

# A Clearer Pathway to Institutionalising Academic Integrity: Distinguishing Between Collaboration and Collusion

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## Abstract

*The educational institution participating in this research is a pre-university pathway institution in South Australia catering for predominantly ‘international’ students. Specific to this research are the students who enter this educational organisation to undertake a Diploma in Business, Information Technology or Engineering, which constitutes the ‘first-year’ of a Bachelor’s degree at the partner university. In response to a mandatory online questionnaire, 106 responses were gathered from new students to the open-ended question—What is the difference between ‘group work’ and ‘collusion’? Academic and professional staff are taking greater responsibility for elucidating the ‘line’ between authorised and unauthorised collaboration. Deep(er) understanding of students’ views/notions of these two concepts are indispensable if institutions with diverse student populations are to develop effective policies and procedures for increasing Academic Integrity (AI) standards among all members of the community.*

## Key Words

Academic Integrity/Misconduct, Collaboration, Collusion, Diploma Programs, Group Work, Pre-University Pathways, Partnerships

## Introduction

An essential part of orienting students to tertiary-level studies is to communicate *how* ethical principles or ‘Academic Integrity’ (AI) apply and are upheld in an academic community. Grades in Higher Education (HE) are largely based on students’ individual effort and results, so when learners are instructed to work in groups, it may contradict the emotional and cognitive approaches they are used to. Preserving the academic credibility and reputation of a Higher Education Institution (HEI) is ‘paramount’ (Batane 2010) and requires a holistic, unified and ‘collaborative’ institutional response i.e., academic advisors, administration, counsellors, faculty, key stakeholders, and the leadership team. With this in mind, and with reference to McCabe (2005, p. 30), ‘the African tribal maxim proclaims that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ ... it takes the whole campus community... to effectively educate a student’.

The concept of ‘collusion’, however, is *not* easy to demonstrate and/or articulate and is usually presented as ‘inappropriate or unauthorised collaboration’. Collusion is also harder to prove than other academically dishonest practices such as blatantly falsifying data, accessing restricted assessment-related materials, or ignoring examination instructions. This issue raises real challenges for HEIs espousing learning outcomes that enable their graduates to be successful at working independently as well as collaboratively. Being institutionally (more) consistent in the design, application, and assessment of collaborative work ensures that students have a clear(er) understanding of the objectives and procedures of tasks, which should in turn, reduce the incidence and prevalence of unauthorised collusion. For all students, explicit guidelines depicting *what* tasks are deemed to be authorised collaboration and *what* actions would cross the line into the forbidden realm of unauthorised sharing of work is warranted.

## Background

The educational institution that participated in this research is one of a growing number of private providers linking up with partner universities to establish pre-university diploma programs. Pathways attract international students and secure their tertiary destination prior to them meeting ‘direct’ entrance requirements (Velliaris & Breen 2014; Velliaris & Coleman-George 2015a, 2015b; Velliaris, Willis & Breen

2015a, 2015b; Velliariis, Willis & Pierce 2015). The participating educational institution offers diplomas comprising the same—or deemed equivalent—eight courses that constitute the first-year of a Bachelor's degree in Business, Information Technology, or Engineering at the destination university. Learners are generally between the ages of 17-27 years and represent more than 20 different nationalities at any one time, including [in alphabetical order]: Bangladesh; Cambodia; China [mainland, Hong Kong and Macau]; East Timor; Egypt; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Iran; Kenya; Lebanon; Malaysia; Nepal; Nigeria; Oman; Pakistan; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; South Korea; Sri Lanka; Turkey; Uganda; and Vietnam.

The educational institution values a culture of honesty and mutual trust, and expects members within this community to respect and uphold these ideals at all times and in all activities. As Bertram Gallant (2008) argued, AI is linked with institutional integrity and needs to be considered 'beyond student conduct and character to the teaching and learning environment'. Rather than relying on the chance that 'pathway' students will somehow develop good practices, staff are cooperating and collaborating to take up a systematic approach to modelling and training them about AI conventions and providing resources to ensure consistent messages are frequently circulated. To what extent this message is understood, however, is surveyed during the 'foundational' first four weeks of each trimester.

