

Determining outcomes for academic misconduct: is it more important to be consistent or fair?

Tracey Bretag and Margaret Green
University of South Australia

Abstract This paper analyses data from a Health Sciences faculty at an Australian university to determine if outcomes for breaches of academic integrity were applied consistently and/or fairly. The analysis concludes that it is appropriate at times for there to be a difference between the identified severity of an academic misconduct incident and the final outcome imposed. The paper argues that while it is important for universities to have clear policy on this issue, it is just as important for those in charge of applying that policy to be adequately trained and deeply committed to both the academic integrity process and to the complex needs of students. We conclude by stressing that a rigid adherence to a rules-based approach in dealing with breaches of academic integrity will not necessarily ensure fairness.

Key Ideas

- It is vital that universities have a clear and detailed policy outlining appropriate outcomes for breaches of academic integrity.
- This policy should be supported by a strong community of practice which provides mentoring to decision-makers so that this policy is executed with both consistency and fairness.

Discussion Question 1 Which is more important: consistency or fairness of outcome for academic integrity breaches?

Discussion Question 1 How can consistency and fairness of outcome for academic integrity breaches be ensured?

Introduction

Academic integrity is the commitment to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (Center for Academic Integrity 2009). This view of integrity as a "clustering of values beyond honesty" (Davis, Drinan & Bertram Gallant 2009, p. 26), involves much more than a commitment from students not to cheat. The CAI makes explicit that academic integrity is multi-dimensional and is enabled by all those in the educational enterprise, from students to parents, instructors and administrators. For this reason, the CAI's Antipodean counterpart, the Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity (APFEI), prefaces 'integrity' with 'educational' rather than 'academic', as a means of encapsulating the complex aspects and numerous stakeholders of integrity across the various educational sectors, including but not limited to universities.

Expecting our students to be honest, that is, to submit work that they have produced themselves, is therefore not the end of the educational integrity loop. The next stage is the assessment process, where instructors determine the level of learning that has taken place, and if there is evidence of academic misconduct, deal with it appropriately. At this stage, the instructor's commitment to educational integrity demands a promise of consistency and fairness. Numerous writers (Yeo & Chien 2007; Carroll & Appleton 2005; Carroll & Seymour 2006) have written about the importance of consistency in responding to plagiarism. This paper makes the case that 'fairness' is just as, and arguably more important, than consistency.

What is 'fairness'?

According to the Australian Oxford Dictionary (Moore 1999), fairness is "just, unbiased, equitable; in accordance with the rules". This definition suggests that 'fairness' involves more than just rule following, although rules certainly provide the foundation. To be 'just' means to "act in accordance with what is morally right or fair", (Moore 1999), to be 'unbiased' is to act without prejudice, and equity entails "the application of the principles of justice to correct or supplement rules of law" (Moore 1999). Each of these definitions needs to be taken into account in any process which seeks to ensure fairness of both procedure and outcome.

Carroll (2002) makes the case for 'fairness' in determining what she calls 'punishment' for breaches of academic integrity. However, Carroll limits fairness to procedure, and states that: "...a fair procedure is one that adheres to the principles of natural justice, produces outcomes proportionate to the magnitude of the offence, and one that is consistently applied across the whole university" (Carroll 2002, p. 73). The author provides guidelines for fair procedures in relation to charges of student misconduct, and suggests that they include provision of evidence to all parties; the opportunity to challenge that evidence; timeliness; and notification of rights (Carroll 2002, p. 73).

We believe that Carroll's application of the concept of 'natural justice' is too narrow. Unlike other authors, she does not include the importance of considering extenuating circumstances and the impact this has on the decision making process (see for example, Were 2006). Wikipedia, the favourite reference point

for all students, also states that 'natural justice' includes the following element: "A decision-maker should take into account relevant considerations and extenuating circumstances, and ignore irrelevant considerations" (Wikipedia 2009). Douglas and Jones (1993) demonstrate that the concept of 'natural justice' has been extended from one that focuses on procedure, to "a more basic duty to be fair, both in how one reaches decisions, and in the decision reached" (Douglas & Jones 1993, p. 484). It is this more nuanced understanding of 'fairness' which we believe is essential in determining outcomes (or 'penalties', as so many writers in the field refer to it) for breaches of academic integrity.

