

## The student voice: What do we know about students' perspective of Academic Integrity?

*Clare Johnson & Mike Reddy*  
*University of South Wales, UK*

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**Section:** Misconduct and challenges in higher education

**Abstract:**

This paper is a review of existing research and resources into academic integrity and plagiarism, to establish to what degree the student voice is being heard. The growing problem of 'contract cheating', 'academic outsourcing' or 'ghost writing' can be very difficult to detect, yet it threatens the very essence of educational integrity. Whilst detection and fair penalties are important, it would be more effective to tackle the root cause by understanding student attitudes. To this end, a search was carried out to explore where evidence of the student voice has been heard within surveys, research papers and other sources discussing Academic Integrity, Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct. Relevant surveys were categorised by number and type of respondent, format (qualitative, quantitative, open, closed, free text, tick boxes) and purpose of questions (understanding of academic integrity, confessions of cheating, awareness of policy), and a review of the author's summary. Next, a review of written papers / guidelines was performed and themes drawn out. Some papers discussed student perspectives but did not refer directly to conversations or forums with students themselves. Finally, social media sources were assessed to establish how much student centred content there is. Reports on events through this medium suggest some direct interaction with students, but this is not comprehensively documented. Findings suggest that there is a reasonable amount of discussion around what constitutes academic misconduct and why students might engage in this behaviour, albeit through the lens of the Academic. There are wide scale quantitative surveys which ask for students' 'confessions' of misconduct. However, there is very limited qualitative data and discussion directly with students about their understanding of academic integrity, reasons for 'cheating' and the value they give their degree. Capturing the student voice is critical for us to determine how institutions can address the issues of academic misconduct. Therefore, there needs to be a series of discussions with students themselves about what would make them less likely to engage in cheating behaviours, how they suggest academic integrity could be better taught in universities, and what support they really need if we are to eliminate this behaviour altogether.

**Keywords:** Contract cheating, focus group, plagiarism, student perspective, student voice.