated have faced, educating faculty on this student perception, and encouraging faculty members to take action in all instances of cheating or suspected cheating.



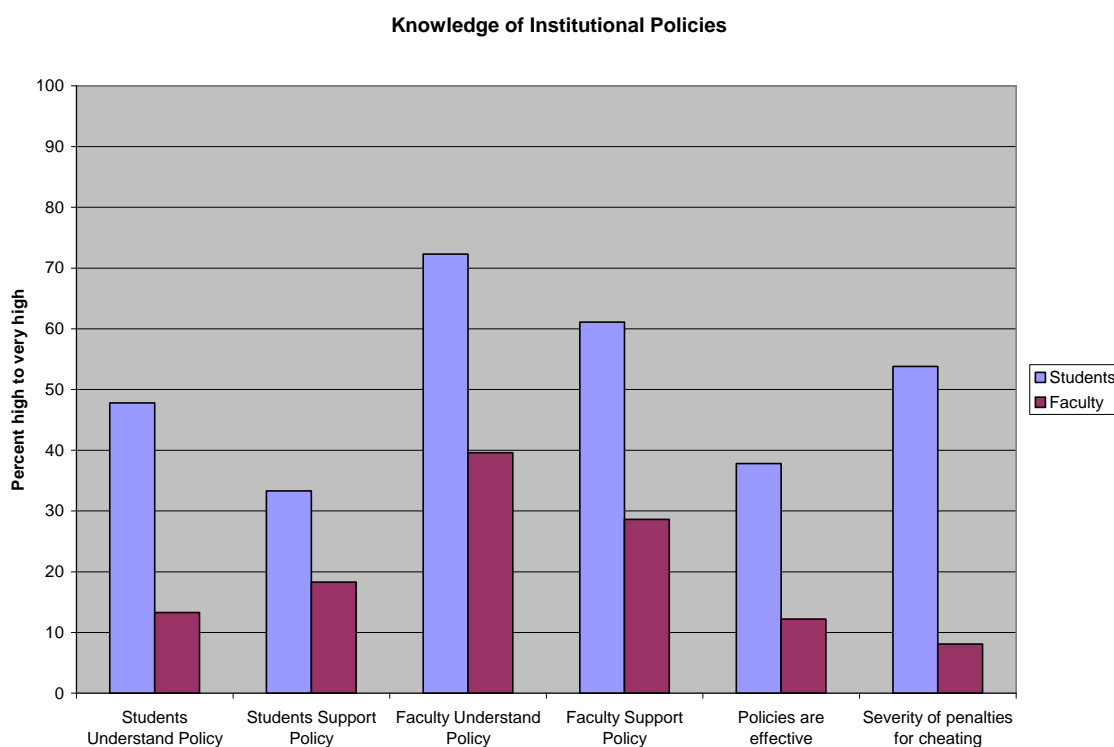
2. Knowledge of Institutional Policies

In this section of the survey respondents were asked to rate their *perception* of understanding and support, by both students and professors, of the university policies concerning cheating, as well as their view of the *effectiveness* of the policies and the severity of the penalties for cheating.

The responses ranged from very low to very high. The chart below demonstrates the percentage of respondents who answered in the high to very high range.

Overall, students had a much higher perception of understanding and support among their peers of the university policies than did faculty members of theirs. As well, student respondents had a much higher opinion of the knowledge, support, and understanding of the university policies that professors have than the professors themselves.⁵

Regrettably, less than 50 percent of both student and faculty respondents believe that the effectiveness of the university policies concerning cheating is high or very high.⁶ However, over 50 percent of students rate the *severity* of the penalties for cheating high to very high.⁷



When asked to evaluate their personal understanding of the university's policies concerning cheating, students, for the most part, rated themselves in the high to very high range. As illustrated by the graph below, the percentages, broken down by the students' year of study, are as follows: Year 1 - 69.3%; Year 2 - 78.9%; Year 3 - 74.3%; and Year 4 - 71.2%.

Conversely, professors rated student understanding of the policies much lower, approximately 13%.⁸ The Hughes-McCabe study offers, as an explanation for the perceived low level by

⁵ At the University of Windsor this was just over 60%; in the Hughes-McCabe study this was 78%. *Ibid.* at 11.

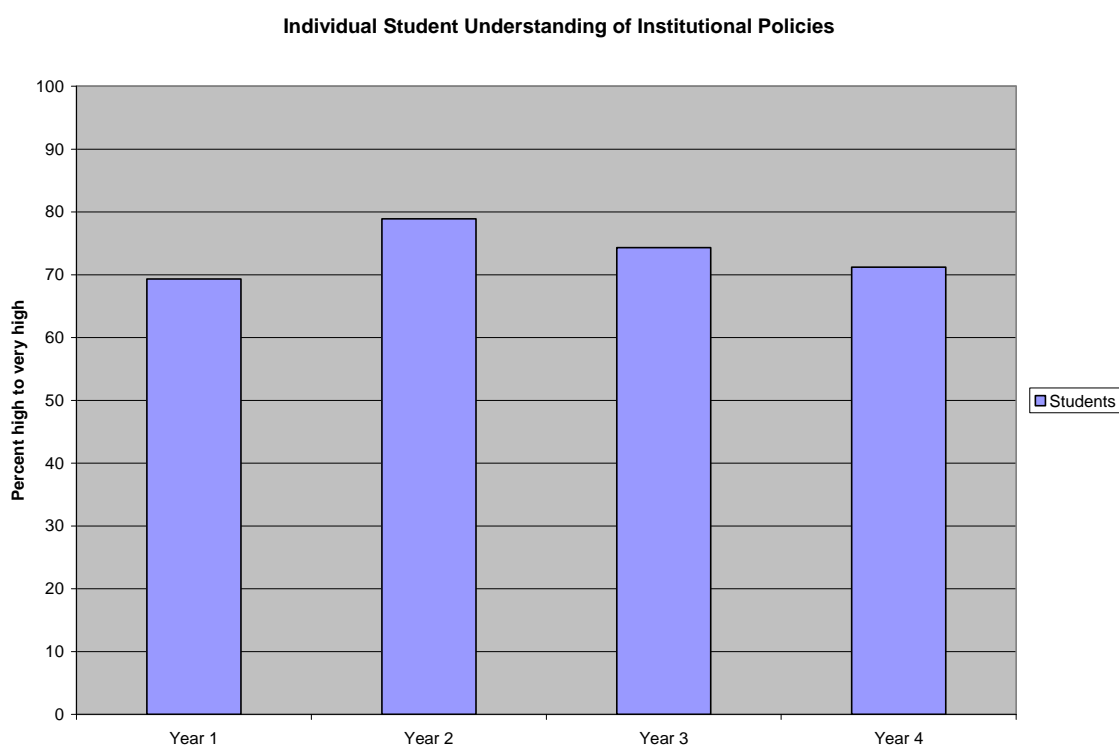
⁶ This is consistent with the Hughes-McCabe study where "only 44% of students perceived the effectiveness of academic misconduct policies to be high or very high" and "only 12% of faculty . . . perceived the effectiveness of these policies to be high or very high." *Ibid.* at 11, 14.

⁷ Compare this to 67% in the Hughes-McCabe study. *Ibid.* at 11.

faculty of student understanding, that “the majority of faculty . . . reported having only a ‘low’ or ‘moderate’ understanding of these policies themselves.”⁹ Of interest, the Hughes-McCabe study also notes:

A related issue may be the low level of discussion about academic integrity policies that reportedly occurs amongst faculty and between faculty and university administrators. . . . The majority of faculty reported having learned about their university’s academic misconduct policies by reading their university calendars, suggesting that faculty and TAs who do not take the initiative may remain largely ignorant of their institution’s policies and procedures for dealing with academic misconduct.¹⁰

Finally, 54% of student respondents rated the severity of penalties for cheating high or very high as compared to 8% of faculty respondents.¹¹



The figures in this chart are consistent with the expectation that students would have a better understanding of policies in the years following their first year of university study.

⁸ This is consistent with the Hughes-McCabe study in which only 11% of professors ranked student understanding of campus policies concerning cheating as high or very high. *Ibid.* at 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* at 14.

¹¹ This is below the 67% rating in the Hughes-McCabe study based on responses by undergraduate students. *Ibid.* at 11.