The Academic integrity process at The University¹

In 2006, the academic integrity process at The University was substantially revised so that it moved from a punitive approach to academic misconduct to one that focused on education and collaboration. The aim of the revised policy was not to "catch and punish" but to "...foster and preserve the scholarly values of curiosity, experimentation, critical appraisal and integrity, and to foster these values in its students... It is expected that students will adhere to high standards of academic integrity and honesty at all times" (University of South Australia 2008). In line with the revised policy, a new system of dealing with suspected cases of misconduct was introduced, using Academic Integrity Officers (AIOs)². In this model, AIOs rank incidences of misconduct from minor to severe, with each case being able to be influenced by issues such as the extent of the misconduct, the student's motivation and/or intention, the impact of any penalties on the student's progression, and contextual factors such as year of study, previous cases recorded, or students learning background, the impact on the outcome, and the level of information provided to students (see Appendix A). Nowhere in the policy is there mention of 'extenuating circumstances', although it has been reported anecdotally that many AIOs use the clause relating to "motivation and/or intention" as the mechanism through which to consider such issues. Interestingly, the database used by the AIOs to record cases does include a section entitled 'other factors integral to the case' which allows AIOs to record a range of extenuating circumstances. However, this option is not explicitly provided for in the official policy.

The AIO model and accompanying policy at The University was based on the one developed at Oxford Brookes University (with significant input from Jude Carroll), and not surprisingly, the underlying principle was a concern for 'natural justice' with a strong focus on procedural fairness. The range of outcomes an AIO can impose range from a record being kept of the incidence on the AIO database through to failure in the piece of work. Outcomes more severe than this must be

¹ We refer to the institution from which this data is drawn as 'The University' because we do not wish to imply that the situation there was unique in terms of its application of an academic integrity framework, but that the lessons learned from analysis of the data may be applicable to other institutions of higher education.

² The system of Academic Integrity Officers at The University has been adapted from the Academic Conduct Officer model at Oxford Brookes University, U.K. Further information about the model can be found at <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/publications/beilt/volume1issue2/perspective/carroll.pdf>

referred to the Head of School for a formal inquiry. To ensure consistency of application The University provided training to selected academic staff identified for the role of Academic Integrity Officer, with each school nominating one lecturer per 2,500 students. These newly appointed AIO's underwent an initial training session run by Jude Carroll and continue to meet and attend training sessions. During the initial training, cases are analysed and reflected upon by the group to ensure that consistent outcomes would be applied across the schools and disciplines. Achieving absolute consistency was recognised to be difficult, but it was agreed that ongoing dialogue in either face-to-face mode or via email discussion would enable "tacit and implicit criteria [being] used to make decisions" (Carroll & Seymour 2006) to be disseminated.

In addition to the revised policy and introduction of an AIO model, an educational component was added to the academic integrity framework at The University. This involved for many Schools, the introduction of specific lectures and workshops to assist students come to terms with what The University defines as integrity and to teach them how to develop evidence-based arguments, paraphrase and attribute correctly. Emphasis is placed on the difference between collaboration and collusion and students are taught strategies to help them avoid the pitfalls of collusion. Strategies are also taught to help students deal with the issues of time management, illness and what to do, when despite the best of intentions, life circumstances interfere with study schedules.

In cases of suspected academic misconduct, academic staff members liaise with the AIO who will explore the case in detail and discuss it with the course coordinator. There are times when the AIO will decide that the case is not severe enough or there is not enough evidence to warrant further investigation, and will therefore counsel the academic staff member about an appropriate course of action. If the AIO believes the case requires further investigation or counseling of the student they will contact the student and arrange a meeting. Students are encouraged to bring a Students Advisory Officer (advocate) to a meeting with the AIO, who also liaises closely with the University Learning Advisers to ensure that students who are confused about where they went wrong are given educative sessions to fill in the gaps. This completes the circle and the philosophy to instill the scholarly values of curiosity, experimentation, critical appraisal and integrity in the students.

Recording academic integrity breaches

Despite the fact that The University's policy does not specifically make allowance for the consideration of external factors, the outcome is often tempered by such a consideration, which results in some outcomes being imposed which do not reflect the perceived severity level of the misconduct. In all cases where the AIO believes that there has been a breach of academic integrity, a warning is recorded on the AIO database.

