

A photograph of a mangrove forest with dense, tangled roots and green foliage. The image is used as a background for the presentation slide.

Exemplary Academic Integrity Project: Lessons for Australia, Europe and Beyond

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Fundamental values of academic integrity

“Academic integrity is a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: **honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.** From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action”.

(Fundamental Values Project 1999, ICAI)



My research focus since 2002

2002 Doctoral research: experience with student plagiarism **2002-2004**

- International EAL students and academic literacies
- Impact of commercialisation of higher education

2005-2008

- Academics' self-plagiarism and fraudulent publishing practices
- How to identify various forms of plagiarism

2008-2009

- Institutional responses to plagiarism and other breaches
- Academic integrity breach decision-making

2010-2012

- Aligning policy and practice in higher education
- Understandings of academic integrity

2012-2013

- Embedding best practice for identified student groups
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Some recent projects

- **2003** 1st Asia Pacific Conference on Educational Integrity, Adelaide, South Australia.
 - (6APCEI in October 2013, Macquarie University, Sydney NSW)
 - **2003** Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity.
 - **2005** *International Journal for Educational Integrity*.
 - **2010** OLT Project, *Academic integrity standards: Aligning policy and practice in Australian Universities*.
 - **2012** OLT Project, *Extending and embedding exemplary academic integrity policy and support frameworks across the higher education sector*.
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Academic Integrity Standards Project*

- Analyse Australian academic integrity policies
- Student survey
- Interview senior managers
- Focus groups with students and staff
- Foster a culture of academic integrity

*Lead institution: University of South Australia
Project partners: University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia, La Trobe University,
University of Newcastle, University of Wollongong.
Project website: www.aisp.apfei.edu.au



Academic
Integrity
Standards
Project
2010-2012



Policy analysis: Key findings

- Changing focus from misconduct (51% of policies) to integrity and education (41%). 28% mixed focus.
- 10% policies concerned with risk management.
- Students still considered to be responsible for AI (institution mentioned in only 39% of policies).
- Most policies (56%) lacked sufficient detail about breaches and outcomes.
- Most policies (56%) made no mention of confidentiality.

5 core elements of exemplary policy



No element privileged over another

Elements interconnected

Strength of the knot

Overarching commitment to academic integrity lies at the heart of an exemplary academic integrity policy



5 core elements of exemplary policy

- Access: Easy to locate, read, concise, comprehensible.
- Approach: Statement of purpose with educative focus up- front and all through policy.
- Responsibility: Details responsibilities for ALL stakeholders.
- Detail: Extensive but not excessive description of breaches, outcomes and processes.
- Support: Proactive and embedded systems to enable implementation of the policy.

A vertical photograph on the left side of the slide showing the complex, exposed root system of a mangrove tree. The roots are a reddish-brown color and are surrounded by green foliage.

Student survey: Key findings

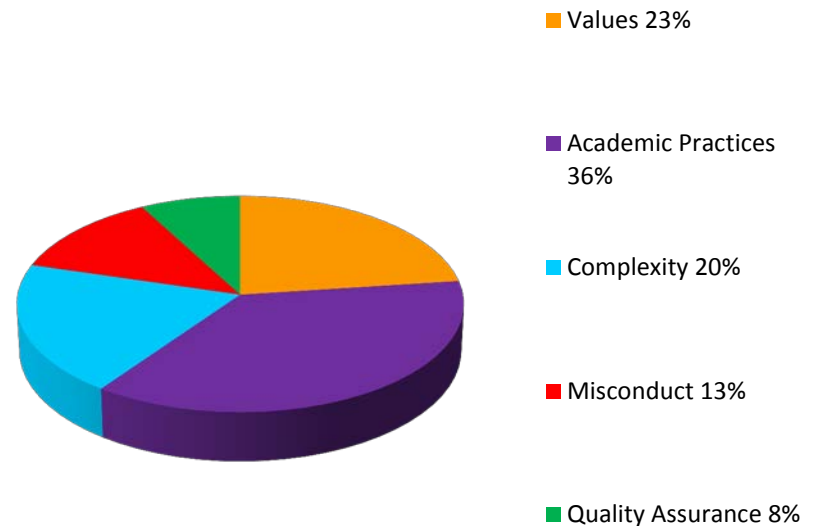
1. Majority reported a **good understanding** of academic integrity and AI policy and were satisfied with support and training.
2. A disproportionate percentage felt **confident** about avoiding an AI breach.
3. **International students** expressed lower understanding of AI and lower confidence in how to avoid a breach.
4. **Postgraduate research students** were the least satisfied with the information they had received.
5. Small group (4.4%) of **educationally 'less prepared'** students had never heard of academic integrity.

