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Real-life example: Lesson about educating plagiarism deterrence to international students

See the attached presentation to see the complete example.

Date: 2019-07-08

## About this document

This document is a real-life example illustrating importance of the values of academic integrity in professional life. It was created as a part of *Toolkit for cross-sector cooperation in terms of academic integrity* within Erasmus+ project.

It is a ready-to-use case study accompanied with didactic notes and discussion questions and/or other tasks for the audience. Find more case studies in [ENAI database of educational materials](http://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/all-materials/?key-words%5b%5d=real-life-example).

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# Real-life example:Lesson about educating plagiarism deterrence to International students

# Basic information

* **Target audience A**: Academics, course leaders, plagiarism prevention officers, and Post-graduate students
	+ In the presentation the slides related to this audience are marked by icon
* **Target audience B**: Undergraduate students
	+ In the presentation the slides related to this audience are marked by icon
* **Summary**: Information about (innovative) form of assessment was not provided in an unambiguous and universally understandable form*.* It was misunderstood by an international student with a different cultural background.
* **Learning outcomes for audience A:**
	+ Think about formulating clear instruction about plagiarism deterrence considering students from different backgrounds, culture and countries.
	+ Take-away messages:
		- Rules and requirements should be stated clearly.
		- Be careful how you put into practice good ideas.
* **Learning outcome for audience B:**
	+ In an open-book test knowledge application (rather than copying notes) is required*.*
* **Length**: 45 minutes

# Material

* The attached presentation to be projected to the audience
* Last page of this document – the text of the story, as handouts for the audience

# Teaching methods

* Discussion over the presented case study.

# Didactic/teachers notes

# This real-life scenario where the lecturer is question has assumed that everyone should know about “open-book online test” and how to answer.

# He also assumed students would only take short notes to the open book test without realising the learning culture of some international students.

# Dr Das, on the other hand, trusted Dr Mario that he would only use applied questions which would minimise the chances of plagiarism.

# Fatima on the other hand, was not used to this new system of assessment.

# The lesson from this scenario: plagiarism deterrence activities should be unambiguous focussing international students.

# This scenario shows to the students and educators anti-plagiarism education should be clear avoiding information's that would give “double negative” connotations.

## Online open-book test

* This is considered as an innovative assessment methodology in which students are expected give answers to on-line questions.
* Each question is timed and students should answer that question within that allocated time.
* Students are allowed to take short notes to the test but the questions are usually formed in such a way an knowledge application (rather than copying notes) is needed
* In this case Prof Mario’s questions were not formulated as applied knowledge usage.

# The story

*The story is on the following separate page that can be used as hand-outs.*

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# Dr Mario Kassar

* An enthusiastic newly appointed lecturer, who was made to lead an MSc module in biomedical science.
* As an innovative lecturer, he has transformed the assessment from formal exam into online open book test

## Students taking Mario’s module

* The module is taken by a variety of students, 50% them are international students
	+ Mainly from Middle-Eastern, Western African and South-East Asian counties
* All students were made to attend a compulsory academic integrity workshop:
	+ **The workshop explored the different types of academic irregularities such as:**
		- Cheating in class, assignments and exams
		- Trying to bribe to achieve academic advantage
		- Misrepresenting facts, figures, data or individuals
		- Fabricating results, information or data
		- Conspiring to deceive in assignments and examinations
		- Colluding with another student(s) with the aim to cheat.
		- Duplicating one’s own submissions with the intention to cheat
		- Not abiding with IT services code of conduct
		- Improper use of online resources
		- **Plagiarism with or without intention (in detail)**

## Summary of Mario’s University regulations

Students are expected to:

* Present truthful and accurate data or facts and research information in academic assignments.
* Completing exams and other academic assignments in an honest way.
* Properly acknowledge extra help obtained from persons, books, articles and other sources, and avoid plagiarism by properly incorporating these sources

# Fatima Al-Zharanai

* An international student who is used to different form of academic writing and to traditional examination
* Obtained very high exit marks in all her undergraduate subjects.
* This is her first course outside her country.
* Attended the academic integrity workshop and clarified her doubts about plagiarism.

# Dr Das

# Dr Das is an academic integrity officer, his main roles include: plagiarism deterrence, educating students on academic integrity, handling alleged plagiarism offenses and recommending appropriate actions/penalties to academic offenses.

# He acts as an intermediary between students and academics to solve, integrity related matters. He has the authority instruct academics in matters relating to integrity.

# Fatima and the academic integrity officer

Fatima: “*Sir, I am bit confused about plagiarism practices under exam conditions.*”

Das: “Ok ask me your doubts, I will try to clear them as much as I can. By the way, you can call me Das.”

Fatima: *“Sir! Suppose I memorise a paragraph word-for-word and reproduce it under the formal exam condition – would it be considered as plagiarism.”*

Das: “Well although you are simply reproducing another person’s work, if it is under exam condition and you write them from your memory, it cannot be considered as plagiarism.

However, in actual fact you are plagiarising. Also, at MSc level, situation like these are rare because the questions are formulated for you to apply the knowledge rather than reproducing them.

Again, please call me Das, here no one is called sir!”

Fatima: “But *Sir, in my country I am used to memorise and reproduce without looking the original and we receive high marks for doing this for examination.”*

Das: “But that is considered as superficial learning. I do not think you would have similar expectation here.”

Fatima: *“Sir! I got another question – what is an open book test?”*

Das: “As I already told you, here we expect the students to apply their knowledge. So in some module exams, we allow the students to take their short notes to the exam hall, BUT expect them to use their notes and elaborate their answers. It is a form of applying knowledge

Fatima: *“So I can copy that notes? Am I right, Sir?”*

Das: “NO! Fatima, I do not think you can pass the test just by reproducing. You need to critically elaborate your short notes to suit the question.”

Fatima: *“Sir! I am still confused, so am I not allowed to use my short notes?”*

Das: “Well, yes you are allowed to use the short notes as long as they were written in your own words.”

Fatima: *“Thanks ever so much, Sir! You have been really helpful, Sir!
I asked the same questions to Dr Mario, Sir, but he said go to the library and learn!”*

Das: “Well he may be busy when you approached. Anyway, I am happy that you are now cleared your doubts.
But please stop calling us ‘Sirs’.”

Fatima: *“But Sir…I mean Das, it is embedded in our culture.”*

# Academic integrity officer Vs. Dr Mario

After this conversation Dr Das send an internal memo to Dr Mario explaining his conversation with Fatima and asking him to help her with preparing the open book test. Also instructed him to produce applied questions

Prof Mario sends a strong email back saying: “*That is not my job!*”

# After the open-book test

* Dr Mario detects several plagiarised answers in Fatima’s open-book answers!
* He decides to send to academic investigation which is carried out by Dr Das.
* Dr Das was amazed to see that most of Mario’s questions can be answered directly from books!
* Fatima was really upset and she wanted to have a private meeting with Dr Mario. Her request was ignored by Dr Mario.
* She then complained to her embassy as she has been racially targeted. The embassy has lodged an official complaint against Dr Mario.