Throughout this article, the collocation 'collaboration' is mostly unfamiliar to new learners at the participating organisation and so a more accessible and meaningful choice of word i.e., 'group work' was used in the research question and interchangeably in this paper. The term 'international students' or 'students' is specific to individuals enrolled in the institution on Australian temporary student visas and who are approximately 98% from a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB). Given the growing importance of partner HEIs amidst the rising number of international students seeking HE in Australia, this study makes a valuable contribution to the scant body of knowledge on Australian 'pathways'.

## Literature Review

In general, the margin between *collaboration* and *collusion* is ill-defined and variable and as such, students may have a poor understanding of the difference. It is important, therefore, that the distinction is made explicit (McCabe & Pavela 2004). This means supporting them to collaborate effectively while explaining that submitting a piece of work done jointly *as if* it has been done individually—whether intentionally or *not*—is considered collusion and is likely to be subject to academic misconduct procedures. If group work is performed outside the classroom or if the group is to receive the same mark irrespective of individual contributions, then this may well increase the likelihood of collusion. Importantly, AI standards do not prohibit students from studying together or tutoring each other if done in 'conformance' with the HEI's relevant AI policies and procedures.

### *What is Collaboration?*

In this discussion, collaboration or 'group work' is distinguished from collusion by describing both actions as a group of students working together on an assignment, but collusion is group activity that is unpermitted (Fraser 2014). It is not uncommon for students to participate in some form of group work during their studies. According to Sutherland-Smith (2005), '[s]taff members agree that working in teams is an essential skill and some disciplines indicate that it is a professional registration requirement for students to evidence their successful group work involvement'. Sharing ideas with others is an effective means of learning, as one can discover and find alternative points-of-view that may not have otherwise been considered. Fink (2003) promoted active learning by a variety of means, but a key aspect was through students partaking in 'group' discussions of the course content and related materials. Faculty may assign (more) complex problems to groups than they could to individuals, in order to initiate deeper information processing and more meaningful psychological connections among participants. Such group work involves students as 'co-learners' striving to achieve a common goal(s) and who are expected to 'share the workload equitably' (Clark & Baker 2006, p. 1). Thus, permissible collaboration includes conversing with others over issues raised by an assessment item and/or the means by which to address an assessment item.

HE courses, particularly at the first-year level, have legitimate group work tasks embedded in the curriculum where, for example, students may make a presentation, but are prohibited from writing the paper-based assignment together. Group discussion facilitates active learning opportunities, while the requirement that students individually complete the assignment is intended to ensure that each person can demonstrate their ‘own’ construction of the material. The difficulty, however, is to encourage discussion to the point that it is beneficial and acceptable, *not* to the point that they are producing common features (ideas, words, phrases, structures, right answers etc.) and crossing the border or the ‘hazy line’ (Barrett & Cox 2005) over to collusion. In clearer terms, legitimate cooperation/collaboration includes: informal study/discussion groups; dialogue over general themes and concepts; interpretation of assessment criteria; or strengthening academic writing and/or study skills through peer assistance. Working together openly and honestly, and with the knowledge of the course coordinator/lecturer, can be a valuable teaching tool. Nevertheless, as expressed by Perry (2010, p. 103), ‘[i]ronically it might be that the positive teaching practice of using groups and the encouragingly high levels of student integration may to some extent help drive collusion’.

### ***What is Collusion?***

At the HE-level, students are required to devise and submit the vast majority of assessment tasks entirely on their own. Without question, program/course documentation should clearly state which assignments, if any, can be done in collaboration with others and whether that includes producing a joint piece of work or only the preparation for it. Collaboration and collusion act in similar ways as both involve active cooperation with others. However, neither can be accidental or involuntary, for example ‘we accidentally colluded’ is never an option; collusion is deliberate. Generally speaking, collusion is associated with and ‘especially for the purposes of the assessments’ (Mahmood 2009, p. 1349) that should have been completed independently. When students work together or with other persons for the purpose of ‘deceiving’ an assessor as to *who* is actually responsible for producing the material submitted, this *is* collusion. In other words, impermissible collaboration embraces working with others without permission and with deliberate intention to mislead.

