

High achievers in competitive courses more likely to cheat on college exams

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A new study finds that students who are known as "high achievers" and take highly competitive courses are the most likely to cheat on their exams. The article is published ahead of print in *Advances in Physiology Education*.

Accurate statistics for [academic misconduct](#) are difficult to report due to the reliance on self-reporting by students. It has been thought that lower-level students were more likely to cheat because they had more to gain in the form of higher grades. However, researchers from the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, found that the opposite was true in students who submitted tests for regrading. Regrading—submitting an unaltered exam for another look by the professor—is a common practice offered to students who think their original grade was not accurate.

The research team scanned more than 3,600 original exams from 11 undergraduate physiology-based courses to determine how frequently academic [misconduct](#) was committed. They examined 448 resubmitted tests for additions or deletions of text or additional markings that were not present on the original exams. The researchers found 78 cases of cheating, almost half of which were submitted by "repeat offenders"—students who had cheated on more than one test during the study period. The difference between male and female cheaters was insignificant. Two-thirds of the cases of academic misconduct were identified in one highly competitive course. "Our results point to high-achieving students as a specific group who may be more likely to commit these acts and show no indication that men are more frequent

offenders than women, which goes against much of the existing [academic misconduct] literature," the researchers wrote.

"Cheating after the test: who does it and how often?" is published ahead of print in *Advances in Physiology Education*.

More information: Kristine Ottaway et al. Cheating after the test: who does it and how often?, *Advances in Physiology Education* (2017). [DOI: 10.1152/advan.00103.2016](https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00103.2016)

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