

What are students doing and how to find it?

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This aim of this workshop is to present, discuss and examine some of the ways academic integrity breaches in written assessment tasks can be identified, including and beyond text matching algorithms such as Turnitin®, and provide participants with ways of recording potential breaches of academic integrity for follow up and assessment.

Evidence of the types of breaches identified and explanations pointing to how they were identified, will be presented. The examples are based on studies of actual cases of contract cheating, which led to a categorisation of various types of markers or clues that can assist with detection. Understanding how the various clues and markers can be identified has been shown in internal institutional workshops, to improve levels of detection as individuals grading assessments have a clearer idea of what they are actually looking for (citation blinded for peer review; Dawson & Sutherland-Smith, 2018).

After presenting some of the observations, workshop participants will then have the opportunity to apply some of the methods and observations to samples of contract cheating papers. In addition, a method of simply recording observations complements the examination of samples while making information capture more efficient can be trialled. Explanations for how the simple documentation can assist in calibrating findings across a class or student cohort to identify teaching and form the basis of a document to initiate a discussion with a student.

The aim of the workshop is to improve understanding of how to identify potential instances of contract cheating, beyond a text-matching score by observing markers and patterns, while providing participants with practical ways of recording findings and preparing for exploratory discussions with students.

Identifying Irregularities

The patterns and clues found in cases of contract cheating that assist with the identification of cases are ‘irregularities’ that differentiate this work from the norms of a subject, course or discipline (*Citation Blinded for review*). Observing irregularities in submissions should prompt the reader/grader to ‘dig a little deeper’. Methods of identifying how to source the basis of irregularities are modelled, with some examples available for workshop participants to explore how it applies in a practical way. While some instances of contract cheating can mirror poorly developed academic skills (Bretag et al., 2014), the key approach when

grading is to identify what is normal within a subject, course or discipline versus what is not.

Types of Irregularities

The workshop will present and discuss a range of different types of irregularities identified in written submissions and provide participants the ability to test documenting methods of identifying contract cheating in written submissions (*Citation Blinded for review*). Examples of the patterns and clues observed and validated are presented as reference points for participants to explore how they appear in assessment tasks.

Recording irregularities for calibration and conversations

An easy method of recording observations during the grading process will also be presented to participants, in order to demonstrate an efficient way of capturing the patterns and clues while marking (*Citation Blinded for review*). The form can then be used to calibrate results across classes or cohorts to identify patterns that may reveal issues that require further discussion to address misconceptions, or identify things that can improve further instances of a subject or influence the redesign of particular assessment tasks or support materials. A practical exercise using the method, will form part of the workshop so participants can practice what is being presented and discussed.

Using what you find to conduct conversations with students

The workshop goes on to outline ways of conducting conversations with students to explore the irregularities so that cases of academic misconduct can be distinguished from cases of under developed academic skills. The approaches can vary depending upon the irregularities found and the responses of the student, but at all times conversations should maintain the principles of fairness in due processes under institutional policy guidelines. Regardless of what outcome is determined, conversations exploring why the irregularities are present in the written work submitted for assessment, are unique opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of academic misconduct, and the struggles some of our students face when balancing education with real life. Conversations with students where academic integrity issues are evident also provide further opportunities for teachable moments (Bertram Gallant, 2017) setting students on a path to succeed in their studies or refer students to academic or personal support services.

Outcomes

Reporting evidence has demonstrated that understanding how to identify irregularities in written submissions improves the rate of detection of potential breaches of academic integrity including contract cheating instances (*Citation Blinded for review*). By building skills in detection while providing an efficient and practical way of recording potential breaches for further follow up improves confidence in having one way of capturing contract

cheating instances as and when they occur.

References

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