3. Sources of Information about Cheating/Academic Policies

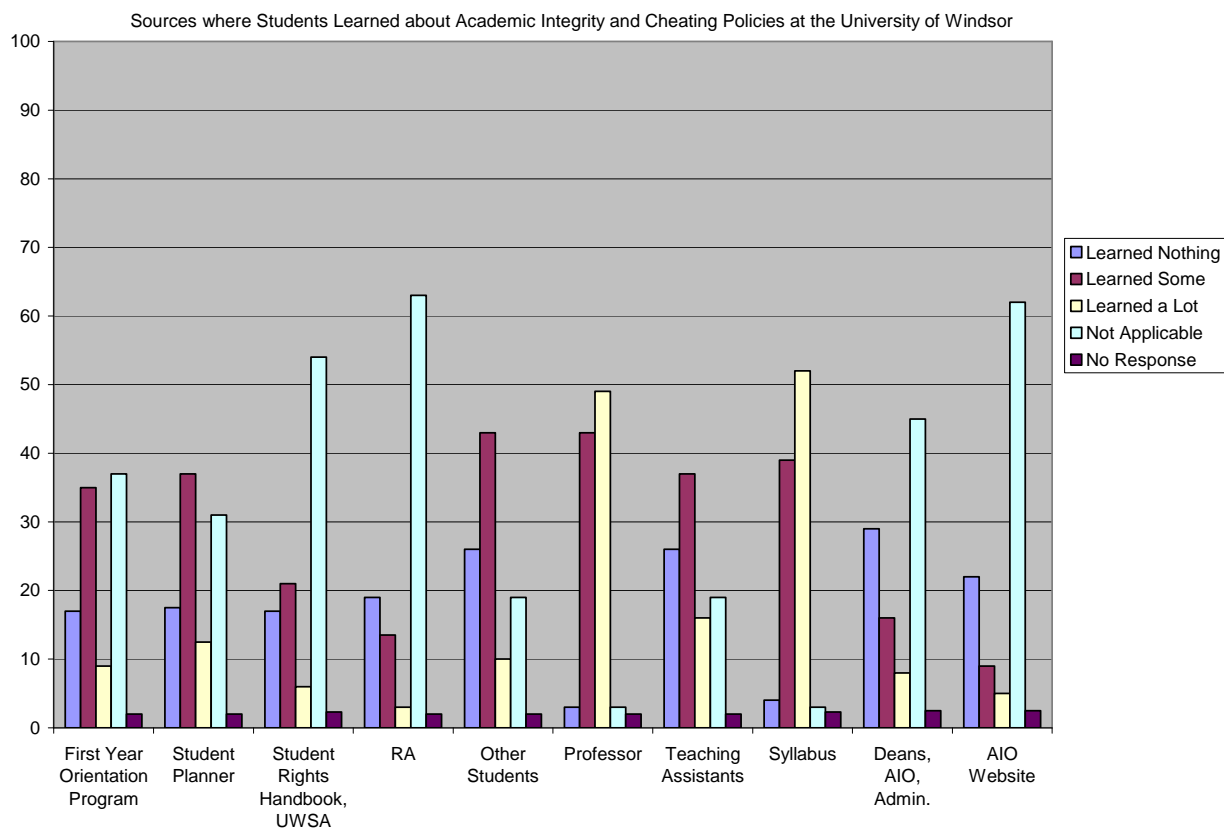
Students were asked to indicate how they had been informed about the academic or cheating policies at the university through specific sources. Almost all student respondents indicated they had been informed in some way.¹² Overall, students indicated the most common source from which they learned of the policies were professors and class syllabi.¹³ The least common sources were Deans, Administration, the Academic Integrity Officer, and the Academic Integrity Office website.

This indicates that, while still relatively new to the university campus, the Academic Integrity Office must promote its services and availability to students more broadly in order to increase student perception of its accessibility and to enhance student awareness of its existence. This also indicates that because professors have the most contact with students, they will continue to bear a significant responsibility for communicating the university's academic integrity policies to students.

The relevant chart can be found on the next page.

¹² This is consistent with the Hughes-McCabe study where 89% of undergraduate respondents reported being informed. *Ibid.*

¹³ This too is consistent with national figures. In the Hughes-McCabe study 56% of students reported learning a lot from faculty. *Ibid.*

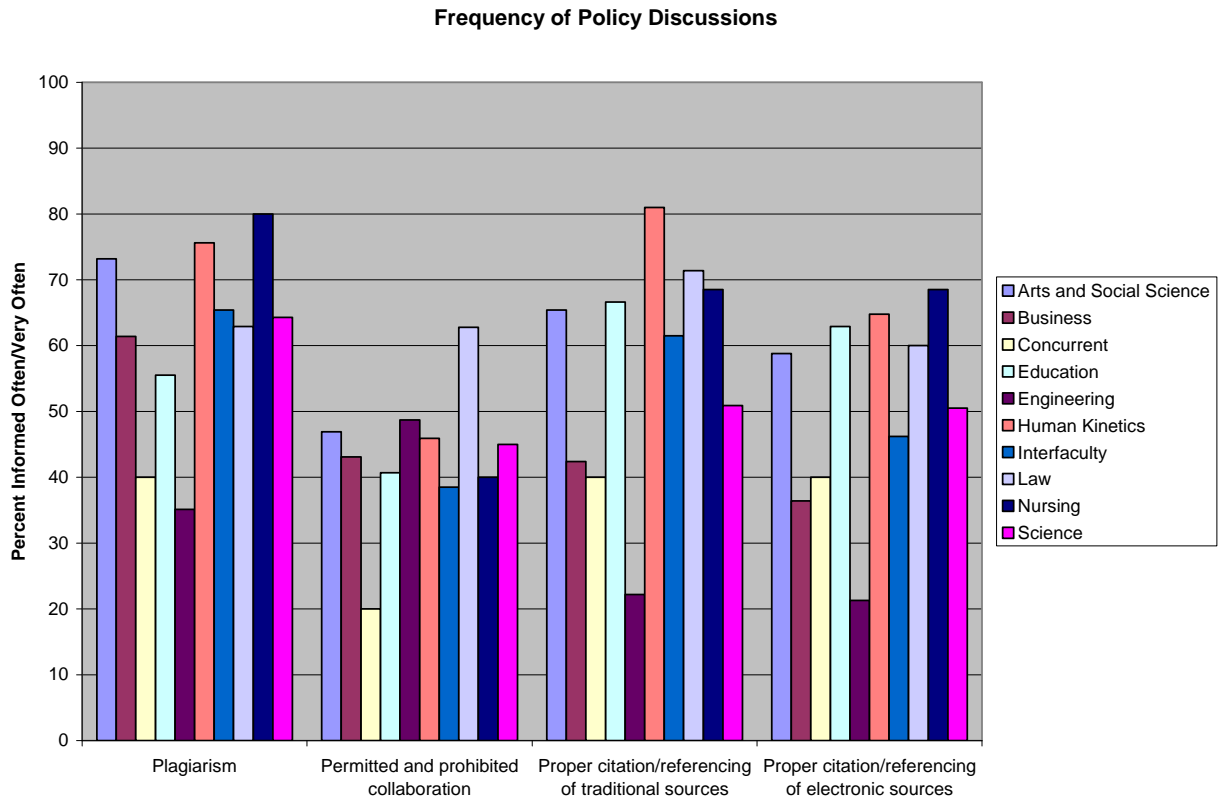


4. Frequency of Policy Discussions

Having responded that professors are the main source from which they obtain information about cheating policies at the University, students were asked to indicate how often their professors discussed policies concerning *specific* cheating behaviour.

The chart below demonstrates the frequency of specific policy discussions as observed **often to very often** by students in their respective faculties.¹⁴ This information could be used as an indicator to faculties that were rated lower by students in policy discussion frequency to increase the amount of time they spend discussing such policies with their students.

¹⁴ When interpreting the following charts the reader is asked to keep in mind that the response rates from students in some faculties were higher than in others; the range being from 2.9% response rate to 11.0%. See the addendum to the report for full participant demographics.

