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Why Students Cheat and How Understanding This Can Help Reduce the Frequency of Academic Misconduct in Higher Education: A Literature Review

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Academic integrity is fundamental to effective education and learning yet cheating continues to occur in diverse forms within the higher education sector. It is essential that students are educated about, and understand the importance of, good academic practice. Strict standards of academic integrity help to ensure that knowledge is acquired in an honest and ethical manner, creating fairness and equity for students, ultimately enriching the student experience at university and the wider society's trust in the value of university education. This literature review synthesizes the many varied reasons why students cheat, as presented in a large body of existing literature. We then turn our attention to what we can do as educators to help reduce the rates of academic misconduct. Factors influencing the propensity of students to cheat are diverse but relatively well understood. Whilst policing and applying appropriate punishments should be part of institutional responses to academic misconduct, it is clear that this is only part of the solution. We emphasize the need for a much broader range of proactive activities to be brought to bear. Many of these are educational in nature and should have benefits for students, staff and institutions beyond discouraging academic misconduct. Resource implication should not be a barrier to their implementation.

Key words: academic misconduct, academic dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism, academic integrity, good academic practice, higher education, university education

Academic scholarship within higher education institutions is expected to be conducted in a manner consistent with principles of equity, morality and honesty. Strict standards of academic integrity help to ensure that the acquisition of knowledge is achieved in an ethically sound and honest manner, creating an environment of fairness for students, promoting trust between students and staff, and ultimately enhancing the student experience at university (Hayes and Introna, 2005).

Upholding good academic practice is paramount for educational organizations. There is a requirement for students to graduate from university having attainted certain skills, abilities and levels of knowledge. If academic integrity is breached through acts of misconduct, universities (and wider society) cannot be sure that students have met their learning objectives and this is troublesome for a number of reasons (Abdolmohammadi and Baker, 2007; Bertram Gallant, 2008).

Firstly, engaging with academic misconduct will directly impact the student's future learning. If, for example, a student were to present a piece of work as their own, when in fact it had been completed by someone else, the feedback that the teacher provides will not necessarily be relevant or helpful to the student. McGowan (2016) highlights the potential concern of creating a 'vicious cycle' whereby if students are not receiving the appropriate feedback and support that they need to enhance their academic growth, they will likely drop behind on content understanding and be more likely to resort to additional acts of academic misconduct in the future.

Academic dishonesty impacts the student directly, but it can also impact the teacher, highlighting a second area of concern. The goal of educators is to help students learn, understand and retain knowledge of discipline specific content. A key part of this process is to assess student development and refine content delivery to meet teaching and learning objectives. If a student cheats, the teacher will not get an accurate picture of that student's true understanding and ability. As such, it will not be possible to identify potential gaps in student learning that need to be addressed and the teacher will not be able to provide the necessary advice to help that student develop. In addition, the teacher may lose the opportunity to adjust and improve their teaching materials for future years if they do not have reliable information on how current students have managed the content (Passow et al., 2006).

Another concern relates to fairness. A student who does not cheat, thereby not receiving any additional assistance, can be disadvantaged compared to those students who do cheat and are not caught (Burgason et al., 2019). It is essential that there is equality for all students within the learning environment and students need to know that the institution actively promotes equal opportunities for all students to succeed fairly. As Passow and colleagues (2006) highlight, all students should be entitled to a fair and just measurement of learning outcomes, which cannot occur if some students are cheating.

Finally, on a larger scale, a subculture of cheating can affect the institution as a whole. If it becomes known that a university has high levels of cheating and that a university does not take cases of misconduct seriously, or does little to rectify the situation, the reputation of the institution will be at risk (Burgason et al., 2019; Parnther, 2020). The wider general public and future employers of graduate students

will no longer hold the university, and its awarded degrees, in high regard. As one faculty member expressed in Marcoux's (2002) investigation of undergraduate students' cheating behaviors, "[if students] go out and they do not really know what they're doing, then it's going to hurt the reputation of the university. And so, what it does, in essence, is cheapen the value of the degree from that university." Reputational costs may not be confined just to the institutions and students concerned, but to the wider sector, adversely affecting the perceived value of higher education (Denisova-Schmidt et al., 2019).

