

### APPROACHES TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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#### Abstract

Academic misconduct has been drawn around multiple and complex facets, such as psychological, motivational, situational, social, and cultural (Whitley, 1998). Simultaneously, societal changes due to globalisation, technological progress, or the recent pandemic crisis, pose new, additional, and continuously changing challenges to academic integrity researchers (Dinis-Oliveira, 2020; Draper et al., 2021). Quantitative surveys have been extensively used to measure academic integrity attitudes and self-reported behaviour of respondents (e.g., students, academics, or

stakeholders) (Amigud & Pell, 2020; Bretag et al., 2019; Curtis & Tremayne, 2021; McCabe, 2016). However, a qualitative approach, with its holistic, “detailed, flexible, sensitive and naturalistic characteristics” (Payne & Payne, 2004, p. 176) and ability to adaptively respond to evolving circumstances, can provide unique insights into the context of academic integrity, the meanings people attach to their actions and relationships between behaviour and meaning (Payne & Payne, 2004). According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research benefits from various data collection methods that are usually

applied in a natural setting where the researcher acts as a data collection instrument; therefore, Creswell considers such a design as holistic with regards to the researcher's reflective role. It has also been argued that qualitative research approaches are particularly suitable to study complex and sensitive phenomena (e.g., Tillmar, 2012; Möllering, 2006).

Thus, a qualitative approach could be applied in the context of academic integrity research to better understand students, academics, or corporate perceptions of ethics and/or ethical behaviour, integrity, or misconduct, to study motives behind their choices in sensitive situations or situations that pose an ethical dilemma, to explore participants' perspectives on academic integrity policies or to gain unexpected insights in many other aspects.

During the workshop, we shall attempt to explore both the advantages that a qualitative approach can bring to researching academic integrity as well as solutions to resolve challenges that can arise from qualitative methods. As the scope of this discussion could be extensive, we will limit the workshop to three questions:

1. What qualitative data collection methods have participants used (or would consider using) in their academic integrity research and why?
2. How can sampling be managed in qualitative research on academic integrity?
3. How can the quality of qualitative research on academic integrity be evaluated?

The workshop organisers will encourage participants to share their ideas and experiences about using innovative or less common but potentially beneficial approaches to qualitative data collection. Moving beyond the more traditional qualitative methods employed in academic integrity research (e.g., interviews or focus group discussions), for example, visual analysis of mind maps was recently applied by Janczukowicz & Rees (2017) as an innovative

approach to collect data exploring understanding of and relationships between academic and professional integrity concepts among medical students.

When it comes to sampling, qualitative research uses non-representative, small samples as it focuses on "the specific, and its meanings, not explaining wider processes" (Payne & Payne, 2004, p. 209-210). 'Who' is selected goes hand-in-hand with 'what is discovered'; research participants are purposively selected based on their interest and suitability, the cases have to be information-rich and thus statistical randomness usually does not apply to qualitative sampling (Hennink et al., 2011; Patton, 2002; Payne & Payne, 2004). During the workshop, we will discuss how sampling decisions unfold in the design of academic integrity research, whether researchers face any specific challenges and, if so, what solutions they have applied or can suggest.

Evaluation of validity and reliability are essential for all types of research methods, but evaluating qualitative research requires a different approach to quantitative. Creswell (2014) relates qualitative validity with the accuracy of the results and qualitative reliability with the consistency of the researcher's approach. Flick (2007a; 2007b) proposes quality assurance principles which, according to him, should accompany the qualitative research process, from planning (e.g., principles of adequacy, openness for diversity) and implementation (e.g., a balance between rigour *and* creativity, consistency *and* flexibility) to dissemination (e.g., transparency, feedback). During the workshop, we will encourage participants to share how they approach quality assessment in qualitative academic integrity research or if there are any specific challenges arising from it.

The workshop organisers will explore all these aspects with workshop participants to co-create a roadmap for qualitative research in academic integrity. The purpose of the roadmap will be to support researchers when they are planning and conducting different designs for qualitative research. Co-creation has been shown as a productive approach to collaborative development of innovative tools and has been

used as a method in exploring different areas including tackling “super-wicked problems” such as climate change (Mauser et al., 2013; Wibeck et al., 2022), but also as a usable approach in higher education pedagogy (Iversen & Pedersen, 2017) including ethics education (Bombaerts et al., 2021). Co-creation workshops support identification of challenges within a particular field and can help participants to create new knowledge.

The workshop will include:

1. A short introduction about the potential of adopting a qualitative approach and data collection methods in academic integrity research.
2. Group discussions: We plan to divide the participants into 3 subgroups. Each subgroup will be dedicated to one question (as stated above). Also, adjusting to the hybrid mode of the conference, the groups will be split by mode of participation - remote or face-to-face.

3. Plenary discussion: Each group will present key points of their discussion. Overall conclusions will be drawn as well as highlights for future research.

With the informed consent of workshop participants, we will take notes of both group discussions and plenary discussions, taking care to ensure the anonymity of participants. These notes will be further incorporated into a post-conference publication reviewing the application of qualitative approaches to academic integrity research.

The co-creative nature of the workshop presumes mutually beneficial exchange between workshop organisers and workshop participants: a pre-workshop handout will be distributed to participants with an initial idea for a roadmap for application of qualitative research, leaving space for notes arising from the workshop; the workshop organisers will gain new insights stemming from workshop participants on application of qualitative approach in academic integrity context.

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