

## Academic Integrity in Higher Education: Upholding Ethics, Fostering Growth

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### ABSTRACT

The following research paper looks at the issue of academic integrity in higher education institutions while noting the significance of the concept for growth and development. It looks at acts of academic fraud and cheating like copying, Examination misconduct, and falsifying information, and the impact they have on the students' future. Therefore, there is a need for institutions to come up with specific policies that deal with ethical conduct of individuals as well as foster the formation of necessary academic skills that can enable people to uphold integrity. Moreover, the paper includes evaluation of own learning derived from certain specific events, supplemented with theoretical examples such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and Kolb's Learning Cycle to explain how these theories work in the actual educational process. The investigation showed that maintaining the culture of integrity inculcates the learners' moral and intellectual development as well as equips them for the ethical demands that they are likely to encounter in real life.

**Keywords:** Academic Integrity; Higher Education; Ethical Behavior; Academic Misconduct; Personal and Professional Development

### Introduction

This portfolio has the purpose of explaining the value and significance of academic integrity in higher education as well as the implications of academic misconduct. Maintaining honesty in academic work is critical for the success of any student.

Students acquire morals and principles through the practice of academic honesty (Roberts and Denney, 2022).

The value of maintaining one's intellectual integrity may be seen in every facet of any individual life. It is essential for students to be able to differentiate between appropriate

and inappropriate behaviours and the repercussions that follows while also required to act accordingly when in a setting designed for learning (Bretag, 2017; Ozen and Yildirim, 2020; Tapingkae, et al., 2020). Academic integrity is the commitment to and demonstration of moral and honest conduct in an academic setting. Regarding giving credit to others when using their ideas, this is most pertinent at the university level. In the simplest terms, it involves recognising the contributions of others and the absence of such acknowledgement serves as plagiarism (George, 2022; Miss, 2021; Cameron, S., & Cameron, 2020).

Students will be expected to adhere to certain standards and guidelines when performing research projects, writing papers, or essays on assigned themes in a classroom setting, all these falling into the category of academic integrity. This entails abstaining from plagiarism, submitting authentic research, and following other moral guidelines (Tricia, 2022; Chaddah, 2021; Morah, 2021). According to Bretag (2017), academic integrity also relates to a person's conduct away from a school or other learning environment.

Academic misconduct, sometimes known as dishonesty, is a significant infraction that can have an impact on a student's future when it occurs when a student consistently violates academic integrity. Therefore, the importance of providing learners with information about academic integrity as well as how they can maintain it cannot be overstated (Bretag, 2017).

## **Literature Review**

### ***Discussion of the importance of Academic Integrity in higher education***

The term 'academic integrity' refers to the values deemed indispensable to university study (Roberts and Denney, 2022). Some of the fundamental values to which the universities adhere are as follows:

- Trust- having the ability to produce true, thoughtful, and authentic work.
- Honesty - telling the truth about the research methods, conclusions, and which concepts are one's own and those that were borrowed from others.
- Fairness - refraining from using unethical tactics to gain advantage, such as misrepresenting other people's work as your own.
- Responsibility - actively participating in your education, such as by continuously searching for the knowledge you need to successfully study.
- Respect - for your peers, professors, and academic peers' works.
- Courage - taking a stand to correct an injustice and defending one's honour (Roberts and Denney, 2022).

Understanding and upholding the academic values expected in a scholastic community constitute academic integrity. Students agree to have their work screened for instances of plagiarism, collusion, and other forms of deception (Sutherland-Smith, 2018).

Preparing materials for evaluation is an integral element of the learning process and it enables one to demonstrate his comprehension of concepts and employ what one have learned in a variety of

contexts. Assessment facilitates the growth of analytical skills, evaluative judgement, communication skills, and presentation abilities, which are necessary skills for graduates (Cameron, 2016).

Primarily, excellent academic practise involves submitting only original work and, it also entails utilising credible sources of information and giving proper credit to the authors and creators of ideas and materials used in your work (Cameron, 2016).

The majority of students do this and continue to behave morally in their future employment. Universities supply the tools required to guarantee that the experience is enhanced and to uphold the integrity of the degrees, the University, and the individual. By supporting behaviours in the workplace and focusing on ones own ethical behaviour in all parts of life, good scholarly practise will set one for success (Bretag, 2017).