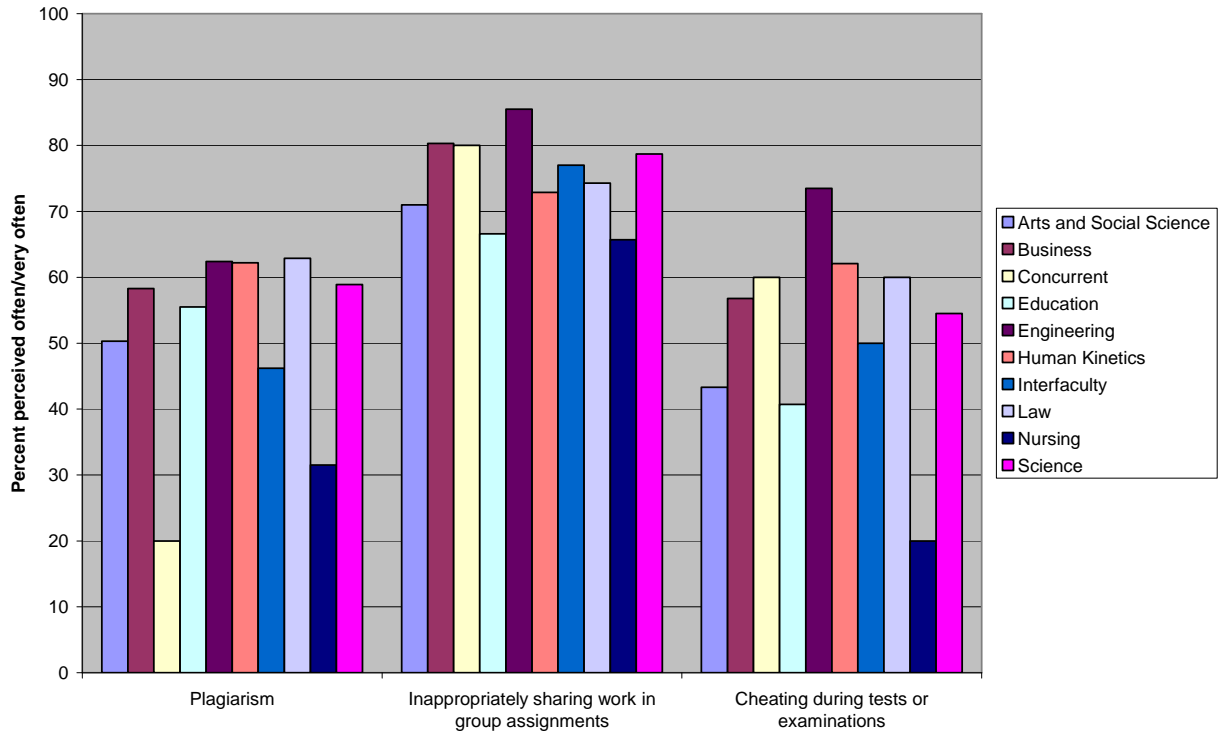


5. Perceived Frequency and Nature of Policy Infractions

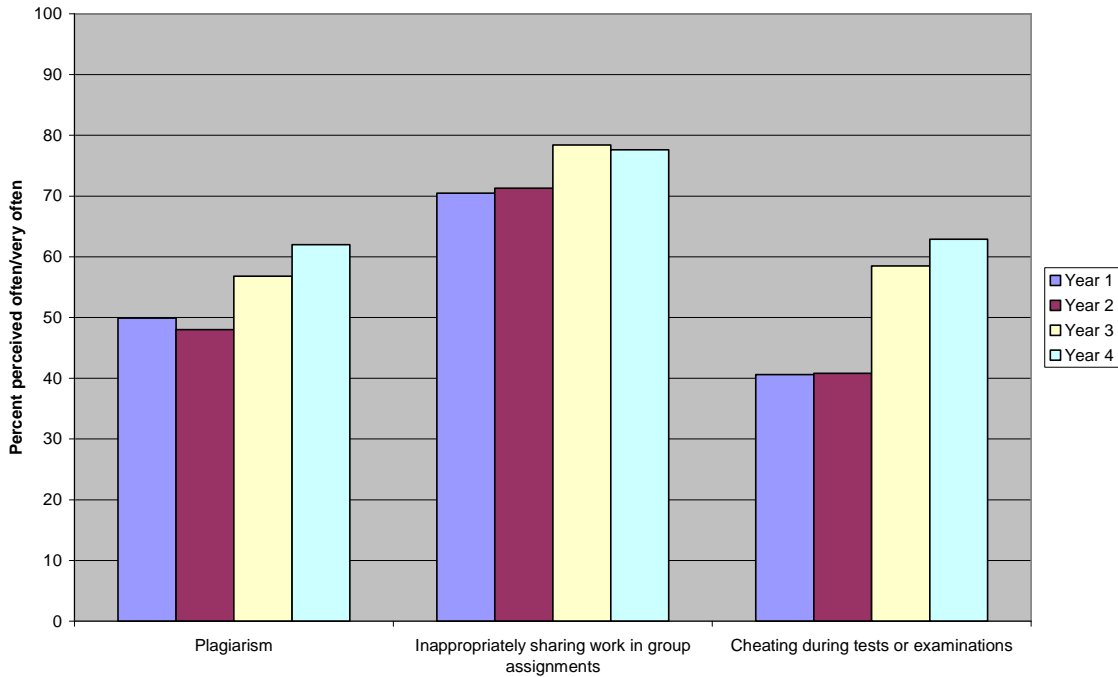
Student respondents were asked to indicate how often they believe specific infractions occur at the University of Windsor.

The charts below indicate the respective faculties and year of study in which the student respondents were registered and the responses indicating that these infractions occur in their faculty **often or very often**. The data indicate that most students feel as though these behaviours take place quite often, with students in certain faculties (e.g., Engineering) or years of study (4th year) believing this more than others. However, over 60% of students in all faculties and years of study believe that inappropriately sharing work in group assignments occurs often or very often.

Perceived Frequency of Specific Infractions (By Faculty)



Perceived Frequency of Specific Infractions (By Year of Study)



6. Frequency of Suspected and Observed Cheating During Tests or Exams

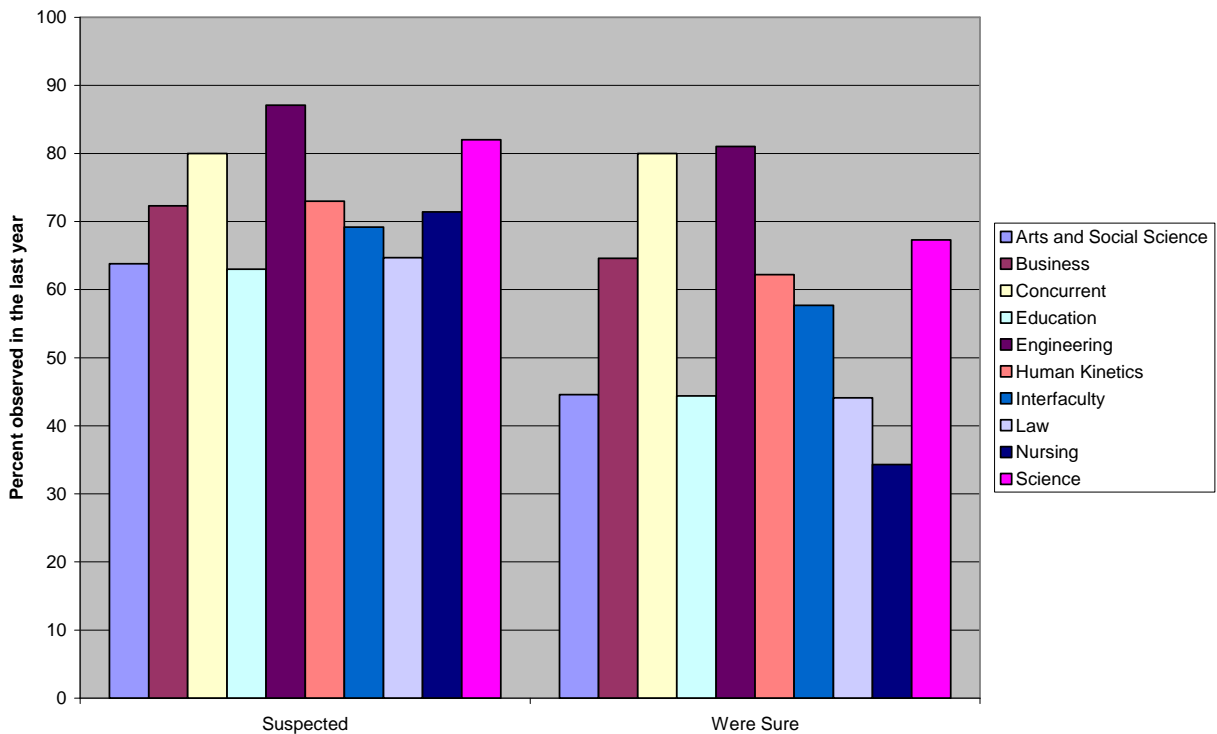
Of the 1228 student respondents, 856 (69.7%) indicated that, in the past year, they had *suspected* another student of cheating during a test or examination and 676 (55%) indicated they were *sure* they had observed another student cheating during a test or examination.¹⁵ While these numbers suggest that a large number of cheating incidents should therefore have been reported, only 10.9% of student respondents indicated they ever reported another student for cheating; 86% indicated they have *not* reported test cheating. Moreover, we know from Windsor's 2006-07 Comprehensive Student Discipline Report that not all cheating is reported, since less than 1% of all students at the university are investigated for misconduct.

Many reasons might explain why students largely allow cheating to go undetected. These include not being aware of procedures for reporting; not feeling they are responsible to police other students; fear of reprisal; and lack of anonymity. Emphasis should be placed on educating students about proper reporting procedures, the confidentiality surrounding reporting, the importance of earning one's degree, and how the value of one's degree is affected by all student behaviours, both positive and negative.

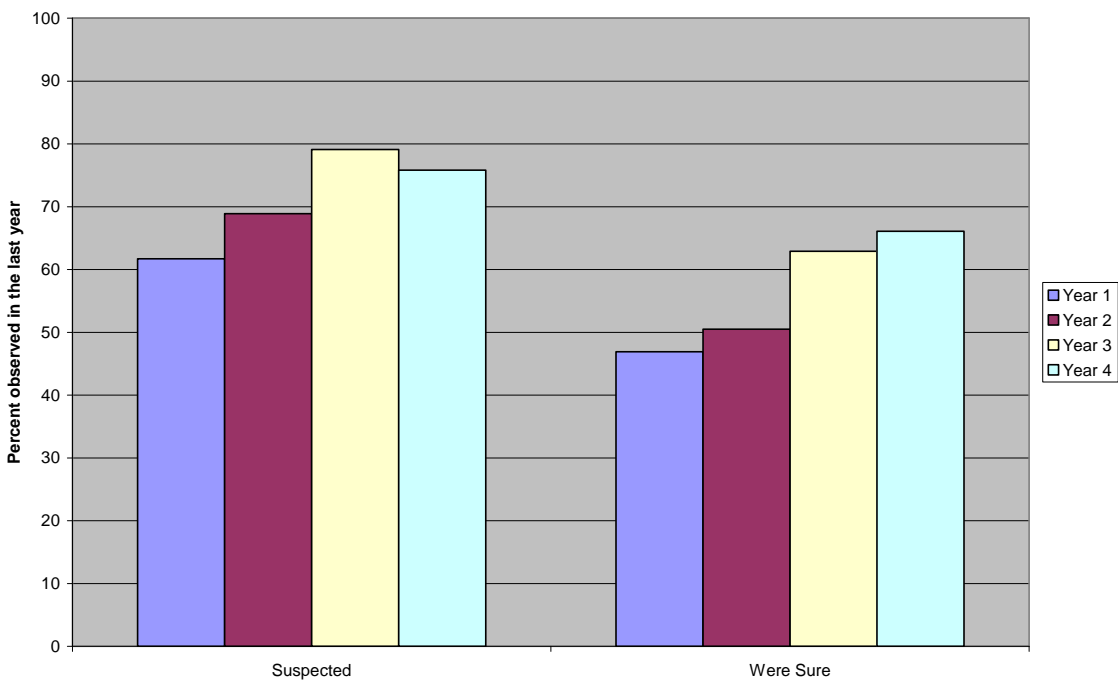
The following charts demonstrate *student perceptions* of cheating during tests or examinations in the year preceding the study, broken down by the faculty and year of study in which the student respondents were registered.

