



‘Empowering the Conversation’: a partnership approach to academic integrity.

Key Words

partnership, academic integrity, academic practice, community of practice

Abstract

Conversations with learners about integrity issues are often difficult and confronting. The complexities of these conversations are often clouded by the different disciplines they occur within (Bretag, 2016). The Learning Centre at UNSW Australia has been the ‘go to’ place for helping learners on the misconduct register to understand their role in this process and to listen to their stories. These conversations have entailed hundreds of hours of individual consultations which have dealt with the learner’s questions, clarifying misunderstandings and listening to individual stories. In conjunction with concerned academics, course workshops were held. It was through these course workshop conversations that the unique nature of the individual communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) was highlighted. This partnership of student and staff (Healy, Flint, & Harrington, 2014) informed the design of a Moodle module, ‘Working with Academic Integrity’. The module takes an interactive approach which fosters an informed conversation about academic integrity and best academic practice. This enables learners to approach their assignments, and to engage with the ideas of other scholars, in an informed and responsible way. This presentation will discuss the design of the module and the feedback of the learners and academics during the implementation phases. Examples of their thoughts will be shared by the use of video, open responses from surveys and written reflective feedback. The response from the learners and staff has been overwhelmingly positive; however, student comments challenge a common assumption that “they know this stuff”! Our findings suggest this is not the case with both undergraduate and master course work students. Two applications are available. The original module, a Directed Mode, is used by the Learning Centre and self-selecting students. It has also been partnered and positively received by ethics officers from numerous Schools. The other application is the Embedded Mode. The Module sits within a specific course so the conversation can be contextualised by lecturers within that community of practice and addresses the needs of specific writing assignments. The Module has also been a springboard for the development of school specific modules which highlight the unique academic practices of the specific fields and the link to professional practice. This conversation with our learners about working with academic integrity and best academic practice has fostered a budding partnership with staff. The key is providing a flexible tool that respects the many voices that need to be heard to be effective. This has the potential to promote a flexible, university-wide open and informed dialogue about academic integrity.

References

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