

eBook

# Upholding equity and integrity in remote instruction

A free guide from Turnitin



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# Glossary of terms

**Academic integrity:** A commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage.<sup>1</sup>

**Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT):** A pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning.<sup>2</sup>

**Digital Divide:** Any uneven distribution in the access to, use of, or impact of information and communications technologies (ICT) between any number of distinct groups, which can be defined based on social, geographical, or geopolitical criteria, or otherwise.<sup>3</sup>

**Educational equity:** All students, regardless of circumstances or location, have equal access to opportunities to succeed in the classroom and beyond.<sup>4</sup>

**Digital learning environments:** A term that encompasses different types of educational settings and structures, often involving technology and devices, including but not limited to:

- **Asynchronous learning:** Allows students to access information and/or engage in learning outside of the classroom, on their own schedule, and often, independent of the instructor. It can sometimes be referred to as on-demand or self-paced learning.
- **Distance learning (or distance education):** Students and instructors are in different geographical locations and instruction occurs on a device. With distance learning, there is no in-person interaction; instruction and assessment are taking place online independently, can take place without regular instructor contact and can be self-paced.
- **Hybrid (or blended) learning:** Is a combination of in-person and virtual experiences. It is an instructional approach where students can complete online, self-paced assignments by a certain date and then meet on-site or online for additional learning activities.
- **Online learning (or eLearning):** A broader term that means students work through digital lessons and assessments online.
- **Remote learning:** When students and instructors, or the source of information, are separated by time and distance and therefore cannot meet in a traditional classroom setting. Online technology is used to facilitate communication, learning, and assessment, but remote learning is known to embrace a more formal classroom framework.
- **Synchronous learning:** Happens in real-time, with students and instructors interacting in a classroom or via video conferencing, collaborating through social learning technology.

<sup>1</sup>ICAI, The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity (Oct. 1999). Retrieved May 22, 2020, from <https://www.academicintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Fundamental-Values-2014.pdf>.

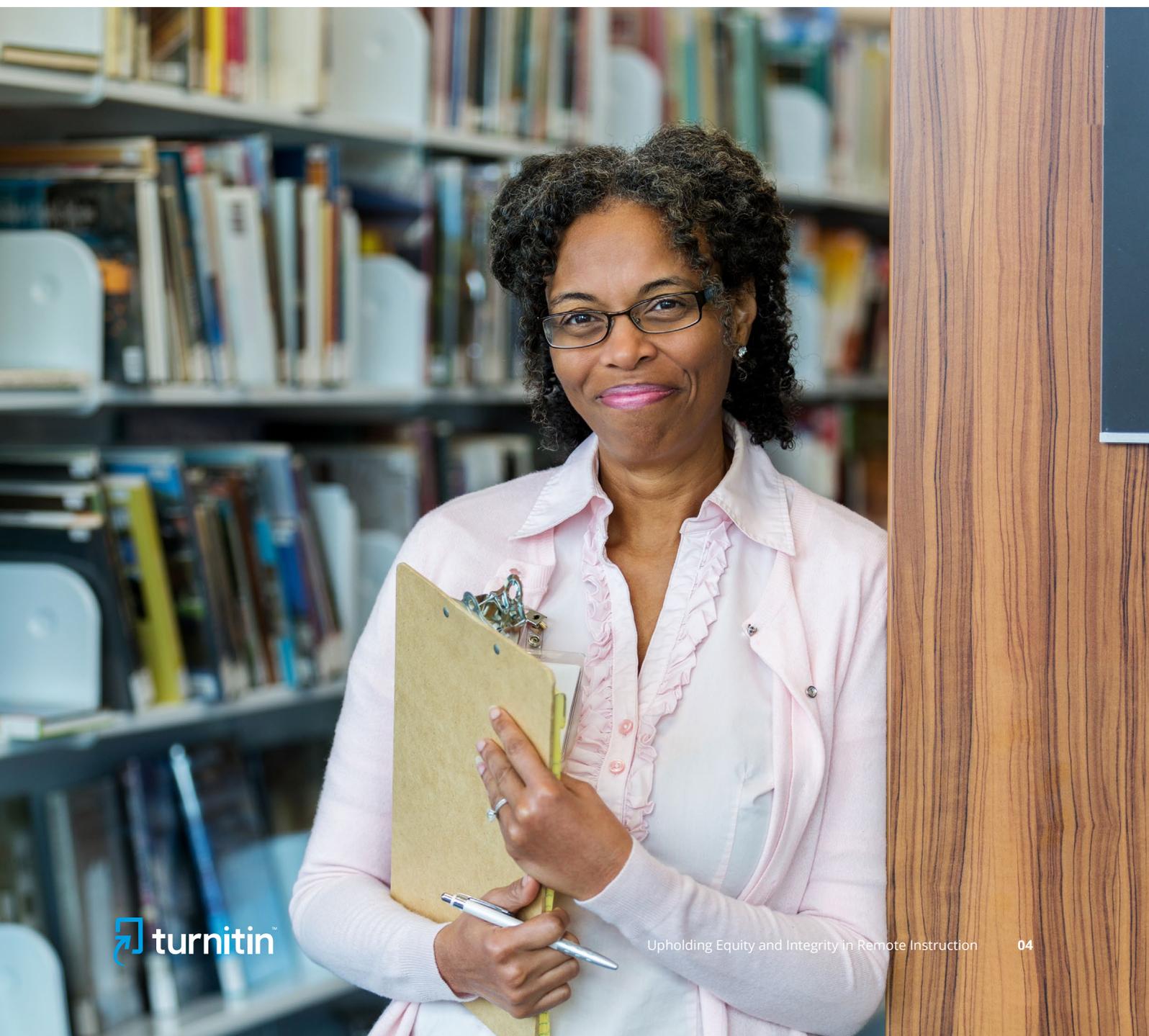
<sup>2</sup>Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). The dreamkeepers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing Co.

