To: UBC Computer Science (CPSC) 110 Teaching Team

From: Terry Chou, CPSC 110 Teaching Assistant (TA)

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Subject: Proposal for Addressing the Issue of Academic Misconduct in CPSC 110

Intended Audience

The UBC Computer Science (CPSC) 110 Teaching Team includes course instructors led by Gregor Kiczales, the course coordinator, and teaching assistants who work closely with students. This professional teaching team is responsible for various aspects of the course, including invigilating exams and detecting academic misconduct during exams, lecture starters, problem-set evaluations, and labs. The leading professor and coordinator are in charge of making the exam invigilation rules, providing TA training during meetings, and assessing academic misconduct reports from teaching assistants to ensure their validity before reporting to the Faculty. As the target audience of this proposal, the CPSC 110 Teaching Team is well-suited to receive suggestions for preventing and addressing academic misconduct in the course.

Introduction

Academic misconduct is a serious issue that affects the integrity of the academic community and can have negative consequences for individual students and the reputation of the institution. CPSC 110 is an introductory computer science course offered at UBC, it is designed to provide students with a foundational understanding of computer programming and problem-solving. The course covers fundamental concepts such as trees, graphs, search, abstraction, and recursion, and uses Racket as the programming language for learning these concepts. CPSC 110 is a prerequisite for many upper-level computer science courses at UBC and is a core course for students pursuing a major in computer science. The course is taught through a combination of lectures and labs and is typically offered in both the fall and winter terms. The CPSC 110 course is an important foundational course in computer science at UBC, and it is essential that academic misconduct is addressed in a fair and consistent manner.

Statement of Problem

The issue of academic misconduct in CPSC 110 has been brought up by instructors, teaching assistants, and students, and it has been getting worse in recent terms. In a recent announcement by Professor Gregor Kizcale in class this term, it was revealed that 39% of students had downloaded and submitted lecture solution files, which was classified as academic misconduct by the teaching staff. The most prevalent forms of academic misconduct in the course include plagiarism, cheating on exams, and collaborating on assignments beyond the allowed limits. These actions undermine the learning process and the integrity of the academic community.

Proposed Solution

One possible solution is to provide additional training sessions or workshops, including informational videos, for the teaching assistants and potentially even the professors, to help them identify and address suspected academic misconduct. This is especially important given that the course has introduced computer-based in-person examinations since the pandemic, and traditional invigilation methods may be outdated. Targeted training will enable the CPSC 110 Teaching Team to improve their ability to detect and prevent academic misconduct in the course. The training may cover topics such as how to recognize various forms of academic misconduct, including students accessing unauthorized files during exams, the significance of academic integrity, and how to deal with suspected cases of misconduct. By investing in this training, the CPSC 110 Teaching Team can promote a culture of academic integrity and reduce the incidence of academic misconduct in the course.

Scope

To determine the feasibility of the proposed solution, I plan to investigate four areas of inquiry:

1. What measures can be taken to ensure that reports of academic misconduct are handled consistently and investigated thoroughly, and how can TAs be trained to identify and report such incidents?
2. How can the consequences of academic misconduct be clearly outlined and communicated to students, and what steps can be taken to ensure that these consequences are enforced in a fair and consistent manner?
3. How can collaboration practices be effectively taught and reinforced in CPSC 110, and what resources can be provided to students to support them in following these practices?
4. The effectiveness of TAs looking closely at students' racket starter files during exams as a means of preventing academic misconduct.

Methods

My primary method for gathering data will involve conducting interviews with my fellow TAs to gather their perspectives on the proposed solutions and to identify potential areas for improvement. As TAs play a crucial role in enforcing academic integrity policies, their insights will be particularly valuable in assessing the effectiveness of these policies and how well they are being communicated to students. In addition to the interviews, I plan to use online surveys to supplement the data collected for the formal report. These surveys will provide a more comprehensive context for the issue of academic misconduct and will help identify best practices and effective strategies.

My Qualifications

As a current CPSC 110 TA for the fourth time, my experience of working closely with students and instructors has given me a deep understanding of the challenges and complexities involved in promoting academic integrity, as well as specific issues and concerns that may arise in the context of CPSC 110. Additionally, my role as a TA has provided me with valuable insights into the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures related to academic misconduct, as well as potential areas for improvement. My experience in this role, coupled with my knowledge of

coding and programming concepts, makes me uniquely positioned to contribute valuable recommendations for addressing academic misconduct in CPSC 110.

Conclusion

Clearly, action is required to reduce the incidence of academic misconduct in CPSC 110 at UBC, as it is the most fundamental computer science course for students who want to pursue the field of technology. By addressing the five areas of inquiry mentioned earlier, I can determine the effectiveness of different approaches to improving the overall learning experience for students. With your approval, I am eager to begin the research at once.