¹⁵ In the Hughes-McCabe study, the rates were 65% and 45% respectively. *Supra* note 1 at 10.

Frequency of Suspected/Observed Cheating During Tests or Exams by Faculty



Frequency of Suspected/Observed Cheating During Tests or Exams



B. SPECIFIC BEHAVIOURS

1. Seriousness of the Behaviour

Twenty-three specific behaviours people might consider cheating were presented to both students and faculty with a request for each to indicate how serious they think the behaviour is. Students and faculty did not agree entirely on which behaviours were the most serious.

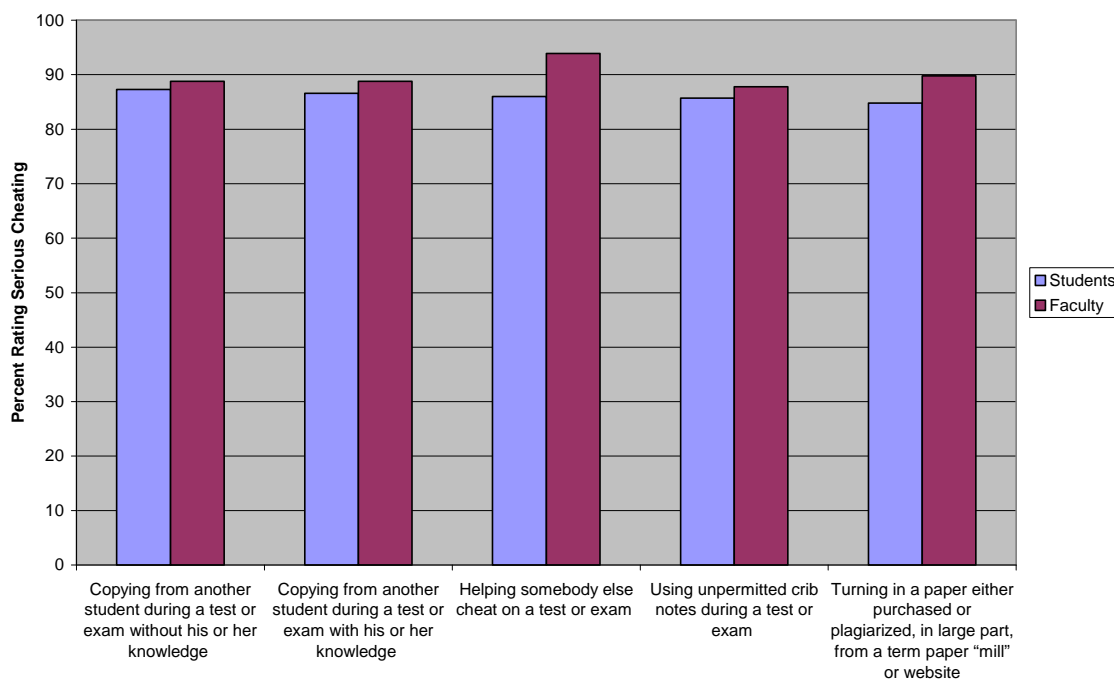
Students indicated these five cheating behaviours were *most serious*:

- copying from another student during a test or exam without his or her knowledge (87.3%);
- copying from another student during a test or exam with his or her knowledge (86.6%);
- helping somebody else cheat on a test or exam (86%);
- using un-permitted crib notes (cheat sheets) during a test or exam (85.7%);¹⁶ and
- turning in a paper either purchased or plagiarized, in large part, from a term paper “mill” or website (84.8%).

The following chart demonstrates the five **most serious** cheating behaviours as rated by students compared to faculty ratings of the seriousness of those same behaviours.

¹⁶ This is consistent with the Hughes-McCabe study where the majority of respondents from all groups surveyed agreed that these behaviours relating to test cheating constituted moderate or serious cheating. *Ibid.* at 8.

Five Most Serious Cheating Behaviours (As Ranked by Student Respondents)



As the chart indicates, faculty ratings of the seriousness of these particular behaviours are higher than those of the students. However, not all five of these behaviours ranked at the top of the five most serious cheating behaviours as indicated by faculty, and those that do were not ranked in the same order by students as they were by faculty.

Faculty indicated these five cheating behaviours as *most serious*:

- a student writing or providing an assignment from another student (93.9%);
- a student helping someone else cheat on a test or exam (93.9%),
- copying material, almost word for word, from any source (including from other students) and turning it in as one's own work (93.9%);
- turning in a paper either purchased or plagiarized, in large part, from a term paper "mill" or website (89.8%);
- copying from another student during a test or exam without his or her knowledge, as well as with his or her knowledge (88.8%).

The five *least serious* cheating behaviours (ranked by students as "not cheating") include:

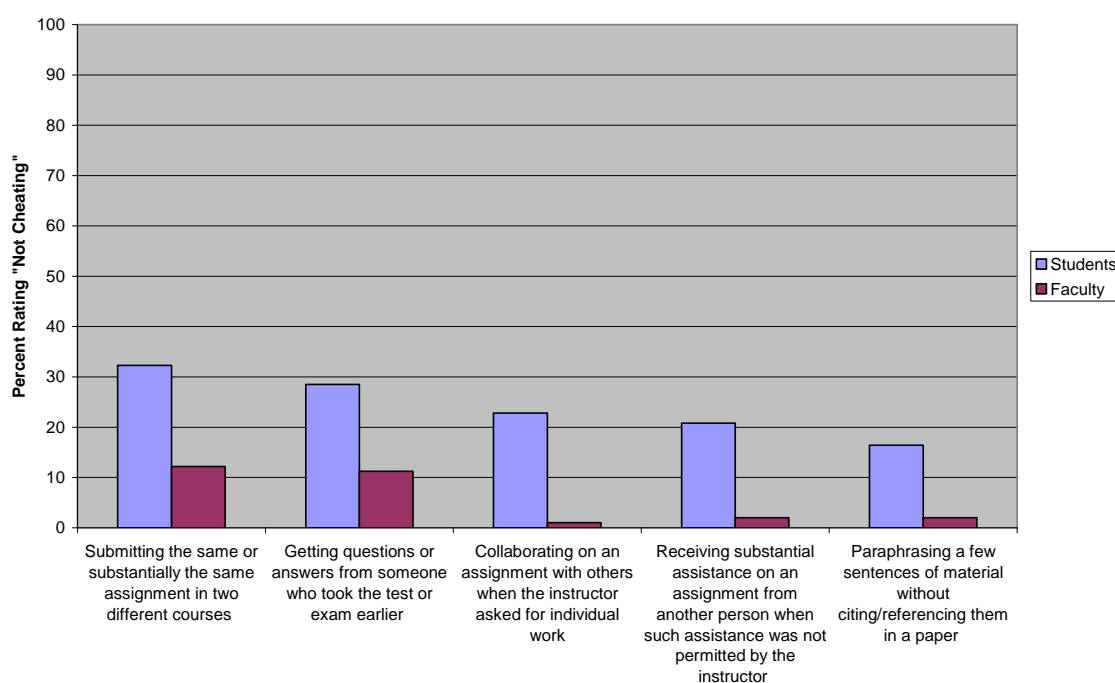
- submitting the same or substantially the same assignment in two different courses (32.3%);
- getting questions or answers from someone who took the test or exam earlier (28.5%);
- collaborating on an assignment with others when the instructor asked for individual work (22.8%);

- receiving substantial assistance on an assignment from another person when such assistance was not permitted by the instructor (20.8%); and
- paraphrasing a few sentences of material without citing/referencing them in a paper (16.4%).

Faculty respondents overwhelmingly did not agree with rating these behaviours as “not cheating,” labeling most as either trivial cheating or serious cheating.

While these behaviours are ranked the least serious behaviours by students, the percentage of students who rated these behaviours as “not cheating” is quite low and thus by no means is the seriousness of these behaviours to be diminished, since the majority of respondents ranked them as at least “trivial cheating.”

