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# Academic integrity is something we *do*:

Exploring understandings and practices  
of academic integrity

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.read (.brioso 2009)

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# Presentation snapshot

- Report on particular aspects of the *Academic Integrity Standards Project (AISP)* 2010-2012 relating to understandings and practices of academic integrity
  - Key lessons from **policy analysis**
  - **Interviews** with 28 senior **academic integrity stakeholders** at 6 six **Australian** universities: What is your understanding of the term ‘academic integrity?’
    - Issues for graduate research students
  - **Student survey** (n= 15,304): **statistical analysis** and random sample of qualitative responses from graduate research students



Academic  
Integrity  
Standards  
Project  
2010-2012

# AISP Project Partners



University of  
South Australia



THE UNIVERSITY  
of ADELAIDE



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE  
AUSTRALIA



**LA TROBE**  
UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF  
WOLLONGONG



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Academic  
Integrity  
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Project  
2010-2012

# AISP Project overview

- Aimed to:
  - Develop a shared understanding of academic integrity standards across the Australian higher education sector
  - Improve the alignment of academic integrity policies and their implementation
- Funded by the Australian Office for Learning and Teaching \$174,000, Dec 2010-2012
- Six Australian universities (UniSA as lead)

(Bretag et al 2010)



# Research questions

- Policies and procedures for academic integrity at the 39 universities
- Responses to academic integrity breaches
- Good practice in aligning policy with teaching and learning
- How to foster academic integrity culture

(Bretag et al 2010)



# Academic integrity policy analysis: Institutional perspectives

- 51% of the policies had ‘misconduct’ and ‘plagiarism’ as their key terms
- 41% had ‘academic integrity’ as a key term
- 28% had a mixed approach of *both* educative and punitive elements.
- Students mentioned as being responsible for AI in 95% of policies
- Staff mentioned in 80% of policies
- 39% of policies identified the institution as being responsible for academic integrity

(Bretag et al , 2011)



# Interviews:

## Individual perspectives

- 28 interviews conducted June - December 2011 at 6 partner universities
- Interviews of senior academic managers:
  - Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academic)
  - Deans: Teaching and Learning
  - Heads of School
  - Program Coordinators

# ‘Understandings of academic integrity’ themes

## 1. Academic practices

academic culture

research integrity

scholarship

academic freedom

acknowledgment

## 2. Values

respect

responsibility

equity

fairness

honesty

trust

authenticity

## 3. Complexity

multi-faceted

multi-stakeholder

## 4. Misconduct

Cheating

collusion

student misunderstanding

student plagiarism

## 5. Quality Assurance

academic standards

accountability

consistent practice

reputation

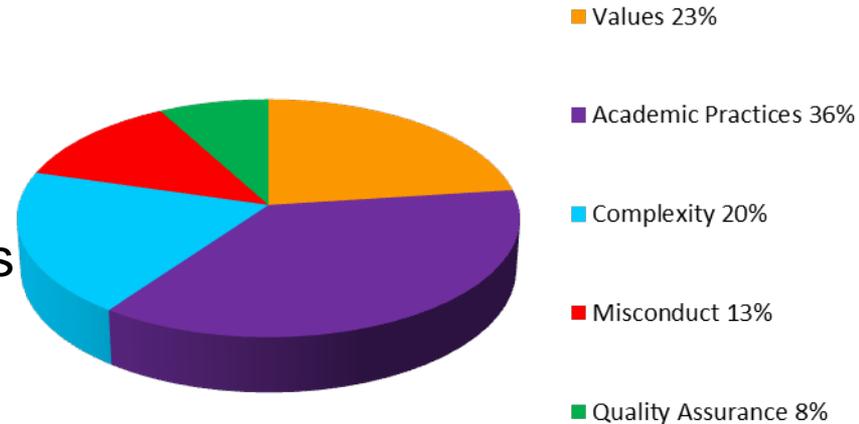
(Bretag 2012)

# What is your understanding 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



(Bretag 2012)

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# Excerpts from interviews

*I guess when we talk about academic integrity, we usually take the students' perspective, and it's...**primarily associated with students not plagiarising work either intentionally or unintentionally.** And it's also...about **general ethical behaviour**, in terms of **approaches to study and assessment, and interaction with others.** And I think there's also a **responsibility on the part of academics to be role models and embed principles of academic integrity into our work.** (Senior Academic, University A)*

