Discussion Paper:

Academic Integrity: Why it is important and how we might enhance it at UTAS

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1. Context
University of Tasmania has a system of policies, procedures and guides to inform staff and students on academic integrity and its significance. Evolutions in technology and the international reach of the Higher Education marketplace introduce new risks and create new challenges for the organisation and the sector to assure quality in assessment, academic learning, and aspects of research. TEQSA and recent research has brought into the spotlight the need to address contemporary forms of academic misconduct such as contract cheating (Draper & Newton, 2017; QAA, 2017; Slade, 2017; Wallace & Newton, 2014), exam cheating (Kremmer, Brimble, & Stevenson-Clarke, 2011; D. McCabe, 2005), self-plagiarism (Bretag & Carapiet, 2007; Bretag & Mahmud, 2009b; Robinson, 2014) and identity fraud (Slade, 2017; Smith, 2017). In the current environment, it is appropriate and timely for the University to investigate the maturity of its current approach, undertake an environmental scan and make recommendations for improvement. Features of successful academic integrity systems include organisation-wide consistency in reporting, investigating and handling instances of academic integrity (Bretag et al., 2011; Mahmud & Bretag, 2014). Consistency and transparency in application of penalties where warranted also ensures confidence in an equitable and fair system (Tennant & Rowell, 2010). This paper will provide a summary of findings in each of these areas along with questions to prompt discussion of motivation for change and potential future directions for enhancement of UTAS’ approach to academic integrity assurance.

This discussion of academic integrity also aligns with changes underway to ordinances 8 and 9. The proposal is that the general misconduct part of Ordinance 9 combines with Ordinance 8 on complaints to create a new ordinance on student conduct. Ordinance 9 would then focus on academic integrity/academic misconduct.

2. Background
In 2017, sponsored by the DVC (Students & Education), the Academic Division initiated a project to investigate enhancing UTAS’s approaches to Academic Integrity. Due to competing priorities, the project did not advance further than initial discussions. This paper serves to further the project by broadening and extending the discussion and gather stakeholder input. Guiding questions for discussion as raised by the original project team are as follows:

- Do the University’s explicit Ordinances, policies and procedures adopt the right definition of academic integrity?
- Are institutional systems for monitoring, reporting and recording instances of student academic misconduct fit for purpose? Are we using them for improvement?
- Are the educational resources provided to staff and students fit for purpose and do they meet best practice? Should we be undertaking more translation of educative materials for students into other languages?
- How should we update our approach to take account of contemporary forms of misconduct i.e. exam cheating, contract cheating, identity fraud etc.?
• What are the appropriate delegations of authority around academic misconduct?
• How do we modify Ordinance 9: Student Discipline to bring it into line with contemporary best practice around academic integrity/misconduct?
• Should we develop a student charter? A staff charter?
• Should the online MyLO module on Academic Honesty be compulsory?
• How do we best ensure consistent messaging across the institution?
• Can we implement a more nuanced approach, which sees misconduct as occurring on a spectrum, and that is clearer about the need for proportional sanctioning?
• Can we do better in capturing the outcomes of allegations that are resolved informally?
• How do we more explicitly include research integrity, ie falsification of data and other research-related breaches?
• Are we adequately supporting academic staff in assessment design that minimises plagiarism?
• Does the Unit Outline Proforma say enough about academic integrity? Is the current student declaration, submitted with all assignments sufficient?
• Are we making the best use of Turnitin and Respondus Lockdown, particularly with regard to HDR theses?
• Is the academic misconduct procedure, as outlined in Ordinance 9 comparable with that of other institutions?
• What level of compliance can we currently demonstrate with the Higher Education Standards around academic integrity?
• Are we doing enough to publicise the outcomes of proven allegations by way of deterrence? Is this actually a deterrent?

3. Academic Integrity: What is it and whom does it involve?

The University of Tasmania, as an early actor in this field, coined a widely (internationally) cited statement on academic integrity due in part to that statement’s recognition through the ALTC Academic Standards project (Bretag et al., 2011).

Academic integrity is about mastering the art of scholarship. Scholarship involves researching, understanding and building upon the work of others and requires that you give credit where it is due and acknowledge the contributions of others to your own intellectual efforts. At its core, academic integrity requires honesty. This involves being responsible for ethical scholarship and for knowing what academic dishonesty is and how to avoid it. (University of Tasmania, Student Guide to Academic Integrity, p.5)

The International Centre for Academic Integrity expanded upon the fundamental value of ‘honesty’ to include related values of trust, fairness, respect and responsibility to guide institutional actions and approaches. In 2014, the inclusion of ‘courage’ in promotion and upholding values and the courage to prosecute failures to uphold them issues a challenge.

The International Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: **honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage**. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals to action. (ICAI, 2014).
Academic Integrity policies of many universities in Australia, and beyond, promote these core values, with subsets or variants of them.

Integral to the creation of a culture of academic integrity is that all members of the academic community adhere to, and promote those basic values. Higher Education providers encourage academic integrity by creating a policy framework that sets out the organisation’s values, expectations, processes, procedures and defines the systems and tools to support it. Academics lead by example displaying academic integrity in the conduct of their research and development of teaching materials. To ensure students understand what is required academics and support elements of the provider implement learning activities that develop that understanding and practice as well as providing tools for self-help. Equity and fairness are integral to a culture of academic integrity. A consistent and uniform approach to identifying and investigating potential breaches of academic integrity as defined by the provider and subscribed to by all academics is essential.

