Enhancing Academic Integrity in Your Course

Wednesday 21 October 2020 is [Global Ethics Day](#) and the [International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating](#)!

It's a good opportunity to ask yourself what are you currently doing with your students and the teaching team to promote awareness and understanding of academic integrity? How can you foster or enhance a culture of academic integrity in your course?

At UniSA academic integrity (AI) means 'a commitment to act with honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, respect and responsibility in all academic work' ([APPM 9.1.1](#)).

Academic integrity discussions often focus on students' cheating behaviors and the prevention and detection of misconduct. These are important issues and align with the need to secure the reputation of the University and its staff, students and credentials. At the same time, however, it is important to foreground the *positive* values of academic integrity as the intrinsic motivators of ethical academic practice that underpin all aspects of University life (Bretag 2018).

Academic integrity involves the whole University – it's not just a student 'problem'. Alongside the tasks of securing the integrity of assessment, reducing the opportunities for cheating, and detecting it when it occurs, we play a role as educators in *promoting* academic integrity and addressing the reasons that students engage in misconduct in the first place.

In this *Guide* we look at some strategies for promoting AI in your course, whether you are a course coordinator, lecturer, tutor or marker. We'll outline some ideas for conversations with your students (and with teaching teams) about academic integrity and academic misconduct, and provide some information and resources that you can share or delve into to find out more.

Strategies for promoting AI

To get started, you might like to ask yourself some of the following questions:

- Do I know my students and the challenges they face as learners?
- Am I aware of the variety and ubiquity of the opportunities to cheat, both subtle and overt, that students are presented with everyday through email, social media and the web?
- Do my students understand the benefits of completing their own work, in this course and for their future professional life? Have I explained what ethical collaboration looks like in my discipline?
- Do students understand what is required of them to succeed in my course and do they have access to the supports or skills to enable them to achieve it?
- Do students know where to find help for their learning or to seek advice about the contract cheating industry?
- Do my students know how to avoid academic misconduct?
- Do my students understand what AI is?
- Do I make AI visible in my course?

To help you respond to these questions, we've gathered together in Table 1 below, some ideas and advice from the higher education sector aimed at fostering AI in teaching and learning (see also the reference list at the end of this Guide).

Following the table is a selection of FAQs that link to more detailed information and resources.

Table 1: Strategies for promoting AI

Curriculum design

- Review the TIU advice on **assessment design and security for online open book exams**
- Ensure that all learning tasks are meaningful, engaging and not easily contracted out to a third party
- Change assessment topics or scenarios regularly
- Design multi-phased (nested) scaffolded assignments (outline/plan, draft, finished product) so students must complete one to do the next
- Build in opportunites to track development and progress
- Create opportunities for students to understand and practice how to demonstrate academic integrity at all stages of their work
- Make sure instructions and expectations are clear
- Articulate your expectations for originality
- Teach students how to cite and reference sources in your discipline
- Provide examples of what constitutes plagiarism
- Provide annotated exemplars of assessments

Teaching / engagement

- Get to know your students
- Talk to your students about the importance of academic integrity and the risks of misconduct
- Discuss the relevance of academic integrity to professional practice
- Make sure your students know how to avoid academic misconduct and where to find help
- Discuss expectations for collaboration, sharing and group assignments
- Discuss how to use paraphrasing and translation tools ethically
- Let students know you are aware of file sharing sites/ paper mills/contract cheating services and how they work
- Let students know you use online plagiarism checkers and are alert to detecting contract cheating
- Let students know about the dangers of contract cheating (for their learning, institutional penalties, blackmail)

Self

- Remind yourself that not every student 'cheats'!
- Recognise that students are vulnerable to a sophisticated contract cheating industry
- Address academic integrity breaches when they occur
- Model ethical practice (eg how to use and cite sources)
- Commit to consistent assessment and moderation processes
- Know how to use Turnitin as both an educational tool and for the detection of breaches
- Get to know the AI team in your Academic Unit
- Engage in professional development and training. Eg undertake the *Epigeum Academic Integrity Learning Modules for staff*

Promoting Academic Integrity FAQs

Delve into the information and resources below to help develop your own awareness and understanding of academic integrity in the contemporary higher education landscape, inform your curriculum design and teaching, and support students and teaching teams to engage in discussions about the positive values of academic integrity and the risks of academic misconduct.