WHY DO STUDENTS CHEAT?

The overwhelming majority of students know, in a general sense, that it is morally and ethically wrong to cheat (Guffey and McCartney, 2008; McGowan, 2016). Despite this, some students still engage in academic misconduct. Researchers have sought to better understand why students engage in academic misconduct and they have identified a number of factors that seem to override a student's integrity and mitigate against the student doing what they know is morally and ethically right. The following factors have been identified as influencing or mediating a student's engagement in academic misconduct:

- lack of understanding of what constitutes academic misconduct
- peers
- honor code and policy at the institutional level
- perceived risk and penalties
- international students and cultural differences
- technology
- teaching environment
- pressures, both internal and external
- a cheating culture
- moral reasoning
- personal attributes including gender, age, grades, discipline of studies, employment, time management skills, and level of satisfaction.

Before elaborating on the research carried out on each of the factors listed above, it is important to acknowledge some of the challenges faced when collecting data in this field. Firstly, self-reporting is key to these studies and the primary technique used in this type of research. A limitation of self-reported data is that the data are vulnerable to issues of dishonesty and to faulty memory recall. Secondly, these studies are essentially observational, which can be useful for detecting associations between variables. However, these associations may be driven by third variables that have not been controlled for, and as such, associations must be interpreted cautiously in terms of any cause-and-effect relationship. Lastly, these studies often focus on links between one factor and academic misconduct, but the list of factors outlined above is not exhaustive, and different combinations of factors may well interact with each other, rather than act in isolation. For example, although gender and specific discipline of study are both known to be associated with propensity to cheat, untangling these effects is challenging when these two factors are interlinked – with different fields of study attracting different gender mixes.

Lack of Understanding of What Constitutes Academic Misconduct

Researchers report that many students engage in academic misconduct because of a lack of solid understanding of good academic practice (Perry, 2010; Busch and Bilgin, 2014). It is argued that the supposed misconduct can sometimes, in fact, be entirely unintentional cheating resulting from ignorance (Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke, 2005; Chen and Chou, 2017). This is particularly true for plagiarism, with research showing that students do not appear to fully understand what plagiarism is and are not able to paraphrase or attribute sources correctly (Bamford and Sergiou, 2005; Elander et al., 2010).

Peers

Peers are also influential in a student's engagement with cheating behaviors (McCabe et al., 2006; Broeckelman-Post, 2008; Makarova, 2017). Firstly, if students believe that their peers are cheating, they will be more likely to cheat themselves (Resurreccion, 2012). This suggests that the behavior of peers provides a norm for cheating (Bowers, 1966; Pan et al., 2019). It has also been found that some students engage in academic misconduct because they are helping out a friend who is struggling (Sutton and Taylor, 2011; Sutherland-Smith, 2013). Related to this, the majority of students report that if they were to discover that a peer had cheated on a piece of work, they would not turn their classmate in (Lim and See, 2001; Rabi et al., 2006; Bayaa Martin Saana et al., 2016; Pupovac et al., 2019; Nyamasvisva et al., 2020).

Honor Code and Policy

Research suggests that institutions that do not have a formal policy or honor code regarding good academic practice are likely to have higher rates of academic dishonesty across the student body (de Lambert et al., 2006). If a university does have an honor code, their students may be less likely to cheat (Bowers, 1966; McCabe and Pavela, 2000; Vandehey et al., 2007). Having a specific policy about good academic practice that is well known to staff and students appears to positively impact student behavior and can reduce the frequency of misconduct cases (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, 2001; McCabe et al., 2002).

Perceived Risk and Penalties

The perceived risk of being caught cheating is a factor that influences student behavior, as does the severity of penalties for being caught (de Lambert et al., 2006; Makarova, 2019). Students are more likely to engage in academic misconduct if they believe that their university does not take it seriously, is not proactive in trying to prevent cheating, and does not consistently and appropriately discipline students who are caught cheating (Zobel, 2004).

Cultural Differences and International Students

Cultural differences are linked to some instances of cheating (Handa and Power, 2005; Sowden, 2005; Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2013; Ison, 2018; Mahmud et al., 2019).

