DEVELOPING A CENTRALISED ONLINE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY BREACHES AT AN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY

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Academic integrity continues to be an important priority for higher education institutions. However, one perennial challenge for is the extent to which universities successfully implement rules, polices, and procedures that are adequately resourced to support it on an operational level. In mid-2019 Edith Cowan University (ECU), a mid-sized Australian university with approximately 30,000 enrolled students, implemented a revised set of policies closely aligned to requirements set out by the Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). These policies introduced the centralised management of academic integrity breaches to the Centre for Learning and Teaching. To support the day-to-day operational workflow, an online academic integrity management system was built in-house, using Microsoft 365® Apps. Designed around the documented steps of managing an academic integrity breach, the system was built to include embedded staff guidance at each step. The introduction of an additional online dashboard also provides additional operational support for the timely management of the breach caseload and ease of sourcing reportable data. In other words, it has served as a 'a one-stop-shop' for qualitative and quantitative data collection that meets ECU's robust internal and external reporting requirements. This includes the tracking of the caseload by severity and outcomes applied. Overall, the aim of developing such a system was to ensure a consistent and transparent approach when enacting university policies and procedures.

In preparation for these policies and processes a scoping review of the literature (along with a benchmarking project) was conducted, which identified challenges in implementing processes that were adequately resourced to support day-to-day operations.

For example, a recent multi-institutional study into contract cheating concluded that in an Australian context, most staff view institutional factors as important for supporting academic integrity but that some processes were failing to engage and inform staff about the management and outcomes of academic integrity breaches (Harper et al., 2019). In addition, a study by Walker and White (2014) reported that the high probability of an outcome of an academic breach being overturned by appeal also undermined staff faith in academic integrity processes. This highlighted the need for a robust online system that captured all relevant case information and could produce appropriate reports at an individual as well as institutional level.

ECU's online system has been operational for 18 months and continues to evolve to meet the ongoing operational needs of the University, such as an unexpectedly large increase in case submissions during 2020 (approximately 50%). At least in part, this is credited to an increase in staff engagement, as they have been provided with clarity in their roles within the process and see consistency in the outcomes applied. This is achieved by breaking the case management process into six distinct steps. Each step includes clear guidance on the action required. It also aims to ensure all recorded information is captured, and in so doing, improves the experience for users and reduces the likelihood of student appeals. In 2020, for instance, there was a noticeable increase in the number of academic integrity investigations; largely due to the impact of COVID-19 on students and respective teaching arrangements. Despite that increase, the number of variation of outcomes applied and total number of appeals significantly reduced. Consistency in the qualitative and quantitative data

collected within the system has resulted in an improvement in annual reporting, with an ability to integrate data with other university systems for trend analysis. In the future, this will provide opportunities to enhance teaching quality and drive improved academic integrity support for staff and students.

This presentation will explore the steps ECU took in 2019 when implementing its revised set of policies and procedures. It will also explore critical data insights, the features of ECU's online case management system, and how it supports academic integrity at the institution. Key discussion points will include how:

- Research findings and benchmarking process provided a starting point and the decision to centralise oversight of the rules, policy, and procedures;

- Staff at all entry and exit points of the academic misconduct process are supported and informed of case decisions and outcomes to be applied;

- Use of the dashboard has improved staff engagement and promoted the use regular ongoing reporting at all levels;

- A consistent and transparent approach has helped build student awareness of the importance of academic integrity.

Through showcasing how one Australian university integrated the findings of a scoping review of the literature and a benchmarking exercise to develop an online academic integrity management system, it is hoped that it will provide a blueprint for other institutions to adopt when enacting revised academic integrity policies or processes.

REFERENCES

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