Resources are organized by the following topic focus and questions:

Academic integrity at UniSA:

- What is academic integrity?
- What is academic misconduct?
- What should I do if I suspect academic misconduct?
- What are the potential outcomes of academic misconduct at UniSA?

Understanding contract cheating:

- What is contract cheating?
- So, why is everyone talking about contract cheating?
- Is contract cheating illegal?
- What are the risks and impacts of contract cheating?
- What are some resources I can use to discuss contract cheating with students?
- What are some resources I can use to discuss contract cheating with my teaching team?

General resources for staff:

- Academic integrity training
- Learn more about academic integrity
- Assessment design and security
- Plagiarism
- Turnitin

General resources for students:

- Academic literacies
- Assignment help
- Copyright
- Referencing
- Understanding Turnitin
- Wellbeing & counselling

Academic integrity at UniSA

What is academic integrity?	At UniSA academic integrity (AI) is defined as 'a commitment to act with honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, respect and responsibility in all academic work' (APPM 9.1.1).	Assessment Policy and Procedures Manual (APPM)
What is academic misconduct?	Academic misconduct refers to any action that contravenes the principles of academic integrity (APPM 9.2). By far the most common form of academic misconduct reported at UniSA is **plagiarism**, which can range from the failure to properly acknowledge or paraphrase sources used in an assignment to passing off third party source material as ones own. The second most common form of misconduct is **third party assistance** where a student submits work for assessment as their own that has involved significant assistant from others for all or part of the work (unless collaboration or outsourcing is explicitly allowed). Third party assistance might include **collusion** (unauthorized collaboration between students), significant assistance from a family member, or the outright purchase of a completed assignment. It can involve 'family and friends; academic custom writing sites; legitimate learning sites (e.g. file sharing, discussion and microtutoring sites); legitimate non-learning sites (e.g. freelancing sites and online auction sites); paid exam takers; and pre-written essay banks)' (Ellis, Zucker & Randall 2018, p. 2). These forms of outsourcing some or all of an assignment have come to be known as **contract cheating** (Lancaster & Clarke 2016).	Assessment Policy and Procedures Manual (APPM)
What should I do if I suspect academic misconduct?	Students should raise any concerns with their teaching staff. Staff should refer suspicions in the first instance to an Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) for further investigation. You can find the AI team email address for your Unit under the Academic Integrity Officers heading on the TIU website.	TIU Academic Integrity

| What are the potential outcomes of academic misconduct at UniSA? | An investigation of academic misconduct should be a learning experience 'from which students can emerge and progress to complete their studies' (Kitt, Dullaghan & Sutherland-Smith 2020).

If after investigation, an Academic Integrity Officer decides that misconduct has occurred then the case is recorded in the University's AI database along with the outcome that has been decided upon.

AIOs take a wide variety of factors into account when deciding on outcomes, recognizing for example that academic misconduct sometimes occurs because of a lack of familiarity with academic conventions.