International students can arrive in a new environment where they are exposed to a new language, different teaching styles and are asked to learn content and produce work in a way that differs to their educational experiences thus far (e.g., Hayes and Introna, 2005). Bretag and colleagues (2019) found that students who speak a language other than English at home were more likely to consider cheating and Walker's (2010) findings showed that international students committed plagiarism more than domestic students. In addition, international students may not understand what is meant by plagiarism in their current institution due to different beliefs held in their culture regarding the ownership of ideas (Busch and Bilgin, 2014; James et al., 2019). These changes in approach and in required thinking can be difficult to internalize, especially if expectations are not made explicit. Cultural differences can result in genuine cases of unintentional academic misconduct.

Technology

The rapid growth of the internet, and the ease with which large amounts of digital information can now be accessed, have been linked to an increase in the rates of academic misconduct (Jereb et al., 2018; Ison, 2019; Luck et al., 2021). This appears to be particularly true for plagiarism and contract cheating (Clarke and Lancaster, 2007; Birks et al., 2020).

Teaching Environment

A number of factors relating to the teaching environment have been identified as influencing the cheating behavior of students. These factors can be divided into three categories: the *teachers*, the *classroom*, and the *assessment schedule*.

Research suggests that teachers are influential in whether or not students will engage in academic misconduct (Makarova, 2019). Students are less likely to cheat if their teacher is engaged and interested in their learning experience and if their teacher spends time talking about good academic practice and what their expectations are regarding student honesty (Cole and Kiss, 2000; Broeckelman-Post, 2008). If teachers provide constructive feedback on how to attribute sources correctly, instances of unintentional misconduct can be reduced. Conversely, if teachers do not openly engage with the university policy on academic integrity, students are more likely to engage in unacceptable academic practices (Moss et al., 2018). Some research has shown that students are more likely to cheat when they are taught by non-tenured staff, as opposed to established, permanent members of faculty (Nowell and Laufer, 1997). Students also seem to be more likely to cheat if they do not feel that they can approach their teacher for help, they do not feel that the teacher views their work as important, or they feel that their class has been taught poorly by their teacher (Ashworth et al., 1997; Rabi et al., 2006; Bretag et al., 2019).

Large class teaching and staff-student ratios have been linked to academic dishonesty, with the number of misconduct cases increasing as class sizes rise (Nowell and Laufer, 1997). Students who are not able to integrate successfully with their classmates are also reportedly more likely to resort to cheating behaviors (Calabrese and Cochran, 1990; Bennett, 2005).

A number of aspects of assessment have been linked to a heightened risk of academic misconduct. For example, if students have submission dates that coincide across several different pieces of work or have quick turnaround times for pieces of assessment, they are more likely to consider cheating (Bamford and Sergiou, 2005; Jeergal et al., 2015; Bretag et al., 2020). Likewise, certain aspects of the assessment itself can influence student behavior. This includes assessment items that are considered by the students to be too time consuming, too difficult, or too easy (McGowan, 2016). Past research has suggested that the move away from examinations, towards an increased reliance on continuous assessment, has increased the opportunities that students have to cheat (Walker, 1998). Interestingly, recent work by Harper and colleagues (2020) suggests, based on student self-reported data, that students may cheat more frequently in exam-based assessments, than previously believed. As such, a move to exams to avoid continuous assessment and associated forms of cheating may not be a full proof solution. Finally, there is research to suggest that using the same pieces of assessment year after year or for re-sit exams and using group work to contribute towards summative assessment may also contribute to rates of cheating (Ashworth et al, 1997; Lim and See, 2001; Rabi et al., 2006; Sutherland-Smith, 2013).

Pressures

Students experience a number of different academic and social pressures, both internally and externally, while they complete their degrees. Some of these pressures have been linked to academic misconduct. The pressure to succeed and a fear of failure have been reported by students as a reason for why they have cheated or why they would cheat (Abdolmohammadi and Baker, 2007; Jeergal et al., 2015). These could be pressures that they are placing on themselves to pass a module, achieve good grades and/or to be able to secure employment in the future (Nuss, 1984; Bayaa Martin Saana et al., 2016). It could also be related to external parental pressures placed on the student, especially if attending university has financial implications for the family (Bennett, 2005; Bayaa Martin Saana et al., 2016).