When work becomes so alike whereby the similarity goes beyond what may be considered a ‘coincidence’, *both* the student who helps another produce work, along with the student who benefited from their help are guilty of collusion. In addition, alternative forms of collusion include: allowing other persons to copy an assignment even if they change words to make it look like their own submission; collaborating with other persons in the writing of all or part of an assessment item submission; collaborating with other persons in the writing of all or part of another student’s submission for the assessment item; providing a copy of one’s work in respect of that item of assessment to other persons; and/or working with other persons to produce work that is presented as one’s own when, in fact, it was the product of paired/group work (Sutherland-Smith 2005). With these points in mind, collusion should *not* be confused ‘caring’ (Wideman 2011).

### ***Institutionalising Academic Integrity***

It has been well-documented that when students believe others are engaging in deceptive practices—and HEI members are ignoring occurrences—they may use this as justification for their own wrongdoing (e.g., Culwin & Lancaster 2001; Bertram Gallant & Drinan 2006, 2008; Kisamore, Stone & Jawahar 2007; McCabe 2005; McCabe, Butterfield & Trevino 2006; McCabe & Pavela 2004; McCabe & Trevino 1995; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield 2001; Zivcakova et al. 2012). Relatedly, ‘[w]hen more than a few faculty behave this way, it is hard to convince students that an ethic of integrity exists on campus and cheating can easily become the campus norm’ (McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield 2001, p. 226). In time, this situation will become increasingly ‘problematic when it is pervasive, normative and systemic’ (Bertram Gallant & Drinan 2008, p. 27). With this in mind and in fervent agreement with Culwin and Lancaster (2001, p. 40), ‘[i]nstitutions that do act proactively run the risk of reducing their student numbers... [however] publicity of the value of their awards long-term should make up for it’.

Bertram Gallant and Drinan (2008) proposed an *Institutional Theory* or model that delineated four-stages to help bridge theoretical, conceptual and practical concerns surrounding institutionalising AI (Figure 1). These ‘stages’ are not intrinsic, linear or static, nor do they guarantee that change will occur (Bertram Gallant & Drinan 2008, p. 29). In order, they are: *Stage One*—Recognition and Commitment; *Stage Two*—Response

Generation; *Stage Three*—Response Implementation; and *Stage Four*—Institutionalisation. The participating organisation is attempting to use this construct as a framework for managing AI. This paper presents the organisation’s underpinning motives for, and response to, *Stage One*—the recognition and commitment phase i.e., discontent with the current state of AI, development of AI knowledge, dialogue about the issue, and an expressed pledge to respond to the matter (Bertram Gallant & Drinan 2008, p. 31). This model does *not* place great(er) stress on either staff or students, but rather involves *all* HEI members facilitating recognition and commitment to elevating AI standards and mitigating academic dishonesty.

