UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

A spotlight on...
Designing Academic Integrity into Curricula
Centre for Innovation in Education

Overview

Academic Integrity underpins every aspect of both staff and student activity in higher education. Providing credit for people's work and ideas, reporting accurate research findings and completing our own work is vital to the reputation of higher education institutions, academics and our students as future professionals. However academic integrity is often only considered from a negative perspective, when a breach occurs.

Benefits

By taking time to consider how we design our programmes and/ or modules, we can promote good academic integrity (AI) practices. This limits the likelihood of academic misconduct. We can help our students understand AI and build good habits, reducing the amount of breaches requiring time consuming investigation.
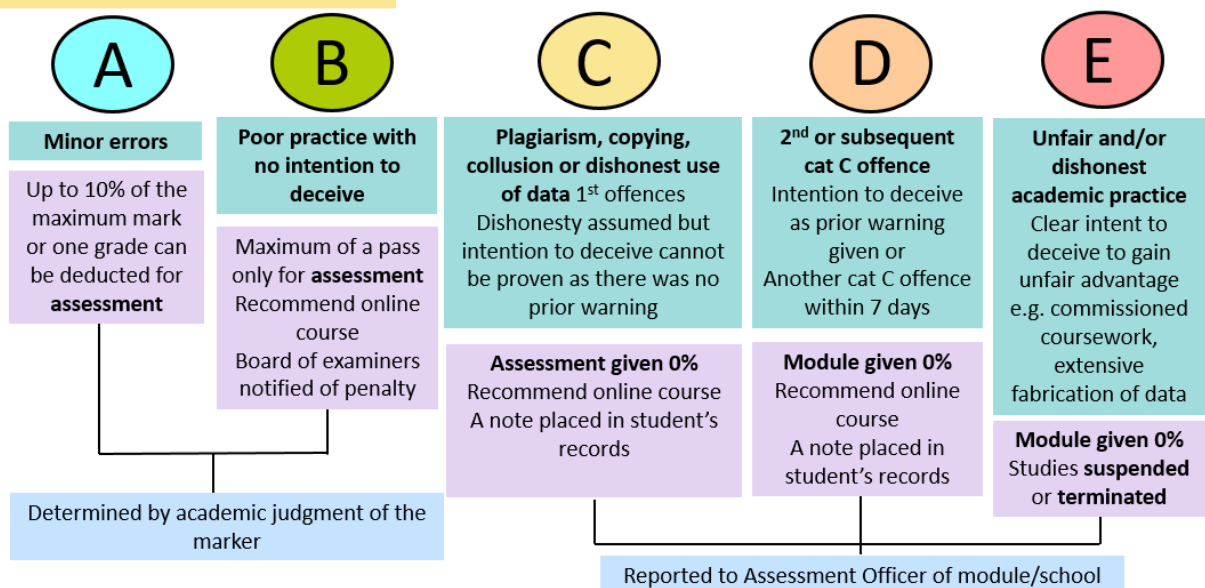
Putting it into practice

Firstly we need to understand the different ways in which AI is breached, and the reasons students do so.

Within the University of Liverpool Code of Practice on Assessment there are 5 categories of AI breach, A, B, C, D, E.

UoL Policy and Consequences of Bad Academic Practice

Academic misconduct

A
Minor errors

Up to 10% of the maximum mark or one grade can be deducted for **assessment**

B
Poor practice with no intention to deceive

Maximum of a pass only for **assessment**
Recommend online course
Board of examiners notified of penalty

Determined by academic judgment of the marker

C
Plagiarism, copying, collusion or dishonest use of data 1st offences
Dishonesty assumed but intention to deceive cannot be proven as there was no prior warning

Assessment given 0%
Recommend online course
A note placed in student's records

D
2nd or subsequent cat C offence
Intention to deceive as prior warning given or
Another cat C offence within 7 days

Module given 0%
Recommend online course
A note placed in student's records

E
Unfair and/or dishonest academic practice
Clear intent to deceive to gain unfair advantage e.g. commissioned coursework, extensive fabrication of data

Module given 0%
Studies **suspended** or **terminated**

Reported to Assessment Officer of module/school

University of Liverpool (2018) code of practice on assessment, appendix L, academic integrity policy.

C   DF   GC

(Parsons, 2019)

Essentially categories A and B refer to unintentional breaches such as mistakes in referencing conventions or forgetting to include a reference. Categories C, D and E are more serious and refer to intentional practices such as plagiarism, collusion, copying or contract cheating. The consequences for breaches to AI are varied but can be very serious, including exclusion from the University.

Students breach AI for a variety of reasons. These include lack of understanding regarding AI (McCabe, Butterfield & Trevino, 2006), how normalized academic misconduct is considered to be amongst their peers and the risk/ reward ratio associated with breaches (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009, Medway, Roper and Gillooly, 2018). Practicalities such as running out of time to complete work, pressure to achieve good grades (Simkin & McLoed, 2010) and the wide-spread availability of essay mill services (Newton, 2018) also contribute.

So how can we promote AI when designing curricula?

1 - Ensure the concept of AI is explicitly addressed early in your programme. One way to achieve this is to ensure your students complete the on-line Academic Integrity tutorial (part of the KnowHow Academic Success module on VITAL) before submitting their first assignment; however AI needs to be revisited throughout the programme.

2 - Make sure you change your assignment title, data set, experiment or practical every year. This does not mean changing the method of assessment, just the assignment specifics. This makes it harder for students to use previous students' work.

3 - Use more authentic assessments. Students are more likely to cheat if they do not see the relevance or purpose of their assessments (Cole & Kiss, 2000) and these assessment types are harder to procure than essays.

4 - Utilise formative assessments. Providing students with clear feedback and feedforward prior to summative assessments allows students to practice and refine their approach in a safe, non-credit bearing environment.

5 - Have students complete an AI activity at least once a year; this could be peer reviewing referencing or building a reading list (Rhodes, 2019) and include debates or discussions regarding commonly experienced AI dilemmas.

6 - Encourage students to seek help early if they are encountering difficulties, before cheating starts to feel like the only answer to their problems.

7 - Avoid assessment bunching! Find out what other modules have deadlines in the same week as your own and discuss as a programme team staggering deadlines; multiple concurrent deadlines increase the chances of academic misconduct.

8 - Ensure students are well supported in their academic and language skills development. Students driven to succeed but struggling academically or linguistically can be more susceptible to AI breaches (Fass-Holmes, 2017).

9 - Warn students of the dangers of contract cheating, not just in terms of University policy but also the wider dangers of essay mills. Some steal students' work and sell it to others, or blackmail students after purchase.

10 - Make explicit links between ethical practices in your disciplinary area and ethical practice as a student. Academic misconduct can lead to unethical workplace practices (Carpenter, Harding, Finelli & Passow, 2004) so highlight the importance of AI to their future careers.

Additional resources & references

Can you help us improve this resource or suggest a future one? Do you need this resource in an alternative format? Please contact us at cie@liverpool.ac.uk

www.liverpool.ac.uk/centre-for-innovation-in-education/resources/all-resources/designing-academic-integrity-into-curricula.html

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