



Exercising professional expertise and nurturing mutual understandings: Exercise & Nutrition academics and ALL staff collaborate to support academic integrity

Key Words

collaboration, academic integrity, discipline-specific academic writing, referencing, plagiarism, educative approach

Abstract

Breaches of academic integrity are of increasing concern to universities (Henderson, Whitelaw & Jose, 2014), who are being challenged to ensure that students are not using 'ghost-writing' services or other means to outwit plagiarism detection software (Sivasubramaniam, Kostelidou & Ramachandran, 2016). Beginning undergraduate students often have an incomplete understanding of what constitutes plagiarism (Newton, 2016), and there are strong arguments for adopting an educative approach to the development of good academic writing practices (Bretag et al., 2014). Several universities have adopted a strategy whereby all students have to complete an online academic integrity unit or module to address this issue. Such modules are usually positioned as add-ons to the curriculum, developed and monitored by academic language and learning departments and/or library staff. However, these modules tend to be generic, and are largely unable to show how the integration of scholarly texts works within particular disciplinary contexts. This presentation outlines a project to develop discipline-based online academic integrity modules for the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences at Deakin University, using the Smart Sparrow (2016) adaptive learning platform. The platform offers students multiple learning pathways depending on their responses to set learning tasks, and allows for customisation by the insertion of content-specific texts and examples. Working closely with academics in the School of Exercise and Nutrition sciences, Language and Learning Advisers (LLAs) created tailored academic integrity modules for students in these two disciplines. We identified common student misunderstandings about collusion, plagiarism, acknowledging and integrating sources, and referencing. These misconceptions were then used as the basis for teaching and practice activities in the modules. Briguglio (2014) suggests that student learning is enhanced when Academic Language and Learning (ALL) staff and discipline academics collaborate, leading to new understandings for both. Such collaboration also ensures that the materials produced are seen by students to be integral to their studies. Furthermore, joint responsibility by support staff and discipline academics for the development of student capacity to write and cite with academic rigour is foregrounded. Similar to Briguglio (2014), Macdonald, Schneider and Kett (2013) also elaborate on the challenges of collaboration between ALL professionals and discipline experts. For example, while initially identifying the need for a clear vision of our respective roles and contributions, blurring of boundaries around these roles occurred as our collaboration evolved. Additional funding and high-level support within the School also allowed for more in-depth engagement by the School in the project. Overall, the collaboration resulted in an increased understanding for both the discipline academics and the LLAs of the particular needs of students learning to write with academic rigour in the exercise and nutrition disciplines, while simultaneously establishing a shared responsibility for such learning between the School and support services. It is anticipated that the in-depth interchange of expertise that informed the project

will result in better student understanding of academic integrity in their disciplines than would have been achievable by either working in isolation.

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