Five Least Serious Cheating Behaviours (As Ranked by Student Respondents)



2. Frequency of the Behaviour Engaged in by Students and Observed by Faculty

Using the same 23 specific behaviours, students were asked to indicate whether they had ever engaged in the behaviour, while faculty were asked to indicate whether they had ever observed a student engaging in the behaviour.

The five behaviours most frequently reported by students to be those they engaged in **at least once** are:

- collaborating on an assignment with others when the instructor asked for individual work (36.3%);
- paraphrasing a few sentences of material without citing/referencing them in a paper (33%);
- getting questions or answers from someone who took the test earlier (31.4%);
- copying a few sentences of material without citing/referencing them in a paper (20.7%); and
- receiving substantial assistance on an assignment from another person when such assistance was not permitted by the instructor (17%).¹⁷

Faculty reported the behaviours they most frequently observe and have observed at least once are:

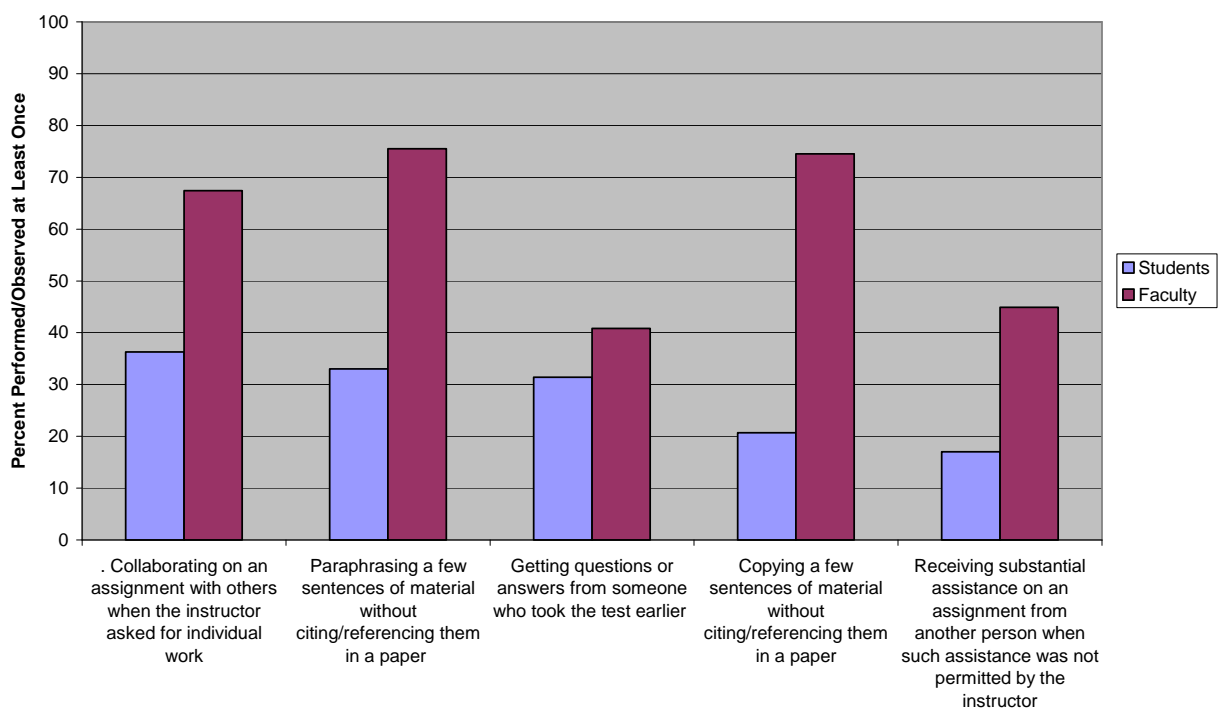
- paraphrasing a few sentences of material without citing/referencing them in a paper (75.5%);
- copying a few sentences of material without citing/referencing them in a paper (74.5%);
- receiving substantial assistance on an assignment from another person when such assistance was not permitted by the instructor (67.4%);
- students turning in as their own work, work done by someone else (59.2%)¹⁸;
- copying material, almost word for word, from any source (including other students) (59.2%);
- using a false or forged excuse to obtain an extension on a due date (54.1%); and
- using a false or forged excuse to excuse or postpone a test or exam (54.1%).¹⁹

¹⁷ In the Hughes-McCabe study, these were: (1) working with others when asked for individual work (45%) (this ranked first and 36.3% in Windsor's survey); (2) getting questions and answers from someone who has already taken a test (38%) (this ranked third and 31.4% in Windsor's survey); (3) copying a few sentences from a written source without footnoting (37%) (this ranked 4th and 20.7% in Windsor's survey); (4) copying a few sentences from the Internet without footnoting (35%) (this was not a separate category in Windsor's study); and (5) fabricating or falsifying lab data (25%) (this did not make the "top 5" in Windsor's study). *Ibid.* at 10-11.

¹⁸ While 59.2% of faculty responded that they have observed this behaviour at least once, 91% of students say they have never engaged in this behaviour.

¹⁹ While 54.1% of faculty responded that they have observed this behaviour at least once, 93.2% of students responded that they have never engaged in this behaviour.

**Five Behaviours Most Frequently Engaged in by Students (as reported by students)
Compared to Faculty Observations of the Same Behaviours (as reported by faculty)**

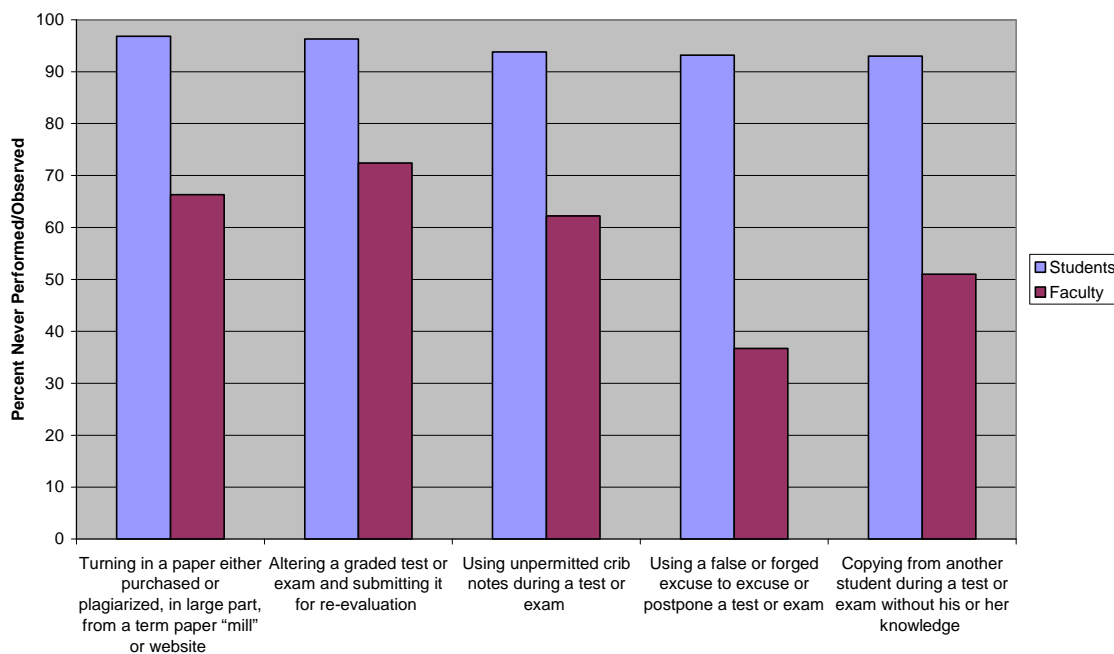


As shown in the next chart, students indicated that the five behaviours **least commonly engaged in** (ranked “never performed”) are:

- turning in a paper either purchased or plagiarized, in large part, from a term paper “mill” or website (96.8%);
- altering a graded test or exam and submitting it for re-evaluation (96.3%);
- using un-permitted crib notes during a test or exam (93.8%);
- using a false or forged excuse to postpone a test or exam (93.2%)²⁰; and
- copying from another student during a test or exam without his or her knowledge (93%).

²⁰ This could be seen as contradicting the faculty rating of this behaviour as one of the most frequently observed student behaviours with 54.1% of faculty saying they had observed this behaviour at least once.

**Five Behaviours Least Commonly Engaged in (as reported by students)
Compared to Faculty Observations of the Same Behaviours (as reported by faculty)**



The five behaviours least commonly observed by faculty (percent ranked as having “never observed”) are:

- altering a graded test or exam and submitting it for re-evaluation (72.4%);
- falsifying lab or research data (68.4%);
- turning in a paper either purchased or plagiarized, in large part, from a term paper “mill” or website (66.3%);
- using un-permitted crib notes during a test or exam (62.2%); and
- fabricating or falsifying a bibliography/reference page (61.2%).

It is possible that students perceive there to be a greater risk in engaging in some cheating behaviours than in others and perhaps that is why some offences considered less serious occur more often than those considered very serious, such as the behaviours faculty have indicated they never or rarely observe.