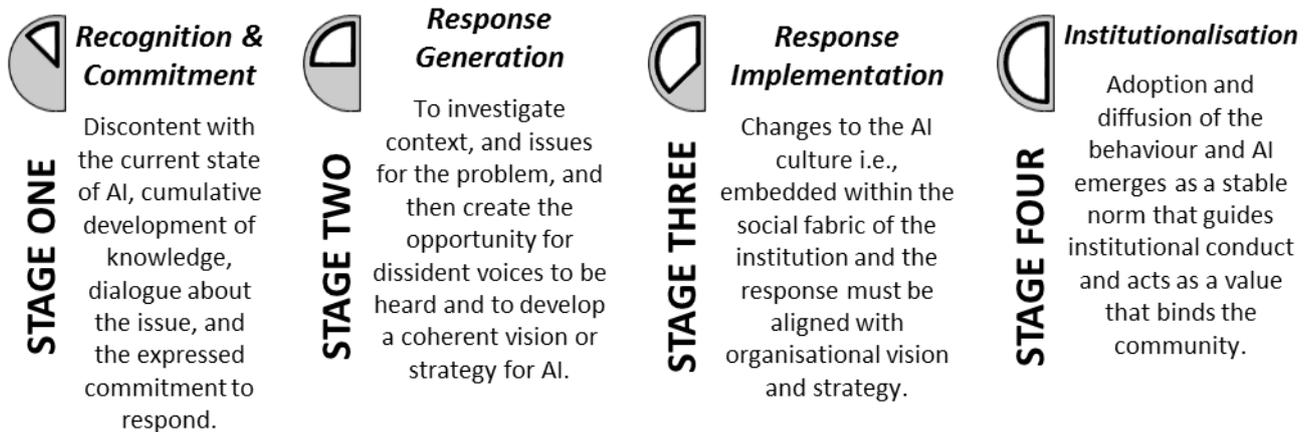


Figure 1. Institutional Theory  
(original diagrammatical adaptation, Bertram Gallant & Drinan 2008, pp. 31-33)

## Research Method and Methodology

The participating educational institution’s ‘Orientation Program’ provides academic, administrative, geographic, and social familiarisation, as well as the opportunity for students to embrace the diversity of their previous experiences. Held one week prior to each trimester officially commencing, orientation is a crucial transition period when students are presented with information to help them survive and thrive at the tertiary-level. In terms of differentiating *collaboration* (group work) and *collusion* (cheating), a workshop is held on Day Two to address issues surrounding AI and these two concepts. Examples of guiding questions for group discussions and activities are listed in Table 1.

Trimesterly and in conjunction with orientation, newly enrolled students are required to complete several mandatory online tasks (penalties exist for failure to complete these requirements). One task involves completion of an author-developed ‘semi-structured’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000) questionnaire of 25 ‘open-ended’ (Creswell 2008; Kaufman, Guerra & Platt 2006; Neuman 2004) items. The single item in the questionnaire and presented in this paper is: *What is the difference between (a) group work and (b) collusion?* The *three* objectives underpinning this study were: (a) to acknowledge the value of student narratives as a source of rich description; (b) to scrutinise qualitative responses for pedagogical improvement e.g., to advance policy, communication strategies and assessment practices; and (c) to seek insight into areas for future empirical exploration.

As students with a range of English language proficiency in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores would be completing the online questionnaire, a well-organised and straightforward layout with clear wording was/is indispensable (Blankenship et al. 2008; Oppenheim 1992). In first-person narrative form, qualitative and electronic data was obtained from 106 ‘new’ students across all diploma offerings. From this cohort, 34 students came through the Eynesbury College Academy of English (ECAE); 13 students attended high school in Australia; and six students had transferred from our partner establishment the South Australian Institute of Business and Technology (SAIBT).

Comments were varied, illustrating *how* students interpreted and articulated their understanding(s). The transcripts provided rich data, but notably, no comment can be contributed to any particular student respondent. The researcher-practitioner decided against the use of computer-based analytic tools in order to remain open to flexible analysis and interpretation. To properly manage the quantity of narrative data and present clear and succinct passages, excerpts were minimally edited to enable a free-flow of response.

