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**Improving student learning**

**by combining accessibility/inclusion with academic integrity**

This project brings together inclusion and academic integrity. We define inclusion as follows: **Inclusion involves celebrating differences in all aspects of who we are as individuals with every person respected, valued and supported.  We aim to integrate it within our practice to enhance engagement, participation, learning and choice for all.**

# **Academic Integrity Terminology – Staff Discussion**

## **Information for instructors**

| **Type of activity** | Discussions. |
| --- | --- |
| **Mode of delivery** | In-person, hybrid, online. Suggestions for adaptations for hybrid and online modes are marked with an icon of a computer screen in instructions below. |
| **Aim** | To raise awareness of the possible negative impact of some common terminology used in teaching academic integrity or dealing with academic integrity breaches.To generate alternative expressions for some of the terms. |
| **Suitable for** | * Staff (both academic and professional service staff) working in higher education institutions with some knowledge of academic integrity and associated breaches. The activity may be adapted for staff less familiar with the topic of academic integrity (see suggestions in the instructions below).
* Staff promoting academic integrity.
* Staff dealing with academic integrity breaches.
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| **Resources** | Handouts. |
| **Time** | Approx. 45-60 minutes. |

## **Rationale and Inclusivity**

Some of the terminology used in connection with academic integrity (much of which has been borrowed from the ‘world’ of legal proceedings) may generate distressing emotions in students. Some of the frequently used words and phrases may also not be accessible to all learners. This may result in an adverse impact on student learning and attitudes.

The aim of this activity is to encourage staff to consider some of the words and phrases used frequently in teaching academic integrity and in dealing with breaches of academic integrity, and to generate more positive, inclusive, and accessible alternative expressions.

## **Activity structure**

1. The instructor welcomes the participants and provides an overview of the activity and its aims.
2. Warmer. The instructor asks participants to list terms and phrases associated with breaches of academic integrity (or academic integrity in general).

Alternative. The instructor asks participants what word clouds are and how they are created by software (i.e. clusters of words of different sizes arranged in a particular shape; the most central words in the largest font size are used most frequently; the words on the peripheral of the shape in the smallest font size are used less frequently). The instructor then distributes A3 or flipchart paper and markers and asks participants to create ‘word clouds’ in groups.



In online or hybrid learning environments, the instructor uses an interactive learning technology application which creates a word cloud out of words submitted by participants on their electronic devices.

1. This is followed by a whole group discussion on the word cloud/list of words generated by participants. The instructor may want to check that participants have a common (and correct) understanding of the generated terms. The instructor may subsequently add other academic integrity common terms and phrases to the word cloud.
2. The instructor introduces/reminds participants of relevant principles related to the use of appropriate/inclusive/accessible language for learning (including the use of plain English). Handout 1 in the Resources section below presents relevant text from the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines, but instructors may also choose to use their own institutional guidance on inclusive and accessible language. The group goes through the principles and discusses/clarifies as appropriate.
3. Main task. The instructor tells participants that the next activity will require them to imagine that they are students themselves (or that they work with a particular student if this is more appropriate). The instructor may provide prompts for this – see Prompts for the main task in the Resource section below. The instructors may adapt the prompts as appropriate.

The instructor tells participants that they will consider a series of statements related to academic integrity and distributes Handout 2 from the Resource section below. Instructors may decide to reduce the number of statements and may adapt questions for discussion.

The instructor may read the statements out loud or may display them on the screen one by one. The instructor may pause when reading out/displaying individual statements to encourage participants’ reflection.

The participants are asked to consider each statement and make notes on the impact of the words (suggested discussion questions are in Handout 2 in the Resources section below).

Participants discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups before sharing ideas with the whole group. The instructor draws participants’ attention to the possible negative impact of the phrases on students and on their learning.

Note: it is possible that some staff members may be in favour of using stronger and more formal language to deter students from breaching academic integrity policies. In this situation, the instructor should encourage participants to be open to considering the impact and benefits of using more positive/inclusive/accessible terminology.

1. Participants are asked to suggest more positive/inclusive/accessible alternatives for the phrases in Handout 3 from the Resources section below. Participants may work individually, in pairs or small groups.
2. The whole group discusses their alternatives. The instructor provides/displays a suggested terminology list (see Handout 4 in the Resources section below) and encourages a discussion on the phrases.
3. If appropriate and time allows, the instructor may refer back to the original word cloud/list of words generated by the group at the beginning of the session and encourage reflection on how academic integrity terminology is used in their institution (and whether any changes to institutional practice and processes should/could be proposed).