4. Why is academic integrity important?
Academic integrity is fundamental to the success and credibility of higher education globally (TEQSA, 2017b). In order to uphold Australian Higher Education’s steadily growing international regard the University’s academic activities, including those carried out in collaboration with other bodies, benefit from upholding internationally accepted norms of integrity and honesty in scholarly work. The significance of academic integrity for UTAS includes:

- Upholding academic quality, credibility and reputation of the University
- Protecting student achievement standards, standards of awards, and perceived value to society and students in particular
- Ensuring that due credit is awarded to student for submitted assessment
- Ensuring the integrity of units, courses and awards
- Ensuring fair outcomes for students that do engage in activities with academic integrity
- Ensuring equity and fairness in prosecuting breaches of academic integrity
- TEQSA compliance through the Higher Education Standards Framework

5. What does best practice in assurance of academic integrity look like?
In 2010, Tracy Bretag from University of South Australia led a multi-university team into the research and development of academic integrity policy and approaches funded by the ALTC. Arising from this work was a set of principles and processes and the proposal that to enact them that would help to build a culture of academic integrity within an organisation.
Figure 1: Framework for enacting exemplary academic integrity policy (Bretag & Mahmud, 2014)

The ALTC project identified five core elements to ensure exemplary academic integrity policy (Bretag et al., 2011). Fundamental to culture building are a shared understanding that academic integrity affects all stakeholders in the organisation so it is everyone’s responsibility. The approach is to ensure that academic integrity is primarily an educative process that supports policy with an active and coherent commitment though all aspects to support a culture of academic integrity. Robustness of policy implementation relies on strong support systems including procedures, resources, training modules and professional development that raise awareness and understanding for both staff and students. To be of use it requires consultation with diverse stakeholders, making policy accessible such that it is easy to locate, easy to read and well written. Similarly, ensuring that there is sufficient detail to describe principles, objectives, types and levels of severity of breaches, relevant penalties, confidentiality and the provision of natural justice provides transparency and sets expectations for all parties.

Emanating from exemplary policy in the project institutions were a number of ‘best practice’ implementation features validated in extant literature.

- **Regular review of policy and process**: The context of Higher Education is such that it is subject to government regulation as well as the dynamics of societal, technological and economic change. With multiple disciplines having different perspectives and experiences of academic integrity the (Morris & Carroll, 2011) recommend *establishment of a multi-level, cross-institutional body to promote academic integrity*. Part of this body’s remit would be regular review of the academic integrity policy and framework.

- **Academic Integrity Champions**: By focusing language, discourse and activities on the positive aspects of academic integrity and the educative processes around it a positive cultural shift ensues. Such a shift enables ‘champions’ of academic integrity from every organisational level and stakeholder group within and beyond the university to be instrumental in enacting policy.

- **Academic integrity education (for all)**: Many institutions implement academic integrity education modules that provide accessible information for staff and students through the learning management system on an as-needed basis. An increasing number of institutions make
successful completion of an academic integrity module compulsory for new staff and students assuring development of organisational learning and culture building through active learning rather than passive means. Risk reduction through repetition (as per OH&S training) might require successful completion of the training module or similar educative activities annually.

- Students as academic integrity partners: Students as peers have the opportunity to make impact on academic integrity culture. In the US a growing number of universities institute an honour code that students voluntarily pledge to and help to police to create a community of integrity. As academic integrity leaders of the student culture it makes sense for students to be the majority decision makers on cases of breaches. Involving students in educating new staff and particularly new students at induction and orientation events also promotes student stewardship of academic integrity standards.

- Robust decision-making systems: Academic integrity is an organisational aspiration for which decisions must be trusted and seen as transparent, fair and equitable with all allegations treated seriously and independently investigated. As decisions have implications for academic careers, protection of involved parties through confidentiality of decisions and shared responsibility for making decisions are important. In the latter case, this requires teams of evaluators as opposed to individuals. Transparency and consistency promoted through the application of clear guidelines for determining types of breach and appropriate (scaled) actions or penalties are essential. Consistent institution level management of (allegations of) breaches rather than management at unit level reduces allegations of unfairness and inequity. Central record keeping of allegations, breaches, actions and outcomes ensure consistent and fair integrity breach decision making but also provide holistic data to inform system enhancement at institution, faculty, school, course, unit, academic and student levels.

6. What are the features of Academic Integrity at UTAS?

Academic integrity has been in the spotlight at University of Tasmania leading to an enhancement project sponsored by the recent DVC(S&E). With Higher Education being Australia’s third largest export, maintaining its quality and reputation is paramount to its growth. It is also an area of interest to TEQSA in the context of the global strategies adopted by the sector.

HESF Provider Standards (Australian University Category) require that: “The higher education provider has systematic, mature internal processes for quality assurance and the maintenance of academic standards and academic integrity.”

The Higher Education Standards Framework has several references to academic and research integrity with relevant standards being: 5.2 Academic and Research Integrity, 6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability, 6.3 Academic Governance, 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students, and 7.3 Information Management.

Table 1 provides a summary of UTAS performance against the standards. A desktop inspection indicates that UTAS meets threshold levels in most areas. What is missing appears to be a comprehensive approach to reporting and record keeping of integrity breaches or allegations organisation-wide. In many cases, the detection of breaches of academic integrity and subsequent actions take place informally without central record of the incident or penalty. Currently there is no
University-wide organisational system to deal with academic integrity issues. Academics as unit coordinators are currently encouraged to deal with suspected academic misconduct informally. Referral of the matter to the Head of School usually occurs for incidents that are more serious. Incidents, subsequent actions and penalties decided by a unit coordinator may or may not be recorded or shared within the organisational unit. This leads to potentially inequitable outcomes and perceptions of bias and unfairness from affected students and their parents.

From an organisational perspective with each academic acting in isolation there is no information gathered on patterns of behaviour to detect repeat offenders or to enhance organisational approaches to assuring academic integrity. Without a uniform institution-wide approach, that can capture all instance and actions, then monitoring alone will be insufficient to design interventions or enable the University to maintain a holistic view of the performance of students, teachers and organisational units in this domain.

Currently a wealth of information (web pages, documents) and activities are available but they promote only passive and optional engagement with the understanding of academic integrity. While academic integrity is important to the organisation it is not currently front and centre of what we do. Motivators to engage with this information appear in some first-year units or on reporting of a serious instance of misconduct. For most students and staff there is no other reason to do so.