<sup>3</sup>Digital divide (n.d.). In Wikipedia. Retrieved August 18, 2020, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_divide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_divide)

<sup>4</sup>ESSA: Equity in Education. Retrieved August 18, 2020, from <https://www.air.org/resource/essa-equity-education>.

# Introduction

To uphold integrity in our educational communities is to prioritize equity and culturally responsive pedagogy in our work, research, and curricula. These resources highlight the value of academic integrity and the importance of accessibility, community building, and equity within student-centered approaches to learning, particularly in remote learning situations.



# How to address inequities

In 2012, The Atlantic article entitled “The Decline of the ‘Great Equalizer,’” Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville stated, “Income depends on educational achievement, and the single best predictor of a child’s likelihood of academic success remains, in turn, the socio-economic status of his or her mother.”

These inequities are even more evident under a remote learning paradigm. *Teen Vogue’s* “[Distance Learning During Coronavirus Worsens Race, Class Inequality in Education](#),” says that according to [UC Berkeley education professor Tolani Britton](#), “The use of distance learning assumes a lot about students’ access to computers, reliable internet connection, space to work at home and parents’ ability to help students with work.” [Statistics have determined that this access is sorely lacking](#), showing big remote learning gaps for low-income and special needs students.

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## What do some of these inequities look like?

**Financial instability resulted in students having to prioritize work over school.** Impacts include chronic absenteeism. According to [The New York Times](#), “With the vast majority of the nation’s school buildings closed and lessons being conducted remotely, more students than ever are missing class — not logging on, not checking or not completing assignments,” and many students drop out of school completely, unavailable by phone, email, or other forms of communication.

**Lack of access to computers or a reliable internet connection.** contributed to chronic absenteeism and decreased learning. “Some teachers report that fewer than half of their students are regularly participating,” according to [The New York Times](#), contrasting reports from selective and affluent schools where “close to 100 percent of students are participating in online learning.” A 2017 report from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration

says that [7 million children do not have home internet service](#). These same children become students in higher education, who when they return home, do not have access, either.

