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# Academic Integrity: An Educative and Equitable Approach in Enabling Pathway Programs

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## Abstract

This paper unpacks the key components of an educative approach to academic integrity and applies them to enabling pathway programs. Enabling programs progress high numbers of students from recognised equity groups into undergraduate studies and are recognised for supporting and encouraging students and fostering a sense of belonging (Burke, Bennett, Burgess, Gray, & Southgate, 2016; Hellmundt & Baker, 2017; Lane & Sharp, 2014). University measures to support academic integrity can, on the other hand, be perceived as procedure-based and punitive (Dalal, 2015). In this paper, we provide an integrative review of literature on the common features of an educative approach to academic integrity and enabling programs and introduce exemplars from two universities of enabling pedagogies applied to academic integrity.

**Keywords:** academic integrity, enabling pathway programs, educative approach

## Introductory Background

Despite a growth in widening participation practices in higher education, 'gaps between participation by the most advantaged and by the disadvantaged stubbornly persist in all countries' (Billingham, 2013, p. 9). In the United Kingdom, Australia and elsewhere, Open Access Foundation programs have been considered an effective way of providing more equitable access to higher education. In fact, in the Australian context, a higher proportion of students transitioning to undergraduate via these programs are from recognised equity groups than other pathways and students from equity groups articulating via these pathways generally have a better experience in undergraduate and have better first-year retention rates than those in other pathways (Pitman et al., 2016). Equity groups include First-in Family to study at

university, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students with a disability, rural and remote students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These programs are referred to by various names including Foundation Studies, Foundation Programs, Special Entry Programs, or Alternative Entry Programs. However, in the Australian context and in this paper, they are commonly dubbed 'enabling programs' (Habel, Whitman, & Stokes, 2016).

The positive experiences of equity groups in enabling programs are of particular interest, especially since many of these students have had negative experiences during their schooling and/or have often not participated in formal education for some time – factors potentially negatively impacting on their enabling and undergraduate experiences. However, research on 'enabling' pedagogies and curriculum has highlighted certain features of the enabling pathway environment that foster a sense of belonging and capability despite previous negative experiences (Burke et al., 2016). Lane and Sharp (2014, p. 66) identified the features of an 'enabling pedagogy model' at the 'leadership', 'teaching', 'community' and 'individual levels'. At the leadership level, there is supportiveness, 'communication' and 'identification of students at risk' among other factors. At the teaching level, 'flexible curriculum, clear expectations, two-way feedback, thinking challenges, explicit skills development, and supportive attitudes'. All of this occurs within a 'community', which accepts 'diversity, mentors, collaborates, shares' and is 'democratic'. Students as individuals are also encouraged to 'set goals', 'commit time', 'take risks', and have 'openness to change' and build 'friendships'. Additional supports and explicit instruction are a key part of enabling programs and pedagogies (Hellmundt & Baker, 2017; Hodges et al., 2013; Hrasky & Kronenberg, 2011; Lane & Sharp, 2014) particularly because of the large number of first-in-family students who do not have knowledge of university cultures (Pitman et al., 2016). Enabling pedagogies include encouraging a sense of belonging, explicit explanation, peer-mentoring, counselling and additional academic support embedded into the programs (Hodges et al., 2013; Lane & Sharp, 2014).

The supportive and flexible approaches, respectful guidance, modelling and encouragement characteristic of enabling programs and pedagogies (Hellmundt & Baker, 2017; Lane & Sharp, 2014) contrast starkly with many current approaches to academic integrity in higher education. These appear to be 'based on procedures, policies, appeals' and 'punitive or disciplinary' sanctions that bring about behavioural changes 'based on fear of punishment' (Dalal, 2015, p.1). In addition, the focus appears to be on individual students conforming to the academy rather than friendship or peer-interaction or identity formation and there is an emphasis on risk-avoidance rather than encouraging risk-taking among students. Such approaches exacerbate the feelings of 'fear, shame and anxiety' felt among many students in the enabling cohort that 'create feelings of lack of capability and not belonging' and negatively affect their academic confidence (Burke et al., 2016, p.8). While it is important for universities to uphold academic standards and rigor and ensure academic integrity, it is concerning that vulnerable students should be alienated and excluded in the process of upholding these standards.