Table 1: UTAS approach to Academic Integrity in comparison to HESF requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HESF Standard</th>
<th>UTAS Implementation</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 5.2.1 There are policies that promote and uphold the academic and research integrity of courses and units of study, research and research training activities, and institutional policies and procedures address misconduct and allegations of misconduct | • Ordinance 9: Student Discipline (under review)  
• Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Policy  
• Responsible Conduct of Research Policy  
• University Behaviour Policy (under review) |
| 5.2.2 Preventative action is taken to mitigate foreseeable risks to academic and research integrity including misrepresentation, fabrication, cheating, plagiarism and misuse of intellectual property, and to prevent recurrences of breaches | • Turnitin – text matching software for assessment  
• Respondus Lockdown – Browser restriction software for online quizzes  
Further actions will include design of assessments for which there is lower risk of breaches |
| 5.2.3 Students are provided with guidance on what constitutes academic or research misconduct and the development of good practices in maintaining academic and research integrity. | University Websites  
• C&Q Academic Integrity and Misconduct  
  o Resources for students  
  o Resources for staff  
  o Explanation of plagiarism (actually statement on plagiarism)  
  o Misconduct – general, academic, resources for staff  
• C&Q Academic Misconduct for Students  
  o Definition of academic misconduct  
  o Examples of academic misconduct |
### Explanation of investigation and resolution process

- **C&Q General Misconduct for students**
- **UTAS Current Students – Academic Integrity for Students**
  - What is plagiarism and academic integrity? (explanatory)
  - Using Turnitin
  - Consequences for academic dishonesty
- **UTAS Current Students – UniStart**
  - Online and/or face-to-face lectures and tutorials completed before semester
    - Critical thinking
    - Using university services
    - Preparing assignments (process)
    - Demonstrating honesty
- **Students on Film – youtube – Academic Integrity focus on referencing**
- **TUU Assistance – Misconduct – student advocacy and explanation of Ord.9**
- **Current Students – Learning Development and Student Advice**
  - Student learning drop-in
  - Student Advisor consultations
  - Workshops
  - PASS
- **Guide – Academic Integrity for Students (McCabe)**
- **Library Guides**
  - Referencing
  - Plagiarism
  - Turnitin
  - Links to online and physical help resources (books)
  - Student Guide to Academic Integrity (Current Students as above)

### 5.2.4 Academic and research integrity and accountability

Refers to TPAs – would have to check individual agreements for this aspect

TPA Policy currently out for consultation with relevant procedures still to be developed. Key point is that third parties should work to the same standards as the university. Challenge is policing compliance when third parties are off campus or offshore. Regular review of TPA for compliance is necessary.

### 5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement

This standard refers to learning, teaching and student experience and access to data and processes with which to make improvements. In 6.2.1(j), below, there is not the same improvement focus and the approach appears
6.2.1(j) the occurrence and nature of formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents are monitored and action is taken to address underlying causes.

- C&Q (secure site) Misconduct Handling for Staff
  - Allegations made by pro-forma letter to HoS
    - Plagiarism
    - Exam Cheating
  - Making a determination
    - Educative approach for misconduct without understanding or intent
    - Penalties for intent to gain academic advantage or disadvantage another student
  - Complaints & Discipline keep database of history of academic misconduct
  - HoS communicates findings and actions by proforma letter to student
  - Academic Misconduct Committee – greater range of penalties
  - Procedural Fairness (Ombudsman) document link broken
  - Annual Course Report (?)

6.3.2(d) Maintaining oversight of academic and research integrity, including monitoring of potential risks.

- UQSC
- URC
- Academic Senate
- Academic Division

7.2.2(d) Information for students is available prior to acceptance of an offer, written in plain English where practicable, accompanied by an explanation of any technical or specialised terms, and includes: information to give access to ... policies and requirements including ... appeals, academic integrity ... intellectual property ...

As for 5.2.3, above. The UTAS Current Students websites are accessible to the public as are those of Curriculum & Quality (C&Q)

7.3.3 Information systems and records are maintained, securely and confidentially as necessary to: b) prevent unauthorised or fraudulent access to private or sensitive information, including information where unauthorised access may compromise academic or research integrity c) document and record responses to formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents

- UTAS maintains a secure network (intranet & storage) where resources are only accessible to authorised users.
- Schools keep records of misconduct investigations and relevant communications
- Complaints & Discipline keep database of history of academic misconduct
7. How might we enhance academic integrity at UTAS?

It is apparent in the Table 1 that UTAS’ approach to academic integrity is sufficient for regulatory requirements. Considering the best practice research mentioned in the earlier section it is also apparent that there are significant improvements that might ensure capacity to promote academic integrity, deal with misconduct and reduce risk in the developing context. When looking at the increase in instances of academic misconduct that are reported it is apparent that workload for relevant officers is going to increase significantly so some process efficiency and increased use of information systems technology may be helpful.

Table 2, below shows a comparison of UTAS’ approach to academic integrity with best practice items derived from research, above. Presented are potential opportunities for enhancement against those items.

*Table 2: Good practice from extant literature compared to UTAS approach to academic integrity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good practice areas and features</th>
<th>UTAS approach</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular review of policy and process (Bretag et al., 2011; Morris &amp; Carroll, 2011)</td>
<td>• Ordinance 9 and the Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Policy are structured documents that are written clearly and concisely however there may be some language that is incomprehensible to a student audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Current responsibility for review and revision of policy is the remit of the Academic Quality Team (Academic Division), Policy Network (distributed across institution) and the UQSC (multi-level, cross-disciplinary).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There is no dedicated body with the range of stakeholders that has been convened either for review of policy and process, or to promote it (actively).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Potential for enhancement at UTAS:**

• Set up a working group of UQSC with (elected) representation from students, academic, professional and administrative staff including senior managers from colleges and university. Remit might include active promotion, engagement and education of the university community, review and improvement of institutional approach to academic integrity and decision making on cases of academic misconduct.

