



From diagnosis to cure? Exploring a reflective partnership journey to improve university wide knowledge on academic misconduct

Key Words

collaboration, consultation, academic misconduct, resources

Abstract

Our academic learning team is often approached with requests to heal individual students who have come down with a case of academic misconduct. These 'patients' are seen on a case-by-case basis and the cure involves taking an educative approach to developing the students academically. However, after an epidemic of cases in a school, a course coordinator called a crisis meeting. This meeting was attended by interested people from across the organisation with the aim of first diagnosing the problem and then setting on a journey of discovery to find a cure. At first, most academics blamed both the University for allowing weaker students to enrol and then the students for not having the academic rigour required of the academic scholarly path. This presentation is the reflective journey of discovery taken by passionate working group with a clear mission to improve the collective knowledge of academic misconduct and to create a single repository for staff and students to access resources. The start of the project was to ascertain the cause and diagnose the situation. The finding was that this was a multi-faceted problem; a combination of poor procedures that are not adhered to and genuine gaps in knowledge of what constitutes academic misconduct and how to avoid it. This finding pertained to staff as well as students. Having identified the gap, the next step was to simplify the procedures in easy to read flow charts; one for students and another for staff. At the end of each stage a wider university consultation was held - workshops for staff and reference groups for students - each group gave constructive feedback which we reflected on and used to improve the next iteration. Our task was then to create meaningful resources that were educative. Visuals of real-life scenarios of academic misconduct that would appeal to a diverse group were designed by our Innovative Media Production Service (IMPS). To ensure the appeal of the resources, the student reference group was consulted for feedback. This reflective process was a partnership among practitioners who had a common goal, to create awareness and educate stakeholders of the procedures and practices involved in academic misconduct. This is an example of ALL involvement in a grass-roots project with a passionate working party that put biases aside to create a vibrant hub of academic misconduct resources with the unexpected outcome of influencing institutional change. There are no "quick fixes" to healing academic misconduct (Morris & Carroll, 2016), and we may never be able to cure the problem entirely. But as a team we have managed to diagnose a few causes, discovered new treatments, formed strong partnerships and create resources as a preventative measure.

References

Morris, E. J., & Carroll, J. (2016). Developing a Sustainable Holistic Institutional Approach: Dealing with Realities "on the Ground" When Implementing an Academic Integrity Policy. In T. Bretag (Ed.), *Handbook of academic Integrity* (pp. 449-462). Singapore: Springer.