(Bretag 2012)

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# Excerpts from interviews

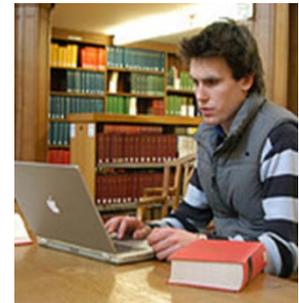
Academic integrity encompasses a number of **values and ideals that should be upheld** in an academic institution. Within the academy there is a fundamental obligation to exercise **integrity, which includes honesty, trustworthiness and respect**. Within an academic structure those **values** must be 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)

(Bretag 2012)

# Academic integrity and graduate research students

- 17/28 (61%) of interviewees mentioned research and research education when discussing academic integrity .
- Inadequate undergraduate education on AI has **potential carry-on effect** into the graduate sphere.
- Our analysis challenges presumption that graduate students have prior knowledge of academic integrity.

(Mahmud & Bretag 2012, forthcoming)



Library 118 (JISC 2005)

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# Excerpt from interviews

*... and it really concerns me when I see things, as I've done in the past where I'm sitting on an academic misconduct committee and here's a postgraduate student, who comes in happily saying, **but I did this all the way through my degree and nobody ever stopped me**, so I presumed that everything was alright, and you think, well, mmm there's a worry. (Senior Manager 2, University D).*

(Mahmud & Bretag 2012, forthcoming)

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# Academic integrity and graduate research students

- 14/28 respondents (50%) mentioned the need for staff to model ethical behaviour in scholarship and research:

*I think that we know that people learn a great deal from watching good behaviours and good practices being modelled and I think it's incumbent on academic staff as much as upon students to reflect upon their approach to academic work, how they go about that, how they behave ethically within that context and yeah it gets towards issues of reasonable conduct and so on...  
(Senior Manager 1, University C).*

(Mahmud & Bretag 2012, forthcoming)

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# Academic integrity and graduate research students

- Interviewees' responses indicated that academic integrity is about **everyday academic practices**.
- Graduate students, as novice researchers, need to be **mentored** by senior academics who model integrity.
- Many graduates are seriously under-prepared and ill-informed about academic integrity requirements.

(Mahmud & Bretag 2012, forthcoming)

## STUDENT SURVEY

Tell us your thoughts about

# academic integrity

Online survey

- ▶ what is academic integrity?
- ▶ why is it important?
- ▶ how do you find out about it?
- ▶ what happens if you make a mistake?

WIN AN APPLE  
iPad2 3G



Go to the survey at [\[url xxxxx\]](#).

Survey open from 6th June to 8th July 2011.

It will only take 10 minutes - once you finish you will be linked to a separate registration point to apply to win the iPad2 3G. Your responses will be totally confidential and anonymous.

If you have any questions about the survey process, please contact Dr Ruth Walker at 4221 5755 or email [rwalker@uow.edu.au](mailto:rwalker@uow.edu.au)

University of Wollongong



AUSTRALIAN  
LEARNING  
INTEGRITY  
COUNCIL

Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC), an initiative of the Australian Government. This was awarded to the University of Wollongong.

## Student survey

- 15,304 students from the six participating universities responded to the survey.
- Largest student survey on academic integrity conducted in Australia.



Academic  
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# Student Survey:

## Graduate research students

- Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students comprised 7.6% (n=1,186) of the total 15,304
- 1/5 (18.5%) HDR students said they had “never heard of academic integrity”.
- 3/5 (61.7%) said they knew their university had an academic integrity policy and how to access it.
- Similar results to undergraduate responses.

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# Survey: Feedback from graduate research students

- Random sample of 289 from the 1,186 HDR responses.
  
- Analysis of qualitative data (open ended questions):
  - 1. Please provide details of your **level of satisfaction** with the academic integrity policy and/or processes at your university.
  - 2. Do you have any **suggestions for improving** the way that your university can contribute to your understanding and demonstration of academic integrity?
  - 3. Do you have any suggestions for **improving the way that academic integrity breaches are dealt with** at your university?
  - 4. Please share your **ideas or concerns** about academic integrity at your university

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# Survey: Feedback from graduate research students

- ❑ 66% indicated they were satisfied with the academic integrity policy and/or processes at their university.
- ❑ 21% gave a neutral comment.
- ❑ 13% said they were dissatisfied.