The degree of the severity of the incident is recorded as not severe, medium or severe³ with a specific range of outcomes attributed to each grade (Table 1).

Table 1: Allocation of outcomes related to severity of incident.

	Not severe	Medium	Severe
No loss of mark, warning only			
Resubmit for full marks			
Loss of 10%			
Resubmit max 50%			
Zero in component (supplementary assessment allowed)			
Zero in component (supplementary assessment not allowed)			
Refer to Head of School			

An important concept to consider is that sometimes it is either the teaching or the assessment task that creates an environment conducive to student misconduct; for example, when exactly the same assessment task is set for two years in a row. There are also cases where academic staff appear to be as confused as the students as to what is and is not acceptable. An important task of the AIO in these circumstances is to talk to the academic staff member about strategies to change assessments in order to reduce incidents of misconduct and to improve their own understanding of what constitutes misconduct.

Methodology

A comprehensive student academic misconduct data set related to a health science faculty was provided by the Academic Integrity Database of The University, with permission from the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Academic. The authors analysed the data to explore the relationship between levels of severity of academic integrity breaches and their outcomes, coupled with the qualitative comments provided by the Academic Integrity Officers, in relation to specific cases to explain any 'factors integral to the case'.

³ While it could be argued that these assigned categories are too broad, it is not the purpose of this paper to interrogate the detail of The University's policy.

Findings

An overview of the academic integrity breaches during the period 2006-2008 in one health sciences faculty provided the results, expressed as percentages, indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of AI breach records in health sciences 2006-2008

	Extent of breach (%)	Level of misconduct (%)	Outcome determined (%)
Not severe	33.9	30.4	32.7
Medium	51.5	53.8	52.0
Severe	14.6	15.8	15.2
Total cases	100%	100%	100%

As seen in Table 2, academic integrity breaches are categorized in the database according to the extent, level and outcome determined. In relation to textual misconduct such as plagiarism, 'extent' is largely determined by the AIO in Health Sciences (where most assessments are text-based) by looking at the amount of text plagiarised, as often indicated by a Turnitin 'Similarity Index' Report⁴ or other text evidence provided by the lecturer involved. In determining the 'Level' of misconduct an AIO considers a range of factors such as intention, year level, previous offences and student's learning background (see Appendix A).

While not specifically mentioned in The University's policy, the AIO database allows for consideration of 'factors integral to the case' which may be a combination of all of those listed in the policy, or other extenuating circumstances relevant to the particular situation. It therefore follows that the 'extent' and the 'level' may not be perfectly correlated. However, once the level has been established by the AIO, the 'outcome determined' (see Table 3) should be closely aligned. Table 2 demonstrates that this alignment did occur in the academic integrity cases investigated, and Figure 1 shows this in diagrammatic form.

⁴ *Turnitin* is a text-matching software program used by most AIOs at The University, as the first step in identifying potential plagiarism in students' text-based assignments. The use of *Turnitin* in academia is not without controversy. While scholars in the U.K. and Australia have generally been receptive to the use of electronic detection software as one tool in an holistic and educative approach to dealing with plagiarism, some scholars in North America have expressed concerns regarding potential ethical, legal and pedagogic issues (see for example, Donnelly et al, 2006; Eodice, 2008).

Figure 1: Consistency of extent, level and outcome in Health Sciences AIO Database

