Tip Sheet – Designing assessment to support academic integrity

This tip sheet complements information available on the Flinders Academic Integrity website and provides strategies you can employ when designing assessments. In developing assessments it is important to adhere the Student Academic Integrity Policy and Student Academic Integrity Procedures (also available on the aforementioned website). In addition, the toolkit released by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) in 2020 provides further support to support staff and institutions. Requiring students to use text-matching software (such as Turnitin) is not enough, you also need to help them learn the importance of meeting academic integrity (AI) requirements and design assessments to support them to learn the relevant skills. The International Center for Academic Integrity found committing to the fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage supports behaviours which allow all members of the academic community (academic staff and students) to operate in ways which support AI.

Focus on student learning

Carroll (2009), McGowan (2016) and Newton (2016), provide a range of suggestions on how topics and assessments can be designed to mitigate against unintended students' failures to meet the requirements of AI. These include not making assumptions about what students may or may not know about AI (regardless of their year level) and providing them with examples of what is correct as well as where they might go wrong in relation to meeting AI requirements by providing students with examples. It is also recommended to provide support about where to find further information about AI both verbally and in writing.

Support students to:
- learn how to learn at university and/or in an Australian university context
- understand the severity of failing to meet the requirements of AI
- develop skills in referencing and avoiding plagiarism
- appreciate the disservice they are doing to their own learning by submitting another's work

Teach by example

It is important to demonstrate good practice and what you expect from students through your teaching. So, it is essential to use appropriate referencing conventions when providing students with materials (PowerPoint or other slides, online recordings referring to another's work etc.). In addition, explain the conventions you are using, why you are using them and why you are explaining your use to students.

Design assessments which make it easier to meet requirements of academic integrity

Some assessment items make it easier to inadvertently or deliberately engage in collusion or plagiarism, while other assessments can more easily be purchased (contract cheating). Miles and Foggett (2019) suggest exams and essays provide greater scope for not meeting AI requirements and recommend a range of other assessment types to replace them. To design assessments which make it easier to meet requirements of AI you need to:
- ensure assessments are linked to learning outcomes (so you are assessing skills/knowledge you are certain students have developed within the topic)
- ensure students have had time to practice/learn the skills/knowledge you are assessing
- scaffold learning so new material builds on what is known – talk to students about what they know, should know and do not know
- design assessments which encourage students to make/construct their own answer rather than find the answer elsewhere (in a printed text or online)
- have assessment pieces moderated, which is a requirement of the Assessment Practice Procedures (Carroll, 2009; McGowan, 2016; Newton, 2016)

Responding to alleged failure to meet requirements of academic integrity

It is imperative that a failure to meet AI requirements is identified and addressed as early as possible in a student's academic career, so they do not continually repeat the same mistakes. When addressing a complaint (or reporting an allegation to your Topic Coordinator), you need to include evidence and reasons why you believe the student has failed to meet the requirements of AI. So, it is important that before any issues arise, you:

- are aware of the policies and procedures and follow appropriate protocols when reporting allegations
- have made students aware of consequences of failing to meet the requirements of AI
- have referred your students to the Student Learning Support Services (SLSS) website which houses resources on developing skills in time management, paraphrasing and quoting, reading effectively, referencing and academic writing OR provided them with useful resources on these
- have provided your students with opportunities to practice the skills (Carroll, 2009; McGowan, 2016; Managing student AI issues website; Newton, 2016)

Forms of academic integrity breaches

The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) identifies six categories of AI breaches:

- **Plagiarism** involves the reproduction of another's work without attribution.
- **Collusion** is where a number of individuals work together to complete an assessment, but are not authorised to do so
- **Copying** is where an individual reproduces and submits work completed by someone else, with or without their permission. The person whose work is copied may also be culpable if they have not taken steps to ensure their work is safe from being reproduced by others
- **Impersonation** involves engaging another to act as oneself, or presenting oneself as another (usually in an in-person examination)
- **Contract cheating** is where an individual outsources an assessment (further details below)
- **Data fabrication or falsification** involves supporting false conclusions through the manipulation or invention of data and/or images (INQAAHE, 2020, p. 6)