Some universities are moving towards a more 'educative' approach towards developing academic integrity (Bretag et al, 2013; Bretag & Mahmud, 2016). However, the enabling cohort requires even more support including 'guidance', 'encouragement', 'modelling' and 'structure' (Hellmundt & Baker, 2017, p.23) than undergraduate students to understand the various disciplinary and task-specific requirements of academic integrity. This paper, therefore, attempts to integrate the literature on an educative approach to academic integrity with that of enabling pedagogies and identify synchronies.

## Key Literature

### Enabling pedagogies

Besides the enabling pedagogies model (Lane & Sharp, 2014) and Hellmundt and Baker's (2017) Guidance, Encouragement, Modelling and Structure (GEMS) model briefly described above, three key recent studies highlight the main characteristics of enabling pedagogies. The first by Hodges et al. (2013) which also affected Lane and Sharp's model (2014) emphasised the need for embedded support such as counselling and academic skills development, normalising help-seeking behaviours among the enabling cohort. They also describe the need for flexible curriculum and highlighted that enabling programs are markedly different to undergraduate programs in that they are transitioning students into the university learning environment, rather than already expecting them to have the skills to achieve in the environment.

The combination of explicit guidance and modelling and preparation for all aspects of the university environment (including the usually hidden curriculum), with flexibility, student centeredness and embedded support are also taken up in the second key study by Relf et al. (Relf et al., 2017, p.5). Fostering an 'ethos of care' was the main characteristic which they found common to the three distinctly different enabling programs they studied. Students and staff in the programs also all identified common characteristics including a 'student-learning-centred and holistic approach', explicit teaching of the 'rules, values, knowledge and academic skills necessary to confidently study at university', establishment of inclusive and respectful learning communities' and a focus on providing 'transformative life and educational experiences for students' (Relf et al., 2017, p.5).

The final important study that will be published in a report in 2018 is that of Bennett et al. (2017) who moved away from specific teaching practices and 'theorised enabling pedagogies'. After interviewing teaching staff and students, they, like Relf et al. (2017) and Hodges et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of 'care', 'flexibility' 'scaffolding' (including assessment, conceptual and emotional) and 'collaboration' (Bennett et al., 2017, p. 20). They also emphasised the need for 'inclusivity, recognition and empowerment' using Bernstein's (1971) theory to explain how enabling pedagogies use students 'experiential knowledge' to provide 'epistemic access' to 'powerful knowledge' (ibid.). 'Reflexivity' among staff and students is thus another key element to the pedagogy (Bennett et al., 2017, p.20).

### Academic Integrity Educative Approaches

As Fishman (2015) noted, university approaches to academic integrity developed from the denominational religious teachings of early western universities, leading to an emphasis on individual responsibility, honour codes and pledges without fully addressing the diversity of student skills and understandings of academic integrity on entering the university.

Despite the prevailing punitive approach to academic integrity described above, there is an increasing awareness that academic integrity needs to be explicitly taught (Bretag et al., 2014). There is also an understanding that once taught, it is an ethos and skill that needs to be constantly reinforced and developed in students and staff at increasing levels of sophistication and in different text-types and activities (McGowan, 2005). As Morris (2015) notes, academic integrity resources should be fully embedded into the curriculum and a key element of the teaching and assessment of each task. She further explains that it is not enough to merely assess academic integrity on submission of a task. Instead, 'formative opportunities' should be provided 'for students to practice' the academic integrity skills required for each task 'with feedback and guidance from tutors, advisers, and peers' (Morris, 2015, p.1).