Foundation concepts: Understandings of academic integrity

Academic integrity is:

1. grounded in action;
2. underpinned by values;
3. multifaceted and applicable to multiple stakeholders;
4. understood by many in terms of what is *not* (misconduct); and
5. important as a means of assuring the quality and credibility of the educational process.

Understandings of Academic Integrity





Definition of academic integrity

Academic integrity encompasses a number of **values and ideals that should be upheld** in an academic institution. Within the academy there is a fundamental obligation to exercise **integrity, which includes honesty, trustworthiness and respect**. Within an academic structure those **values** must be evident in the **research as well as the teaching and learning activities of the institution**. Academic integrity involves ensuring that in **research, and in teaching and learning, both staff and students** act in an **honest** way, that they're **open and accountable** for their actions, and that they exhibit **fairness and transparency** when they're dealing with **people or with research**. Furthermore, it is important that **staff members at all levels** be role models and **demonstrate integrity as an example to students** who will progress through the **education system and then transition into professional life**. Academic integrity impacts on **students and staff in these core activities**, and is **fundamental to the reputation and standing of an organisation** and its members. (Law Academic, University A)



Where to next?

Aims of the Exemplary Academic Integrity Project (EAIP)

1. Extend and embed the '5 core elements' of exemplary AI policy across the higher education sector.
2. Develop resources accessible to both public and private higher education providers.
3. Develop support systems for International English as an Additional Language (EAL) students.
4. Develop support systems for 'educationally less prepared' students.
5. Extend lessons about policy and support to postgraduate research students.

Exemplary Academic Integrity Project

Where are we up to?

1. Roundtable with key stakeholders
 - *What actually happens in practice?*
 - Best practice framework
2. National Speaking Tour
3. Postgrad Research policy analysis
4. Resources for student groups
5. Online academic integrity tool





