

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STRATEGIES – STUDENT INSIGHTS

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Keywords

Academic integrity; contract cheating; student success; student attitudes; student surveys

Abstract

Our presentation will report some key findings from our LITE Fellowship research project – namely two student surveys undertaken in 2020 and 2021.

The surveys were inspired by the Bretag and Harper (2018) student survey undertaken in Australia. We adapted the questions to our context – a Russell Group university in the UK – but included similar questions to enable a comparison and find out if there were common themes. The main aim of the surveys was to understand our students' awareness of what is meant by the term 'academic integrity' (AI). The responses provided an important insight into student (UG/PG) attitudes to academic integrity, their understanding of academic malpractice, and their awareness of the penalties for being found to have plagiarized, and found guilty of contract cheating (Medway et al, 2018; Morris 218; Harper et al, 2019).

The 2020 survey had over 200 responses from students in seven of the eight faculties, from all years of study and including home, EU and international students. Having established the broad picture from an initial analysis, we were able to analyse the findings in more depth and identify trends (especially during the Covid pandemic) according to specific faculties and schools. We then cross-referenced the responses according to gender, undergraduate or postgraduate, year of study, home/EU/international status, and first language. The results were then shared with individual schools and presented a useful snapshot of students' current understanding,

current practice and potential room for improvement. Key findings included the need to use student-friendly language in policies; a desire for greater opportunity to talk about AI, more resources and better guidance; students' lack of awareness of essay mills and the threat posed by these 'services'; broad agreement on the importance of academic integrity but confusion regarding group work and the point at which this can become collusion. The December 2021 survey obtained nearly 500 responses from all eight faculties. Initial findings have enabled us to draw parallels with the 2020 findings. We have been able to identify improvements that have been made and areas which require further work. A more in-depth analysis of the survey is continuing to take place. We aim to complete this work by the May conference where we will present all our findings.

The findings informed our recommendations in terms of teaching and learning at School/Faculty level and to policy at University level, to further support student success. With this in mind, we have been working very closely with various stakeholders, including our student Academic Integrity champions. Our paper will also discuss the initial perspectives of our AI champions and their contributions to our project. We are currently undertaking a staff survey and this will provide an insight into the support provided by teaching staff in helping students understand the requirements and whether this matches what students say about their experience. It will also indicate staff perceptions of students'

understanding of this area. Obviously, this is still work in progress, but the resultant findings will inform our conference paper. We will seek to identify the impact of Covid on student behaviour (Easton, 2020; Reedy et al, 2021). In the context of the key issues raised by the QAA Academic Integrity Charter (2020), we will

discuss examples of best practice currently undertaken at the University of Leeds, on-going discussions regarding developments, and our recommendations for further embedding a culture of academic integrity.

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