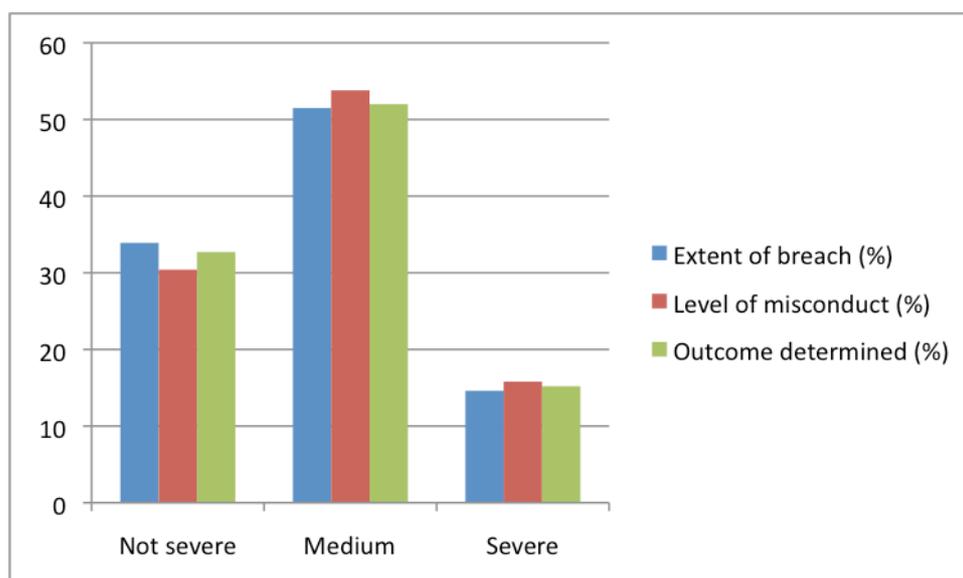


Table 3 shows the outcomes allocated to each of the three categories of academic misconduct, and demonstrates the distribution of outcomes against the range of possible penalties allowable in the policy (as per Table 1). Those outcomes highlighted in Table 3 indicate that while most of the cases in Health Sciences fitted well within the rubric of the policy, six particular cases did not.

Table 3: Allocation of outcomes related to severity of incident.

	Not severe	Medium	Severe
No loss of mark, warning only	27%	3.3% (cases 3,4,5)	
Resubmit for full marks	15.4%	1.1% (case 6)	3.7% (case 1)
Loss of 10%	55.7%	13%	
Resubmit max 50%		69.6%	11.1%
Zero in component sup allowed	1.9% (case 2)	11.9%	44.5%
Zero in component no sup		1.1%	33.3%
Refer to Head of School			7.4
Total	100%	100%	100%

The highlighted cases required further investigation of the category 'factors integral to the case', as identified in the AIO database, to ascertain the reasons for the apparent divergence from policy. The following case descriptions are drawn from the database and expanded upon by the AIO responsible for dealing with these matters.

Qualitative data: Factors integral to the case

Case 1: Severe level of misconduct/Not severe outcome awarded (resubmit for full marks)

In this instance, a post-graduate student submitted an assignment with no attribution and a moderate amount of cut and pasted material. This was deemed to be a severe level of misconduct, based on the student's post-graduate status, longstanding experience of study requirements at The University, the complete lack of attribution throughout the assignment and the fact that some material had been cut and paste from sources. During the discussion with the AIO it became evident that this student was suffering from extreme emotional distress and had been under undue family pressure, such that submission of her assignment had necessarily been accorded a low priority. During the discussion, when asked why she didn't apply for an extension, the student explained that she "just wanted to get it out of the way". Her stressful circumstances had clearly led her to making an irrational and out of character decision. Having checked the AIO database and determined that this student had no prior breaches of academic integrity, the AIO decided that the student should be permitted to resubmit the assignment for full marks, despite the identified severity of the breach.

Case 2: Not severe level of conduct/Medium outcome (zero for component with supplementary assessment allowed)

In this instance, an international English as an Additional Language (EAL) student was found to have brought a translation Dictionary to the exam which contained a large amount of English notes within the pages. The exam invigilator passed the case to the AIO who subsequently examined the English notes and found that only three words actually related to this specific exam. Therefore, the level of misconduct was deemed to be 'not severe'. However, in keeping with the usual practice within the faculty, where taking any notes into an exam is considered to be a severe breach of academic integrity, the AIO imposed an outcome which reflected the faculty's position, while still allowing for the student to eventually pass the course (with the opportunity for a supplementary assessment). Worthy of note is that AIOs from other faculties in The University (eg Business), which do not permit supplementary assessment, do not have this option. It is therefore unlikely that an AIO in Business would impose the outcome 'zero in the component with no supplementary assessment', as this would mean that the student would automatically fail the course. The different academic policies (seemingly unrelated to University-wide academic integrity policies) in each of the faculties clearly have an impact on the outcome decisions made by individual AIOs.

