

# ICED 2020 proceedings:

## The future is now as educational developers foster academic integrity in universities

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### **Abstract**

External factors impact academic integrity in universities, making academic misconduct by students in assessment a high risk factor. In response, institutions are embracing a suite of prevention, detection and investigative initiatives. Educational developers play a significant role in enhancing academic integrity in tertiary institutions through their collaboration with stakeholder groups, influence in policy development and interpretation, and currency in research findings. This paper briefly examines current and future educational development roles in fostering institutional academic integrity, using Bertram Gallant and Drinan's (2008) four stage organisation change model (recognition and commitment, response generation, implementation, and institutionalization). In each stage, examples are provided from the academic integrity work in a large, metropolitan, research-intensive university.

### **1 Introduction**

Threats to institutional academic integrity have always existed, but now sophisticated online contract cheating services are a new threat, offering students fee-based individualised assessment responses written by a ghost-writer that can be submitted as the student's own work. These services bombard our students with persuasive marketing messages, and vulnerable students can find themselves accepting this "help" as situational ethics come into play (Rowland, Slade, Wong & Whiting, 2018).

Acceleration in student cheating is a symptom of broader sector disruption (Bretag et al., 2019). Funding uncertainty for universities drives corporate priorities, such as attracting students from broader pools, reliance on the extensive casualisation of teaching, and placing extra demands on educators with fewer resources. Similarly, today's students face increasing individual and contextual challenges while undertaking academic study that can influence their ethical decision-making behaviour (Slade, Rowland, & McGrath, 2016).

In 2015 detailed Australian media reports of student cheating resulted in the regulatory body, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), requiring universities to account for their academic integrity responses and to become more proactive in ongoing accountability to sector standards.

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While the scope of academic integrity responses varies across universities, mandatory areas include ensuring robust policies, procedures and processes, support for detection, education for students and staff and strengthening assessment design (Slade et al., 2016). A mix of stakeholders such as institutional decisionmakers, professional staff, educators and students are involved. This situation has significant implications for educational developers, who have a “key role to play in stimulating increased collaboration, coherence, and even organizational learning in the modern university” (Stensaker, 2018, p. 276). Educational developers act as institutional brokers between stakeholders (Sutherland, 2018) and policy interpreters (Smith, 2016). The recent rapid transition from face-to-face teaching to remote delivery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of these educational development roles in terms of practical organisational decision-making and maintaining evidence-based teaching and learning principles and practice.

This paper connects several ICED 2020 conference themes (Future-ready Assessment, Educational Developers, Universities and The Future is Now) with educational development. In particular, it briefly examines current and future educational development roles in fostering academic integrity. Bertram Gallant and Drinan’s (2008) four stage model of organisational change to enhance academic integrity across an institution provides a useful heuristic for the following section. This section also provides educational development examples of addressing academic integrity from a large, metropolitan, research-intensive Australian university. The purpose of the paper is to provide one translation of the model into educational development practice and stimulate discussion within the sector about educational developers’ own experiences.

## **2 Educational and organisational lens**

The four stages in Bertram Gallant and Drinan’s (2008) institutional model are recognition and commitment; response generation; implementation; and institutionalisation. Educational developers play a leadership role in guiding and supporting the movement through these stages and addressing some resistance issues. The following sub-sections look more closely at each of the stages.

### **2.1 Recognition and commitment (Stage 1)**

Academic integrity has always been a core value of universities. The term “academic integrity” is defined by the International Center for Academic Integrity “as a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals to action” (ICAI, 2020, n.p.). In more recent times, increased stimuli for Australian institutional recognition and commitment of academic integrity has come from public media attention, particularly about contract cheating<sup>2</sup>; new sophisticated ways for students to cheat online; institutional accountability to the national regulatory body; influence of accrediting bodies; and of reputational risk to the individual, the institution and the public.

Recent research reported by the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (2020) provides further theoretical clarity by separating academic integrity from academic security. Academic integrity emphasises the educative process to enable learners to uphold the values of academic integrity. Academic security focuses on assessment design and places restrictions on assessment to prevent cheating attempts. Both academic integrity and academic security are needed to maintain a holistic perspective. In summary, external impetus, organisational awareness, and theoretical clarity provide educational developers with opportunities for professional conversations with staff and the ability to make informed

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<sup>2</sup> “Contract cheating occurs when a student submits work that has been completed for them by a third party, irrespective of the third party’s relationship with the student, and whether they are paid or unpaid.” (Source: Haper & Bretag et al. 2019)

contributions to institutional commitment, and provide leadership in initial and ongoing response generation.