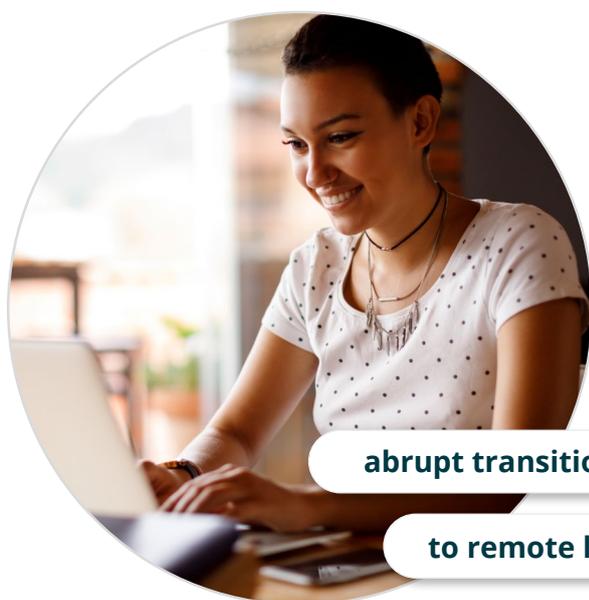
**Homeless students who relied on residential programs found themselves with nowhere to go and very few or no resources to connect to remote learning.** Dormitories shut down during the pandemic, and along with it, shelter and wellbeing, let alone internet connectivity.

**Support for English-learner students decreased.** Remote learning may have shut out millions of English learners. According to [EdWeek](#), “Teachers who work with English-language learners are more apt to use general digital resources rather than tools designed specifically for English-learners and that English-learner educators reported fewer hours of professional development with digital learning resources than did mainstream teachers,” suggesting that remote learning and school closures may have a huge impact on students with limited understanding of English

and thus a limited ability to work independently. Additionally, English-learners who don't speak one of the major languages may receive less support, as distance learning is likely conducted with English or Spanish unless the student population dictates otherwise.

**The needs of students with disabilities were largely ignored in the abrupt transition to remote learning.** According to [Inside Higher Education](#), "Students who are deaf or hard of hearing, have low vision or are blind, those with learning disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or a physical disability that requires the use of a computer keyboard instead of a mouse, students with mental illnesses or various other challenges, have been put on the backburner 'en masse,' as instructors scrambled to transfer two months' worth of teaching content to a digital format."

**Remote learning limited culturally-relevant modes of communication.** [Research](#) has shown that students from oral-based narrative traditions may not readily ask questions in writing and even if they spoke up in class before, within the context of videoconferencing, be discouraged to engage. [Anokye](#) states that "research supports the belief that orality, for instance, is the fundamental mode of expression in the African American community.



**abrupt transition**

**to remote learning**

Nowhere is it better demonstrated than in the oral narrative style. The storytelling tradition is strong among African Americans and abstract observations about life, love, and people are rendered in the form of concrete narrative sequence which may seem to meander from the point and take on episodic frames. This is a linguistic style that causes problems with American mainstream speakers who want to get to the point and be direct." In the realm of remote learning, video conference discussions may not make space for such expansive and episodic journeys. Furthermore, many questions are taken in written format, whether via chat or by email, which may fly in the face of this cultural context.

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If education, as stated by Horace Mann, is "the equalizer of the conditions of men," then remote learning cannot further the rift between the haves and the have nots. Access must be upheld for all. And in order to address these gaps, we can — and should — enact culturally responsive pedagogy and actions. As Matthew Lynch states in [The Huffington Post](#):

"Culturally responsive pedagogy is a student-centered approach to teaching in which the students' unique cultural strengths are identified and nurtured to promote student achievement and a sense of well-being about the student's cultural place in the world."

## So, what are some ways to address and bridge inequalities in remote learning under the umbrella of culturally responsive pedagogy?

**Support English learners.** Now more than ever, uphold their culture of origin and perhaps center assignments around their expertise and knowledge, knowing the end goal is language procurement as opposed to learning the new subject matter. Include end goals for each assignment — and in a videoconference, proactively double-check your language usage. In-classroom instruction affords more feedback from students through body language; this may be absent in videoconferencing. More tips can be found at [EdWeek](#).

**Allow your class discussions to meander.** Every student learns in their own specific way, and consider the journeys a mind must make to reach meaningful conclusions about concepts. In a video conferencing platform, this may be more challenging to facilitate, but consider allowing students to discuss topics at will.