Cheating Culture

If students successfully cheat, there is a risk that this type of behavior becomes normalized (Moss et al., 2018; Tee and Curtis, 2018). If there is a belief that cheating occurs within an institution, a cheating culture is likely to develop making it more probable that current and future students will engage in misconduct (Selingo, 2004; McCabe, 2005).

Moral Values

Some researchers have suggested that cheating behaviors are driven by an erosion of moral values or the underdevelopment of moral reasoning in students (Belanger et al., 2012; Edmondson, 2013). For example, significant

negative correlations between moral reasoning scores and acts of plagiarism have been found (Abdolmohammadi and Baker; 2007; Guo, 2011). Students have also been described as being 'morally ambivalent' when it comes to academic misconduct and their willingness to tolerate the cheating behaviors of their peers (Lim and See, 2001). Vandehey and colleagues (2007) found that non-cheating students presented with higher moral reasoning compared to their cheating peers and Bennett (2005) found that students who held strong moral positions disapproved of plagiarism and were less likely to engage in plagiarism. Additional research has shown that if students have a teacher that they respect, that teacher can act as a strong 'moral anchor' for their students and potentially deter their students from engaging in misconduct (Simkin and McLeod, 2010).

Personal Attributes

A number of personal attributes have been identified in the literature as having an impact on a student's academic behaviors. These include gender, age, grades, discipline of studies, employment status, time management skills and level of satisfaction with university experience.

Studies investigating the role that gender plays in academic misconduct show mixed results. The majority of research shows that males are more likely to cheat than females (e.g. Bowers, 1966; Davis et al., 1992; Smith et al., 2007; Hensley et al., 2013; Yu et al., 2017; Jereb et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018; Denisova-Schmidt et al., 2019), but some work suggests that this gender difference may not exist (e.g., Baird, 1980; Ward and Beck, 1990; Bokosmaty et al., 2019) or that females may in fact cheat more than males (e.g., Graham et al., 1994; Shaw et al., 2015).

Some research shows that younger students are more likely to cheat, compared to older students (e.g., Graham et al., 1994; Chapman et al., 2004; Walker, 2010). Those achieving lower grades and those who are failing, or are at risk of failing, are more likely to commit misconduct than top achieving students (e.g., Graham et al., 1994; Newstead et al., 1996; Chapman et al., 2004; Smith et al., 2007). There is also literature to suggest that students in some academic disciplines are more likely to cheat. For example, research has shown that the rates of academic misconduct are noticeably high in the business studies and nursing disciplines (e.g., Brown, 2002; Chapman et al., 2004; McCabe et al., 2006; O'Leary and Pangemanan, 2007; McCabe, 2009; Wideman, 2011; Hensley et al., 2013). Students are also more likely to cheat if they have part-time employment during their studies, compared to students who are not employed while they complete their degree (Nowell and Laufer, 1997; Chapman et al., 2004; Bennett, 2005; Yu et al., 2017).

Poor time management, time pressure and procrastination have been suggested as reasons why students are guilty of academic misconduct (e.g., Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead, 1995; Roig and DeTommaso, 1995; Ferrari and Beck, 1998; Lim and See, 2001; Bamford and Sergiou, 2005; Guo, 2011; Goh, 2015). And finally, dissatisfaction with a module or a course can result in lower levels of interest, a poorer work ethic, and reduced productivity. Ultimately this discontentment can make it more probable that a student will cheat (Hayes and Introna, 2005; Smith et al, 2007; Chen and Chou, 2017).

The complexity of academic misconduct, as an issue within our education system, is clearly evident when you look at the diverse range of factors that can be used to explain why some students cheat. All of these factors need to be considered whenever attempts are made to design an effective strategy to reduce the incidence of academic misconduct.

HOW DO WE PREVENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AT UNIVERSITY?

