

# Using an online training module to improve awareness of and attitudes towards academic integrity and plagiarism

TEQSA

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## Focus Area: Academic integrity education

Academic integrity is a key area of interest in university education, perhaps most salient where failures in academic integrity result in issues such as plagiarism, including sham paraphrasing, illicit paraphrasing, recycling, and contract cheating, amongst others. There may be a range of reasons why students engage in behaviours that lead to breaches of academic integrity, some of which may be motivational or contextual. Other reasons may be that students have limited knowledge around the importance of academic integrity or limited skills to prevent plagiarism, which may result in inadvertent plagiarism. Sufficient education and training in these areas may be resource-intensive in already time-limited curricula. To address these issues, I developed an online academic integrity module using the existing learning management system (LMS), designed to be embedded within the first-year psychology curriculum. The module was specifically designed to: a) enhance knowledge and understanding of academic integrity and related ethical principles; b) develop awareness and recognition of plagiarism; and c) develop skills in preventing plagiarism through appropriate referencing.

Using a mastery-based hurdle design, the module consisted of a series of stages, with brief online tasks within each stage, and items that could be automatically marked by the LMS. Stages could be completed and repeated with a randomised pool of items, requiring 100% accuracy before students could progress to the next stage, as well as full completion before students could submit the major assessment for the unit. Evaluation of the online module embedded in a first-year psychology unit demonstrated its potential to improve awareness of and attitudes towards plagiarism, including the perceived seriousness of some forms of plagiarism such as illicit and sham paraphrasing (see Curtis, Gouldthorp, Thomas, O'Brien, & Correia, 2013).

## Key lessons:

- Emphasise the importance of academic integrity, as well as providing education regarding breaches of academic integrity (eg plagiarism), especially in programs where underlying academic integrity principles are clearly relevant to ethical and professional practice.
- This type of online training module may be particularly suited to units where accuracy and repetition are important to improve knowledge and awareness (eg recognising examples that constitute plagiarism) and developing skills to prevent plagiarism, especially where the need for training may outstrip available resources in the longer term.
- Consideration needs to be given as to how such online training is embedded within curricula. Using a discipline-specific, mastery-based hurdle approach, where there are benefits (marks for completion) and consequences (pre-requisite for assignment submission) may enhance students' perception of the relevance and importance of the task.

## References:

Curtis, G. J., Gouldthorp, B., Thomas, E. F., O'Brien, G. M., & Correia, H. M. (2013). Online academic integrity mastery training may improve students' awareness of, and attitudes toward, plagiarism. *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 12(3), 282–289. doi: 10.2304/plat2013.12.3.282