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**Digital technology is helpful but it is new to many.** Companies are donating laptops and wi-fi connections to mitigate inequity around access. Keep in mind that students are learning new technologies and may need support in the form of training and extra time and understanding. There may be a doublelearning-curve for students unfamiliar with technology and digital access, so configure your syllabus and curriculum

accordingly, affording time for onboarding and allowing for alternative modes of instruction, such as printed packets.

**Be inclusive with technology.** Learning materials ought to be compatible with screen readers to benefit visually impaired learners and those with learning disabilities. Anne Milne, in a June 2020 Education Central article, advocates upholding online cultural sustainability and nurturing personal relationships online. In addition to [asking educators to audit their online spaces](#) to be centered on student needs, she asks educators to consider asking, “How is your virtual space connected — not just to the internet, but with learners’ lives and realities, across subject areas, with the community, and with students’ identities?”

**Survey your students to understand their interests.** [Your students themselves are a clear source of insight into what will resonate with them](#). Consider building a reading list that centers their interests, and offer a [culturally-relevant reading list](#). Such student-centered actions build personal trust between instructors and students, which has lasting impacts on learning and intrinsic motivation, which can be hard to nurture in remote learning.

**Create multiple points of feedback for students.** [KQED Mindshift reports](#) that in San Leandro, California, “At all grade levels, high-quality feedback makes a difference in student learning Continuing to give that feedback is one of [Joe] Feldman’s recommendations for grading during COVID19. Focusing on that, rather than on the pressure that is often associated with grades, he said, sends the message that teachers care about what’s happening in students’ lives.” Maintaining feedback loops is critical in remote learning, where most teacher-student interaction can take place.

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**Gather data on student learning** to [check for understanding](#) and provide formative feedback, through [item analysis](#) and one on one interactions with students, whether in written student-to-teacher emails or in face-to-face video-based office hours. Ensure multiple channels of communication so as to be inclusive of different styles of learning and communication. Some students will be more comfortable with written communication, while others may find it challenging to open up without face-to-face discussion.

[Karen Strassler wrote in \*The New York Times\*](#), “Equality in the classroom is a fiction — it would be absurd to suggest otherwise. It’s painfully obvious that only some of my students benefited from strong high school educations. Others start college inadequately prepared in foundational reading and writing skills. Many are immigrants who struggle with academic English and

miss the cultural references that would make our readings more readily accessible. Race, gender, class, sexuality, citizenship status, and other factors shape who feels confident speaking up in class and who feels afraid of saying the wrong thing. When we pretend such inequities don’t exist, we allow them to persist unchallenged. But like other utopian dreams, the fiction of equality — cultivated by those generic rooms with their uniform chairs — also has its value.”

As educators, we are building a narrative and reaching towards equality. While equity may not exist today, we have a responsibility and ensuing choice to move towards equity, as individuals and as institutions, semester by semester, course by course, assignment by assignment, and student by student.

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# How to support learning differences

For those with learning difficulties or disabilities, an unstructured, remote classroom can be an overwhelming and less-than-ideal environment for learning. Just like in a physical classroom, students benefit from thoughtful accommodations in order to find success. Enabling closed-captioning on your videos, using a larger font or a different colored background than white in emails and online communication, as well as employing and describing visuals in your lessons, all help with accessibility even before the lessons have begun.

Accessibility can and should be a state of mind instead of just a box to check.

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**Here are some ideas on how to best support learning differences in a distance learning environment.**

**Be explicit and consistent with rules, guidelines, and expectations.** The best and most effective step you can take in supporting students with learning

differences is creating a sense of structure from the get-go. Students on the spectrum benefit from a schedule that allows them to prepare for what is coming; [structure and routine can often help individuals on the spectrum build flexibility](#). In fact, schedules also benefit other learners too, as it keeps anxiety low, therefore supporting learning outcomes and mitigating misconduct.