Academic misconduct is an important teaching and learning issue, and as such, the higher education sector plays a key role in ensuring that students are educated effectively and thoroughly and that academic integrity standards are upheld (Macdonald and Carroll, 2006; Bertram Gallant, 2008; Chesney, 2009; Birks et al., 2020). Universities have a responsibility to be proactive in the process so that students develop an understanding of what constitutes good academic practice and academic dishonesty. If universities become directly and openly involved in this educational process as a whole, rather than simply focusing on punitive approaches when good academic practices are breached, the number of academic misconduct cases could be reduced (Devlin, 2006; McGowan, 2016; Perkins et al., 2020).

McGowan (2016) discusses the importance of presenting "core values within a culture" by highlighting the need for universities to present a united front regarding the understanding and reinforcement of good academic practice policies and procedures. This requires the institution, the faculties, the schools/departments and the staff to have a uniform understanding of what academic integrity means and to actively reinforce this shared understanding across all levels of the institution (Devlin, 2006; McGowan, 2016). There are specific strategies that can be adopted at each level of the institution to help reduce rates of cheating, which are outlined below, but it is important to remember that each level of the institution needs to actively engage with these strategies in unison if we are to have a significant impact on the academic behavior of students.

The Institution and the Faculty/School/Department

Research suggests that an institution specific policy, integrity code or honor code, can help to create a climate of academic integrity, ultimately reducing rates of academic misconduct (Martin, 1992; Brown and Howell, 2001; Parnther, 2020). This, however, will only work if the policy or code is known to each department within the university, and is also clearly understood by students (Kibler, 1992, 1994; McCabe, 2005; Parnther, 2020). It is stressed that if policies and honor codes are to be effective, the approach must be holistic in nature (Macdonald and Carroll, 2006; Perkins et al., 2020). There must be a unified understanding and support of academic integrity that is seen across the whole institution (Kibler, 1992; Macdonald and Carroll, 2006; Birks et al., 2020) and students must be given the

opportunity to actively engage with the institution's policy and receive educational training on good academic practice. Institutions also have a duty to ensure that students know where to go for help should they have any concerns regarding academic practice (Devlin, 2006; McGowan, 2016). This could include support for writing and source attribution skills, study skills and content related queries (Perkins et al., 2020). It is believed that if students can get the support they need, it may prevent them from seeing cheating as an option (or their only viable option).

Providing academic integrity training for our students appears to be an integral part of the education offered at higher education institutions and is essential in helping our students develop an understanding of and appreciation for good academic practice. This view is supported by Bolin's (2004) work which links academic dishonesty to the larger context of deviant behavior and delinquency. Bolin's findings suggest that cheating behavior is well explained by a student's lack of self-control, their perceived opportunity for cheating and the interaction of these two factors. Bolin also found an association between academic dishonesty and a student's attitude toward dishonesty, a finding shared by Salter and colleagues. (2001). This work suggests that there are links between a student's actual engagement in cheating and the student's tolerance for cheating, their perception of whether or not the university accepts cheating, and the student's level of cynicism. Bolin believes that student attitudes greatly influence one's engagement with cheating and argues that attitudes can be altered more easily than personality traits. As such, Bolin recommends that an institution's intervention be focused on altering a student's attitude towards dishonesty, by having honor codes in place that are visible to students across the institution and educating students that academic misconduct is not accepted within the institution.

In addition to having a clear and accessible policy, institutions are also encouraged to have procedures in place to monitor potential breaches of academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism detection software; Jocoy and DiBiase, 2006). These procedures, and associated penalties, must be upheld in all departments across the institution and be visible to students. Should misconduct be discovered, the institution must be seen to consistently follow through with the appropriate punishments (McCabe and Pavela, 1997; Martin, 2005; Devlin, 2006; Evans, 2006; Brent and Atkisson, 2011).

The Teaching Staff

The staff-student relationship is vital, playing a powerful role in helping to reduce cases of academic misconduct, and as such, researchers have long argued that this is a relationship that needs to be developed and fostered (Oaks, 1975; Hardy, 1982; Stearns, 2001). Broeckelman-Post (2008) highlights the positive opportunity that an advisor-advisee type relationship brings in terms of staff being able to discuss specific expectations regarding good academic practice with students and also specific academic conventions, such as source attribution. Broeckelman-Post's research showed that being able to have these types of discussions with students was particularly successful when the discussion was targeted to a specific piece of assessment, rather than addressing good academic practice more generally. Additional researchers also stress the importance of staff directly educating their students about academic misconduct, providing students with feedback about their academic practice (e.g., correctly attributing sources) and engaging students in an open discussion about the significance and value of good academic practice (Hardy, 1982; McBurney, 1996; Overbey and Guiling, 1999; Lim and See, 2001; Landau et al., 2002; Bamford and Sergiou, 2005).