Besides specific teaching and learning activities, recent research has shown that a whole systems approach is needed to foster academic integrity and to educate students, staff and administrators. This approach is described in Bretag et al.'s seminal report on exemplary practices in academic integrity policies. They note that effective and educative academic integrity policies need to focus on 'Access, Approach, Responsibility, Support and Appropriate amount of detail' (Bretag et al., 2015, p.473). In terms of Access, 'the policy is easy to locate, easy to read, well written, clear and concise. The policy uses comprehensible language, logical headings, provides links to relevant resources and the entire policy is downloadable as in an easy to print and read document' (Bretag et al., 2015, p.473). In approach, exemplary policies view academic integrity 'as an educative process and appears in the introductory material to provide a context for the policy. There is a clear statement of purpose and values with a genuine and coherent institutional commitment to academic integrity through all aspects of the policy' (Bretag et al., 2015, p.473). Responsibility: 'The policy has a clear outline of responsibilities for all relevant stakeholders, including university management, academic and professional staff, and students' (Bretag et al., 2015, p.473). Support 'systems are in place to enable implementation of the academic integrity policy including procedures, resources, modules, training, seminars, and professional development activities to facilitate staff and student awareness and understanding of policy' (Bretag et al., 2015, p.474). Finally, academic integrity policies require sufficient detail:

Processes are detailed with a clear list of objective outcomes, and the contextual factors relevant to academic integrity breach decisions are outlined. The policy provides a detailed description of a range of academic integrity breaches and explains those breaches using easy to understand classifications or levels of severity. Extensive but not excessive detail is provided in relation to reporting, recording, confidentiality and the appeals process. (Bretag et al., 2015, p.473)

Building on this policy focus, Bretag and Mahmud (2015, pp.1-2) highlighted the importance of an academic integrity culture or ethos within an institution. They identified the components that contribute to the development of an academic integrity culture: 'academic integrity champions, academic integrity education for staff and students, robust decision-making systems, record keeping for evaluation, and regular review of policy and process'. Within this culture, there is a 'paradigm shift from misconduct to integrity' and a focus on 'working with students as partners' (Bretag & Mahmud, 2015, pp.1-2). Other researchers such as Dalal (2015) have explored the specific behaviours needed from students and staff to foster this ethos. Dalal highlights the need for a 'reflective approach' which 'calls for mindfulness, empathy, and skilful dialogue on the part of the instructor and appears to encourage critical self-reflection in the student' (Dalal, 2015, p.1). This suggests a shift towards explicitly unpacking the cultural expectations of the higher education system including academic integrity as recommended by Fishman (2015).

## **Synchronies in the Literatures**

Table 1 below shows the synchronies in the literature on enabling pedagogies and academic integrity educative approaches under the headings of 'ethos, elements, education and enablers'. The italicised phrases highlight where although implied in the other literature, an element is best described in one body of literature. Therefore, under 'ethos', although both literatures focus on clearly communicating and involving all parties and developing a culture of learning, there is a stronger emphasis in the enabling pedagogies literature on 'supportive approaches' which we believe is important to foster with regards to academic integrity. Likewise, the academic integrity literature that focuses on an educative approach has a stronger emphasis on a 'holistic approach' which we believe is vital to encouraging staff in particular to be on the same page with regards to academic integrity for enabling students. Both literatures emphasise communication and the involvement of all stakeholders. However,

while the literature on enabling pedagogies focusses more on two-way feedback between students, teaching and administrative staff, the academic integrity literature has a stronger emphasis on academic integrity champions.

