

ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

Educating in an Era of Continuous Change

Bridging the Integrity Gap: Co-designing inclusive academic integrity education for a future focused higher education landscape

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Academic integrity is a cornerstone of ethical scholarship and fair and credible higher education. However, many students – particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds (Bretag et al., 2019; Devlin et al., 2018; Dockery et al., 2016; Webb et al., 2024) such as international, low socio-economic, and regional, rural and remote cohorts - struggle to understand its principles and institutional expectations (Birks et al., 2020; Locquiao & Ives, 2020, 2024; McCabe et al., 2012; Waltzer & Dahl, 2023). These challenges are often shaped by systemic barriers, which can lead to disproportionate rates of unintentional misconduct, disadvantage (Dockery et al., 2016; Webb et al., 2024), and poorer learning experiences. Existing academic integrity education often fails to address these inequities (Bretag et al., 2019; McCabe et al., 2012) relying on generic, compliance-focused, one-size-fits-all approaches that do not fully meet the needs of these diverse learners.

This project addresses these gaps by creating interactive digital resources that promote ethical decision-making and academic resilience for all students. Unlike traditional technology enhanced learning models, it embeds inclusive design and student co-creation at its core. Students were engaged as active partners in the design of these resources, ensuring their voices shape both pedagogical and practical decisions. Grounded in constructivist learning theory, this project drew on inclusive education design, and students-as-partners frameworks (Cresswell, 2011; Gravett et al., 2020; Tennyson, 2010). Constructivist principles informed the use of authentic, scenario-based learning to support ethical reasoning, while iterative co-design cycles, guided by the students-as-partners approach, ensured the materials reflected diverse perspectives and needs.

The project was implemented across multiple phases, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate students' knowledge and understanding of academic integrity. Results from an online questionnaire showed that while most students could correctly identify plagiarism, fewer understood subtler concepts such as paraphrasing and correct referencing. Focus group discussions further highlighted varied experiences with academic integrity education. Students described current online modules as outdated or unengaging and expressed a need for more practical resources as well as ongoing support to navigate academic integrity expectations. The previously outlined theoretical foundations, together with the collected data, guided the development of scenario-based resources, including case-studies, interactive digital tools such as an AI chatbot, and staff guides and training material. Student co-creators from diverse backgrounds collaborated with academic staff to design, refine and test these materials for accessibility and relevance.

Preliminary findings highlight that student co-created materials improved students' understanding of academic integrity and increased their confidence in ethical academic practices. Staff also report greater ease in integrating practical academic integrity concepts into their teaching. This work demonstrates how academic integrity education can move beyond a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, offering a scalable, equity-driven model – supported by innovations such as interactive AI – that better serves the realities of today's diverse higher education landscape.

Keywords: Academic misconduct; higher education; students-as-partners; equity and inclusion; technology enhanced learning; ethical decision making

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