Academic integrity is crucial because it fosters development. It helps learners flourish when they are encouraged to come up with original ideas. Students will work harder to come up with creative ideas if copying is forbidden, hence they will engage in brainstorming to the maximum extent possible, increasing their capacity to produce unique, creative ideas and developing their self-confidence as a result, which helps them advance both personally and professionally. When students are motivated to complete their projects on their own, their hidden talents and abilities will emerge (Roberts and Denney, 2022).

Additionally, it aids people in improving their interpersonal abilities, which will help them accomplish their goals and will be beneficial to them in their academic and future professional endeavours. Not only does it fosters in students a sense of independence and self-worth that they can achieve things on their own without outside

support, but the learning principles become comprehensive for them (Cottrell, 2019).

However, when students finish their assignments without engaging in academic dishonesty, it means they're actually learning, which contributes to knowledge acquisition. A student's future is at risk if, for example, they cheat on an exam. Additionally, the student will learn nothing from the lessons they are being taught in class. Students won't be able to achieve higher things in life if they don't learn anything in school. Academic dishonesty interferes with learning in this way (Sutherland-Smith, 2018).

Roberts and Denney (2022) mentioned that academic integrity can be encouraged using classroom conversations, disciplinary measures and school procedures. It is further explained that teachers can discuss the significance of academic integrity in the classroom and in this manner, students will learn how to maintain honesty.

Through instruction, students can be exposed to academic dishonesty. Universities can also let students know what happens if they act in a way that calls into question the integrity of their education (George, 2022).

Students who cheat on exams may face disciplinary action from their schools, which will teach them the repercussions of their behaviour. This encourages individuals to finish their academic work on their own, without using unethical tactics, and so encourages good behaviour.

Teachers should make sure that kids are aware of school rules in a similar manner. If not, tell them what it is and see if they have any questions. When they follow the rules and laws of the institution, learners understand the value of academic integrity and why it counts to follow the rules.

## Discussion

### *Discussion of the implications of academic misconduct*

Violations of university or college regulations constitute academic misconduct. Cheating can be broadly defined as any action that helps or attempts to obtain an unfair academic advantage for oneself or others. Academic misconduct is alleged if you engage in contract trickery, collusion, plagiarism, or data fabrication. Students must adhere to the rules of conduct, specifically those prohibiting academic misconduct (Tricia Bertram Gallant, 2022).

The types of academic misconduct widely mentioned are:

- Plagiarism refers to more than just “copying” or “using” another person’s ideas, concepts, thoughts, or writing. It entails appropriating, distorting, and then presenting as one’s own ideas the ideas of others. Whether a student is a senior or a beginner, everyone at educational institutions, who is expected to do scholarly work must respect intellectual honesty and transparency as members of the institution or academic community (Montoneri, 2020).

As a result, authors of journals, research papers, and articles should be treated with respect, and any instances of contract cheating, data falsification, subpar scholarship, misconduct, or a lack of citation and referencing that obstruct the completion of the learning process are regarded as unethical and may have serious repercussions in the future.

In an educational setting, one must not only know how to use other academics’ works, but also how to correctly reference them in order to avoid disappointing others or undermining the tenets of academic debate (George, 2022). As a result, plagiarism is a critical component of academic dishonesty. Academic publications such as research journals require students and scholars to submit original work. Reading related articles online may result in the alteration or duplication of a given idea or opinion without providing appropriate citations or references (Montoneri, 2020). Academic writing may involve any type of plagiarism, including paraphrasing, self-plagiarism, mosaic plagiarism, and direct plagiarism. A reliable plagiarism detector will help you avoid using duplicate information in your writing (Sutherland-Smith, 2018). All file kinds, including excel, ppt, pdf, and docx, are supported by the scanner and the application allows you to compare numerous files or two separate ones side by side in different languages using your laptop or mobile device (Sutherland-Smith, 2018).

- Cheating means using another person’s work, information, writing, materials, methods, or devices to complete academic tasks. As per example, theft and submitting the work of others as your own is a prohibited practise and other instances of plagiarism include the unauthorised use of notes and textbooks during a test, the provision of one’s materials to another student for copying during a test or individual activity (Tricia, 2022).
- Misrepresentation is carried out with the goal of misleading the

lecturer or instructor and to gain an academic advantage. In order to raise your grade, it also entails lying to your teacher. Misrepresentation also includes using someone person's words without attribution and claiming that you came up with them (Tricia, 2022).