*Table 1. Guiding questions to steer students away from ‘collusion’ and potential misconduct*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Why should I care about AI?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>What will happen to me if I am found to have committed an AI violation?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>What is assessment and how important is it?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Have I followed all the assessment guidelines?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Is there a difference between collaborative learning and collusion?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Is it collusion if I discuss an essay question with a friend?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Is it appropriate to seek assistance from other students with my assignments?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>What strategies can I use to ensure appropriate collaboration in group work?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>What are the benefits of producing my own work?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>How can tasks be divided when doing a group work assignment?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Did I write my assignment by myself?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Did anyone give me a written document to copy?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>What should I do if my friend asks me for help?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Is it cheating if a tutor helps me with my assignments?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>I think my friend copied my assignment, so am I in trouble?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>I know lots of students who work together on assignments, why should I care about the rules?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>If I know someone who is cheating, what should I do?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Why is it important to keep copies of my drafts?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>What does the school’s policy say about collaboration and collusion?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Why does my assignment need a cover sheet?</i></li> <li>▪ <i>How does doing a group activity help me achieve the learning objectives of the course?</i></li> </ul>
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## **Qualitative Findings**

The excerpts presented herein are not inclusive of all students’ views as the quantity of qualitative data was more than could be reported. First and foremost, of the 106 responses, the following three narratives provided the most articulate distinction and utilised effective key terms to describe *collaboration* e.g., cooperation, honesty, and shared goals, and *collusion* e.g., dishonesty, secretive, and unethical. These passages are a good starting point for discussion:

*Group work is doing some work cooperatively with others honestly. For example, lecturer gives us a group work task and we form a group to finish it. Another example, however, is when a lecturer gives me homework that I have to finish independently, but I did it with other classmates and got the same answers. This is collusion.*

*Group work is the legal way of helping each other in a group and is also known as teamwork, while collusion is the illegal way of helping someone under secret agreement of helping each other. I have examples for both cases, for group work the study of some students in a group before exam and helping each other to prepare themselves for paper, while for collusion some students help each other in the examination hall, which involves a pre-planned agreement for this unethical help.*

*Group work means students work together to hand in an assignment. It involves division of labours. Every student has to complete their own part and put the things together. Collusion means students have secret cooperation for an illegal or dishonest purpose. If the assignment is individual work, students should not cooperate with each other, they must do their own work. So, the difference between group work and collusion is that group work is known by the lecturer and it is acceptable in*

*the assignments, but collusion is working together secretly and the lecturer does not know anything about that group work and thinks that it is an individual's work.*

At least 50% of the responses indicated agreement and confluence—albeit brief—regarding how the students viewed the concept of group work versus collusion:

*Group work is a way for students to focus everyone's knowledge to solve problems, however, collusion is just a way to finish some mission without hard working.*

*Group work is teamwork that is a combined production, but collusion is when students have the same answer and only one person knows how to do the work.*

*Group work is the work available for students to do in a group. Collusion means students do some individual work in group.*

*Group work means that you have an assignment, which the lecturer is telling you to do with a group, but collusion means students copying from each other.*

*Group work means your lecturer told you to work in a group instead of working by yourself. Collusion means your lecturer told you to study individually, but you don't listen.*

A minority of students chose to answer the question with a vague explanation usually distinguishing between group work and collusion by articulating that they are at polar opposites; described in terms of ethical/unethical, good/bad, honest/dishonest, positive/negative, or simply right/wrong:

*A—is a group working together, B—is doing some bad things together.*

*Group work is doing good things and collusion is doing bad things in school.*

*Group work is helping each other, collusion is doing the wrong thing together.*

*Group work is learning together, collusion is cheating together.*

*Group work is right, collusion is wrong.*

While students may have recognised the difference, some responses were focused on and/or limited to one side of the coin. The following quotes referred solely to 'group work':

*Group work has more positive aspects than collusion.*

*Group work is the right way of students working together well.*

*Group work is when all members join in the work.*

*Group work is when members in the team finish the job in the right way.*

*Group work is working with different students to get solutions and complete work together.*

The following quotes referred solely to 'collusion':

*Collusion can only be done under the table.*

*Collusion is doing some bad things together.*

*Collusion is doing wrong things in class, such as cheating.*

*Collusion is not the right way to do work.*

*Collusion is students cheating together.*

Few students resorted to their own moral judgement to formulate a response that took a condemnatory tone and incorporated such expressions as legal/illegal, stealing and/or criminal activity:

*Collusion means that a group is using an illegal way to have their benefits. I will never do that!*