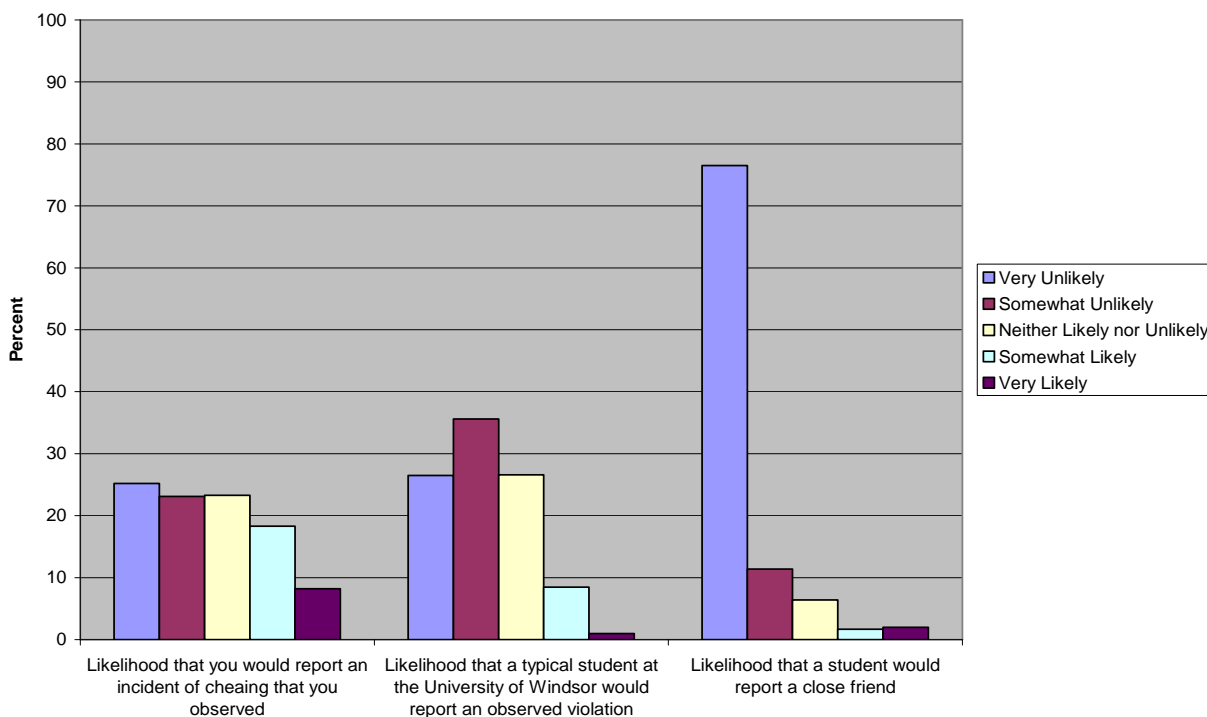
The university might address the notion of there being “levels of cheating” by taking all academic misconduct very seriously and encouraging faculty and students to report all misconduct issues, even those considered “trivial.” Students should not be given incentive to engage in cheating behaviour through lax application of university policies.

3. Student Responsibility for Monitoring Academic Integrity

In general, students do not believe they should be responsible for monitoring other students' behaviour or for reporting offenses. In fact, many students are of the opinion that it is "none of my business," "not my job," and "professors should be paying more attention."²¹ They believe that because the university pays professors, teaching assistants, graduate assistants, and proctors to watch out for academic misconduct, the responsibility for monitoring others and reporting misconduct should not rest with students.

Almost half of student respondents (48.3%) reported they would be unlikely to report another student for cheating and 62.1% believed the typical student at the university would be unlikely to report another student for cheating. Not surprisingly, when it comes to the likelihood of reporting cheating, 87.9% of students reported they would be unlikely to do so (76.5% very unlikely; 11.4% somewhat unlikely). Moreover, as the first chart below demonstrates, most students reported they would be "very unlikely" to report a close friend for cheating.

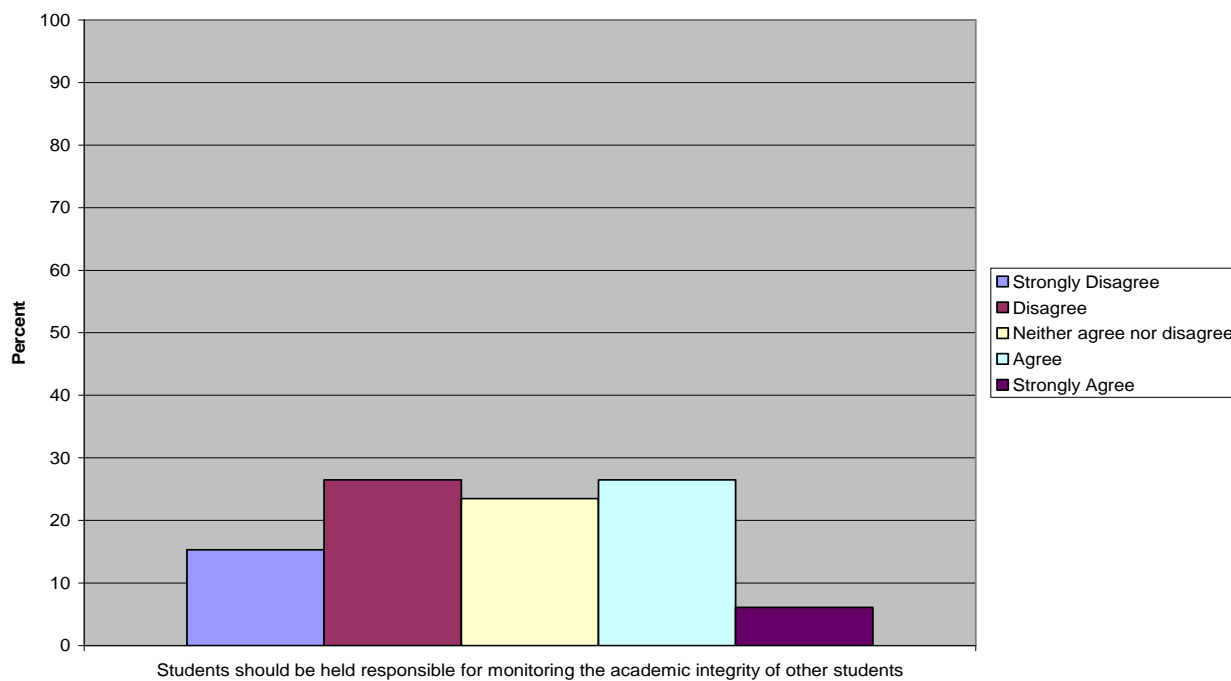
Student Likelihood of Reporting Cheating



Faculty respondents indicated that, overall, they too do not agree that students should be responsible for monitoring the academic integrity of other students, but the inclination in this direction is not as strong as that of students: 41.8% of faculty respondents indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed that students should bear the responsibility for maintaining integrity, while 32.6% of faculty respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that students *should* bear responsibility.

²¹ Comments of these types were generated from the survey.

**Student Responsibility for Monitoring Academic Integrity of Other Students
(Based on Faculty Respondents)**



4. Sanctions

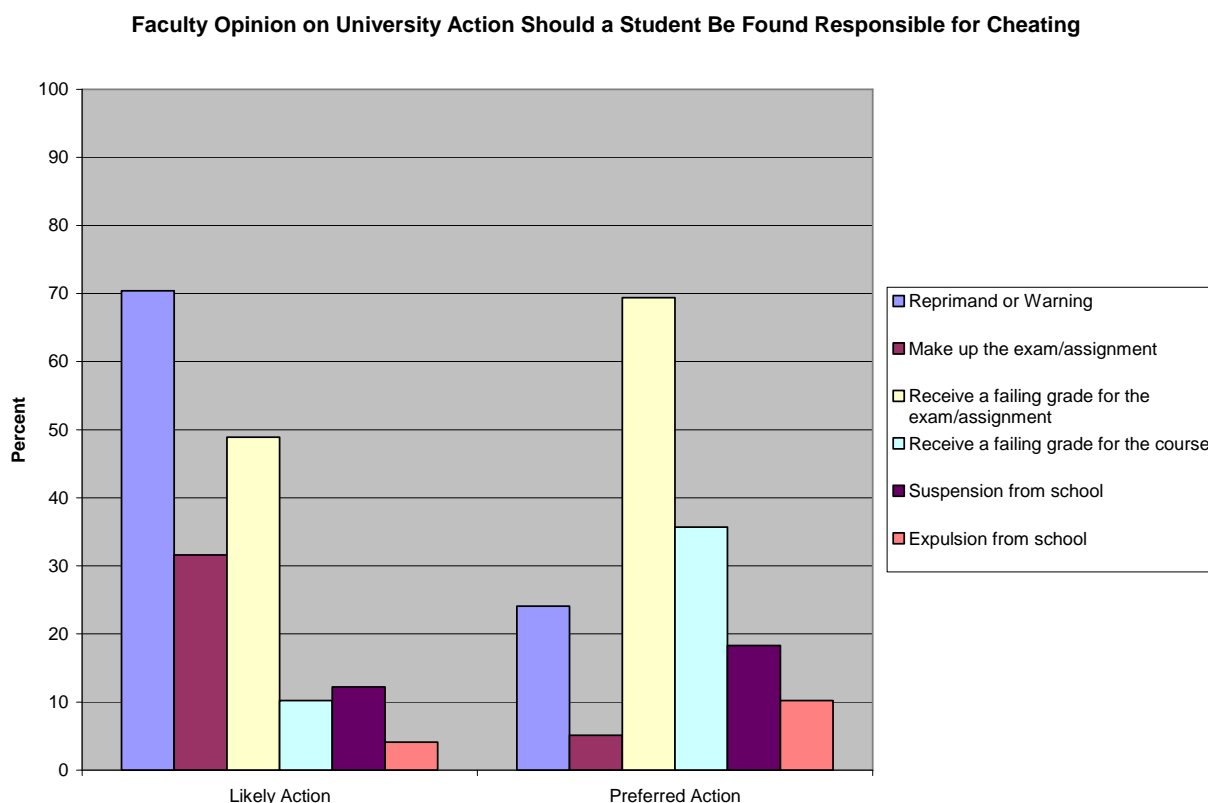
Of the faculty respondents, 56.2% agreed or strongly agreed that cheating is a serious problem at the university,²² while only 8.1% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 34.7% were uncertain.