For groups less familiar with the topic of academic integrity and associated terminology, the instructor may adapt Handout 2, 3 and 4 to raise participants’ awareness of different types of academic integrity breaches or other aspects of academic integrity.

## **Resources**

### **Handout 1. Language-related principles from the Universal Design for Learning Guidelines**

**Clarify vocabulary and symbols (Checkpoint 2.1)**

The semantic elements through which information is presented — the words, symbols, numbers, and icons — are differentially accessible to learners with varying backgrounds, languages, and lexical knowledge. To ensure accessibility for all, key vocabulary, labels, icons, and symbols should be linked to, or associated with, alternate representations of their meaning (e.g., an embedded glossary or definition, a graphic equivalent, a chart or map). Idioms, archaic expressions, culturally exclusive phrases, and slang should be translated.

* Pre-teach vocabulary and symbols, especially in ways that promote connection to the learners’ experience and prior knowledge
* Provide graphic symbols with alternative text descriptions
* Highlight how complex terms, expressions, or equations are composed of simpler words or symbol
* Embed support for vocabulary and symbols within the text (e.g., hyperlinks or footnotes to definitions, explanations, illustrations, previous coverage, translations)
* Embed support for unfamiliar references within the text (e.g., domain specific notation, lesser-known properties and theorems, idioms, academic language, figurative language, mathematical language, jargon, archaic language, colloquialism, and dialect).

**References**

CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2 Available at http://udlguidelines.cast.org

## **Prompts for the main task**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| You are a student in your first semester of studies having just finished your A levels. You find everything a little overwhelming and you experience some stress, especially before submitting your first assessments.  | You are Foundation Year student who has a young family and a part-time job. It’s been a while since you were in a classroom.  |
| You are one assessment away from graduating and you just submitted it. You have never had any issues with academic integrity.  | Most of your assessments involve numbers but you recently had to submit an essay which proved challenging.  |
| You are a second-year student, and you suspect some of your classmates received good grades for assignments that they did not write. You feel this is really unfair.  | You have very high ethical standards. Your future career depends on this.  |

### **Handout 2. Main task.**

**Task 1. Read the statements and consider the discussion questions below.**

1. Contract cheating is a very serious offence.
2. You are prohibited from engaging in dishonest academic conduct.
3. If you commit any academic malpractice, you will be prosecuted.
4. If we have a report from your lecturer or a fellow student regarding their suspicion that you have committed an academic offence, you will be investigated.
5. I write to inform you of allegations of collusion in relation to your assignment.
6. Students found guilty of violating the academic misconduct policy will face severe disciplinary sanctions, including termination of studies.
7. Repeat offences will result in harsher penalties.
8. Copying text from sources without quotation marks is a minor misdemeanour, but it is unacceptable.
9. You must comply with academic integrity policy and not commit academic offences.
10. Academic misconduct policies must be enforced by all.

**Discussion questions.**

While imagining that you are the student described in your prompt, consider:

* Do you fully understand the statements?
* How do the statements ‘sound’ to you?
* What emotions do these statements evoke in you?
* If you saw these statements in an official university email or a letter to you, how would you react?
* If an instructor/lecturer used these statements when teaching about academic integrity, how would this impact on your learning about the topic?
* Do these statements apply the relevant principles related to the use of appropriate language for learning (e.g. UDL or your institutional guidance on inclusive/accessible language)?

### **Handout 3. Alternative terminology.**

Consider the phrases below and suggest more positive/inclusive/accessible alternatives.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Terms and phrases** | **Alternatives** |
| If you commit academic misconduct / academic offence / violation / dishonest academic conduct / malpractice… |  |
| Minor misdemeanour / minor violation |  |
| You are suspected of… / There is an allegation that … |  |
| Disciplinary sanctions, penalties |  |
| Plagiarism is unacceptable. |  |
| An investigation / prosecution |  |
| Comply with the policy |  |
| Academic misconduct policies must be enforced. |  |

### **Handout 4. Alternative terminology – suggested language**

| **Phrases** | **Alternatives** |
| --- | --- |
| If you commit academic misconduct / academic offence / violation / dishonest academic conduct / malpractice… | If there is a breach of academic integrity…If academic integrity principles are not applied/followed… |
| Minor misdemeanour / minor violation | Academic practice which needs further development  |
| You are suspected of… / There is an allegation that … | There are (some) concerns about…  |
| Disciplinary sanctions, penalties | Consequences, implications |
| Plagiarism is unacceptable. | There are many ways in which we can help you to learn how to avoid plagiarism.  |
| An investigation / prosecution | A process of exploring whether academic integrity principles were followed… |
| Comply with the policy | Follow the policy |
| Academic misconduct policies must be enforced. | Academic integrity is promoted… |

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