- A student may engage in academic dishonesty if he or she reuses or republishes previously submitted work. Self-plagiarism is committed when a previous assignment or research paper is used in whole or in part to compose a new assignment or paper (Sutherland-Smith, 2018).
- Collusion refers to a group of students deceitfully collaborating on an assignment that is meant to be completed by each student alone. The students' work will contain the same answer or solution, but it may be portrayed differently as a result of alternative sentence patterns or paraphrasing. When a task is performed and turned in collectively rather than individually, it is considered to have been cheated (Sutherland-Smith, 2018).
- It is also mentioned that sometimes when a student submits the same research paper or assignment for two distinct classes without the teachers' consent, this constitutes a duplicate submission. It makes little difference if the student submits the paper in two separate semesters. During either semester, he or she must obtain permission from both instructors (Sutherland-Smith, 2018).

- Another type of misconduct is when without the permission of a teacher or author, it is academic malfeasance to distribute faculty or author intellectual property (Sutherland-Smith, 2018).

### ***Reflection and definition of academic skills used to prevent academic misconduct***

People need academic skills in order to excel in a learning environment. In order to succeed in their degrees, students in colleges and universities are expected to have highly developed academic skills (Cameron, 2016).

Academic skills go beyond just cognitive abilities (higher level thinking). A competent student also requires a broad range of soft skills, including communication and organisational abilities (Cottrell, 2019).

Academic institutions can impose official sanctions for academic misconduct. The remaining consequences are associated with social, moral, ethical, and academic concerns and revolves around the following:

- Social consequences, explained as it is observed that deception can negatively affect a student's honesty and diligence. Students who frequently cheat in academic activities will continue to lie throughout their lives. This attitude will persist in the family, social life, and workplace, affecting everyone associated with the individual (Montoneri, 2020).

- Incorrect evaluations whereas the majority of college students find it challenging to submit academic papers without plagiarised content. They engage in intentional or mechanical copying because the Internet provides access to anything and everything. Borrowing the ideas of others is sometimes unavoidable; however, failing to provide proper citations and references constitutes deception or plagiarism (Montoneri, 2020).
- Legal Consequences; Students participating in live initiatives funded by organisations and government agencies are expected to submit their work independently. Any form of plagiarism, data fabrication, deception, or falsification can result in project cancellation and legal action against the educational institution, including lawsuits, fines, and penalties (Montoneri, 2020).

Whether it is a student, teacher, or instructor, academic malfeasance can be avoided to a large extent by having academic papers scanned for duplicate content by the anti-plagiarism software. It provides a detailed report after conducting a comprehensive search for duplicate and paraphrased content.

***Reflection on my personal learning journey for this academic year, using one of the reflective models such as a Gibbs' Reflective Cycle or Kolb's Learning Cycle***

Reflection is a method for gaining insight into the field of practise through analytical consideration of any aspect of it (Hunt,

2021). The acquired knowledge and lessons can be used to preserve good practise as well as to advance and improve services provided by professionals to their clients (Libguides, 2022).

Reflecting on my journey of inquiry-based learning is a very satisfying activity. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that I would not be here if not for my incessant inquiry along the way. Some questions have been addressed, while others have transformed into more elucidating inquiries. I believe that asking questions is essential to developing knowledge and insight, and ultimately helps students make sense of their environment. I concur, and I believe that my questioning has enabled me to come back to the very first queries I posed on this voyage. Now is the time to determine whether my newly acquired skills and understanding of inquiry-based learning enable me to confidently address these initial concerns.

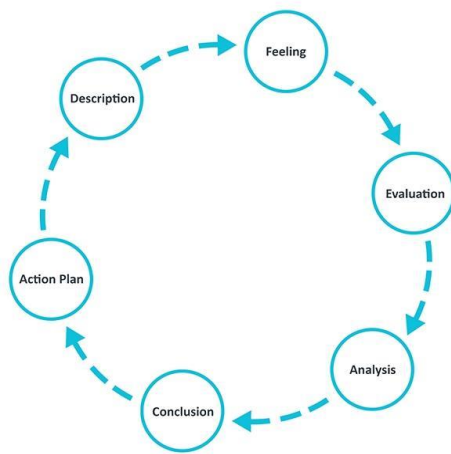
Graham Gibbs constructed the GRC model in 1988. He desired to establish a framework for learning from diverse experiences. The paradigm provides a framework for analysing past experiences. A crucial aspect of Gibb's Reflective Cycle is that it is cyclical, making it suitable for experiences that repeat themselves and enabling one to learn from events or circumstances that went remarkably well or terribly wrong.