• The Review of Ordinance 9 with the proposal to separate Academic Misconduct and General Misconduct is already in train.
**Academic Integrity Champions (Bretag & Mahmud, 2015; Tricia Bertram Gallant & Drinan, 2008)**

- **focusing language, discourse and activities on the positive aspects of academic integrity and the educative processes around it**
- **Establish ‘champions’ of academic integrity from every organisational level and stakeholder group within and beyond the university**

- Much of the language used in document names and headings has a negative note that focuses on words like ‘breaches’, ‘misconduct’ or ‘discipline’. In some instances, there is a mixture of negative terms with the topic, i.e. “Plagiarism and Academic Integrity” or “Academic Integrity and Misconduct”.
- To ‘champion’ a cause people (students and staff) respond to it being positive and upholding of morals or values. By identifying staff, and particularly students, that champion academic integrity and providing forums for them to engage with the university community understanding and valuing of the importance of academic integrity can be promoted.

**Potential for enhancement at UTAS:**

- Review each of the documents relating to academic integrity (Ord 9, policies, website, etc.,) such that language and terminology promotes the quality rather than negative aspects.
- Creating a cadre of academic integrity ‘champions’ to provide an informed group that can undertake the review and promotion activities mentioned in the previous section.
- Engaging ‘students as partners’ in the promotion of academic integrity by getting them to run training for new and current students (and staff) to help build a supportive and informed culture.

**Academic integrity education (for all) (Bretag et al., 2014; Thomas & Scott, 2016)**

- **implement academic integrity education modules**
- **make successful completion of the academic integrity module compulsory**
- **require successful completion of the training module or similar educative activities annually**

- There is a MyLO module “Academic Honesty” that informs about academic integrity. Engagement for staff and students with this module is mostly optional.
- There is a MyLO site on Research Integrity that is integral to research training at UTAS.
- UniStart is an optional pre-semester module for new students that introduces aspects of academic integrity.

**Potential for enhancement at UTAS:**

- Implement a **Student Charter** and a **Staff Charter** that state the expectations and responsibilities of the relevant party with respect to the rest of the organisation (Griffith Uni., Bond Uni., Melbourne Uni.,
| UoW, JCU, Monash, RMIT, UC, etc.,) | This is being discussed as part of the review of ordinances 8 and 9  
• Ensure that Academic Integrity is a central part of the Charter documents  
• Make it compulsory that all current staff and students complete an academic integrity and/or charter engagement module with quiz type assessment.  
• Make it compulsory that all new staff and students undertake the module as part of induction or orientation – to be successfully completed within the first semester  
• Keep a central register of completions  
• Engage in curriculum design (activities and assessments) that minimise the opportunities for academic misconduct. E.g. Wiki writing, Vodcasting, Virtual World engagement, Social Networking, Social Bookmarking, Blogging, Audio Podcasting (Gray et al., 2010) E.g. Unique tasks for each student, Multi-step assessments, Assess using specific scenarios, Use multimedia, Request drafts or planning documentation, Request progress meetings (CSU) |
| --- | --- |
| Students as academic integrity partners (Dix, Emery, & Le, 2014; D. L. McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2003)  
• institute an hono(u)r code  
• students to be the majority decision makers on cases of breaches  
• students in educating new staff and particularly new students at induction and orientation |  
• Doesn’t currently happen  

### Potential for enhancement at UTAS:  
• Engage academic integrity champions to actively engage university community in significance and skills information sessions to support engagement with the completion of the quiz  
• As per first section: Set up a working group of UQSC with (elected) representation from students, academic, professional and administrative staff including senior managers from colleges and university. Remit might include active promotion and engagement of the university community, review and improvement of institutional approach to academic integrity and decision making on cases of academic misconduct.  
• Honour codes have been difficult to instil in the Australian Higher Education context. There is a significant cultural difference to the US. It may be a later step if AI champions are effective. |
Robust decision-making systems (Bretag et al., 2011; Carroll, 2016; Carroll & Appleton, 2005; Park, 2004)

- All allegations treated seriously and independently investigated
- Confidentiality of proceedings and decisions
- Shared responsibility for making decisions (teams of evaluators)
- Application of clear guidelines for determining types of breach and appropriate (scaled) actions or penalties
- Institution level management of (allegations of) breaches
- Central record keeping of allegations, breaches, actions and outcomes
  - Consistent and fair integrity breach decision making
  - Holistic data to inform enhancement initiatives and track performance at institution, faculty, school, course, unit, academic and student levels
- Central record keeping of allegations, breaches, actions and outcomes

Academics generally decide how to deal with breaches of academic integrity detected as plagiarism, misrepresentation or cheating on a case-by-case basis at the unit level. Potential problems with this approach can be:

- Lack of record keeping to provide unit and course or school level data about allegations or actions
- Lack of uniformity of responses
- Often punitive and not educative
- Lack of natural justice
- Lack of privacy and confidentiality
- Can lead to complaints of unfairness or favouritism

Reports are made of serious cases of academic dishonesty or misconduct to the HoS, by the academic (using a report template), as detailed in the current ordinance 9. This has some advantages:

- Good records and evidence associated with case (School and UTAS level)
- Provides natural justice with informal explanatory response to allegation and an appeals process
- Academic Misconduct Committee provides broader consideration of cases than an individual (HoS) can provide and does not provide a single target for retribution

This has some disadvantages:

- HoS a potential target for retribution
- Ad hoc. No transparency or consistency of decision making involving guidelines for relationship between breaches and penalties

Records kept by Academic Misconduct Committee are incomplete (only serious breaches not dealt with by HoS or academic)

Potential for enhancement at UTAS:

- Make it a requirement that academics (or other authorised parties) report all breaches of academic integrity, research integrity and instances of general misconduct via an easy to use web-based intranet system. The proposed
| 15 | establishment of the Conduct and Academic Integrity Office (CAIO) will assist in this regard. |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| • Create a secure centralised system for reporting and recording all allegations, investigation details, evidence, outcomes, penalties, and appeals. (e.g. Griffith Uni., - Student Academic Integrity Management System; Newcastle Uni., - Student Misconduct Register; USQ – Student Record Management System; Flinders Uni., - Confidential Register). |
| • Ensure that the centralised system for reporting and recording academic integrity issues has an effective workflow system to expedite investigations and reach appropriate and timely outcomes. |
| • Create College based roles “Student Academic Conduct Officer” (Newcastle Uni.,) or “Academic Integrity Officers” (UoW, UniSA) and “Academic Integrity Manager” (Griffith Uni.,) that engage with the centralised system and provide investigation services and recommendation provision independent of unit coordinator and HoS. |
| • Document a clear set of guidelines for the assessment of seriousness of instances of breaches of academic integrity with a scaled set of responses or penalties to be applied University wide. (Section 5, Matrix, Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity, Griffith University; Section 7, Academic Integrity Policy, Torrens University Australia; Tennant & Rowell, 2010, Plagiarism Reference Tariff (Tennant & Rowell, 2010) |

8. Starting to address the focus questions

Do the University’s explicit Ordinances, policies and procedures adopt the right definition of academic integrity?

The current Ordinance 9 ‘Student Discipline’ – covers rules governing actions relating to both academic and general misconduct. There is no instance of the word ‘integrity’ in the document. As such, the document does not give anything positive with which a student might engage or aspire to. It is as the document’s title suggests, focused on student discipline.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Policy (2014) – Does not offer a definition of academic integrity but does offer one for plagiarism. It refers readers to the ‘University Statement on
Plagiarism and Academic Integrity’ available on the University of Tasmania website and Unit Outlines’.

The Academic Integrity and Misconduct website, under Curriculum and Quality, offers the following statement:

Academic Integrity is mastery of the art of scholarship.

Scholarship involves researching, understanding, and building upon the work of others. It requires that credit is given where it is due and the contributions of others in our intellectual efforts are acknowledged appropriately.

Honesty must be exercised to effectively practice ethical scholarship and avoid the consequences of academic dishonesty.

Under ‘Academic Integrity Resources for Students’ which is linked to from the website above, there is an aspirational (mostly descriptive) statement about the university’s academic environment along with a link to the definitional ‘A Guide to Academic Integrity for Students’ wherein academic integrity is also defined as above.

The unit outline templates have sections headed ‘Academic Referencing’ and ‘Academic Misconduct’. The former describes expectations and links to guides as well as describing the term ‘plagiarism’ and its consequences. Unit outlines offer no definition for ‘Academic Integrity’ per se.

In answer to the question(s) posed, there is no definition of academic integrity offered in any of the ordinance, policy or procedure documents. Addressing this by ensuring academic integrity is explained and expectations set out in each of the relevant documents removes the need to search the university website to find out what it is – a task that students certainly won’t do – not that they would read an ordinance or a policy for that matter. As to the question of whether it is the ‘right’ definition, it is possible that the ICAI’s and AISP’s definitions will be useful for comparison:

The International Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as a commitment to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. We believe that these five values, plus the courage to act on them even in the face of adversity, are truly foundational to the academy. Without them, everything that we do in our capacities as teachers, learners, and researchers loses value and becomes suspect.

- **Honesty** – Honesty is an indispensable foundation of teaching, learning, research, and service, and a necessary prerequisite for full realization of trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

- **Trust** – When honesty is established as a value it allows for and encourages the development of trust. Trust accrues over time, with experience, and is built on a foundation of actions more importantly than words.

- **Fairness** – Fair treatment is an essential factor in the establishment of ethical communities. Important components of fairness include predictability, transparency, and clear, reasonable expectations.

- **Respect** – Scholarly communities succeed only where there is respect for community members and for the diverse and sometimes contradictory opinions that they express.
Responsibility – Responsibility for upholding the values of integrity is simultaneously an individual duty and a shared concern. Every member of an academic community – each student, faculty member, and administrator – is responsible for safeguarding the integrity of its scholarship, teaching and research.

Courage – Courage is the capacity to act in accordance with one’s values despite fear. Courage is an element of character that allows learners to commit to the quality of their education by holding themselves and their fellow learners to the highest standards of academic integrity even when doing so involves risk of negative consequences or reprisal. (ICAI, 2014)

The Academic Integrity Standards Project (2010 – 2012) offer the following definition of academic integrity that explicitly integrates learning and teaching with research aspects of academia:

Academic integrity encompasses a number of values and ideals that should be upheld in an academic institution. Within the academy there is a fundamental obligation to exercise integrity, which includes honesty, trustworthiness and respect. Within an academic structure those values must be evident in the research as well as the teaching and learning activities of the institution. Academic integrity involves ensuring that in research, and in teaching and learning, both staff and students act in an honest way, that they’re open and accountable for their actions, and that they exhibit fairness and transparency when they’re dealing with people or with research. Furthermore, it is important that staff members at all levels be role models and demonstrate integrity as an example to students who will progress through the education system and then transition into professional life. Academic integrity impacts on students and staff in these core activities, and is fundamental to the reputation and standing of an organisation and its members. (AISP, 2012)

Are institutional systems for monitoring, reporting and recording instances of student academic misconduct fit for purpose? Are we using them for improvement?

Currently, there is no ‘institutional system’ for monitoring, reporting or recording instances of student academic misconduct at UTAS. In the first instance, many academics may deal informally with suspected academic misconduct such as plagiarism or cheating. Problems inherent in this approach relate to the fact that there are no central records of informally addressed incidents, investigations, outcomes or penalties applied relating to alleged misconduct so it is difficult to assess the magnitude of the issue. Risks of a predominantly informal system to the student are a potential lack of natural justice and unfairness inherent in inequitable allocation of penalties. For the academic the risks include allegations of unfairness, favouritism and breach of ethics. For the organisation, the lack of records does not enable monitoring of patterns of misconduct for particular students and addressing them appropriately. Similarly, the current obfuscation of patterns of misconduct relating to units, courses, disciplines and the university as a whole reduce the organisation’s ability to address them. Without an institutional system that transparently records all suspected cases of academic misconduct, provides natural justice through independent investigation, records outcomes of investigations and allocates consistent and appropriate penalties as
appropriate; the organisation risks its own reputation for equity and fairness and fails to eliminate risks to students and staff.

