

# Are we educating educators about academic integrity?

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A study by Swansea University researchers has found that student academic integrity is not a core concept taught to academics in Higher Education.

An academic integrity-focused approach to addressing plagiarism emphasises the promotion of positive values alongside education of staff and students about good, and bad, practice in writing, studying and assessment design. The [concept](#) was developed many years ago and is seen as desirable, yet it was not clear whether academic integrity features prominently in the education of academics themselves.

About one third of all university students report engaging in some sort of plagiarism and related forms of misconduct. Reasons given for this misconduct vary from pressure to achieve, belief they won't be caught or and a lack of understanding. Staff also show varied understanding of student academic integrity and this may have negative consequences for all concerned.

Given the central importance, still, of textbooks in HE learning and teaching, two Swansea University researchers, Josie Ransome and Philip Newton, identified the most common textbooks used in PGCerts in UK Higher Education; the courses designed to teach academics themselves about learning and teaching and which often lead to Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. They analysed the texts, along with some assessment specific textbooks, to determine what messages the books convey regarding academic integrity and the behaviours associated with

misconduct.

Philip Newton, Director of Learning and Teaching for the Swansea University Medical School said: "We did a few simple qualitative analyses of the content of the books, hunting for anything and everything to do with academic integrity. We found very little. There were some exceptions, but in general academic integrity did not feature, and where we did find relevant content, the language used ('cheating', 'plagiarism') was not reflective of an academic integrity-based approach.

"More recent developments in the field, such as the purchasing of custom written assignments (contract cheating), were particularly notable by their absence. This is, of course, not to say that these concepts are not covered elsewhere in staff development, but for academic integrity to truly function properly it needs to be part of the mainstream discourse around learning and teaching, not something that academics find out about through rules and regulations once something goes wrong".

The researchers concluded that current textbooks did not recognise 'academic integrity' as a concept. They recommended that future editions should include academic integrity as a core concept in learning and [teaching](#). This would help to embed integrity in the mainstream discourse of [higher education](#) and prevent it being seen as a standalone, disciplinary concept.

The full research paper "Are we Educating educators about [academic integrity](#)? A study of UK higher [education](#) textbooks" has been published by Taylor and Francis.

**More information:** Josie Ransome et al, Are we educating educators about academic integrity? A study of UK higher education textbooks, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2017.1300636](#) Josie Ransome et al. Are we

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