Contract cheating

Contract cheating has received a great deal of attention in recent years. it is a form of failing to meet AI requirements where a student submits work that has been completed by a third party (i.e. a purchased assessment piece or one completed by a friend or family member). Assessments that are recycled year after year also likely to encourage outsourcing behaviours. In addition, the contract cheating and assessment design project found these practices are engaged in for a range of reasons and student behaviours are not the only consideration. The site provides an information sheet outlining various assessment tasks and their likelihood of being outsourced. The three types of assessments most likely to be outsourced are:

- those with a short turnaround time
- heavily weighted tasks
- continuous tasks (weekly quizzes, especially online quizzes which attract grades) (Bretag et al, 2019, p. 682).

Authentic assessment supports academic integrity

In addition to the strategies discussed above, authentic assessments will also support students to meet the requirements of AI. The contract cheating and assessment design project outlined five factors which

support authenticity. The [additional findings from a survey of students and staff at Australian universities](#) infographic describes these factors as:

1. **Frequency:** the task is common or fundamental to the discipline/profession
2. **Fidelity:** the task reflects how things are done in the discipline/profession
3. **Complexity:** the task reflects the 'messiness' of real-world problems
4. **Impact:** the task has an impact that is shared with/delivered in the real world
5. **Feed forward:** the task directly, meaningfully informs future practise (Contract Cheating and Assessment Design, 2018, p. 2)

Academic Integrity: assessment design questions

Carroll (2009) identifies seven questions to ask yourself when designing assessments to support students to meet AI requirements. Answering "yes" to all these questions helps you and your students to meet learning outcomes and address academic integrity requirements:

1. Are you sure the students will have been taught the skills they will need to display in the assessment?
2. Have you designed a task that encourages students to invest time and effort? Have you designed ways to dissuade them from postponing assessment tasks to 'the last minute'?
3. Are there opportunities for others to discuss and interact with the student's assessment artefact during its production?
4. Turning to the task itself, can the student find the answer somewhere? Does the answer already exist in some form?
5. Can the student copy someone else's answer?
6. Is the brief clear about what will be assessed, and which aspects of the work must be done by the student?
7. Does the question, in the way that it is posed, push students towards asking themselves, ''How and where do I find that?'' or ''How do I make that?'' (Carroll, 2009 pp. 126 – 129, Harper et al., 2019)

References

Bretag, T., Harper, R., Burton, M., Ellis, C., Newton, P., van Haeringen, K., . . . Rozenberg, P. (2019). Contract cheating and assessment design: exploring the relationship. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 44*(5), 676-691. doi:10.1080/02602938.2018.1527892

Carroll, J. (2009). Plagiarism as a Threat to Learning: An Educational Response. In G. Joughin (Ed.), *Assessment, Learning and Judgement in Higher Education* (pp. 115-131). Springer Netherlands. doi:10.1007/978-1-4020-8905-3

Harper, R., Bretag, T., Ellis, C., Newton, P., Rozenberg, P., Saddiqui, S., & van Haeringen, K. (2019). Contract cheating: a survey of Australian university staff. *Studies in Higher Education, 44*(11), 1857-1873. doi:10.1080/03075079.2018.1462789

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). (2020). *Toolkit to support quality assurance agencies to address academic integrity and contract cheating*. Retrieved from https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/inqaahe-teqsa-qbbg-academic-integrity-toolkit-v1-0.pdf?v=1594958272

McCabe, D. (2016). Cheating and Honor: Lessons from a Long-Term Research Project. In T. Bretag (Ed.), *Handbook of Academic Integrity* (pp. 187-198). Springer Singapore. doi:10.1007/978-981-287-098-8

McGowan, S. (2016). Breaches of Academic Integrity Using Collusion. In T. Bretag (Ed.), *Handbook of Academic Integrity*. (pp. 221-248) Springer Singapore. doi:10.1007/978-981-287-098-8

Miles, C., & Foggett, K. (2019) *Authentic assessment for active learning*, presentation at Blackboard Academic Adoption Day

Newton, P. (2016). Academic integrity: a quantitative study of confidence and understanding in students at the start of their higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 41*(3), 482-497. doi:10.1080/02602938.2015.1024199