*Group work is a legal way to learn with others, which is not only good to you, but also your partner. However, collusion is to work with others to find some illegal way to do the work. These two are totally different.*

*Group work is based on a group working together legally, but collusion is asking others to finish the work that is supposed to be finished individually and cheating and lying about your assignment.*

*Group work is share students' ideas and collusion is stealing someone's idea, which is like a crime.*

*Group work is when you share your work with other students, because the teacher wants you to work together. But, collusion can be a criminal activity when students buy their assignments that were written secretly by another person.*

This questionnaire was invaluable in helping to more quickly pinpoint student errors, correct misunderstandings, and reinforce important ideas. The inaccurate responses below will help guide the pedagogical design of forthcoming teaching and learning activities and assist staff in better recognising potential misunderstandings that students have from the outset. Regardless of the cause, there are strategies that can be used to address and correct misconceptions. With even a minimal number of students demonstrating little understanding of the distinction, further attention needs to be paid to clarifying the terms. The following excerpts indicated terminological confusion:

*Collusion is just thinking about something without acting.*

*Group work is students do the work together. Collusion is your own thinking of the study.*

*Group work means that they need to finish a job together, but collusion means they just need to cooperate.*

*Group work pays attention to teamwork and collusion pays attention to everyone's opinion.*

*I am sorry that I do not know collusion, but I suppose that it means everyone contributes and shares the same achievement, but maybe it means no contribution, but getting a grade.*

*Sharing ideas is group work and sharing one idea is collusion.*

Worryingly, the comments below revealed total unfamiliarity. However, understanding what collusion is comes prior to being able to identify and prevent it. Further, a plethora of cognitive cues will make it harder for first-year students to partake in collusion and plead ignorance to *what* it is:

*Are they the same?*

*I am not very sure about it. Maybe I misunderstand the meaning of the word 'collusion'. I think group work and collusion is the same.*

*No idea at all.*

*Not sure.*

It is critically important that students have a decent understanding of institutional policies with respect to collusion and that they are on the same page as their lecturers. Indeed, the excerpts above suggest that this educational institution needs to spend additional time explaining what constitutes 'collusion' and how to actively avoid it; augment the 'hazy' line.

## **Discussion**

In agreement with Sutherland-Smith (2005, p. 57), instead of exhorting students to strive for AI, HEI processes and outcomes may drive them away from collaborative learning. Similarly, Boehm, Justice and Weeks (2009, p. 55) stated that '[m]ore proactive and preventive approaches may better promote scholastic honesty than sanctions for students caught cheating'. As cultural diversity will continue to be part of the fabric of the participating educational institution, it is vital that staff—both academic and professional—enter into critical discussions about social, cultural and educational incongruence that may lead to 'honest confusion' (McGowan & Lightbody 2008).

Academic dishonesty is a complicated concept and it would seem apparent from this study that these 106 new students had varied views i.e., shallow/deep and accurate/conflicting, pertaining more specifically to 'collusion'. Given the wide range of prior learning situations experienced by students, the organisation needs a deep(er) knowledge base about teaching diverse learners than ever before and (more) highly developed diagnostic abilities to guide their decisions (Kisamore, Stone & Jawahar 2007). International students with under-developed academic skills will, in likelihood, be challenged by the academic demands of Australian HE.

### **Implications, Limitations and Future Recommendations**

The participating educational organisation cannot prepare students for every facet of academic language and learning skill development. A sensitive and developmental approach is required to change learning behaviours. Concurring with Griffith (2013, p. 2), 'AI education advocates do not wish to do away with punishment, but instead they wish to couple appropriate, clear, and widely known consequences with pre-emptive education and prevention'. Pre-university pathways are ideal HEIs for acculturating (international) students in the kinds of behaviours that demonstrate AI and the norms/practices of Western HE conventions (Velliariis & Warner 2009; Velliariis, Willis & Breen 2015a).

