



Does good policy mean good practice?

Target audience: Policy & Governance Units, Subject Coordinators, Heads of School, Academic conduct Advisors, Teachers (sessional and tenured), Administrative Staff

Key issue being addressed: Determining and addressing any barriers that might prevent the implementation of a university's academic integrity policy.

Purpose of the case: To assist staff to work through their own policy to understand their own and their colleagues' responsibility with respect to policy implementation

Materials and preparation needed to answer case:

- Remind participants to find and access appropriate policy and academic integrity resources at own institution prior to coming to session.
- Copy of university academic integrity policy, and procedures.
- Separate PowerPoint for facilitator based on 1 or 2 hour session.
- Bretag, T., Mahmud, S., Wallace, M., Walker, R., Green, M., McGowan, U. & Partridge, L. (2011). Core elements of exemplary academic integrity policy in Australian higher education, *International Journal for Educational Integrity*. 7 (2) pp. 3 - 12. Available online:
<http://www.ojs.unisa.edu.au/index.php/IJEI/article/viewFile/759/574>

The case

Abstract

In response to varied practices across faculties, University X develops an institutional policy on academic integrity. After five years of implementation, staff have not engaged adequately with the new policy.

University X is a large university that had operated for many years without an institutional policy on academic integrity. Individual faculties had their own idiosyncratic rules and responses related to student breaches of academic integrity. This proved particularly problematic at University X where many students were enrolled in combined degrees and so were receiving mixed messages about the consequences of academic integrity breaches.

Five years ago, in response to this obvious issue of inequity, the university wrote a comprehensive policy outlining the practice to be followed by staff when breaches of academic integrity were suspected. The policy was clearly articulated and the processes made as simple and streamlined as possible for staff to undertake. To support the policy a series of online resources were developed for staff. Students were made aware of the institutional policy and issues of academic integrity generally through a compulsory online module which all new students entering University X were required to complete.

Fast forward five years.....practically the entire student population of University X have now completed the online module and are familiar with the existence of the institutional policy.

By contrast, anecdotal evidence strongly indicates that the staff knowledge and understanding of the university's policy related to academic integrity is far less established.

As a consequence, even with the existence of a good policy, practice has not necessarily changed substantially. A series of initiatives to inform staff of the policy and their obligation to implement it, have been employed including emails to all staff, the production and distribution of an information pamphlet, and a dedicated session about the policy at induction of new staff. It appears there are two main issues. Firstly, despite these initiatives many staff are still unaware of the existence of the policy and secondly a proportion of the staff that do know of the policy still believe that it is easier to either turn a blind eye or deal with the matter without engaging in the policy processes. The consequence of this is that the university is unable to accurately determine the degree to which academic misconduct is a problem at University X and whether or not there has been a measurable change over time of academic integrity.

Questions for discussion

1. What does your university's policy do to support the efforts of staff when dealing with academic integrity breaches by students?
2. How simple is the reporting process at your university?
3. How much work is involved in the process for the staff member who first suspects or identifies that an instance of academic integrity breach has occurred?
4. What measures are in place at an institutional level to keep staff (particularly sessional staff) informed of the university policy on academic integrity?
5. What measures are in place at the Faculty or School level to keep staff (particularly sessional staff) informed of the university policy on academic integrity?
6. How well does your university's policy on academic integrity measure up against the 5 elements of an exemplary policy outlined in Bretag et al(2011)?
7. Do you have any suggestions for how your university's academic integrity policy and processes can be improved?

Suggested readings

East, J. (2009). Aligning policy and practice: An approach to integrating academic integrity. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 3(1), A38-A51. Available online: <http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/viewFile/66/62>

Lee, L. & Faulkner, W. (2010)¹. Turning good policies into good practice: Why is it so difficult? *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology*. 2(1), pp. 89-99. Available online: <http://genderandset.open.ac.uk/index.php/genderandset/article/view/64/78>

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.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Australia License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/au/).

¹ This reference does not relate specifically to the implementation of academic integrity policy but raises some interesting considerations around the general implementation of policy.