### 2.3 Response generation (Stage 2)

In 2016, as a result of institutional decision-makers' request for a background paper on student dishonesty in assessment, three educational developers from the University's central teaching and learning unit undertook a desktop environmental scan of current research and university responses to academic misconduct<sup>3</sup>. Its findings included eight strategic responses in scholarly literature and other universities' practices. Overall, it was evident that a holistic, multi-pronged institutional response was needed, as explained in Figure 1.

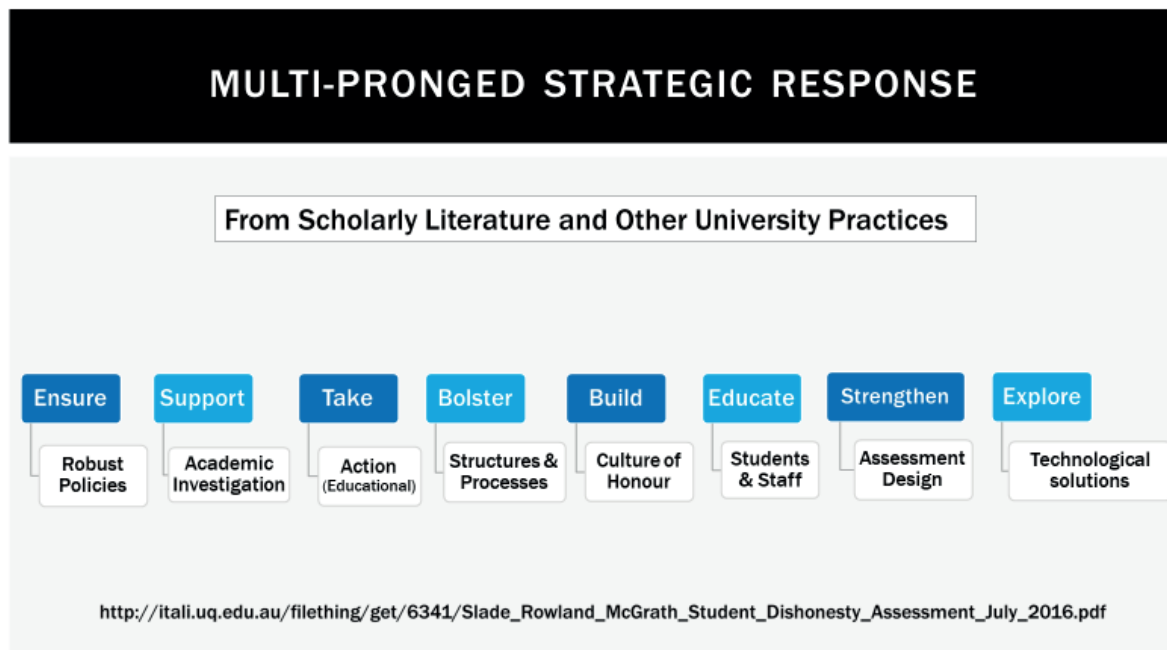


Figure 1: Findings of Student Dishonesty in Assessment Background Paper.  
Source: Slade, Rowland, & McGrath (2016)

A timely review of current assessment policies and procedures then enabled the inclusion of a new focus on academic integrity, and the decision was made to develop the *UQ Academic Integrity Action Plan* to oversee the implementation of its recommendations.

### 2.4 Implementation (Stage 3)

The Action Plan was approved in February 2020, with responsibilities attributed across the University for its 13 recommendations (see Figure 2). The central teaching and learning unit was responsible for providing an educative online academic integrity program for students and staff and to support academic staff and integrity officers in their detection and investigation processes. Providing academic integrity support is continually challenged, as the academic integrity officers in various parts of the university change often, on a two-three year cycle.

Developing resources for new academic integrity officers is one of the intended outcomes of the accompanying *Academic Integrity Resource Plan*. Further, this work encouraged new collaborations between the different departments involved in academic integrity promotion and student misconduct investigations. Academic integrity was seen as an important strategic priority and educators were concerned about their students' lack of learning if they cheated.

<sup>3</sup> The full paper can be accessed at <https://itali.uq.edu.au/files/1246/Discussion-paper-addressing-student-dishonesty-assessment.pdf>

## 2.5 Institutionalisation (Stage 4)

The University made good progress towards institutionalisation, seeing measures of integration, a shift in progressing cultural norms, and staff embracing academic integrity as a priority. Institutional progress was supported by increased collaboration across the sector, emergence of new research findings and strong collegiate participation in TEQSA-funded national academic integrity workshops. While Bertram and Drinan (2008) anticipated that there

### UQ Academic Integrity Action Plan

The [UQ Academic Integrity Action Plan \(PDF, 524KB\)](#) defines and promulgates the principles of academic integrity at UQ. This Plan presents 13 recommendations that embody strategies to enhance current academic integrity, prevent student academic misconduct, and respond more effectively when misconduct is identified. The approach addresses the full life cycle from prevention, detection, response to ongoing continuous improvement.