Broeckelman-Post (2008) makes an interesting argument about the clarity of teaching that students receive. Much research shows that teacher clarity is linked to an increase in student learning of course content (McCaleb and White, 1980; Land, 1981; Chesebro, 2003; Comadena et al., 2007; Titsworth et al., 2015). Broeckelman-Post argues that the same could be said for the teaching of good academic practice. If students are taught about academic integrity in a clear manner, they may be more likely to understand and retain the principles. With an increased understanding comes a potential reduction in academic dishonesty. Handa and Power (2005) suggest that one way to increase the clarity of academic integrity teaching is to use a workshop-based approach where students complete practical exercises designed to both assess their understanding and to assess their ability to apply their understanding to different situations. This approach is also supported by Pecorari (2013) and Gunnarsson et al. (2014). Kibler (1994) also favors such an approach but does stress that this learning opportunity cannot be a one-off experience. Kibler believes that students need to encounter lessons on academic integrity and misconduct more regularly throughout their degree.

The types of assessment used by teachers, and the way the assessment is presented, can impact academic honesty (Devlin, 2006). Suggestions to help prevent academic misconduct include using multiple versions of tests or exams, setting different exams and assignments each year, and using a variety of assessment types (e.g., oral presentations, viva voces, invigilated exams and tests, and reflective or problem-based assessments; Oaks, 1975; Hardy, 1982; Rabi et al., 2006; Goh, 2015; Lines, 2016; Morris, 2018; Awdry and Newton, 2019; Sotiriadou et al., 2020).

The personality of the teacher can also influence students' academic behavior. If a student respects their teacher, sees that their teacher is personally invested in their learning and views their teacher as friendly and approachable, that student will be less likely to act in a dishonest manner (Andersen and Andersen, 1987; Ashworth et al., 1997; Stearns, 2001; Rabi et al., 2006).

The importance of contributions from teachers and higher education institutions in ensuring that our students understand academic integrity has long been understood, as highlighted in the following quote: "No matter what the faculty member may think, if the student does not consider a form of cheating wrong, he will have no scruples about doing it." (Oaks, 1975). This reminds us of the importance of appropriately educating students about good practice and

academic misconduct (Richardson and Healy, 2019). One cannot assume that students will share our understanding of these concepts and as such it falls to educators to ensure students receive appropriate training and that through our instruction, they understand what is considered right and wrong.

An under-explored potential mechanism for reducing academic misconduct is to have teachers better inform students about the rationale behind assessments. Academic misconduct might be reduced if students 'buy in' to the reasons why specific assessments are utilized. For example, students might be less likely to engage in misconduct if they perceive the assessment to be fair, relevant, and sympathetic to other pressures on the student. More radically, academic misconduct might decline if students perceive that they have had some influence over the nature of the assessment. For example, students could be given a choice of alternative assessment types, or some influence over the setting of submission deadlines. Such influence could be exerted at a whole-class or individual level.

Educating Not Just Students, but also Staff

As illustrated above, academic literature powerfully highlights the importance of students developing a thorough and accurate understanding of academic integrity and academic misconduct. There is no question that educating students about this fundamental component of academia is a must for higher education institutions. Another crucial consideration, however, relates to staff and their understanding of these concepts. Are staff familiar with the university policy on good academic practice? Do staff know how to deal with cases of misconduct if they come across them? Are staff likely to act at all in these situations? Is there consistency between colleagues across the different university schools and departments in terms of how cases are dealt with (this is especially important when students take a range of courses across different subject areas)? These are important questions that need to be addressed, because if consistency does not exist across the institution, we cannot expect students to understand academic integrity and uphold good academic practice.

