

Discovery Interviews for Academic Misconduct

Some types of academic misconduct, such as contract cheating, can be difficult to detect. If you have suspicions about a submitted assessment, engaging the student in a conversation about their assessment can be helpful to understand your suspicions. This resource provides tips for documenting the discovery interview and examples of questions you may ask to gain clarification.

Tips for Documenting the Discovery Interview

- Document your communication with the student, including details about when and where the discovery interview will be held. Ensure that the student receives confirmation of these details in an email, even if you have arranged the meeting over the phone or face-to-face with the student.
- During the interview, take an approach that is exploratory, rather than accusatory.
- Maintain a neutral tone of voice. Avoid showing anger or frustration.
- Allow the student to have an opportunity to explain themselves.
- Avoid discussing possible consequences with the student.
- Ensure the results of your discovery interview are documented by taking detailed notes. If you are conducting a virtual meeting and plan to record it, ask the student for permission first. Consent is important.

Examples of Discovery Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your work. Why did you choose this topic?
2. Tell me about your process for completing your assessment. When did you start it? How long did it take you?
3. Tell me about the sources that you consulted when you did your assignment. Where did you find these sources? (Asking follow-up questions such as: Which journals? Which books? can allow you to probe further.)
4. Why did you choose these sources? When you think back to the sources you read for this assignment, can you tell me verbally what your key learnings were from what you read? Who are the most influential researchers in this field? How did their work contribute to your paper?
5. We didn't use [insert source here] in our class discussions at all and it wasn't on our reading list. How did you find it? Why did you choose it?
6. Tell me about your thesis statement (or research process, conclusion). How did you arrive at the thesis statement (or conclusion)?
7. The assignment instructions ask for X, Y, and Z. You addressed X, but not Y. Why not?
8. Your work mentions these terms (insert terms here). Can you tell me verbally what these terms mean?
9. For coding assignments: What does this function do? How does this code work? What does this code make happen?
10. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your academic work?

For more information: Heather.Morris@umanitoba.ca, [Student Advocacy](#) or Brenda.Stoesz@umanitoba.ca, [The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning](#), University of Manitoba.

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