

Maintaining Academic Integrity: Staff and Student Perspectives

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There has been a lot said at academic conferences and written in academic journals and the popular press about a perceived “plagiarism plague”. The first author has been using an electronic “originality checker” for the past five years to detect plagiarism in student assignments at levels 3 to 10. The second author has experienced the process from the “other end” as a postgraduate student. The authors are interviewing a broad sample of staff and students in order to answer three research questions:

- how do they rate the importance of “maintaining academic integrity” and “acknowledging sources”?
- how do they rate their experiences of “originality checking”?
- how can educational institutions improve their processes ?

The findings so far indicate that most staff are concerned about academic integrity but many are worried that too much time may be taken up in checking originality and dealing with students who have transgressed. Many students were unaware of the issue when they first enrolled but all are keen that they are not penalised for failing to following academic conventions for citations and references.

The availability of a great range of resources on the Internet (including so-called “cheatsites”) has increased the ease with which students can (wittingly or unwittingly) plagiarise the work of others. Fortunately there are now websites like turnitin.com that can be used to detect such plagiarism.