**Table 1: Comparison of enabling pedagogies and academic integrity educative approaches**

| <b>Enabling Pedagogies</b>  | <b>Academic Integrity Educative Approaches</b>   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Ethos of Care</b><br/> <i>Supportive approaches</i><br/>           Encouragement<br/>           Sense of belonging<br/>           Supportive of identity shift<br/>           Communication/Collaboration<br/> <i>Two-way feedback</i></p> <p><b>Elements</b><br/>           Scaffolding<br/>           Structure<br/>           Clear expectations<br/>           Explicit explanation<br/>           Modelling<br/> <i>Respectful guidance</i></p> <p><b>Education</b><br/> <i>Flexibility in curriculum</i><br/> <i>Acceptance of diversity</i><br/>           Assessment carefully planned<br/>           Encouragement of collaboration<br/>           Challenge<br/>           Democracy</p> <p><b>Enablers</b><br/> <i>Normalised support</i><br/>           Embedded counselling &amp; academic support<br/>           Explicit skill development<br/>           Empowerment and reflectivity<br/>           High quality resources<br/>           Peer-mentoring</p> <p>(Hellmundt &amp; Baker, 2017; Hodges et al., 2013; Lane &amp; Sharp, 2014; Pitman et al., 2016; Relf et al., 2017)</p> | <p><b>Ethos of Integrity</b><br/> <i>Holistic approach</i><br/>           Carefully articulated policy<br/>           Culture of Academic integrity<br/>           All responsible vs individual honour code<br/>           All educated<br/> <i>Academic integrity champions</i></p> <p><b>Elements</b><br/>           Scaffolding<br/> <i>Systematic and systemic issue</i><br/>           Upfront consistent message<br/>           Concise and comprehensible<br/>           Modelling<br/>           Cultural expectations taught</p> <p><b>Education</b><br/>           Formative opportunities for practice<br/>           Assessments minimising misconduct<br/>           Assessment for learning<br/> <i>Genre analysis skills</i><br/>           Opportunities to make mistakes and improve<br/>           Enough detail</p> <p><b>Enablers</b><br/>           Embedded &amp; targeted support in courses<br/>           Proactive systems<br/>           Feedback from peers, tutors and advisors<br/>           Teaching mindfulness and critical self-reflection<br/>           Focus on learning and classroom practices<br/> <i>Apprenticeship approach</i></p> <p>(Bretag &amp; Mahmud, 2015; Bretag et al., 2014; Dalal, 2015; Fishman, 2015; McGowan, 2005; Morris, 2015; Sutherland-Smith, 2014)</p> |

Under 'elements' both literatures focus on scaffolding and structure. However, the academic integrity literature has a stronger systems focus, while the enabling pedagogies literature has a stronger focus on 'respectful' guidance of the student. We believe that this respect should be infused throughout the system and communicated to all parties in enabling education so that student confidence is supported.

Under 'education', both literatures focus on allowing students opportunities to make mistakes and be challenged and for academics to structure assessments carefully to minimise academic integrity issues. However, the enabling education has a stronger emphasis on flexibility and acceptance of diversity which we believe should be addressed in relation to academic integrity in enabling programs. Likewise, the academic integrity educative approaches highlight the need for teaching specific academic integrity skills for different genres and activity-types – something that is important for enabling students, so that they do not expect a 'one-size-fits-all' approach in undergraduate study.

Finally in terms of 'enablers', both literatures highlight embedded support and proactive approaches. However, the emphasis in the enabling literature on 'normalising' support will, we believe help to foster an environment where students are willing to look for and receive help as it is normal practice for all. The academic integrity educative approach also emphasises an 'apprentice approach' which we believe is a little at odds with the peer and collaborative learning needed for fostering a culture of academic integrity.

In the section below, we discuss exemplars of embedding an educative approach to academic integrity at the University of South Australia (UniSA) College and the University of Newcastle English Language and Foundation Studies Centre (ELFSC). Staff within these two large enabling programs draw upon the educative approaches of their institutions, but also have some practices specific to the enabling context.

## **Educative and enabling approach at UniSA College and ELFSC**

This section of the paper discusses an integrated educational approach to academic integrity practices at the University of South Australia and the University of Newcastle. It also examines how these practices are adopted and expanded on within UniSA College and ELFSC.