The model consists of six stages that permit reflection on an experience and, as a result, the development of improved strategies for handling similar or similar future experiences. The six phases include describing, evaluating, analysing, and drawing conclusions regarding an experience, how it made one feel, and developing an action plan for future

experiences that are similar or related (Gibbs, 2010).

In the event of an alike or related experience, reflection is an essential asset one can rely upon. It empowers scholars

who exploit it regularly. Focused pondering (or reflection) has numerous benefits, including enhancing comprehension and self-awareness (Gibbs, 2010).

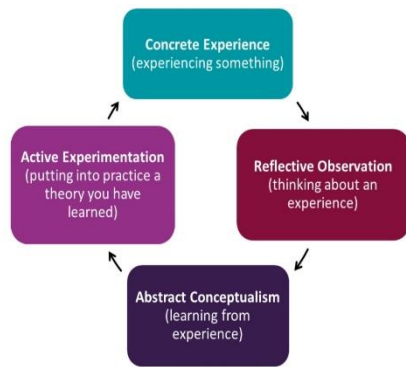


**Figure 1:** Gibbs' reflective cycle (The University of Edinburgh, 2020).

The essence of Kolb's theory is that people learn through action. Kolb's theory is especially intriguing due to its emphasis on the learner's perspective and personal growth. In contrast to the conventional, didactic method, the individual oversees the learning process in experiential learning (Kolb, 2014).

According to Kolb (2014), learning is a four-stage, continuous process in which the

learner acquires knowledge from each new experience. His theory views learning as an integrated process in which one perpetually generates and implements improvement ideas. Effective learning, can only occur when a cycle of four phases is completed: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 2014).



**Figure 2 :** Kolbs' Learning Cycle (Libguides, 2022).

In the initial phase of the cycle an individual has an experience that functions as the basis for observation. An individual is exposed to a *concrete experience* that affords an opportunity for learning. According to Kolb's theory, an individual cannot learn through observation or reading alone. The objective is for the individual to actively engage in the experience in order to gain knowledge from it (Libguides, 2022).

Before making judgements, the individual engages in *reflective observation* during the second phase of the process. Attention is paid to any discrepancies between experience and comprehension. The objective is for the individual to analyse the circumstance and derive meaning from the experience.

Individuals develop hypotheses to explain their experiences through *abstract conceptualization*. This analysis frequently generates a new concept or modifies an existing one. The person finds reoccurring themes, challenges, and/or problems throughout this phase, which will help them in future learning scenarios. The goal is to come up with ideas that can be used in the future (Libguides, 2022).

*Active experimentation:* Participants apply what they have learnt to a new circumstance in the final stage. They use their theories to address issues, make choices, and/or affect people or events. The student employs application-based experimentation to test theories and takes judicious risks. The goal is to apply the ideas to various and fresh situations in order to find ways to get better (Libguides, 2022).

For my personal learning journey reflection I have chosen Gibbs reflective cycle.

**Description**

I am reflecting on an assessment that involved a PowerPoint presentation in groups of four musketeers, which provided me with a clear understanding of how certain colleagues perceive me and how crucial it is to be able to overcome anxiety and maintain focus, especially during group tasks and presentations. The division of labour has occurred, everyone has learned their respective roles, and now comes the moment of truth.

