Academic integrity: Threats and opportunities

Tracey Bretag
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Overview of presentation

- Higher education context
- 2015 context: increasing threats to integrity
- Values of academic integrity
- Recent research on academic integrity
- Teaching and learning resources
  - Undergraduate and postgraduate
- Institutionalisation of academic integrity
- Holistic approach
- Where to next for Macquarie University?
The higher education context

- Policy changes with every new government
- Increasing competition at every level: Student admissions; university ranking systems; government funding; research (funding and status)
- Massification and commericalisation of HE
  - Increasingly diverse student body
  - Socially and educationally disadvantaged students
- Corruption in wider society - constant scandals in media
  - Changing social values and norms
- Breakneck changes in technology affecting employment
The day-to-day context

- Reduced English language competence (local and international students)
- Differing cultural and educational norms
- Reliance on fee-paying students
- Exponential increase in electronically available information
- Explosion of social media
- Large class sizes (often poorly attended)
- Blurring of roles – students or customers?
- Students (and staff) have increasingly complex lives
- Credentialism reigns
- Job market is increasingly competitive and ever-changing
The 2015 context

- MyMaster scandal (Visentin 2015)
- Fake diploma mills (Chung 2015)
- ICAC investigation of corruption in higher education
  - international student recruitment, retention and graduate outcomes
- Infiltration of university email and social media by unscrupulous cheat sites dressed up as ‘assistance’.
- Marketing blitz on campus and in the local community
Threats to integrity

Essay mills and file sharing sites

• Think Swap
  http://thinkswap.com/au/unisa/division-business
• Biadu Library (Chinese file sharing)
• Currentessay.com:  http://currentessay.com
• Freelancer.com: https://www.freelancer.com
• Spoonfeedme:  https://spoonfeedme.com.au
• Acemyhomework: www.acemyhomework.com
Research and experience

• Rigby et al (2015): half of the UK student participants (n=90) were willing to buy an assignment from a cheat site.

• “When we have a group task, the first thing we do is sit down and ask the question: ‘Should we buy the assignment or do it ourselves?’ Which one would be quicker and get the best result?”
My philosophical stance

• Both aspirations (e.g. towards values) and evidence-based practices are critical to develop cultures of integrity.
• Academic integrity is an educational not a compliance issue.
• Developing a culture of integrity requires a systemic approach and sustained commitment by all stakeholders.
  • Students as partners/leaders, not passive recipients of policy.
Academic integrity is a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action”. (Fundamental Values Project 1999, ICAI)

Note: addition of the quality of courage (2013)
Evidence from OLT funded projects

- Changing focus from misconduct (51% of policies) to integrity and education (41%). 28% mixed focus.
- 10% policies concerned with risk management.
- Students still considered to be responsible for AI (institution mentioned in only 39% of policies).
- Most policies (56%) lacked sufficient detail about breaches and outcomes.
- Most policies (56%) made no mention of confidentiality.

*Lead institution: University of South Australia. Project partners: University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia, La Trobe University, University of Newcastle, University of Wollongong. Project website: www.aisp.apfei.edu.au
Evidence from student survey

1. 64.5% of students said they had heard of academic integrity and thought they had a good idea what it entails.
2. 4.4% of total students and 8.8% of international students had never heard of academic integrity.
3. 64.7% said they knew whether their university had an academic integrity policy and they knew how to access it.
4. 79.9% of total students agreed that the academic integrity policy was clearly communicated, but only 70.4% of postgraduate research (HDR) students agreed.
5. 94.2% of total students (and 89.4% of international students) stated they felt confident they knew how to avoid an AI breach.
6. 92.1% of total students and 95.6% of postgrad research students agreed that academic integrity has relevance to their lives beyond university.

Bretag et al (2013)
Exemplary Academic Integrity Project*

Resources

• Plain English definition of academic integrity
• Collation of academic integrity YouTube videos
• Framework for enacting exemplary AI policy
• Resources for postgrad research students
  • Case scenarios for use in postgrad training
  • Evidence-based framework to foster integrity in postgraduate research
• Online academic integrity policy toolkit

www.unisa.edu/EAIP

*Lead institution: University of South Australia
Project partners: Griffith University, Queensland Institute of Business & Technology, Project website: www.unisa.edu.au/EAIP
"Academic integrity means acting with the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in learning, teaching and research. It is important for students, teachers, researchers and all staff to act in an honest way, be responsible for their actions, and show fairness in every part of their work. Staff should be role models to students. Academic integrity is important for an individual’s and a school’s reputation."
Academic integrity policy toolkit

www.griffith.edu.au/exemplary-academic-integrity-policy
Academic integrity resources

Exemplary Academic Integrity Project

Academic integrity policy toolkit: Consideration of relevant matters in determining outcome

Students' academic integrity breaches do not occur 'in some atemporal ether' (Howard 1999, p. 154). An Academic Integrity Decision-Maker needs to take into account the extent of the plagiarism, the student's intention and motivation, the conventions of the discipline, the student's knowledge of academic conventions and the impact of the outcome on the student's progression.