#### Summary of recommendations

- Establish a Student Academic Honour Code
- Develop an operationally enforceable Student Code of Conduct, to replace the current Student Charter
- Provide an educative online academic integrity program for students and staff to complete
- Create an encouraging environment for students to report breaches of academic integrity by their peers
- Adopt an educative approach to sharing past breaches and the penalties with students
- Develop a support program for students with English as an additional language (EAL) or who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)
- Implement a campaign to promote the importance of academic integrity
- Revise the academic integrity and misconduct policy
- Support academic staff and integrity officers within schools regarding suspected and actual breaches of academic integrity (see [resources](#), [UQ staff login required](#))
- Review the Assessment PPL entry to include Identify Verified Assessment with Hurdles
- Support staff in the design and uptake of new assessments and reliable eAssessment tasks.

Figure 2: Recommendations summary from the UQ Academic Integrity Action Plan.

Source: <https://itali.uq.edu.au/resources/assessment/academic-integrity>

would be resistance to change, and the resulting iterative renewal processes between stages, our biggest challenge so far as a predominantly face-to-face teaching institution has been the unexpected rapid delivery of online assessment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no time for protracted assessment discussions or significant curriculum redesign, and we were somewhat unprepared for ensuring student identity verification in online examinations and for designing robust online assessment tasks. Educational developers supported staff with a suite of just-in-time academic integrity resources (see Figure 3), one-to-one consultations, and in ongoing organisational decision-making, and ensured that all of our students across the globe could use the existing online Academic Integrity Tutorial.

It was very encouraging to see that the pre-COVID-19 foundational academic integrity work remained strong, and that despite the pressured situation, academics were still prioritising academic integrity. Whilst the full implications of our academic integrity response is still open



for reflection, developing these resources, and engaging in new thinking about online assessment issues, has definitely accelerated parts of the Action Plan's implementation in an unexpected way.

**academic integrity**

**TEQSA**

## Creating Academic Integrity Resources for Rapid Online Delivery

Dr Christine Slade, on behalf of the Assessment Online team, Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation (ITaLI), The University of Queensland

**Focus area: Making academic integrity visible**

By late 2019, The University of Queensland (UQ) was preparing to roll out its comprehensive Academic Integrity Action Plan during 2020. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, a number of ITaLI staff were quickly redeployed into an Assessment Online team whose remit was to provide timely resources to support academics rapidly move their teaching and assessment tasks online. Academic integrity was already a priority, but concerns were heightened with the transfer to the online mode.

**Students** - The **Integrity Notice** (posted in courses on LMS) and **Integrity Pledge** (included with assessment task) are adaptable to different tasks and disciplines. Core messages are:

- Commitment to UQ's academic integrity values, to actively create an honest culture, to respect peers and educators and uphold the reputation of UQ;
- Not seeking unauthorised assistance, or giving in to persuasive cheating messages. Being aware of contract cheating services potential blackmailing activities;
- UQ is monitoring assessment situations to detect academic misconduct; and,
- Trusted university support services are available. Students can be proud of their achievements when they are done with integrity.

**Teaching staff** - We created a short slide deck that could **facilitate a conversation with their students about the importance of academic integrity**. Key points are:

- Discuss academic integrity in the current context. Take an empathetic approach;
- Identify misconduct areas in online assessment and why some students cheat;
- Discuss the impact of cheating on the individual;
- Identify the risks of contract cheating; and,
- Recognise that UQ takes academic misconduct seriously.

**School Academic Integrity Officers** were provided with additional academic integrity information, as new assessment resources were developed, to strengthen their leadership in detection and investigation strategies and as a point of contact for academics.

**Additional measures**

- Providing assessment design alternatives to strengthen academic integrity online
- Adding existing resources and creating new ones; available to all from the sector.
- Facilitating opportunities for academics to share what worked in online teaching.

Figure 3: An Educational Development Response to Rapid Online Delivery during COVID-19.  
Source: <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/creating-academic-integrity-resources-rapid-online-delivery-uq-v2.pdf?v=1589166198>

### 3 Conclusions

This short paper demonstrates ways educational developers can provide significant teaching and learning leadership now and also, as new academic integrity threats continue to emerge, in the future. It takes time and sustained effort by educational developers to maintain momentum and reach the implementation and institutionalisation stages. The organisational change process is not linear, but rather iterative by nature. For example, there can be different parts of the University or various stakeholder groups at various degrees of implementation. Unexpected events like COVID-19 can bring progress in unexpected ways. Future reflection and research is needed to understand more fully the role of educational development in enhancing institutional academic integrity as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, and in future recovery phases.

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