The limitations of this research included: a single site of study; data gathered from a relatively small student cohort in only one trimester intake; the absence of some students from 'Orientation Week'; pathway student recruitment/admissions processes that favour a certain student population; attributes that may affect, to varying degrees, understanding of concepts and the ability to articulate an answer; responses that may have been affected by the seriousness with which students treated their reply; and the research design consisted of only one questionnaire, so follow-up interviews may have facilitated richer narratives. It would be interesting to extend the survey to other HEIs with differing contextual conditions in order to determine whether similar results emerge.

Although the findings may not be generalisable, they should be of interest to others seeking to foster an integrated and holistic approach that focuses on community building and educational advancement of AI campus-wide rather than enacting punitive measures. That is, support should 'not simply be directed at stopping academic misconduct, but at supporting academically integrous behaviours' (Bertram Gallant & Drinan 2008, p. 32). Future recommendations include new, continued and/or revised actions as listed in no particular order below (adapted Devlin 2006; Higbee, Schultz & Sanford 2011; Velliariis, Willis & Pierce 2015):

- advising students at an 'early' stage i.e., Orientation Program + Weeks 1-4 of each trimester, *what* academic misconduct is and how to avoid it; and asking students for their input on how to create a community of integrity at the start of each trimester and establishing them as stakeholders in the teaching and learning community;
- advocating for AI standards at every level from policy and procedures, through faculty/division and school/department procedures, to academic and professional staff practices; and deploring cheating/lying/fraud/theft, and other dishonest behaviours that jeopardise the rights/welfare of the community and diminish the worth of its academic qualifications;
- being aware of and responsive to students' different cultural backgrounds, especially in relation to caring for others and sharing work; and charting how students' understanding of 'helping friends' is formed and put into practice, and how they draw on the words and ideas of others;
- designing approaches to assessment that minimise the possibility for students to collude, while not reducing the quality and/or rigour, as well as implementing appropriate security practices for the 'safe' submission and return of tasks;
- disseminating information about ethical student conduct via a plethora of avenues/media e.g., brochures, handbooks, and posters on walls in classrooms; and providing students with early notification and fair warning if any individual or group may be at risk of breaching AI standards;

- ensuring that staff are ‘interculturally competent’ i.e., at least aware of students’ social, cultural and educational backgrounds to be able to provide support for their academic development; and checking whether staff are providing suitable advice to students regarding available sources of assistance to help develop their skills in academic writing and, in particular, the preparation and presentation of assignments; and
- maintaining a register of warnings issued regarding academic dishonesty and AI breaches; and ongoing development and review of systems and processes to promote AI and to detect and deal equitably with any student against whom a breach is alleged.

As previously stated, this study was based on *Stage One* of Bertram Gallant and Drinan’s (2008) *Institutional Theory*, by explicating how ‘misconduct’ may stem from ‘misunderstanding’. *Stage Two* (i.e., universities renew and reinvigorate AI policies and procedures); and *Stage Three* (i.e., organisational structures, procedures, and cultures must be made to protect the institutionalisation of AI), are well underway, but are beyond the scope of this paper. *Stage Four*, however, is when AI emerges as a ‘stable norm’ and acts as a value that binds the community. This is not yet the case within the participating educational institution, but is a driving force behind promoting AI from ‘Day One’.

## Conclusion

Publicising the distinct nature of collaboration or ‘group work’ and collusion, and bringing awareness campus-wide, may reduce the time-consuming and emotionally grim process of dealing with misconduct. Positive staff-student relationships—academic and professional staff—promote empowering learning environments. Faculty should, therefore, foster ‘constructive’ relations through role-modelling, careful planning, implementation of cooperative learning strategies, and better-quality assessment. Additional empirically-based studies will continue to be executed in this pathway institution to explore students’ understandings of academic conventions, to improve current practices, and to determine other strategies for preserving its academic credibility and reputation. It is hoped that others—persons and HEIs—will also gain useful insights from this article thereby assisting them with strengthening the review and design of teaching, learning and assessment practices with regards to AI.

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