

Approaches and strategies to foster a culture of academic honesty: how can we help students develop an understanding of good academic practice?

Erica J. Morris

Higher Education Academy, Oxford, United Kingdom

In recent years, higher education institutions in the United Kingdom have worked to ensure that their students can effectively develop an understanding of good academic practice, and the associated study, information literacy, research and academic writing skills. Institutional approaches for promoting good academic practice in students tends to involve a number of interrelated strategies that include: teaching and learning policies and practices emphasising the design of innovative and authentic assessment tasks; induction and first year programmes where students receive information, advice and guidance covering acceptable and unacceptable forms of academic practice; and explicit regulations to deal with cases of dishonest practice (e.g. student plagiarism, collusion, data fabrication and cheating).

Baughan and his colleagues (2008) have described a university initiative that involved looking at developing lecturers' understanding of how assessment may be designed to help minimise opportunities for student plagiarism, and embedding new learning activities at the programme level. Indeed, recommendations from the literature have emphasised the importance of institutions developing a 'holistic approach' to tackling student plagiarism and related issues (MacDonald & Carroll, 2006). Rust (2005) has highlighted how students may not see the relevance of generic study skills modules, for example, and how it is better for educators 'to integrate the skills you want to develop in the curriculum, and especially in the various assessment tasks' (p181). It is also now widely recognised that students need opportunities to practise their academic skills, receiving timely and meaningful feedback on formative assessments (MacDonald & Carroll, 2006; Sunderland-Smith, 2008).

By drawing on the above perspectives, this workshop will enable participants to consider and discuss effective approaches that can be used to help students develop an understanding of, and the skills for, good academic practice: We will look at strategies and associated resources that can help foster a culture of academic honesty. The workshop will also be informed by the findings of information gathering interviews involving 12 of the 24 Higher Education Academy Subject Networks, which looked at available staff development resources, and identified generic and subject-specific issues relating to academic integrity. These include issues relating to addressing the varied learning needs of students from a range of educational backgrounds; the difficulties students experience with learning and academic writing skills; and changes in assessment practices, such as the use of peer-assessment or group work.

This workshop will be designed to enable participants to explore such issues, and to consider how students' understanding and skills relating to academic practice can be acquired in the context of the relevant subject or discipline. In summary, at the workshop, participants will be able to:

- consider approaches and resources that have been used to help students develop their understanding of, and skills for, good academic practice;
- look at generic and subject-specific issues relating to academic integrity; and
- explore how academic practice can be developed in a subject context.

References

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