

# PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING A CULTURE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIRTY YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH (1991–2021)

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There is no doubt that maintaining and promoting academic integrity in institutions of higher education is a crucial process and even more so in the current COVID-19 environment where some universities rushed to adopt online learning technologies to deliver their courses. Further, the threat from contract cheating sites makes the pursuit of academic integrity even more challenging for students, academics and institutions alike. In Australia, cuts to our universities, their staff and research means that we are operating with less of everything to maintain the requisite standards of quality and integrity.

This paper presents a systematic review of the literature on academic integrity in Australia from 1991 to 2021. It will summarise the key findings from studies undertaken by researchers in this region over the past three decades. This paper will show that in the 1990s, little was known about academic integrity in the region as evidenced by a lack of studies on plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic misconduct in Australia as compared to other countries like the US, UK and Europe where many researchers had been investigating the issue for many years (eg. McCabe and Trevino, 1995, 1993). However, in the 2000s, many studies on academic integrity began to be published by Australian researchers such as the well-known Tracey Bretag and her colleagues (2018a, 2016, 2011) and others who were also interested in this area of research (eg. Sutherland Smith, 2008; McGowan, 2005). The increase in such studies was probably due to funding of academic integrity projects by the Australian government which, sadly, has been

substantially reduced. Despite a lack of resources, studies continue through to the present day with research on, for example, students' and academics' perceptions and responses to academic misconduct (AUTHORS, 2020; Harper et al., 2018b), the role of emotions (Prentice, 2018; Curtis and Clare, 2017), and the use of assessment practices to reduce incidences of academic misconduct (Dawson, 2020; Rogerson, 2017) being added to the literature.

Findings from these studies will be presented. These suggest that students, academics and higher education institutions need to stay up to date with current knowledge and practices and remain vigilant when it comes to maintaining and promoting academic integrity.

Strategies and recommendations that have resulted from thirty years of Australian studies on academic integrity will also be outlined. These strategies include developing academic integrity modules for both students and staff to gain a better understanding of the issue, utilising educative rather than punitive approaches to academic misconduct, revisiting assessment tasks to ensure academic integrity and having exemplary academic integrity policies and procedures in place. In addition, the introduction of contract cheating legislation in Australia will be mentioned as another strategy that could be effective.

The paper will end with a call for continued work to be done in the field to convince everyone of the importance of promoting and maintaining a culture of academic integrity in higher education, and more so in our post-pandemic world.

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