

Assessment Integrity in Online and Modular Classes

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Abstract

Assessment integrity in online and modular classes is often framed as preventing cheating, although integrity also depends on whether the task measures the intended learning, preserves learner authorship, records relevant process, and supports a proportionate judgment. This conceptual review proposes an Assessment Evidence Integrity Model with five links: construct clarity, authentic task design, transparent conditions, corroborated authorship, and defensible interpretation. Evidence available through 2021 suggests that surveillance-heavy solutions can create privacy and access problems while failing to improve poor assessment design. The framework recommends varied application tasks, learner explanations, staged drafts, oral or written corroboration, assistance declarations, and low-stakes sampling across time. Security controls should be selected according to consequence and risk, with accessible alternatives and data minimization. The article distinguishes misconduct from collaboration, resource use, and household assistance permitted by design. It does not estimate dishonesty or validate an assessment system. Its contribution is a layered method for producing trustworthy evidence without assuming that one invigilated event is the only route to integrity.

Keywords: assessment integrity; online learning; modular classes; authorship; authentic assessment

Introduction

A secure test can still lack integrity when it measures recall instead of the intended competency, uses inaccessible technology, or produces a score that cannot support the decision being made. Conversely, an open-resource task can provide trustworthy evidence when its purpose, conditions, and authorship are clear.

Emergency remote education changed access to resources and assistance. Rules designed for a supervised classroom often became ambiguous at home. Students need to know what collaboration, reference use, adult help, and technological support are allowed.

Purpose of the Article

This article asks which links make assessment evidence defensible and how schools can respond to risk without defaulting to intrusive surveillance.

Conceptual Approach

Design and Source Base

The review integrates academic-integrity guidance, authentic assessment, formative assessment, and online-learning research available through 2021. It treats integrity as a property of the whole inference from task to judgment.

No control proves authorship absolutely. Confidence grows when several pieces of evidence converge across time and modes and when learners understand the assessment's purpose and rules.

The Assessment Evidence Integrity Model

Clarify the Construct

The teacher should specify the knowledge or performance being judged and remove barriers unrelated to it. If independent recall is essential, resource limits may be justified; if application or synthesis matters, open resources may strengthen the task.

Accessibility accommodations preserve the construct when they remove irrelevant obstacles. They should not be mistaken for unfair advantage or hidden assistance.

Design an Authentic Task

Tasks tied to a local case, learner choice, explanation, comparison, or creation are harder to answer through simple copying and often generate richer evidence. Authenticity does not require a large project; one justified decision may be sufficient.

Question banks and randomized values can reduce answer sharing for routine skills, but variation should not create unequal difficulty. Design should remain aligned before it becomes unpredictable.

Make Conditions Transparent

Instructions should state allowed resources, collaboration, time expectations, assistance, submission, privacy, and consequences. Learners can declare the help and tools used without being penalized for support that the design permits.

Modular tasks should distinguish caregiver logistics from answer production. Online tasks need a route for connectivity failure and an alternative that preserves the same evidence requirement.

Corroborate Authorship

A brief explanation, staged draft, annotated process, oral follow-up, or comparison with prior work can corroborate authorship. The aim is to understand the learner's reasoning, not to create a climate of suspicion.

Corroboration can be sampled according to risk and consequence. High-stakes decisions require stronger and more independent evidence than routine practice or feedback tasks.

Interpret and Respond Proportionately

Irregular evidence should trigger inquiry before accusation. Teachers should consider unclear rules, access failure, cultural and language differences, permitted help, and assessment design alongside possible misconduct.

Responses should follow fair procedure and distinguish education, correction, reassessment, and formal sanction. Data collected for security should be minimal, protected, retained only as needed, and accessible for challenge.

Table 1*Assessment evidence integrity model*

Link	Integrity question	Evidence practice
Construct	What learning must the task reveal?	Align task and remove irrelevant barriers
Task	Does the response require meaningful judgment?	Use application, explanation, or creation
Conditions	What resources and help are allowed?	State rules and declare assistance
Authorship	What corroborates learner ownership?	Sample process, drafts, or follow-up
Interpretation	Is the conclusion fair and proportionate?	Review context and use due process

Note. The table is an analytic tool proposed in this article; it does not report field measurements.

Discussion

The model shifts integrity from policing behavior to designing a credible evidence system. Security remains one layer, but it is supported by construct alignment, meaningful tasks, clear conditions, and corroboration.

Scope and Research Agenda

This review does not estimate misconduct or establish the effectiveness of proctoring. Detection data can be biased by access, algorithmic error, and differential scrutiny. Future studies should compare evidence quality, privacy burden, accessibility, student understanding, and procedural fairness across assessment designs.

Conclusion

Trustworthy assessment is built through several modest links rather than one intrusive control. When purpose, conditions, authorship, and interpretation are transparent, online and modular classes can support defensible judgments while respecting learners.

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