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# Excerpt from satisfied graduate research student

*Aside from the **orientation**, I received proper information about academic integrity, its relevance and practice in one's profession from **online module, lectures, tutorials, workshops, library sessions, seminars and conferences**. It was made clear that plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty or breach may be detected for example with the **use of the 'Turnitin'**. It must also be the dictate of a clean conscience to exercise academic integrity consistently. I am pleased that the University has taken an **active role in the nipping of academic breach of integrity at its bud**. Orientation and induction courses have certainly dealt with this issue and the **ethics committee course** has explored it at length allowing students to **explore scenarios associated with breaches in integrity** and enabling them with the capacity to react appropriately to such a scenario.*

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# Excerpt from dissatisfied graduate research student

*I know for a fact that **breaches of academic integrity have been completely ignored** due to the time and effort it takes to follow up the student and pursue the matter. **Outright plagiarism has been overlooked** and the student has received little if no punishment. **It needs to be dealt with**, there needs to be an interview with the course coordinator and head of school and if it is deemed that the student plagiarised they need to **receive a fail**. **SIMPLE.** (emphasis in the original).*

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# Suggestions for improvement

- ❑ 49% of sample gave suggestions for improvement in response to the question:

“Do you have any suggestions for improving the way that your university can contribute to your understanding and demonstration of academic integrity?”

- ❑ Two categories: Support and Outcomes.

# Suggestions for improvement

## □ Support:

- workshops
- online modules
- website
- library sessions
- examples
- cases
- training to use 'Turnitin' as an educative tool.



*Spring 2012 Student Hackathon Coding (@matylda 2012)*

## □ Outcomes

- enforcement of academic integrity policy
- consistency in dealing with academic integrity breaches
- provision of more information on breach outcomes.

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# Suggestions for improvement

- ❑ Most respondents chose not to provide any suggestions in response to the question “Do you have any suggestions for improving the way that academic integrity breaches are dealt with at your university?”.
  - 48% left this question blank
  - 20% said ‘No’ in response.
- ❑ Common themes in responses:
  - students were unaware of outcomes
  - outcomes should be made known to the broader academic community (including students)
  - stronger penalties
  - consistency in dealing with academic integrity breaches.

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# Graduate students' concerns

- ❑ Only 30% of students shared their ideas or concerns about academic integrity.
- ❑ One key concern:
  - Relationship with supervisor, including issues of ownership of data and authorship

*Despite Faculty policy, I know of an academic who insists their **name goes on any papers** related to measurements performed in one of his laboratories, even if that academic has had no input into interpretation of the results (i.e. the project does not relate to them in any way). I find this situation **intolerable... This behaviour, to me, is wholly at odds with academic integrity.***

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# Graduate students' concerns

- ❑ Concerns about academic integrity in relation to international English as a Second Language (ESL) students:
  - *I have some concerns about the standards of expectation for students from non-English speaking backgrounds, or otherwise disadvantaged students. This is NOT to say that circumstances should not be considered or accommodated, but that such consideration should not extend to allowing breaches of academic integrity. This is by no means policy, but I believe it does occur, perhaps with the best intentions, and doing so undermines the relevance and integrity of the institution and Australian higher education generally.*

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# Conclusions

- ❑ **Policy analysis:** academic integrity is not consistently understood, explained or enacted.
- ❑ **Interview analysis:** stakeholders have a wide variety of understandings of academic integrity;
  - Key foundation concept: academic integrity is grounded in academic practices.
- ❑ **Student survey data analysis:** HDR students do not necessarily receive adequate training or induction into a culture of integrity.
  - HDR students have concerns about academic integrity and how policy is practiced, particularly when a breach occurs.

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# Conclusions

- ❑ **Lack of shared understanding** of academic integrity at institutional, staff and student levels
  - Creates inconsistencies; serious impediment to the fostering a culture of integrity.
- ❑ Did the Academic Integrity Standards Project achieve its objective of ‘aligning policy and practice in Australian universities’?
  - Contributed to an empowering dialogue with the potential to be a catalyst for change.
  - **New project:** ‘Extending and embedding exemplary academic integrity policy across the Australian higher education sector’ to start 1 December 2012.



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For other research papers, case studies,  
exemplars and learning resources from  
the  
Academic Integrity Standards Project,  
please go to:

<http://www.aisp.apfei.edu.au>

*Support for this project/activity has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.*

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