National speaking tour

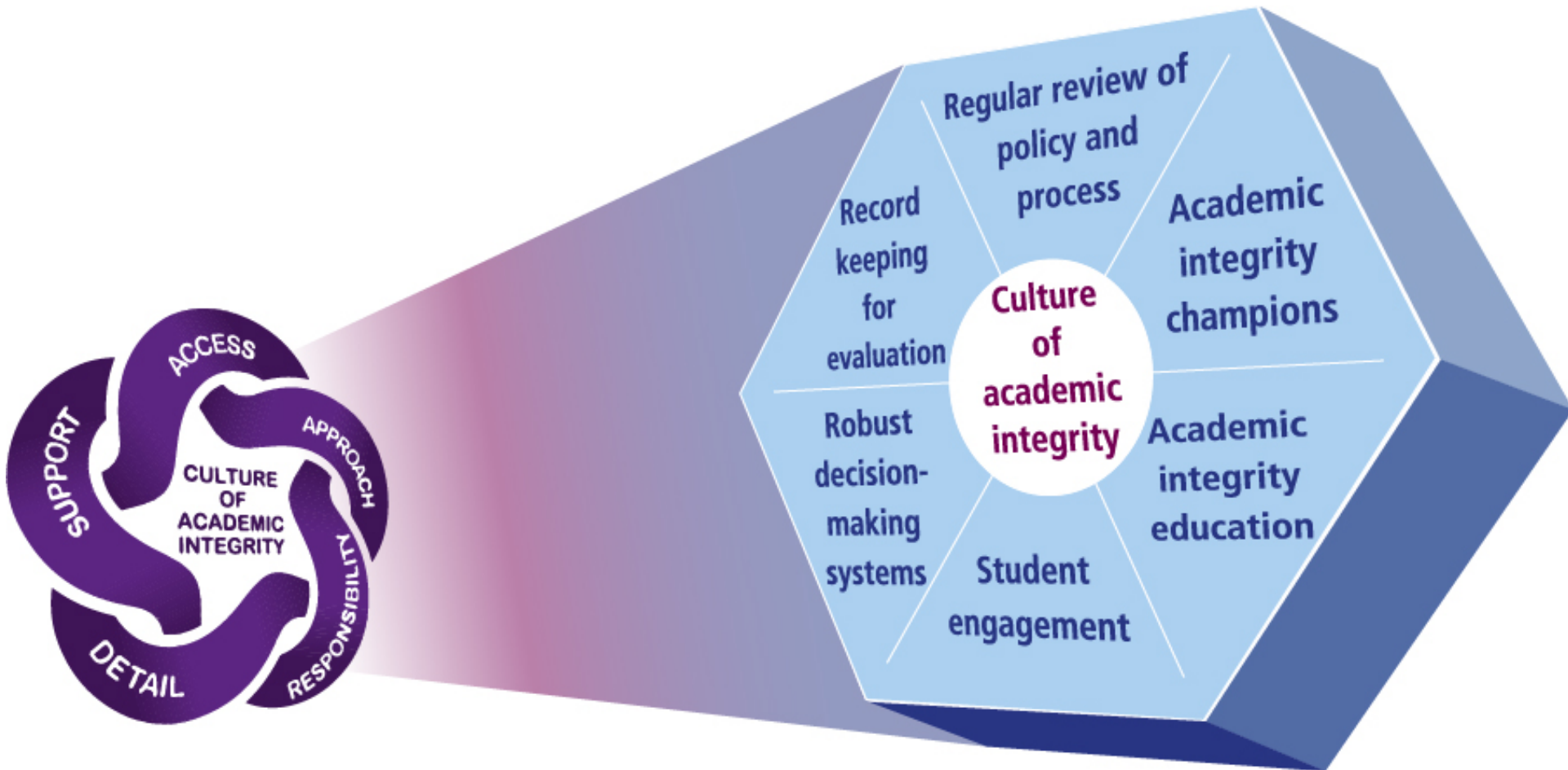
- Representatives from five universities identified as having exemplary policies made presentations at the Roundtable.
 - Transcripts from presentations analysed.
 - Findings immediately shared with both public and private HE providers across 5 states in Australia.
 - Recommendations for good practice echo work by East (2009), East & McGowan (2012), Morris (2011), ICAI.
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Building a culture of integrity

*“... a **strong policy** is of course an essential part of creating a culture of academic integrity, but I’m not so sure what comes first, **whether the culture generates the strong policy or the strong policy generates the culture**, but never the less it’s absolutely essential. But it’s not enough; it’s not enough to create that culture. You need to have the **supporting processes**, particularly for staff in order to have a truly effective alignment of policy and practice - both to establish and to maintain a rigorous culture of academic integrity.”* (transcript of Roundtable presentation, University B)

Framework for enacting exemplary academic integrity policy





Regular review of academic integrity policy and process

Exemplary policy is not enough. Policy requires constant revision based on an institutional commitment to academic integrity and feedback from:

- Breach data
- Academic integrity breach decision-makers
- Appeals committees
- Senior managers
- Teaching staff
- Students
- Policy-makers in other functional areas



Academic integrity champions

Data from all five institutions' presentations were coded under this theme. 'Academic integrity champions' were grouped as follows:

- From outside the academy: (eg the media, Government funding bodies, regulatory bodies.
- From management: (Academic Board, DVCs, Deans, Heads of School, Academic Services
- From staff: Professors, Program Directors, Course Coordinators, Academic Developers, Learning Advisors, Lecturers
- From students: undergraduate, postgraduate and research students



Academic integrity champions...