As best as you can, establish rules for your virtual classroom similar to those in your physical classroom. The start and end time; how participants share their thoughts; familiar phrases that you used in your physical classroom, all help to support students who may already be feeling flustered upon login. Perhaps you even write out your online course expectations with images associated with each rule, then review them before each class — better yet, email/mail them to every student, so everyone has a physical reminder of what they can expect. [Time management](#) is also a crucial component of remote learning for every type of learner, so encouraging thoughtful and proactive organization — especially during [midterms and final exams](#) — can empower students across the board.

And while these expectations may need to shift as the semester progresses, at least the students who need structure the most have a foundation upon which to pivot.

**Offer personalized — and when you can, immediate —feedback frequently.** Research has shown that effective learners create internal feedback and cognitive routines while they are engaged in academic tasks. [D. L. Butler and Winne \(1995\)](#) found that for all self-regulated activities, feedback is an inherent catalyst. “As learners monitor their engagement with tasks, internal feedback is generated by the monitoring process. That feedback describes the nature of outcomes and the qualities of the cognitive processes that led to those states.”

However, it has been observed that less effective learners depend much more heavily on external factors, like the task itself or their teacher for feedback, and have minimal self-regulation strategies. According to [Hattie and Timperly \(2007\)](#), “They rarely seek or incorporate feedback in ways that will enhance their future learning or self-regulation strategies.”





For students with learning disabilities, the need for explicit feedback in order to meet learning objectives and maintain engagement is essential, especially in a digital learning environment, where in-person cues are lacking. Opportunities to reach out to students directly and personally are more complicated with remote instruction, but not impossible. For assignments and assessments, try to provide as close-to-immediate-feedback as possible, so that a student can understand right away if they are on target. Do your best to go beyond “Good job!” by [providing feedback that is actionable and specific](#), which gives students with learning differences exact directions on how to improve. A private message within a Zoom video call can also work to redirect behavior and boost a student’s focus and engagement within a discussion.

A direct email outside of your course communications to see how students are faring can go a long way, and can give you the chance to offer personalized information privately. Checking in with families and caretakers via email or phone calls are also effective ways to provide feedback to the student’s learning team as a whole, as well as offer additional guidance and outside resources, if appropriate.

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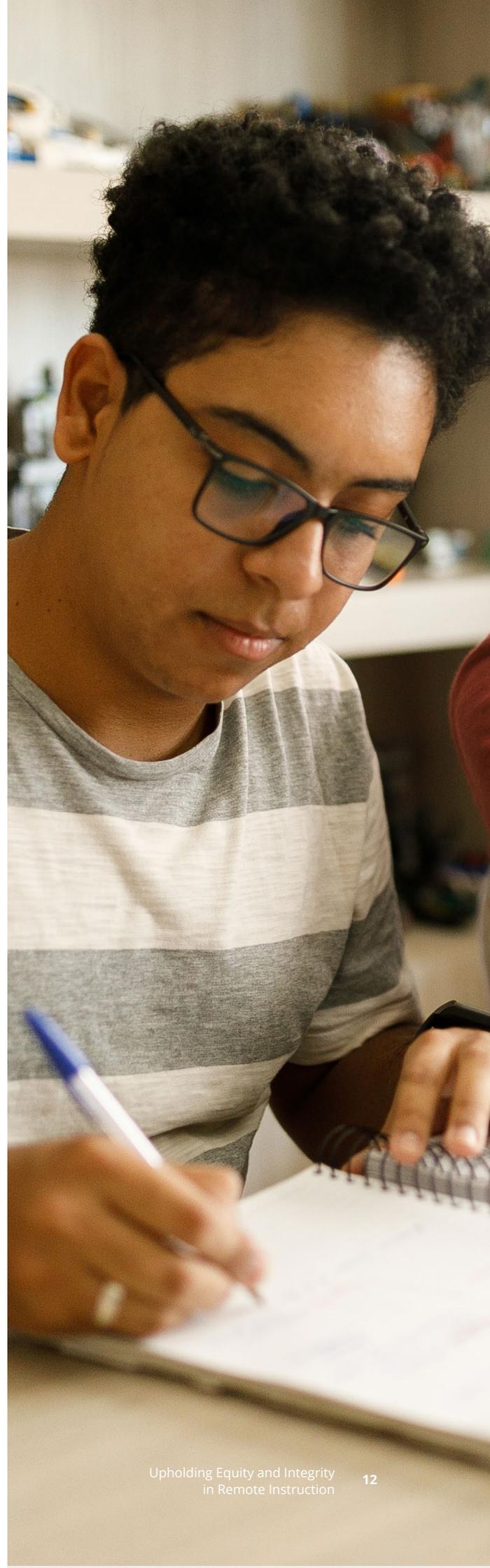
**Leave room for flexibility amidst dependable structure.** This tip may feel directly at odds with tip #1 (consistency! expectations!), but the two are actually compatible. Once you’ve set a routine for your online class, shared and clarified your expectations, and even offered a student (or many students!), a personal check-in, you’ve set yourself up with room to flex.