Other contextual factors such as the student's learning background, their level in the academic program and any other previous breaches, may also need to be taken into account (Enno 2008, p. 4). Each case should be decided on its individual merits and without bias or pre-judgement.

Examples: See 9.2.3 of University of South Australia’s Assessment Policy, and La Trobe University.

Jump to...
Framework for enacting exemplary academic integrity policy

*Bretag & Mahmud 2015, (forthcoming)
Evidence-based framework for fostering integrity in postgraduate research

Mahmud & Bretag 2013a
Institutionalisation of academic integrity

Systemic approach (Davis, Drinan & Bertram Gallant 2009)

• **Stage 1:** recognition of issue and commitment to addressing it
• **Stage 2:** Response generation: development or reinvigoration of policies and procedures
• **Stage 3:** Implementation of procedures; clarity amongst all stakeholders regarding centrality of AI
• **Stage 4:** Integration of academic integrity into every aspect of campus life
  • Requires partnership between students and staff

At what stage is Macquarie Uni?
Holistic approach

Integrity needs to be promoted in every aspect of the academic enterprise (Bretag 2013):

• University mission statements, marketing & admissions processes (Bertram Gallant & Kalichman 2011)
• Nuanced and carefully articulated policy & procedures (Bretag et al 2013; Carroll & Appleton 2001).
• Assessment practices and curriculum design (Devlin 2002)
• Information provided during orientation, and frequent and visual reminders on campus (Bertram Gallant & Kalichman 2011; Bretag 2013b).
• Embedded and targeted support in courses and at every level for students (Bretag et al 2013)
• Professional development for staff (HEA 2011a)
• Research training (Mahmud & Bretag 2013a & b).
• New technologies for both education and detection (HEA 2011a).
• Standing committee with a remit for academic integrity (HEA 2011a).
Academic integrity ‘champions’

We need academic integrity champions at every level:

• **Outside the academy:** eg the media, Government funding bodies, regulatory bodies

• **Senior Management:** Academic Board, DVCs, Deans, Heads of School, Academic Services

• **Staff:** Professors, Program Directors, Course Coordinators, Academic Developers, Learning Advisors, Lecturers

• **Students:** undergraduate, postgraduate, research students, committee representatives (inc. AI)
AI breach decision-making

• Need to reduce perception of excessive workload and inconsistency of outcomes
• Oxford Brookes Model of Academic Conduct Officers or Academic Integrity Officers/Advisors, etc
  • Faculty-based
  • Teaching and research active
  • Authority to make decisions
  • Professional development
  • Community of practice
  • Educative role to both staff and students
  • Feedback to policy-makers
Responses to contract cheating

Relying solely on exams is problematic:
• innovative technological solutions include hidden microphones, iWatches, ingeniously concealed notes, special eyewear, and high tech pens to name just a few (Swearingen et al 2015).

A multi-pronged approach needed (Newton & Lang 2015):
• Technological
• Assessment design (inc. timing & staging of assessments)
• Relationship building (between students and staff)
• Legislative (cross-institutional collaboration?)
• Consequences, both academic and legal
Academic Integrity Module at MQ

• Does Macquarie Uni take a “holistic” approach to promoting and embedding academic integrity?
• How does AIM fit in with other Macquarie University initiatives to promote academic integrity?
  • What are the benefits of compulsory vs voluntary completion of AIM?
  • What about postgrad students?
  • What about AIM for staff?
• Who has an ongoing remit for academic integrity?
• How can Australian universities collaborate to confront some of the recent threats to AI?
Concluding comments

• We are confronting new academic integrity challenges that require new responses.
• Consistent recommendations on how to implement academic integrity policy from Europe, North America and Australia.
  • Plethora of resources available
• We need to commit to a systemic and holistic approach which makes integrity central to all areas of scholarship and research, and to all stakeholders.
• It is time for universities to work together to address emerging threats.
References


References


Exemplary Academic Integrity Project: www.unisa.edu.au/EAIP

HEA (2011a). Policy works: Recommendations for reviewing policy to manage unacceptable academic practice in higher education, Higher Education Academy JISC Academic Integrity Service http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/academicintegrity/policy_works

HEA (2011b). Supporting academic integrity: Approaches and resources for higher education, Higher Education Academy JISC Academic Integrity Service http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/academicintegrity/SupportingAcademicIntegrity_v2.pdf
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