Where a ‘serious’ instance of academic misconduct is encountered the documentary information and evidence can be presented to the relevant Head of School from which point a formal system of addressing and recording the issue is engaged. The problem is that such a system is at present functionally incomplete.

With no endemic institutional system operating at all levels there are insufficient data collected to improve the quality of the organisation’s approaches and responses to academic misconduct.

*Griffith University* has implemented, over two decades, what is widely considered an exemplary system that provides tools and processes for academics and the wider organisation to deal equitably and formatively with academic misconduct. The challenge has been encouraging academics to refer all suspected cases to the central system but by expounding the values of the system to all stakeholders, making it easy to access, and creating responsive, automated workflows, the organisational culture has adapted effectively.

*Are the educational resources provided to staff and students fit for purpose and do they meet best practice? Should we be undertaking more translation of materials?*

Current educational resources include a MyLO site ‘Turnitin and Academic Honesty’ focused on how to use and interpret the results from Turnitin, understanding what plagiarism is and lists resources to assist students in being able to write academically.

Currently the site is poorly designed and arguably quite confusing. There is an issue of consistency in terms of language. The ‘Plagiarism’ link goes to a page that provides information on ‘academic honesty’, ‘academic misconduct’, ‘plagiarism’ and ‘academic writing’. As such, the design of the site is suboptimal. The term ‘academic honesty’, probably as a key term at an earlier juncture, is now inconsistent with wider literature and related documents in the university (ordinance and policy). Plagiarism is a particular type of academic misconduct that featured in earlier Quality initiatives and should not take precedence over the key topic, which is Academic Integrity.

A suggestion would be to revise the MyLO site and to ensure that it is a standalone, self-contained educational tool. Further, creating clear learning outcomes, learning activities and assessments (formative and summative) for engagement by students assures learning in this important area.

The same site is currently available to students and staff but focuses on students. A further suggestion is to create a separate but related site focused on enhancing staff knowledge of academic integrity, how to assure, how to police and handle it at UTAS. This would make an excellent professional development and staff induction tool. Further, making this an assessed learning object, similar to WH&S training would ensure that the organisation is enhancing corporate knowledge of this important area of academic quality.

Translation of such materials into other languages may not be required, as all students must meet IELTS levels that assure adequate comprehension of learning materials. Culture rather than language may confound understanding for some students but if materials are part of an
assessable unit then appropriate reformation of understanding through engagement is achievable.

**How do we update our approach to take account of contemporary forms of misconduct i.e. exam cheating, contract cheating, identity fraud etc.?**

This question might usefully be a discussion topic for a group with a wider range of experiences and responsibilities within the organisation. Literature discusses:

- Why students cheat (Brimble, 2015; D. McCabe, 2005),
- Strategies that organisations can adopt with respect to addressing exam cheating (Cluskey Jr, Ehlen, & Raiborn, 2011),
- Contract cheating (Draper & Newton, 2017; QAA, 2017; TEQSA, 2017a; Wallace & Newton, 2014),
- Online cheating (Cluskey Jr et al., 2011; Mellar, Peytcheva-Forsyth, Kocdar, Karadeniz, & Yovkova, 2018),
- Essay mills (Newton & Lang, 2016; QAA, 2016, 2017),
- Plagiarism (Bretag, 2013; Carroll, 2016; Fish & Hura, 2013; QAA, 2016)
- Self-plagiarism (Bretag & Carapiet, 2007; Bretag & Mahmud, 2009b; Robinson, 2014),
- Identity fraud (Slade, 2017),
- Strategies to minimise plagiarism (Bretag & Mahmud, 2009a; Carroll, 2016; CSU, 2011; Levine & Pazdernik, 2018; Park, 2004)

Griffith University’s ‘Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity’ (Dec 2017) describes most recently recognised forms of student academic misconduct. Similarly, LaTrobe University’s Academic Integrity Schedule of Responses (June 2015) comprehensively itemises their currently relevant forms of misconduct and specifies responses deemed appropriate depending on whether it is found to be a ‘minor’ or a ‘serious’ breach.

**Should we use separate instruments to manage academic misconduct and general misconduct?**

This is underway through a revised Ordinance 8 on student conduct that brings together complaints and general misconduct and a revised Ordinance 9 on academic integrity/misconduct.

**How do we modify Ordinance 9: Student Discipline to bring it into line with contemporary best practice in academic integrity/misconduct?**

A draft is being prepared for review with more detail incorporated in related procedures.

**Should we move to a student charter? A staff charter?**

Several Australian universities have instituted student and staff charters e.g. Griffith University, Bond University, Melbourne University, University of Wollongong, James Cook University, Monash University, RMIT University, University of Canberra, etc. In essence, a
A charter is a clearly stated set of rights and responsibilities for parties in an enterprise. Usually couched as what students can expect of the university (and its denizens) and what the university expects of students in return; in effect it sets up a learning and student experience contract (Pitman, 2000; Williams, 2015). The design of University of Adelaide’s Student Charter exhibits accessibility and readability by keeping the student expectations and student responsibilities to just four lines each as headings, each of which can be drilled down into for more detail.

Having expectations (and responsibilities) clearly set out in a readable and publicly accessible form of itself sets the level of transparency and responsibility for the academic engagement of students.

As with many university documents (ordinances, policies, procedures, etc.) there is often very little cause for a staff member to engage with them and even less for a student unless they find themselves in contravention of some rule. In order to engage both staff (academic and professional) and students with the charter(s) then an assessable module that develops and tests staff and student knowledge of the charter(s) is a logical extension of an Academic Integrity Module. This is a topic under discussion as part of the review of Ordinance 8.