Students with learning differences who typically require extra time in class to take an exam or who need a concept explained several different ways before full comprehension are going to need even more space and time to complete their work in a digital setting. You can do that in a few ways: one idea is to offer a “menu” of assessment options from which students can choose; perhaps they illustrate mastery of a concept by writing an essay, recording a song, or building a website that reflects the story arc of a main character in a novel.

You can also preview work with students who might require lead time in order to participate, which may be an email the night before that offers an example problem or includes a few talking points related to the next day’s discussion topic. Another idea is to have several due dates, where students can send in a rough draft, receive feedback, then utilize a few extra days to revise and turn in their best work. [The option for unlimited submissions through Turnitin Feedback Studio](#) is a great way for all types of learners to take ownership of their learning at their own pace, iterating and reiterating before a final draft.

Upholding rules, setting aside time for personalization, and maintaining flexibility are all going to take extra effort and a lot of strength from educators. All students, especially those with learning differences, are looking to you to help shepherd them through these uncertain times and support them as they seek learning success in a digital learning environment.

“Another idea is to have several due dates, where students can send in a rough draft, receive feedback, then utilize a few extra days to revise and turn in their best work.”



# How to build community

Feeling welcome and greeted are the first steps into any successful community environment — [a sense of belonging is a basic human need](#), one that supports an entire lifespan so that we can dare to challenge ourselves, knowing we have support in case we fall. Conversely, when students feel ignored or excluded, they can feel uncomfortable and unmotivated, lessening the chances for learning success. In sum, a sense of belonging goes far beyond the first step of participation.

In a remote learning environment, especially one that is unexpected and one for which students did not come prepared, a sense of belonging becomes even higher stakes. In such a situation, students enter remote learning environments with great uncertainty.

As educators, we want to [build inclusive classrooms](#) and strive for positive outcomes. We've entered teaching to uphold the quest of learning and help subsequent generations gain knowledge and ultimately make our world a better place.

*“In a remote learning environment, especially one that is unexpected and one for which students did not come prepared, a sense of belonging becomes even higher stakes.”*



## So, let's discuss how to build community in an online classroom.

Many of the principles — nurturing strong teacher-student relationships, providing a caring environment, and setting clear expectations, for starters — remain the same in the realm of remote learning even while the tools differ.

### **In a remote learning environment, it's important to emphasize encouragement.**

It's one thing to receive encouragement in person, but when it comes to online learning, you may have to reinforce this in multiple ways; not just in feedback, but through direct messages and in one-on-one conversations.

Furthermore, amplify your general presence in videoconferences. Be aware that you have to work a little harder at communicating. Subtleties are often missed over video — maybe someone is talking over you in a group discussion or there may be an internet connection mishap. So, make very clear your encouragement with simple acts like shout-outs, keeping in mind your facial expressions and body language as they appear within the boundaries of your screen.

### **Leverage technology to help students**

**communicate.** Keep communication open — offer multiple channels for communication in addition to email. Consider setting up a Slack for your class or a blog or other online media, so that they can communicate with each other and you can see what concerns they may have. You can then choose to enable Slack on your smartphone or just your laptop so you, too, can set boundaries for yourself.

You should also make time to facilitate real-time learning and discussions via “break-out sessions” or a “student lounge” in video conferencing platforms or Slack channels. Encourage students to use networking sites like Facebook, Skype, or Google Hangouts to interact beyond the classroom because sometimes, the best support comes from cohorts. And don't

underestimate the gesture of sending an email to your students, such as thank you notes, specific words of encouragement, and reminders.