Literature to date shows that many staff are unfamiliar with their institution's policies on good academic practice and that they are unsure how to deal with a case of misconduct, should it arise (Simon et al, 2001; Pickard, 2006). There appears to be reluctance from staff to follow their institution's policy when they observe cheating (Jendrek, 1989; McCabe and Trevino, 1993), with some staff stating that they prefer to deal with misconduct cases informally, on a one-to-one basis (Nuss, 1984; Jendrek, 1989; Schneider, 1999; Simon et al., 2001; Harper et al., 2019). A number of staff even admit that they do not apply any form of punishment if they do catch students engaging in academic misconduct (Barrett and Cox, 2005; Busch and Bilgin, 2014; Harper et al., 2019). This has not gone unnoticed by students who often view staff as being more lenient, compared to their institution's formal policy, when it comes to punishments for academic misconduct cases (McCabe et al., 2002).

Academic staff report a number of reasons for why they do not actively police misconduct cases. Sometimes staff feel that they do not have the necessary evidence for a conviction (Simon et al., 2001; Busch and Bilgin, 2014), that the process is cumbersome and too time consuming (McCabe, 1993; Schneider, 1999; Busch and Bilgin, 2014), or that the institution will not support their case (Schneider, 1999; Busch and Bilgin, 2014). Faculty have expressed a fear that students will no longer like them, and that students and staff may no longer view them as good teachers if they pursue a claim of academic misconduct against a student (Schneider, 1999; Simon et al., 2001). There are also faculty who are concerned that they may ultimately be sued if they go through the formal channels of reporting a student (Schneider, 1999). Additional explanations for why some staff are reluctant to get involved in cases of misconduct include being unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the formal processes (Simon et al., 2001), not being willing to give up control of the situation (Schneider, 1999), and simply feeling that it is not worth the aggravation or the anxiety (Schneider, 1999). Finally, some staff feel that actively controlling the academic integrity of students is not viewed as important by the institution (Li, 2015).

When asked to rate the severity of different forms of misconduct, staff tend to rate the acts more seriously than their students do (Roberts and Toombs, 1993; Roig and Ballew, 1994; Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead, 1995; Duff, 1998; Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke, 2005; de Lambert et al., 2005), and when asked to estimate the prevalence of misconduct, staff tend to underestimate how frequently students are cheating compared to both students' estimates of prevalence (Duff, 1998; Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke, 2005) and students' actual self-reported rates of misconduct (Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke, 2005).

Staff need to be educated about their institution's stance on academic misconduct so that they know and agree to:

1. what they expect of their students. This will help ensure that students get the same message and information from staff, not just within the same school or department, but also across the university.
2. what they expect of themselves. This includes having a shared understanding of how the different forms of misconduct are defined at their institution.
3. what their institutional policy is for dealing with cases of misconduct, thereby understanding the process that they must go through to report cases, and also understanding how the severity of a case is determined.

CONCLUSION

The existence of academic misconduct has been well documented since the 1960s through numerous studies carried out across the higher education sector (e.g., see Parnther, 2020). In order to protect the academic integrity of qualifications and institutions, and the credibility of awards gained by students, it is crucial that findings from research into co-factors of academic misconduct are used to better manage and prevent misconduct. The main reasons why students cheat have been identified. The risk factors involved, however, are complex and as the number of

factors compounds, the likelihood of cheating increases. In addition to reactive strategies, such as applying punitive measures to discourage cheating, preventative strategies are equally valuable. Educating students appropriately about *good* academic practice and different forms of misconduct is particularly important and should be part of institutional responses to mitigating the risks from academic misconduct. Evidence suggests that this positively influences the academic choices made by students in relation to cheating and helps students to avoid risk factors. How students are informed is also important. Directly (and repeatedly) engaging students in activities relating to good academic practice and misconduct, so they truly have the opportunity to learn in an engaged and active manner, is the most effective approach. At a policy level, institutions need to manage misconduct transparently and consistently. Part of this process is checking staff understanding of academic misconduct and providing training for staff as necessary. Effective strategies need not be resource or time intensive. Furthermore, any additional time and resources invested in these strategies should be offset by a reduction in academic misconduct cases. These strategies will empower both students and staff, offer educational benefits in helping improve student understanding of good academic practices, and help protect the reputations of individual students, individual institutions and fields of study, and the whole higher education sector.

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