

Student Conduct and Academic Integrity

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND VPNS/IPS

A VPN or virtual private network is technology used to enable users to encrypt and transmit data privately. Internet Service Providers assign a modem with its own address, otherwise known as an IP (Internet Protocol) address. An IP is series of numbers that identify your geographical location and guide how your information is found, exchanged and shared online. As we navigate the internet, and visit different sites, our IP address is recorded, leaving traces of where we have been, personal data is shared throughout this process.

A VPN allows you to change your IP address which provides you anonymity by masking your online activity and making it untraceable. It also ensures your security by making your information less vulnerable to hackers or anyone wishing to obtain it. This is done by arranging your data in a way that only the intended recipient is able to understand and comprehend.

You may encounter situations where you notice a student using different IP addresses which may point to an academic integrity violation. However, on its own, it is not a reliable source to use to verify if a student has cheated or not.

Here are some examples:

- **COUNTRIES WITH INTERNET RESTRICTIONS**

Students residing in countries where governments censor and monitor internet usage may not be able to readily access BrightSpace or other platforms like Zoom and must change their IP address via a VPN in order to do so.

- **DIFFERENT SERVICE PROVIDERS.**

Students may use multiple devices on different networks with different IP addresses such as your mobile phone and your home internet.

- **TECHNICAL ISSUES.**

A student screen may freeze, or internet connection may be unstable, requiring them to reboot their modem which may change their IP address.

Using your academic judgement is the best tool you have to detect academic integrity violations. Here are some questions you can ask students when there are concerns around their internet usage and their work.

Ask the student to expand on some general concepts from the course – in order to assess student knowledge (not necessarily an oral quiz, more of an informal conversation)

- Ask the student about points they may have made on their assessments – do they have answers from recent assessments that stand out? Can they explain their thought process?
- Lastly ask about the different IP addresses – ask why this may be the case, and hear their explanation, let them know why you are concerned and assess their response

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact either of the Student Conduct Officers:

Erin Hagen – ehagen@lanagara.ca or Jennifer Cheddie – jcheddie@lanagara.ca

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