Faculty were asked to assume a student was found responsible for cheating on a major test or written assignment. They were then asked to indicate the likely action they perceived the University would take against the student and what action they would *prefer* the university to take. The most common perception was that the university would reprimand or warn the student. However, faculty indicated their preferred course of action would be for the student to receive a failing grade for the exam or assignment.²³

²² This was 46% in the Hughes-McCabe study. *Supra* note 1 at 12.

²³ This is entirely consistent with the Hughes-McCabe study. *Ibid.* at 14. Currently, under Senate Bylaw 31, the university does not have authority to sanction students for misconduct using grade penalties. Rather, grades are considered a matter for faculty and reflect the academic merit of the work. This means that both courses of action could occur simultaneously: a warning/reprimand as disciplinary action by the university, and a failing grade as a consequence of the work in question having no or little academic merit, as determined by the professor. However, in the new Bylaw 31, passed by Senate in November 2007 and likely to be implemented in the spring of 2008, grade penalties as a sanction for misconduct will be available in some cases.

With respect to more serious sanctions for the misconduct, 16.3% of faculty perceived the university would likely suspend or expel the student, while 28.5% indicated suspension or expulsion as their preferred course of action.



5. Faculty Reasons for Ignoring Suspected Cheating

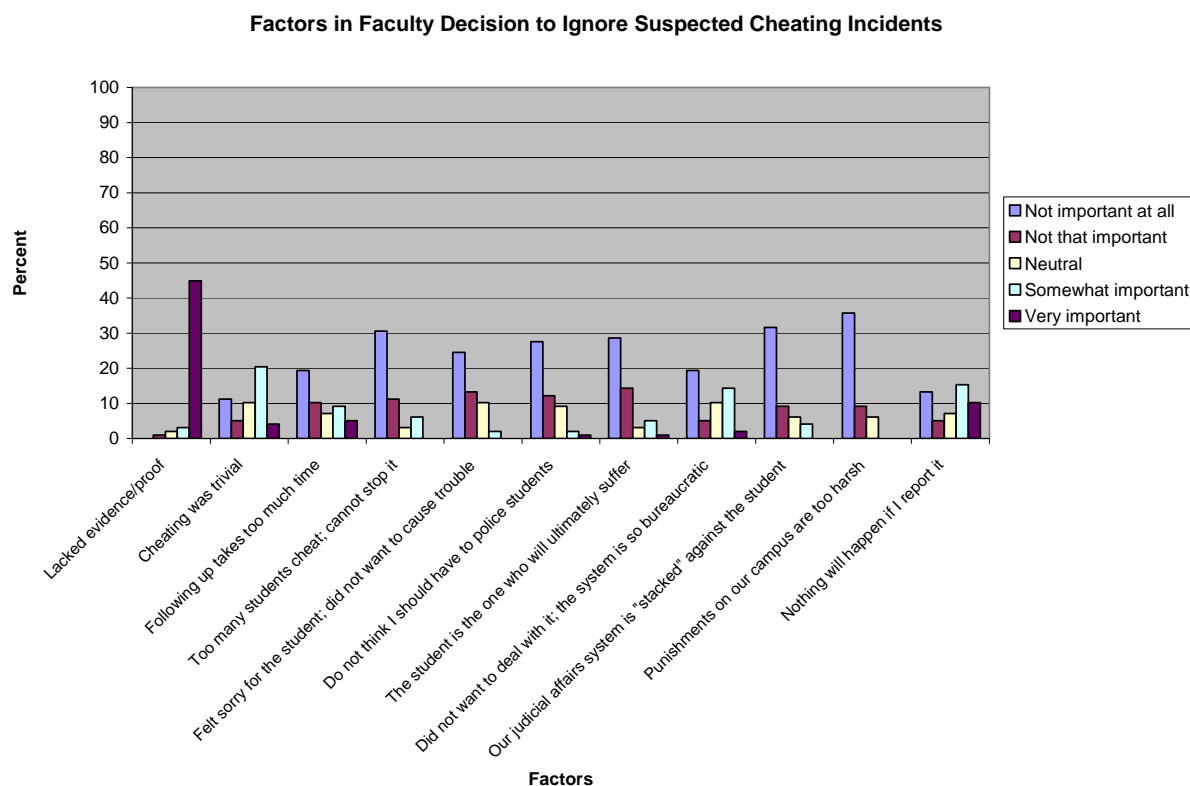
Of the faculty respondents, 51% indicated they had ignored a *suspected* incident of cheating in their courses²⁴ while 49% indicated they had not. Of those who ignored a suspected incident of cheating the most frequently-cited “very important” reason for doing so was lack of evidence or proof.²⁵

There is a need to educate faculty about what constitutes evidence. It is possible that some faculty members think they do not have sufficient evidence in cases where, for example, it is their word against the student's. This is not necessarily the case and faculty should be encouraged to report all suspected academic misconduct in order to improve the culture of integrity at the University of Windsor.

²⁴ This was 46% in the Hughes-McCabe study. *Ibid.* at 12.

²⁵ Likewise, this was the reason cited most often in the Hughes-McCabe study (85%). *Ibid.* Two other reasons cited in the Windsor study mirror those of the Hughes-McCabe study, e.g., lack of time to pursue suspected cases, and trivial nature of the offence, although the percentages in the Hughes-McCabe study for these items were higher. *Ibid.*

In general the university might consider a more proactive approach in ensuring that all faculty are properly apprised of the policies concerning cheating and academic misconduct, as well as their obligation to report it.



6. Faculty Referrals

When asked if they had ever referred a suspected case of cheating to their Department Head, Associate Dean, Dean, the Vice-Provost, or the Academic Integrity Officer, 70.4% of faculty respondents said they had²⁶ and 25.5% said they had not.

Of those who indicated they had referred a case, 47.9% reported they were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the results, while 15.3% indicated they were either very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with the results.²⁷ This suggests there is work to be done on the part of the Academic Integrity Office to increase faculty satisfaction.

It is possible that faculty who are dissatisfied with the results of reporting an incident of academic misconduct will be unlikely to go out of their way to report incidents in the future.

²⁶ This exceeds the 53% who would take this action as reported in the Hughes-McCabe study. *Ibid.*

²⁷ In the Hughes-McCabe study, 65% of faculty reported being satisfied or very satisfied with how the case was handled. *Ibid.* at 14.

This will not improve the culture of academic integrity on campus. It might be helpful to seek input from faculty members as to their views on appropriate sanctions in individual cases, as well as to make reporting incidents as painless as possible. Regrettably, where faculty do not report cheating incidents, this “may serve to reinforce a low risk assessment. With no formal record, a student could continue to engage in academic misconduct and if and when formal action is taken, would likely be treated as a ‘first time’ offender.”²⁸