In some cases, individuals took a unique leadership role:

*“... one of the people from [my university] ...was really **the driving force** behind our policy development, so returning from that conference in 2003, [name] took it upon herself to develop a [name of university] policy on academic conduct.” (University B)*



Academic integrity education for all stakeholders

*“...academic integrity as our policy, started moving in the direction of educative and what are the roles and responsibilities of **students, staff, academics, professional [staff]** and what are we going to do about it to ensure that people don't get into that statute space [of misconduct].” (University D)*



Academic integrity education for all stakeholders

This finding corresponded with the AISP recommendation for *support*:

“Systems [should be] in place to enable implementation of the academic integrity policy including procedures, resources, modules, training, seminars, and professional development activities to facilitate staff and student awareness and understanding of policy.” (Bretag et al 2011, p. 4).



Student engagement

Data from 5/5 institutions coded under 'student engagement'.

- Importance of encouraging students to be *partners*, rather than passive recipients in academic integrity education.
- University of California, San Diego: *International Academic Integrity Matters Student Organization (IAIMSO)*.
- OLT funded academic integrity project Macquarie University, Australia.





Robust decision-making systems

- 5/5 universities recommended that there should be a person or persons with a 'designated academic integrity role'.
- 4/5 universities said they should be located *within the faculty*:

"...responsibility in our model sits with Academic Integrity Officers, [who are] academics within every school who have a portion of their workload allocated to academic integrity, following up breaches and applying the Uni's approach consistently and fairly. And it means that decision making responsibilities are given to people who are actually on the ground, working in the schools.
"(University C)



Recommendations for decision-making

- Clear, easy to follow **guidance** on the breach process
- Criteria to **differentiate** minor from major breaches and outcomes.
- **Links** to documents to aid decision-making.
- Guidance on how and when to access **breach data**.
- Standard document **templates** for every step of the academic integrity breach process
- **Professional development** for academic integrity breach decision-makers.



Record keeping and evaluation

Academic integrity breach data should be confidentially maintained, managed and analysed for the purpose of:

- process improvement
- quality assurance
- procedural fairness
- Transparency
- Improvement of teaching and learning.



Record keeping and evaluation

All five institutions emphasised the need for **centralised records**:

“We record all the levels so we actually even record the allegations, we record the findings, we record the appeals, so you actually have very rich data in regards to centrally in the university”. (University D)



Record keeping and evaluation

How do we *know* that what we are doing is having an impact on the culture of integrity in our institutions?

- How can we assess and evaluate this?
- What do we currently do?
- What should we be doing?
- Are teaching staff engaged in the process, making reports, etc?
- Are all disciplines/faculties represented?
- What might prevent staff engagement?
- Are students engaged in the process?
- Benefits of peer-to-peer mentoring



Support and training for postgraduate research students

AISP survey finding: postgraduate research students least satisfied with information & support.

Suggestion for support:

“Actual examples of how students most commonly breach academic integrity would be great (especially for those incidents that happen accidentally) and the penalties for doing so would be useful. Examples of how to go about avoiding breaches would also be great.” (AISP survey student response)



Targeted support for EAL students

*“My concern is that students with ESL may have difficulty understanding the concept.... Other students have copied web based information too easily and many don't understand why it should be checked as a 'proper' source. There should also be **stronger support for ESL students** who already have difficulty with the language and don't often realise they're committing plagiarism when writing their essays....”(AISP survey student response)*



Fostering academic integrity in postgraduate research*

- Need for **consistent and educative approach** to integrity across the university, at all levels of scholarship and for all stakeholders.
- Postgraduate research students have unique role as both **students and research trainees**.
- **Web links** needed from main academic integrity policy to all research related policies/resources.
- Link postgraduate policy to detail on breaches and outcomes
- **Much more needed to meet the unique needs of postgraduate research students.**



EAIP deliverables

- Develop online academic integrity policy template
- Draft definition of academic integrity in plain English
- Collate academic integrity YouTube videos
- Identify good AI resources for postgraduate research students
- Develop case scenarios for use in postgrad training
- Develop a draft of postgrad academic integrity policy and practice guidelines for Deans & Directors of Graduate Studies

www.unisa.edu.au/EAIP



Concluding comments

- 20 years of academic integrity research in the U.S.; >10 years in Australasia.
 - Consistent recommendations on how to implement academic integrity policy from Europe, North America and Australia.
 - **New insights from AISP and EAIP**
 - Need to apply lessons about academic integrity to all areas of scholarship and research, and to all stakeholders.
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References

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