**Should the online MyLO module on Academic Honesty be compulsory?**

Many Australian Universities make completion of their Academic Integrity module compulsory. Examples are Newcastle University, LaTrobe University, University of New England, and University of Sydney amongst others.

For the same reasons that we assess student knowledge to assure learning then we are reducing risk to individuals and the organisation by assuring student and staff knowledge of academic integrity.

A logical extension of this is to make successful completion each year compulsory as is required for OH&S/WH&S training for most organisations. In terms of risk, the arguments for doing so are similar.

**How do we best ensure consistent messaging across the institution?**

There is a need for consistent language and terminology in all communication and documentation. Further appropriate strategies are worthy of discussion by a wider stakeholder group.

**Can we implement a more nuanced approach, which sees misconduct as occurring on a spectrum, and that is clearer about the need for proportional sanctioning?**

Currently, UTAS leaves the determination of the level of academic misconduct up to the relevant Head of School or Academic Misconduct Committee as per Ordinance 9. The nature of any penalties scales as per the judgement of that HoS or Committee as to the severity of the breach. The challenge is that UTAS does not have a clear and transparent set of guidelines for determining severity and proportionality of response.
Many universities recognise misconduct as occurring on a spectrum. Often graded as to the level of intentionality and level of student experience. Griffith University uses a matrix (rubric) that rates severity of each of five criteria as either tier 1 or tier 2. The criteria are: type of misconduct, extent of misconduct, experience of the student, intent of the student, and impact of the misconduct. Tiers are explained in the quote from their framework below:

*Proportional responses:* the Framework recognises that a distinction should be drawn between less serious instances of academic misconduct which may involve simply inexperienced academic study and writing skills and more serious instances which may involve intentional misconduct and misrepresentation. The former (Tier 1) requires an educational or developmental response and only the latter (Tier 2) deserves Penalties. As a result when concerns are first raised the framework allows for the provision of opportunities for students to learn; whereas subsequent offences are more likely to be intentional, and the outcomes may become progressively more severe. Further guidance... (Griffith University Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity, 2017)

LaTrobe University, under Academic Integrity, has published a detailed schedule of responses and penalties for academic misconduct.

Many universities’ approaches to academic integrity or misconduct fail to provide a transparent means for determining the appropriateness of a response/penalty based on the range of criteria that are considered. UniSA for example, has a range of criteria and a range of penalties but no transparent means to making an appropriate decision. Consistent penalty decisions and related processes are fundamental to equity and transparency (Carroll, 2016; Carroll & Appleton, 2005).

In an attempt to standardise and clarify the link between breach and response for universities across the UK, Peter Tennant and Gill Rowell, as part of the AMBeR project, created a tariff (points) system for calculating penalties for detected plagiarism (Tennant & Rowell, 2010). Used in conjunction with a text comparison tool such as Turnitin and comprehensive records of prior breaches appropriate penalties are simple to calculate.

The tariff system currently only considers plagiarism. In order to make such a system more widely applicable then designs for tariffs for other sorts of academic misconduct are necessary.

*Consistent application of penalties:* this would require us to reach university wide agreement on what the penalties are and how they should vary across levels of study, severity of offence, number of offences, level of program etc. Further, consistent application of penalties may best be realised by limiting the number of people making decisions, e.g. defer decisions to centralised officer.

A current proposal is establishment of a Conduct and Academic Integrity Office that will receive information about academic misconduct and process cases that are more complex. The proposed system would encourage local resolution by Colleges using a consistent approach to application of penalties with referral of more serious cases for handling by the CAIO and the Academic Misconduct Committee.

*Can we do better in capturing the outcomes of allegations that are resolved informally?*
Consider Griffith University’s framework and policy documents for a process and procedures. The key step in the process is the entry of all suspected cases of breaches of academic into Student Academic Integrity Management System (SAIMS), for attention from a centrally based, independent investigator, the Student Academic Integrity Coordinator. SAIMS is a workflow system into which an academic can enter details and evidence and await timely outcomes as per policy timelines. Records of breaches and suspected breaches can reveal patterns of student behaviour, unit vulnerability, and other data not currently available to make fair decisions. SAIMS is a mature system with an academic culture that embraces it. It is available as a web-based and desktop application.

UTAS could adopt such a system; however, the lead-time in developing it might be considerable.

Extant literature provides other models for institutionalising academic integrity that are good reference points (Tricia B Gallant & Drinan, 2006; Park, 2004).

**How do we more explicitly include research integrity, i.e. falsification of data and other research-related breaches?**

Like UTAS, some universities separate the instances of academic misconduct into research related and coursework related categories. Good arguments for doing this relate to systems unique to the research domain such as research ethics and publications.

There are, however, crossovers into the coursework domain in terms of plagiarism and scholarship in theses for which the same tools and systems may be appropriate. In many cases, alignment of penalties and processes relating to prosecuting suspected breaches are justifiable. Implementation of SAIMS (Griffith University) at UTAS would require the independent investigator to apply Research specific rules and standards when analysing data and making a recommendation.

**Are we adequately supporting academic staff in assessment design that minimises plagiarism?**

Not currently. There is literature and there have been various projects related to the design of assessment that minimises plagiarism (Gray, Thompson, Sheard, Clerehan, & Hamilton, 2010). The key aspects are the ability to individualise assessment items. An example would be multi-stage, project-based assessment for which each student receives a unique set of data.

Charles Sturt University provide the following assessment design criteria to minimise plagiarism:

- Develop unique tasks and be wary of reusing tasks from previous sessions
- Vary the tasks and/or elements within the assessment task
- Assess higher order thinking skills that require students to apply knowledge rather than simply find and present answers
- Consider alternative assessment types such as a report, a multimedia presentation, a project, a learning journal, rather than an essay
- Combine different methods of assessment, such as a submitted task with a related in-class component
• Provide different students in the same cohort with different scenarios or data sets
• Make the task more specific and less generalised so that the application of knowledge to a specific practical case is required (which can be varied from session to session)
• Incorporate an element of personal reflection, experience or opinion
• Clearly express assignment requirements such as outlining facts, for example in a student’s own words or paraphrasing the words of others

The design criteria, above, negate the ability for students to engage in many of the currently popular forms of academic misconduct relating to assessment.