7. Safeguards Used by Faculty to Reduce Cheating

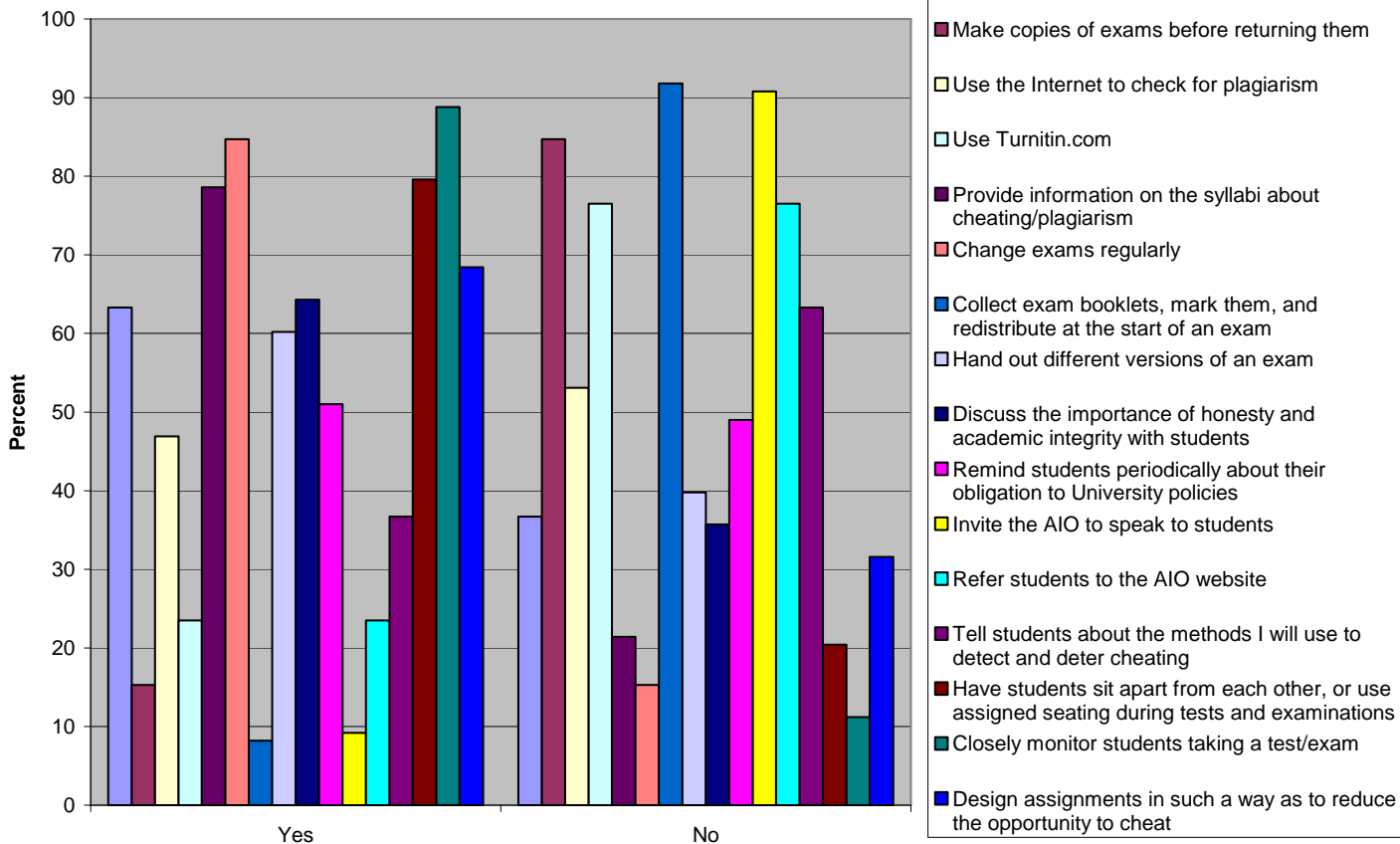
Faculty were asked about the type of safeguards they employ to reduce cheating in their courses. All of the respondents indicated that they used at least some measure. The following chart illustrates what safeguards faculty use most and least. The top five were:

- closely monitoring students taking a test or exam;
- changing exams regularly;
- having students sit apart from each other, or using assigned seating during tests and exams;
- providing information on syllabi about cheating/plagiarism; and
- designing assignments in such a way as to reduce the opportunity to cheat.²⁹

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Items 1, 2, and 4 in the Windsor study ranked 1, 2, and 3 in the Hughes-McCabe study. Ranked 4th in the Hughes-McCabe study was “discussing the importance of honesty and integrity with their students,” which was ranked 6th in the Windsor study. *Ibid.*

Faculty Employed Safeguards to Reduce Cheating



C. GENERAL COMMENTARY

1. Faculty Opinion

Faculty respondents were generally supportive of the role they play in upholding the institutional policies on cheating at the University of Windsor. Many agree that cheating hurts everyone and that perhaps stronger sanctions should be imposed on those students who commit offences.

When asked what role faculty members thought they should play in promoting academic integrity and/or controlling cheating in their courses, some respondents reported that strong rapport with students is important as are clear explanations of the principles of academic integrity, close monitoring of cheating on assignments, and follow-up. It was noted that faculty should encourage students to have a strong sense of personal responsibility and that this requires a good relationship with students. Also, plagiarism should be clearly defined and principles of documentation for the discipline explained, especially at the first year level. Finally, students must be made aware of long term consequences.

2. Student Opinion

Students felt strongly about their role in the reporting of cheating by other students. However, some said the reason they did not report cheating is because they are not aware of the procedures for doing so. Many others believe it is not their job to police other students. They would rather not get involved, with some indicating that whistle blowers endure more stress after reporting the incident. Some students indicated it should be the responsibility of professors, teaching and graduate assistants, and proctors to ensure that no cheating takes place as they are the ones receiving monetary compensation to do so. Another common response was, "What goes around comes around." Students generally believe that cheaters are only hurting themselves. However, some students were dismayed about cheaters who get ahead the easy way while others work hard to earn their degrees.

Many indicated they were worried about lack of anonymity and the consequent potential backlash or reprisal from their peers if they reported cheating. Moreover, not wanting to be "a rat," a "tattle-tale," or "a snitch" was a common theme. Most students indicated they would never report a close friend for cheating.

Some students were worried that if they reported someone the penalty would be too harsh for the student committing the offence. Others believed that even if they reported an incident the university would do nothing. Students questioned, "If professors are not doing anything to stop cheating, why should students?"

Nevertheless, students were generally supportive of university policies on cheating and indicated they were pleased the university was beginning to take these behaviours more seriously.

3. Suggestions for Improving the Culture

Having regard to the fact that the results of the University of Windsor study generally reflect the status of academic integrity in the nation, as reported in the Hughes-McCabe study, it may be instructive to consider some of the suggestions made by Hughes and McCabe in moving forward to improve the culture of academic integrity at the University of Windsor. These include:

- Given a student culture that values collaboration, faculty should be realistic when assigning independent work and be clear about their rationale for doing so. For example, the requirement that students work individually on an assignment for which there is only one right answer is not likely to be adhered to by many in an unsupervised setting.
- Faculty may need to either substantially change their exams between semesters or “level the playing field” by making them available in advance to all students as a study aid. For courses with multiple sections, faculty need to either create different exams or have all students write the same exam at the same time.
- Perceptions of unfairness in the assessment process appears to be a significant justification for cheating in the mind of many students.
- More may need to be done to ensure the effective invigilation of tests and exams.
- More work may need to be done to educate undergraduate and graduate students about why fabricating and falsifying lab or research data are anathema to the values of academe. Faculty can minimize the opportunity or temptation for students to engage in these behaviours by ensuring that laboratory assignments and research assignments are sufficiently different from term and term and encouraging honest reporting of data.
- Students may also benefit from being educated about information literacy: effective citation practices, strategies for finding useful references, and how to keep track of works cited or paraphrased.
- To encourage legitimate referencing, faculty can require drafts (which can help students avoid last minute work) and annotated bibliographies and copies of the references used.³⁰

Regrettably, the following factors contribute to repeat offences: the typical student is unwilling to report, faculty ignore suspected cases primarily due to lack of evidence, and weak penalties are imposed.³¹ To improve the “perceived low risk level” for engaging in academic misconduct, Hughes and McCabe suggest the following:

- Faculty and the administration need to take action when TAs report cheating.
- Universities should increase the confidence faculty and students have in the effectiveness of their academic misconduct policies and procedures.
- Universities should actively educate faculty on academic integrity policies so as to signal institutional commitment about this important issue.

³⁰ *Ibid.* at 16-17.

³¹ *Ibid.* at 17.

- Institutions should recommit themselves to academic integrity and put effort into understanding where existing policies are failing. Policies that include meaningful penalties will increase the confidence of the university community.
- Implementation of such policies needs to be supported by system-wide educational efforts directed at administrators, faculty, TAs, and students.³²

Finally, Hughes and McCabe suggest “combined efforts between universities, colleges and high schools in an attempt to curb academic misconduct before it becomes routine. Special educational programming for incoming students may be particularly important to reinforce the message that academic misconduct will not be tolerated.”³³

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

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ADDENDUM

Participant Demographics

<u>Students</u>						
Year of Study	Number of Respondents	Total Number of Students			Response Percentage	
		F/T	P/T			
1	407	2959	586	[3545]	11.5	
2	223	2940	476	[3416]	6.5	
3	366	3344	858	[4202]	8.7	
4	232	2861	624	[3485]	6.7	
Total:	1228	12,104	2544	[14648]	8.4	
<u>Faculty Members</u>						
Faculty	Number of Respondents	Total Number of Students			Response Percentage	
		F/T	P/T			
FASS	497	5374.5	1510	[6884.5]	7.2	
Business	132	1562.5	597	[2159.5]	6.1	
Concurrent	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Education	27	812	130.25	[942.25]	2.9	
Engineering	117	820	245	[1065]	11	
HK	37	535	57	[592]	6.3	
Interfaculty	26	317	24	[341]	7.6	
Law	35	554	8	[562]	6.2	
Nursing	35	601	73	[674]	5.2	
Science	202	1559	455.75	[2014.75]	10	
Missing	115	N/A	N/A			
Faculty	Number of Respondents	Total Number of Faculty		Response Percentage		
FASS	37	191		19.4		
Business	3	52		5.8		
Education	1	30		3.3		
Engineering	6	57		10.5		
HK	3	16		18.8		
Law	4	28		14.3		
Nursing	6	19		31.8		
Science	20	131		15.3		
Other	5	N/A		N/A		
N/A	13	N/A		N/A		