**Over-communicate with your students.** Now is the time to overcommunicate— to stay aligned, informed, and to stay socially connected. Distance learners might need stronger reminders when it comes to deadlines, so put everything important in writing. Use email, Slack, or other communication platforms to keep your students informed and engaged. It could also be helpful for you and your fellow educators to engage in discussion forums with students. Some ideas include private/closed pages on Facebook or the aforementioned Slack application or the discussion boards on your LMS.

Check in often with your students; assign them questions as to how you can help in this new format. You will have to do a little more outreach than usual to have insight into their learning.

“Now is the time to over-communicate— to stay aligned, informed, and to stay socially connected.”

Consider offering check-ins at the beginning of each online class, so that you might have more transparency into students' state of mind and wellness. In-person classrooms provide windows into student moods that remote learning may not make accessible, so you may need to be more direct when seeking access to this information. Offer online office hours where you can have realtime conversations and stay connected with students. And don't forget to enable subtitles in video conferencing platforms to increase accessibility for all students.

Creating a sense of belonging and community in remote learning is critical — as you can see above, the key factor is to facilitate a learning environment with multiple channels for engagement and participation so that students don't feel isolated and educators can gain transparency into learning.

# How to uphold academic integrity

Educators everywhere are looking at instruction through a new lens and encountering myriad and valid concerns as they transition to remote instruction. One main focus is therefore how to uphold academic integrity when students are not physically in a classroom.

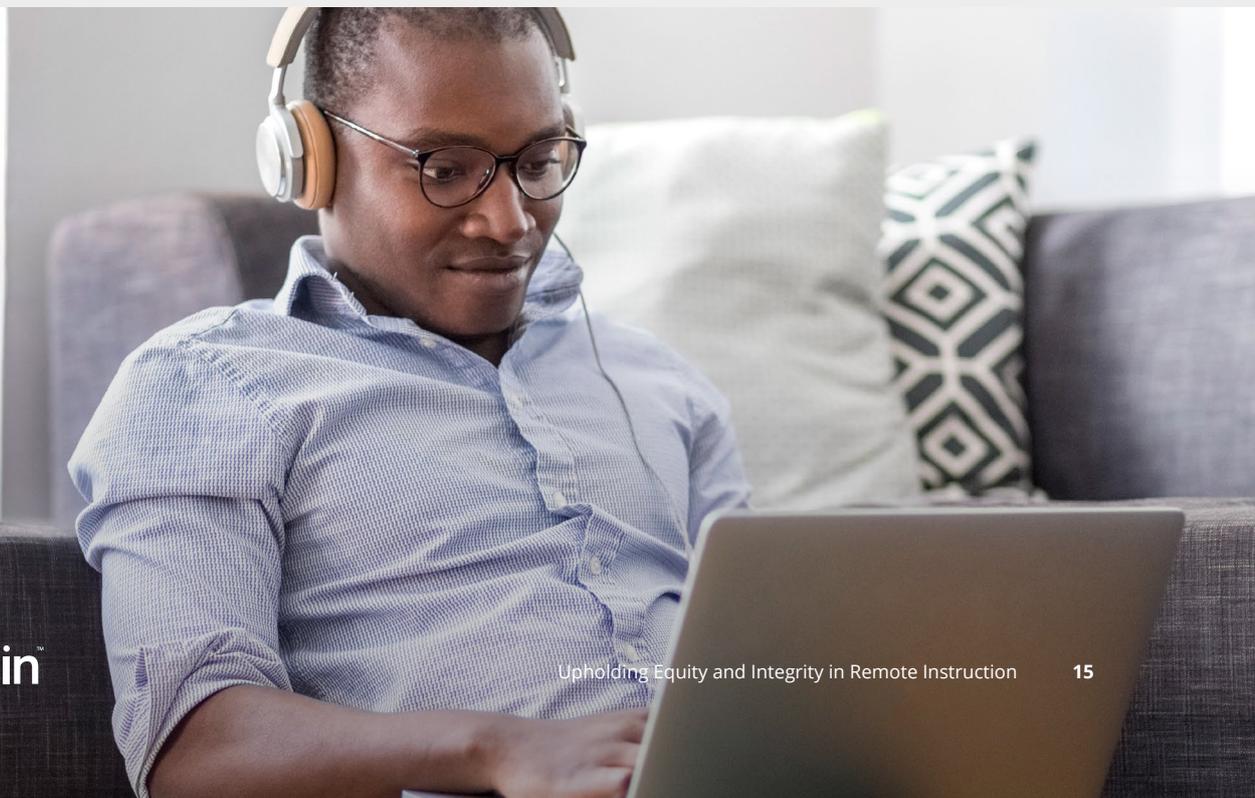
“Cheating,” according to Ann Musgrove, “significantly decreases when students believe that learning has a purpose”

