

# STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN UPHOLDING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: STUDENT BOARDS AS PRAXIS

Özgür Çelik<sup>1</sup>, Temel Serdar Yılmaz<sup>1</sup>, Nalan Erçin<sup>1</sup>, Burcu Özge Razi<sup>1</sup>, Senem Çente Akkan<sup>1</sup>, İrem Saka<sup>1</sup>, Emre Uygun<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey

## Keywords

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## Abstract

On the grounds of the prerequisites of the research, it can be stated that academic integrity is *sine qua non* element. While the community of a handful of educators and students is one of the smallest parts of academic integrity, bringing it to the size of an institution would be a big step towards maximising it. That, creating a culture of academic integrity, not only adds a formal dimension but also increases the quality of academic studies, establishes a strong chain of honesty among stakeholders, and ensures that all stakeholders are responsible for each link of this chain (Razi, 2020). Thus, one of the most important objectives of academic institutions is to raise awareness and a sense of responsibility that all stakeholders are interconnectedly part of the academic honesty chain, which requires a commitment on an institutional basis.

Although academic integrity is substantially reflected as merely concerned with the misconduct of students, it has several dimensions and, consequently, stakeholders, which respectively are internal, organisational, institutional, and societal (Gallant, 2008). Starting from the basis as a surface definition, the individuals, including actors of academic

integrity like students, teachers, and researchers, lay the foundation of other dimensions since actors constitute organisations which, then, become parts of broader contexts like institutions; then, the institutions shape the social contexts which have expectations from individuals forming organisations and institutions (Gallant, 2008). From this perspective, it is evident that all stakeholders, namely managers, teachers and students, are of critical significance as they are interconnected, and unless any of them act with integrity, all stakeholders would be negatively affected. As one of the core stakeholders of academic institutions, students have a critical role in upholding academic integrity across institutions.

The so-called ambassadors of academic integrity are primarily students. Traditionally, students' role is confined to not violating academic integrity and presenting original work. However, students are at the very centre of upholding academic integrity. As John et al. (2021) stated, "students play an important role in helping build a culture of academic integrity and are the primary initiators for any activity, campaign or dialogue" (para. 5). Students not only can raise

awareness of other students about academic integrity through various activities but also can contribute significantly to the formation of a culture of academic integrity. From this standpoint, we can mention certain roles and responsibilities of students as the ambassadors of academic integrity, such as acting proactively to prevent academic misconduct, encouraging and motivating their peers to follow the premises of academic integrity, and internalising the fundamental values of academic integrity in every moment of their academic life, which are honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage (ICAI, 2021).

For a long time, academic integrity scholars have been putting tremendous efforts to uphold and underline the significance of academic integrity by publishing seminal papers. These works contribute much to the body of knowledge and pioneer a collective understanding of academic integrity. Nevertheless, publication may not be enough to generate the desired impact (Green, 2019). Scholarly works may fall short in reaching students. Academic integrity student boards act as a bridge between scholars and students in terms of exploiting the impact of research outcomes to the fullest. The members of student boards are composed of students who have background knowledge about academic integrity, and at the same time, they are well-informed about the dynamics of student mindsets to which scholars have little access. Therefore, student boards are essential in the effective implementation of academic integrity across the institutions, which is in harmony with Bretag and Mahmud's (2016) claim that students should act as academic integrity champions in such student-led bodies to support the development of policies and mentoring of others. Such organisations, thanks to their organic relationship and close contact with students, can be considerably effective in gathering genuine information about their most urgent learning needs to produce academic works with integrity and reasons for their accidental or intentional academic integrity breaches. Consequently, this kind of data can be

used to create appropriate and context-sensitive preventive steps like training modules, workshops, or institution-wide educative campaigns.

From this standpoint, the Centre for Academic Integrity (CAI) of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey, gives due importance to student involvement in creating a culture of academic integrity. CAI student board was established with seven members (3 PhD, 3 MA, and 1 BA student). All members are studying academic integrity in their theses. The student board primarily collaborates and cooperates with the CAI board. The main activities of the board have been the production and dissemination of educative content for social media (e.g., A Visual Guide to APA7), announcement of currently available webinars or instructional materials for students and conducting research and participating conferences on Academic Integrity to test and widen our knowledge of the field. The board also aims, as future initiatives, to create and present an online interactive module, organise workshops and webinars, and run AI-themed poster, essay, or video competitions. To this end, the student board regularly meets once a month to discuss the topics and issues on the agenda, set new goals, and share tasks. All the members of the board also collaborate online through project management software to accomplish the pre-set objectives. In line with the aforementioned objectives and the crucial role of students as ambassadors, through such activities, the board aims to create opportunities for its members to take active roles and responsibilities in improving their own knowledge and helping others gain awareness in academic integrity rather than staying as passive recipients of the theoretical information generated by academic integrity researchers. Thereby, furthermore, "praxis" is to be established where theory and practice develop in a symbiotic relationship (Freire, 1974; Hawkins & Norton, 2009). In this presentation, we, as the CAI Student Board, aim to share our experiences, activities and approaches to

uphold academic integrity in our context. Additionally, our sincerest desire is to call for

global collaboration and cooperation with other academic integrity student boards.

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