Both institutions have infused an 'ethos of integrity' into all their interactions with students and have moved from focusing on 'misconduct' to emphasising 'integrity' in all their policies and communications with students and staff in a systematic manner. Both institutional cultures reflect the core academic integrity elements: Access, Approach, Responsibility, Detail, Support (Bretag et al., 2015, p.473). This is exemplified by the fact that UniSA has an Office for academic integrity (AI) coordinating all AI activities currently under the leadership of Tracey Bretag – a leader in the field of academic integrity. In addition, both institutions have academic integrity policies that place responsibility on staff and students, and educate staff and students to promote academic integrity. Both institutions have mandatory academic integrity modules for all students and provide AI workshops for students and staff.

Both encourage AI champions at a faculty, school and discipline area who receive specialised training and a workload to promote and support discipline-relevant AI activities as well as ensuring a consistent approach across the institution. At UniSA, these champions are known as Academic Integrity Officers (AIOs), while at the University of Newcastle, they are known as Student Academic Conduct Officers (SACOs). These AI champions proactively help to develop resources and pedagogies that prevent academic integrity breaches as well as supporting students who have committed breaches. They also support all staff including course coordinators, lecturers and especially sessional staff, including tutors, to scaffold and model academic integrity and develop assessment items that minimise academic integrity breaches.

While adopting their universities' best practice in AI and 'ethos of integrity', UniSA College and ELFSC also place a strong emphasis on working with an 'ethos of care', where support, as well as encouragement, is part of the educative enabling pedagogical approach. As enabling students often enter higher education from disadvantaged backgrounds (Pitman et al., 2016), an 'apprentice approach' to AI might not be sufficient to provide the supportive environment they need. Research suggests that students who lack the social and cultural capital and skills necessary to navigate the complex university environment (Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000) may feel isolated and overwhelmed (Forsyth & Furlong, 2003). Therefore, the academic champions (AIOs or SACOs) in UniSA College and ELFSC emphasise supportive approaches and two-way feedback with enabling students in order to accommodate the diversity of our student cohorts.

In recognition of the diversity of enabling cohorts, the AIOs and SACOs at the two institutions recognise that academic integrity breaches are frequently the result of issues such as limited language abilities, difficulty with the study load/workload requirements, significant family and/or health problems causing less time being able to focus and work on assignments rather than dishonesty. Understanding that issues of breaching AI policies are often multifaceted, students who are seen for breaches of AI policy are provided with additional support. For example, students interviewed for a breach of AI policy may be referred to attend AI workshops if they just need to revise on some of the AI policy aspects. If they have breached the policy because they are a student with English as a second or other language, and they are struggling with language and writing proficiency, they may be referred to a learning adviser for help with academic writing. If they have breached the policy due to other issues and they might be a student struggling with mental health issues, or family issues, a counsellor, and the Program Director/Program Conveners may be recommended to discuss their study load and get study advice if the student is struggling. It is often the case that difficulties that students may be having in other areas of their studies are identified by AI breaches.

Since UniSA College and ELFSC follow best practice for enabling programs by embedding support into the curriculum (Hodges et al., 2013), they are able to ensure that support is flexible and suits the needs of the diverse cohort. AI topics are embedded into core courses and as part of a flexible academic literacies curriculum in all courses. At ELFSC, embedded academic advisors support students outside of class individually and in groups and present short sessions in class on request of the lecturers on academic literacies including AI issues. The embedded enabling counsellor provides individual counselling, group sessions on managing stress, time-management and study-life balance as well as presentations at key points of the year in classes in order to minimise breaches as a result of study or personal issues. At UniSA College, students are taught in class to read and understand Turnitin reports, and supported to complete AI online modules and an AI quiz. Therefore, support is 'normalised' and respectful guidance is provided.