## Here are several ways institutions and instructors can support original student work in the realm of remote learning.

### **Build community around academic integrity.**

Within your learning community, ensure clarity around the definition and importance of academic integrity. Make sure to have an academic integrity statement in your syllabus and/or LMS and on each assignment. Furthermore, research has found that when students respect their instructor, they are less

likely to cheat ([Orosz, Tóth-Király, Böthe, Kusztor, Kovács, & Jánvári 2015](#)). Distance learning can weaken students’ attachment to honor codes and learning objectives, so schools should prioritize and establish positive relationships with students. Whether you build community through communication via blog posts or through one-on-one tutorials online, make students feel seen. Present students with learning outcomes for each assignment and make your subject matter meaningful. “Cheating,” according to Ann Musgrove, “significantly decreases when students believe that learning has a purpose” ([Musgrove](#)).



**Uphold academic integrity in course and assessment design.** When designing courses and assessments, employ a variety of strategies in order to ensure that your students are being offered opportunities to showcase their knowledge honestly and effectively. Prior to an exam or assessment, provide rubrics and grading criteria for each assignment, so students will know exactly how they will be graded. You can also require students to submit their outline for pre-approval before student writing. Prepare a list of possible essay questions or in the case of STEM, short and long answer questions for the exam — and choose a few from the list for the actual exam. Set a time limit for answering each question. (Students with a deep understanding of concepts will be able to answer the questions within the allotted time — whereas students with little or no understanding will need extra time to look up the quote or formula or information before composing a response).

As you calendarize your semester, consider frequent, low-stakes quizzes to measure objective learning to reduce the risk of cheating, or opt for open-book assignments and assessments. Ask questions that will ensure your students have a conceptual understanding of principles as opposed to memorization. You can use a variety of assessment methods (essays, long answer, short answer, etc.) that require the application of a specific concept.

The most important thing? Design assessments that make cheating less of a temptation. Personalize your assignments. Ensure your questions are specific to your course content, including content from your lectures or class discussions. Possibly have students write personal responses to questions, too. Bottom line: avoid generic questions that can be answered through objective means. ([Smith, Duprey, & Mackey 2005](#))

**Use technology explicitly and effectively.** From the get-go, make known your use of academic integrity software, like Turnitin's suite of plagiarism detection tools. Software such as Turnitin Feedback Studio enables digital assessment and feedback, which is helpful in upholding integrity in the assignment and grading workflow. Depending on your school's policy, some may even consider having Zoom or other video conferencing apps open as students take exams, which can provide the added element of proctoring or invisible pressure to ensure academic integrity. During exam and test-taking, if your online platform allows you to do so, show only one question at a time, which prevents students from copying and pasting questions.

By prioritizing these aspects of community building, course and assessment design, as well effective technology integration, educators can help students to produce their best, original work, even when facing the challenges of remote instruction.

“During exam and testtaking, if your online platform allows you to do so, show only one question at a time, which prevents students from copying and pasting questions.”

# Conclusion

Equity and integrity have a significant impact on student learning outcomes and achievement in a variety of ways. By thoughtfully addressing barriers faced by individual students in our curricula and planning; by prioritizing community and utilizing technology to stay connected in a digital world; by upholding academic integrity holistically in our classrooms and in our work, together, we can strive to provide every child with an equal opportunity for success.



# Support students in creating their best, original work



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