**Feelings**



During the group presentation, I experienced a range of emotions, including emotional distress and resentment towards one of the girls in the class who was filming the presentation and expressing her jealousy by saying horrible things about me that she believed no one could hear. I also felt a sense of responsibility for the team, as I had been selected as the leader, as well as anxiety, as I was the one who would begin the presentation and needed to find the perfect phrase to grab everyone's attention. Due to the realisation that I was being filmed, my pulse rate increased and I felt tense. At this time, my emotions began to take control, increasing my determination to succeed. My strength was my abrupt realisation that I had assumed control, but there was still apprehension of discomfort until everyone had left. One group member had what appeared to be a panic attack at the conclusion of his presentation, as he began to shake his hands and stared at the transparencies. At this point, I became more dominant; I began encouraging him by passing him the tablet containing our notes and reassuring him that he is not alone by holding his arm. Although there was maximal team effort, I believe that my optimistic nature fostered a positive environment. Even though we performed "excellently," I was extremely depressed when it was over. I felt overtired, exhausted.

### ***Evaluation***

My positive experience was that my group was enthusiastic and rewarded me with thoughtful remarks for acting as spokesperson; this made me feel appreciated that my group acknowledged my efforts. Camera discouragement and hearing those remarks repeatedly in the background were flaws. Due to my high level of empathy, I feel ashamed that I even

paid attention to such matters and gave them such importance. Consequently, this experience has taught me that I need to develop more self-control.

### ***Analysis***

My experience indicates that the negative outweighed the positive because more responsibilities were assigned to me. As a result of my analysis of the situation, my skills demonstrate leadership, verbal communication, and tolerance. In retrospect, the result of my sentiments may have been that I am an empathic leader, and instead of concentrating on monitoring and evaluating progress, I allowed negative comments to affect me and my efforts, particularly near the end when I realised that my other team member was panicking for the same reason.

### ***Conclusion***

In the future, I will address tension openly after the presentation, rather than overcompensating by sharing everything I know. I could be less observant of my surroundings and disregard the opinions of peers who do not contribute positively.

### ***Action-Plan***

As per future objectives, I must concentrate on improving my self-control, so I will set objectives. I will focus on positive results and actions. To control negative emotions, I will develop emotional self-regulation skills, a technique that identifies my thoughts, feelings, behaviour and motivation to take constructive actions.

The growth of students personalities and academic abilities depends on academic honesty (Cameron, 2016). Students must therefore understand the value of academic integrity throughout their education. They would benefit from academic integrity in every area of their lives. Institutions must

so encourage academic honesty and combat student academic dishonesty.

### **Implications**

Scholarly misconduct has pronounced policy, practice and theoretical consequences in higher learning institutions. From a policy perception, certain principles that the institution should adopt in consulting and examining their students include the following, Course Code of Conduct and Consequences: The student agrees to abide by the rules that are put in place concerning plagiarism, cheating, and misrepresentation of information. These policies are important applied to ensure the validity of the awards offered by the institution and safeguard the reputation of the institution. Furthermore, constant application of these policies ensures austerity of ethical standards, and upholding of high standards of ethical professionalism.

In this context of practicality, the advocacy for academic integrity formation creates a learning atmosphere that prepares students into acquiring innovative concepts and knowledge analysis abilities. Thus, through compliance with integrity standards, students achieve the objectives of protecting themselves from academic dishonesty and improving their individual and career characteristics. There are numerous implications related to the practicality of these concepts as well; with lessons on academic dishonesty, learners who adopt such ethical measures will take these principles with them into the workforce, hence improving the population's reliability.

According to the literature, academic integrity is on a profound level linked to other ethical educational and moral values of learners. Human beings A P Norridge assertion implies that education entails achieving knowledge and character and ethical reasoning. A brief about Kohlberg again coupled with ethical theories in education illustrates the place of integrity in enhancing students' moral and learning personalities. Thus, focusing on the academic integrity, educational institutions help create ethical individuals capable to solve various moral problems in their academic activities and, further, in their occupational lives.

### **Conclusion**

In this case, the study demonstrates the significance of academic integrity in determining students' educational and career paths. Maintaining integrity in academic institutions is not simply about non-participation in the wrong doing, it is about creating the right environment in which students can think, create, invent and reason ethically. Thus, the paper illustrates how different types of academic dishonesty are detrimental on the course of education and the general society. Coming up with Person Academic Experiences using standard theoretical frameworks is another way of supporting the theme of integrity within one's personal and professional development. Finally, the study pleads for more effective institutional regulation and educational practices aiming at the actual prevention of misconduct, as well as at the promotion of ethical culture and values, by developing in students high levels of professional and moral consciousness in order them to handle the ethical dilemmas

they are likely to face in their professional lives.

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