To be truly respectful of students and to guide transformative learning experiences, along with the embedded support for all enabling students described above, the two institutions also ensure flexibility based on the individual needs of their diverse cohorts. For example, ELFSC has embedded a series of short AI online modules that staff can use in preparation of each assessment item. Students can also access these 'just-in-time' and 'just-for-me' based on their needs with an emphasis of preventing AI breaches before they occur. Each of the five modules developed thus far address common issues arising out of different types of assessment tasks (e.g. group work, writing essays with sources). These resources are embeddable into course Learning Management systems. Each consists of a short video of up to 5 minutes and a set of questions, which can be completed and automatically 'marked' within the application. Text and voiceover provide students with formative feedback on their responses, either correcting a misunderstanding, or reiterating a correct response. The scenarios include increasing complexity, asking 'What if' questions. The value of these short modules for academic integrity

scaffolding and support is that, unlike generic academic integrity programs, the modules are short and self-contained, each focusing on a different scenario and can be embedded into teaching and preparation for assessment. The modules are flexible and can be used at transitional points. Each module offers guidance encouraging students to follow pathways for support, thus again normalising support-seeking behaviours.

Another way of showing students respect is involving them democratically in the AI process and ensuring two-way feedback and an 'ethos of care'. For example, the AIOs at UniSA College found that many enabling students experienced some of the language included in the AI policy as complex and punitive, and were intimidated by AI processes. Words such as 'students being charged with plagiarism' in the formal invitation to discuss possible breaches of AI could be confronting to students. Therefore, in response, the language was changed to the less punitive 'there may be evidence of a breach of University academic integrity policy'. The outcome letters in particular were changed to be far less formal with comments such as 'we have confidence that you will learn from this mistake' and encouragement to make use of 'support services'. As well as using more 'enabling' language, an educational video has been developed by the UniSA College AIOs to dispel myths about AI processes. The video presents a visual scenario in which two students, enacting a role-play, discuss the most common concerns students have about AI breaches. The video is included in the initial emails to students who have potentially breached AI policy and shown to students in AI meetings. The AI breach investigation process at UniSA College has also been adapted to move from an 'apprentice approach' to one that encourages 'transformative learning experiences' through peer and collaborative learning. Therefore, the AI investigation process for first-time breaches by enabling students has moved from an individual to a group interview. Group consultations help alleviate student anxiety and demonstrate that they are not alone in the process. Group investigations also encourage students to share what they have learnt via word of mouth enhancing the peer-learning process.

The University of Newcastle has also recently decided to emphasise peer learning by developing Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) focused specifically around AI. In ELFSC, these will build on the existing Combined Academic Program Support (CAPS). CAPS sessions are currently run in 1.5 hour blocks across the academic year for all non-mathematics based courses and include combined support of student mentors who are ex-enabling students themselves, a librarian and Learning Advisor who together support students in their academic literacies and research skills. Online and night CAPS sessions are also provided. These sessions already include a strong focus on AI and due to close collaboration with academic staff scaffold the generic skills needed across courses and genre analysis skills to meet the requirements of specific assessments. Additional AI focused sessions will be added. Therefore, support is 'normalised' and respectful guidance is provided.

The overall outcome of adopting the enabling educative approach at the two institutions is that students are well informed about AI and AI policy, but have less anxiety associated with the process and can focus on their learning. At both universities, there has been a reduction in the overall number of breaches and a reduction in the number of repeated AI breaches per student. This will be detailed at a later date.

## **Conclusion**

Academic misconduct is a growing problem for the higher education sector (Scanlan, 2006; Simon et al., 2004; Hendershott et al., 2000). Research suggests that academic misconduct amongst undergraduate students can be a result of poor language skills and inexperience with academic conventions (Bretag, 2007), and anecdotal evidence suggests that enabling students are particularly at risk of inadvertent academic misconduct. This can have an effect on the anxiety students may feel associated with academic integrity investigations, reinforcing

the need to provide support for academic skills development. Encouraging open discussion about AI principles within program curriculum has been found to be more effective at fostering honest academic practice than the threat of punitive consequences. The exemplars described above have shown that it is important to scaffold and support students in enabling programs in understanding the requirements of the University, but at the same time an even more flexible, and supportive approach with embedded support and respectful guidance is required. Both students and staff (with the help of academic integrity champions like the AIOs or SACOs) should be assisted in reflection and in the facilitation of the 'inner change that leads to original work by a student and other changes in outward behaviour' (Dalal, 2015, p.2) without negatively affecting the confidence of enabling students.

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