**Does the Unit Outline Proforma say enough about academic integrity? Is the current student declaration, submitted with all assignments sufficient?**

As stated above, the unit outline templates have sections headed ‘Academic Referencing’ and ‘Academic Misconduct’. The former describes expectations and links to guides as well as describing the term ‘plagiarism’ and its consequences. Unit outlines offer no definition for ‘Academic Integrity’ per se.

There are a mixture of implied and explicit ways for students to signal that the work that they are submitting for assessment is their own:

“Cover sheets, in these instances, are considered redundant as you have already declared compliance with University rules (such as the plagiarism statement) in order to access MyLO” – Faculty of Education, CALE, Assessment Web page: [http://www.utas.edu.au/education/learning-and-teaching/student-resources/policies-and-procedures/assessment](http://www.utas.edu.au/education/learning-and-teaching/student-resources/policies-and-procedures/assessment)

OR

“I declare that all material in this assignment is my own work except where there is clear acknowledgement or reference to the work of others. I am aware that my assignment may be submitted to plagiarism detection software, and might be retained on its database. I have read and complied with the University statement on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity on the University website at [www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism](http://www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism). I will keep a copy of this assignment until the end of the semester.*

Signed: Date:

**Are we making the best use of Turnitin and Respondus Lockdown, particularly with regard to HDR theses?**

Best practice in the control of student plagiarism involves the implementation of structured education modules, plagiarism detection software (Turnitin), focused policies and procedures and student centre support (Levine & Pazdernik, 2018). Like UTAS, this combination of approaches is used at many universities.

Commentary from Research required.
Is the University’s Academic Misconduct procedure, as outlined in Ordinance 9 comparable with that of other institutions?

This needs to be assessed more fully.

What level of compliance can we currently demonstrate with the Higher Education Standards around academic integrity?

Threshold. See Table 1.

Are we doing enough to publicise the outcomes of proven allegations by way of deterrence? Is this actually a deterrent?

Under the Ordinance, publication of results/outcomes of academic misconduct cases is allowed but it is unclear as to how widely this is done. (ADLTs, might have relevant commentary).

9. Potential enhancements for academic integrity at UTAS

Work is underway for ordinance 9 to focus solely on academic misconduct and for a revised ordinance 8 to cover complaints and general misconduct. This paper is key in linking into the development of a revised academic misconduct ordinance.

As outlined in Table 2, enhancement ideas for discussion and consideration are:

- Set up a sub-committee of UQSC (or other body) with (elected) representation from students, academic, professional and administrative staff including senior managers from colleges and university. Remit might include active promotion, engagement and education of the university community, review and improvement of institutional approach to academic integrity and decision making on cases of academic misconduct.
- Review each of the documents relating to academic integrity (Ord 9, policies, website, etc.,) such that language and terminology promotes the quality rather than negative aspects.
- Creating a cadre of academic integrity ‘champions’ across Colleges to provide an informed group that can undertake the review and promotion activities mentioned in the previous section.
- Engaging ‘students as partners’ in the promotion of academic integrity by getting them to run training for new and current students (and staff) helps to build a supportive and informed culture.
- Implement a Student Charter and a Staff Charter that state the expectations and responsibilities of the relevant party with respect to the rest of the organisation (Griffith Uni., Bond Uni., Melbourne Uni., UoW, JCU, Monash, RMIT, UC, etc.,).
- Ensure that Academic Integrity is a central part of any Charter documents
- Make it compulsory that all current staff and students complete an academic integrity and/or charter engagement module with quiz type assessment.
  - Make it compulsory that all new staff and students undertake the module as part of induction or orientation – to be successfully completed within the first semester
- Keep a central register of completions
- Engage in curriculum design (activities and assessments) that minimise the opportunities for academic misconduct. E.g. Wiki writing, Vodcasting, Virtual World engagement, Social Networking, Social Bookmarking, Blogging, Audio Podcasting (Gray et al., 2010) E.g. Unique tasks for each student, Multi-step assessments, Assess using specific scenarios, Use multimedia, Request drafts or planning documentation, Request progress meetings (CSU)
- Engage academic integrity champions to actively engage university community in significance and skills information sessions to support engagement with the completion of the quiz
- Make it a requirement that academics (or other authorised parties) report all breaches of academic integrity, research integrity and instances of general misconduct via the CAIO through possibly implementing an easy to use web-based intranet system.
- Create a secure centralised system for reporting and recording all allegations, investigation details, evidence, outcomes, penalties, and appeals. (e.g. Griffith Uni., - Student Academic Integrity Management System; Newcastle Uni., - Student Misconduct Register; USQ – Student Record Management System; Flinders Uni., - Confidential Register).
- Ensure that the centralised system for reporting and recording academic integrity issues through the CAIO has an effective workflow system to expedite investigations and reach appropriate and timely outcomes.
- Create local College based roles “Student Academic Conduct Officer” (Newcastle Uni.,) or “Academic Integrity Officers” (UoW, UniSA) and “Academic Integrity Manager” (Griffith Uni.,) that engage with the centralised system and provide investigation services and recommendation provision independent of unit coordinator and HoS.
- Document a clear set of guidelines for the assessment of seriousness of instances of breaches of academic integrity with a scaled set of responses or penalties. (Section 5, Matrix, Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity, Griffith University; Section 7, Academic Integrity Policy, Torrens University Australia; Plagiarism Reference Tariff (Tennant & Rowell, 2010)
- Determine a set of penalties that can be consistently applied across the University.

10. References


CSU. (2011). How to minimise plagiarism in your students’ work... in 5 steps. In C. S. University (Ed.): Charles Sturt University.


