

Maintaining academic integrity in an online environment

academic integrity

TEQSA

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Focus area: Assessment design

Like many higher education providers, International College of Management Sydney (ICMS) shifted to fully online delivery as part of a rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While initial plans provided support for directly affected students, often still in China, the College then took the decision to transition to fully online delivery in the interest of student and staff wellbeing.

Fortunately, the College growth strategy had included plans for online delivery in coming years. The new suite of undergraduate courses was accredited in 2019 for online delivery and many academic staff had engaged in professional development to learn how to design for online delivery.

Principles informing the shift to fully online delivery

- Career-focused education, with small classes and authentic activities to promote learning
- 'ICMS community' philosophy, prioritizing connecting students with their peers, their teachers and their future industries
- Pedagogy decisions first, technology to follow
- ICMS L&T principles such as active learning are embedded into online (for example, one third of every hour of zoom delivery is allocated to student activity)

Academic integrity and the shift to online

A critical component in the rapid shift to online delivery is assessment. In order for the existing learning outcomes to be demonstrated, all assessment tasks needed to be available online. This meant tasks ranging from preparing events, field trips to on campus examinations all needed to be redesigned for fully online access. Maintaining high standards of academic integrity in this new and dynamic environment was critical.

The following is a list of considerations that guided the academic team in redesigning assessment tasks for academic integrity, online.

Step 1 – consider the Intended Learning Outcomes

Planning replacement delivery and assessment strategies must start with intended learning outcomes and ensure that students aren't disadvantaged. ICMS learning environments use the principle of 'backwards design' (Wiggins & McTighe) If students need to be able to demonstrate a skill, this involves examining the 'intended learning outcomes' (ILO) of the subject and ensuring that all the content, activities and learning materials are focused on this outcome.

Step 2 – assessing online

This step involves planning how the tasks that were originally designed for on campus might be done online. For example, a recording taken on a mobile phone of a student performing a task, perhaps accompanied by a reflection on the best and most challenging aspects of the task. Another example is shifting from a closed book exam on campus to an open book exam submitted online.

Step 3 – assuring academic integrity online

The instructions for students in the shift to online need to be adjusted. As example, the instructions for students on what to include in the video or reflection need to be made explicit and the questions in closed book exams will need to be adapted to open book, higher order types of questions. Tasks can focus on both product and process, for example requiring use of specific theories covered in the class or those from the institution's database. Reminders about the importance of academic integrity are critical in this step, for example stipulating that students must keep drafts or may be requested to participate in a viva to describe how they completed the work. Requiring screenshots as evidence of engagement with the LMS or other institutional platforms can also be designed into tasks.

Step 4 – scaffolding learning

ICMS follows Salmon's (2013) 5 Step model to scaffold student learning online. Student confidence and a clear understanding of what is required are keys to promoting academic integrity, therefore take time to support students in accessing the technology and gaining confidence in the new environment.

Step 5 – be vigilant

ICMS has small classes and the teaching staff can get to know their students. Following hunches and inviting students to demonstrate their thought process or the research they did in preparation for the task can be helpful aids in assuring academic integrity. These conversations can be in zoom or a similar web conferencing tool.

Finally, technology wont be the whole solution but it can certainly help streamline the processes for responding to suspected breaches of academic integrity. For example, a simple e-form is used to direct cases to the appropriately trained staff member and the reports simplify the monitoring and analysis processes.

References:

Salmon, G. (2013). *E-tivities: The key to active online learning* (2nd ed.). London and New York: Routledge.

Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (Expanded 2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development