In addition to academic counselling , outcomes for students can include, re-submission of the assessment task with a penalty applied to the mark, and zero for the assessment. More serious outcomes are referred to the Unit's Executive Dean for Formal Inquiry, such as zero for the course or suspension from enrolment at the University for a period of time. (APPM 9.5.4)

An explanation of APPM Section 9 for students can be found in every course outline and via the SEU Study Help pages. | For students:
Section 9 Academic Integrity, SEU |

Understanding contract cheating

| What is contract cheating? | 'Contract cheating occurs when students employ or use a third party to undertake their assessed work for them and these third parties may include:

• Essay writing services
• Friends, family or other students
• Private tutors
• Copy editing services
• Agency websites
• 'reverse classifieds'' (TEQSA 2017) | TEQSA (2017) *Good Practice Note: Addressing contract cheating to safeguard academic integrity* |

So, why is everyone talking about contract cheating?	Contract cheating has become a focus of attention in higher education nationally and internationally, for a number of reasons:	Academic integrity toolkit, TEQSA
		ICAI (2020) IDoA Resource Guide (pdf)
	Globally dispersed, commercial enterprises have grown rapidly. Contract cheating is big business, relentlessly targetting students via social media and online platforms.	
	Commercial providers can include academic custom writing services, online freelance services, pre-written essay banks, file sharing sites and paid exam takers.	
	These employ engaging, persuasive and deceptive practices to market 'academic services' across a diverse range of fields of expertise (TEQSA 2017)	
	This form of contract cheating appears to be on the rise in higher education (Newton 2018) with many fearing that COVID 19 and the pivot to online education delivery has exacerbated the situation - academic norms may be unclear for isolated students under pressure, who are at the same time are presented with a wide range of easily accessible temptations and opportunities. (ICAI 2020).	
	Contract cheating can be hard to detect at the point of assessment submission – many services claim to provide original, plagiarism free work, for example. Marker training and new software detection tools are, however, improving the rates of detection. Eg IP address tracking, webcam identity verification, and writing style tracking (Dawson & Wendy-Sutherland Smith 2019; Lancaster 2020).	
	Contract cheating highlights the importance of a systemic response to academic integrity involving all stakeholders, rather than focusing on the responsibilities of individuals alone (TEQSA 2017).	

Is contract cheating illegal?	From 4 September 2020, amendments to the *TEQSA Act* have made it an offence in Australia to provide or advertise academic cheating services in higher education. The powers of TEQSA include monitoring, intelligence gathering, investigation and pursuing prosecution of identified cheating service providers (TEQSA 2020). The Act targets commercial service providers, rather than users. TEQSA is, however, empowered to share information with UniSA regarding any UniSA student that has used, or is reasonably suspected of using, an academic cheating service. Currently, UniSA maintains a list of websites that have been identified as a risk to academic integrity. Access to these sites via the UniSA network, on campus, is blocked by the UniSA firewall.	*Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Amendment (Prohibiting Academic Cheating Services) Bill 2019* *Higher Education Integrity Unit*, TEQSA *Protecting academic integrity*, TEQSA
What are the risks and impacts of contract cheating?	There are costs to contract cheating. • It undermines learning and learning environments, and damages peer, teacher relationships. • Students miss out on learning (with long term consequences for professional life). It places the student, the faculty/teacher, the educational organization, and society at risk with students who will graduate with knowledge gaps and undeserved academic awards (IDoA 2020). • Students that behave dishonestly in the studies are also likely to behave dishonestly in their professional careers (Guerroro-Dib, Portales, & Heredia-Escorza, 2020). • Evidence is emerging of the blackmail and extortion of clients (York, Cefcik & Veeran-Colton 2020). Students who engage in contract cheating are vulnerable to future exploitation.	Yorke, Sefcik & Veeran-Colton (2020) *Contract cheating and blackmail*, TEQSA (pdf)

