USING A STRUCTURED AND ROBUST METHOD OF ENQUIRY IN THE INVESTIGATION OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

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Abstract: The use of comparison software in the prevention and detection of academic misconduct is a valuable tool but it only goes so far in being able to confidently make a formal finding of dishonesty or cheating. As institutions of learning we have a two-fold responsibility: we must ensure all those moving through our institutions are adequately educated and trained in the techniques needed to perform academic roles in whichever field we work in, and secondly we have to protect the authenticity and trustworthiness of our research findings. A high similarity index on its own is not necessarily conclusive evidence of academic misconduct. Within the whole investigative process, there needs to be human judgement brought to bear on the allegation and further information needs to be acquired. An allegation of plagiarism or other academic misconduct is a serious charge to make, the stakes are high so, we; as those charged with investigating such allegations, must ensure that our methods are fair yet robust. It is of immense benefit to our institutions, for both pedagogic and reputational reasons, for us to be able to distinguish between those who simply need more guidance and training on how to reference, review and research, and those who are culpable of deliberately passing off the work of others or false results.

As misconduct investigators, we need to ensure our methods are fair, robust, transparent and audit-able. The interview methods introduced in this workshop have been shown to elicit better quality information about the circumstances under investigation (Memon and Bull (1991)) and to reduce the likelihood of false confession to serious offences (Gudjonsson 2003). This workshop is based on the PEACE interview model currently used in all criminal Justice interviews in England and Wales. This is a flexible way of ensuring we meet our objectives of being fair yet robust in or enquiries. The PEACE model was developed in the early 1990s as a response to criticism of the police interview methods of the time, the PEACE approach was based on best practice derived from communication, memory and conversation-management research. This model is very different from the common representation of interview, or interrogation, one might see on TV. This is a fact-finding process where the objective is to discover what has occurred, rather than to confirm any suspicion of guilt from the outset. Our objective is to identify the innocent mistake and address those needs, and to provide any information pertaining to guilt to our respective decision makers or committees. In this 90 minute workshop we will focus on the benefits of a structured, objective-driven interview methodology. We will consider the benefits of incorporating such a process into the misconduct investigation policy and practice how to develop a sound investigative interview approach to allegations of academic misconduct. Our aim is to highlight best practice and apply it to academic conduct interviews. Some of the issues we will consider are, planning and preparation for the interview, questioning and question types, question strategies and Interview objectives. During the workshop, delegates will be guided through a number of activities designed to draw into focus the benefits of conducting investigative interviews with people accused of committing academic misconduct. There will be ample time for questions and discussion of current, specific interview issues. Chris Haycock has over 20 years of interview experience and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, a Senior Lecturer and Course Director at Coventry University and a Faculty Academic Conduct

Officer. He teaches investigative interviewing at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Chris graduated with an honours degree in Law before training as a Barrister at the Inns of Court School of Law in London. He spent 11 years as a Police Officer in the UK, conducting innumerable investigative interviews, and his last role before leaving the Police was as a National Law and General Duties Trainer where he trained police officers, inter alia, in the art of investigative interviewing. Chris is currently working on a project to deliver better interview training both within and beyond the UK criminal justice system.

References

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