	• Consequences at UniSA for student found to have engaged in academic misconduct by contract cheating can include zero for course, suspension from their program for a period of enrolment, or even expulsion from the University.	
What are some additional resources I can use to discuss contract cheating with my teaching team?	Raise awareness of contract cheating as a problem.	*Students are not concerned about contract cheating (and we are not talking to them about it)* Contract Cheating and Assessment Design project (pdf) Bretag, T. et al (2018) *Contract Cheating and Assessment Design* project website QAA (2020) *Contracting to Cheat in Higher Education*, 2nd edition, UK (pdf)
	Detecting contract cheating.	TEQSA (2020) *Substantiating Contract Cheating: A guide for investigators* (pdf) (2018) 'How to detect contract cheating' *CRADLE suggests…* no. 1, CRADLE, Deakin University *Impossible to prove? Substantiating contract cheating*, Contract cheating and assessment project (pdf)
	See what other university staff are doing at the ICAI's International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating	*International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating*, ICAI ICAI (2020) *IDoA Resource Guide* (pdf) (2020) *Three more ideas*, ICAI (pdf)
What are some additional resources I can use to discuss contract cheating with students?	Raise awareness of contract cheating as a problem, and the potential risks. Students are also often unclear about when and how they can collaborate with others when it comes to assessment. Is it "cheating" to talk with	*Contract cheating - not a victimless crime* Contract Cheating and Assessment Design project (pdf) Rundle, K. & Curtis, G. (2020) *Beware of ghosts:*

	friends or tutors, look up books and past lectures, or look at the course site? Ensure class/course time to discuss expectations – as well as the pitfalls of "sharing" behaviours.	*explaining contract cheating and ghostwriting and why you shouldn't do it*, UWA/TEQSA (video & pdf) Miron, J & McKenzie, A (2020) *Avoiding contract cheating student tip sheet*, Academic Integrity Council of Ontario (pdf) *Collaborating with integrity* Contract Cheating and Assessment Design project (pdf)

General resources for staff

Resources for staff	Academic integrity training All UniSA staff can enrol in the Epigeum modules for staff. (5 modules, approx 2.5 hours total)	*Epigeum Academic Integrity Learning Modules* for staff. Modules 1-5: 1. What is Academic Integrity? 2. How do I show Academic Integrity in my preparation? 3. How do I show Academic Integrity in my work? 4. How can I feel more confident about Academic Integrity? 5. How do I deal with more complex situations?
	Learn more about academic integrity	*Academic integrity toolkit*, TEQSA (2019) *Guidance note: Academic Integrity*, TEQSA Bretag. T. (ed) 2016, *Handbook of Academic Integrity,* 1st edition, Springer ebooks.
	Assessment design and security	*Assessment design and security for online open book exams*, TIU *Assessment integrity online*, TEQSA (2020) 'Academic Integrity, assessment security and digital assessment', *CRADLE suggests…* no. 7, CRADLE, Deakin University Phillip Dawson (2020), *The prevention of contract cheating in an online environment,* TEQSA

	Plagiarism	Jude Carroll 2007, *A Handbook for deterring plagiarism*, 2nd edition, Oxford Brookes University
		Jude Carroll & Jon Appleton, 2001, Plagiarism: a good practice guide, JISC & Oxford Brookes University (pdf)
		Sarah Elaine Eaton (2017) Academic integrity and plagiarism: Supplementary materials for educator workshops. Calgary: University of Calgary. (pdf)
		Plagiarism.org
	Turnitin	Tamra Ulpen & Sandra Barker, Interpreting Turnitin reports and identifying signs of potential misconduct, video, TIU (1h 26 min)

General academic resources for students

Resources for students	Academic literacies	Academic Success Literacy Activity (ASLA), SEU
		See a Learning Adviser, SEU
	Assignment help	Study Support, SEU
		• Study Help
		• Study Help Pals
		• See a Learning Adviser
		• PASS
		• Studiosity
		Ask the Library, UniSA
		Study Help, Library, UniSA
	Copyright	Copyright, Library, UniSA
	Referencing	Referencing, Study Help, SEU
		Academic Integrity and Referencing, SEU
	Understanding Turnitin	Turnitin similarity report, learnonline student help, UniSA
		How to use Turnitin, Referencing: Study Help, SEU
	Wellbeing & counselling	Counselling, SEU

If you would like to ask teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our FAQs, write to TIU@unisa.edu.au, have an online consultation with a member of the TIU or complete the online modules as part of *Introduction to Engaging Learners Online*.

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