Cases 3 & 4: Medium level of misconduct/Not severe outcome awarded (warning only given, full marks awarded)

Cases 3 and 4 are linked. Two students worked together on an individual assessment item. The result was that both students submitted very similar work in terms of format and ideas, although there was minimal direct text match. Using the properties in Microsoft Word to identify the date of document creation, the original author was able to be identified. In addition, individual consultations with each student verified this assessment. In this case, Student A wrote the original document, but was later approached by his friend, Student B, who was having difficulty with the task. Student A acted as a peer mentor, assisting Student B with comprehension of the task, and with content mastery. As part of that process, Student A provided an electronic copy of the assignment to Student B, suggesting that she might find it useful. At no time did Student A give Student B permission to copy the work. The AIO determined that while this behavior was ill-advised, it did not constitute an intention to cheat or provide Student B with the opportunity to cheat. Student B followed the format of Student A's work, but clearly made an attempt to paraphrase most of the document. The only small text matches were those where Student B was still struggling to understand the content. While the AIO considered the level of the academic integrity breach to be 'medium', a lesser penalty was imposed because both students had been admitted straight into the second year of the program and hence had not completed the specific academic writing and integrity course completed by other students in the first year of study.

Case 5: Medium level of misconduct/Not severe outcome awarded (warning only given, full marks awarded)

In this case, a student submitted an assignment with large sections of text copied, but not appropriately attributed as quotations with quotation marks and the full in-text reference provided. The AIO determined that in neglecting to show quotations appropriately, the student was presenting the text as paraphrased rather than quoted material. This student was not doing well in a number of courses and had already failed the course for which the assignment was written. In consultation with teaching staff, it became apparent this student was struggling with serious mental health issues, and there was concern that a harsh penalty for the academic integrity breach would further exacerbate the situation and put the student's personal safety at risk. Given that the student had already failed the course, and the workload associated with even a lenient penalty such as 'resubmit for a maximum P2' would literally "tip him over the edge", it was decided to impose the most lenient outcome of 'warning only, with a note on the file'. In this situation, the student was compelled to re-take the course the

following year, which would therefore provide further opportunities for learning.

Case 6: Medium level of misconduct/Not severe outcome awarded (resubmit for full marks)

This student submitted a paper that had minimal in-text referencing and there was no correlation between the reference list and references cited in the text. The student was a mature-aged first year student who claimed no prior learning in the area of referencing. This seems to be genuine. No teaching of academic integrity had been done in the first semester of the program which was when this transgression was noted. Given the early stage of the program and lack of formal teaching within the program at the time of the breach, the low percentage value of the task (10%) and The University's focus on student education rather than punitive outcomes, the student was sent to the Student Learning Centre for tuition and asked to resubmit the paper again.

Discussion

The key finding from our analysis is that in the case of the Health Sciences faculty data, there is evidence of overall consistency between the identified level and extent of the academic integrity breach and the outcome determined by the AIO. The second finding is that in the few cases where there was apparent inconsistency, the qualitative data provided an explanation which focused on 'factors integral to the case' (extenuating circumstances). Is the second finding an indication of lack of consistency as identified by Carroll and Appleton (2005), or is it because trained AIOs are using nuanced judgement based on extensive experience to take into account a range of mitigating factors, which ultimately ensure a fairer process? We contend that it is the latter. Consistency and fairness occurs when those in charge of determining outcomes consistently take into account the full range of factors, as well as the action itself.

As Howard (1999) cogently argues, "In the matter of student plagiarism, it is real people who are at issue. These are not author-functions; these are human beings sitting in one's class, one's office. And it is not their texts that are punished, but their persons. Their persons, therefore, must be integral to the definition of their plagiarism" (p. 164). We take Howard's reference to 'persons' as an exhortation to AIOs at The University to take into account the life experiences and circumstances of students ("the full range of factors") when assessing a potential breach of academic integrity.

However, very few writers advocate the need to take such circumstances into account when determining outcomes/penalties for breaches of academic integrity, despite the fact that numerous researchers have explored typologies of reasons to explain student plagiarism, including 'pressures' which may relate to time, family, financial or broader social and cultural pressures (see Bennett 2005; Bretag 2005 & 2008; Devlin & Gray 2007; James, McInnes & Devlin 2002; Park

2003). In her doctoral research on institutional responses to plagiarism by international students, Bretag (2005) argued that investigations of plagiarism need to acknowledge the impact of the student's language, cultural and educational backgrounds, the institutional policy framework, including governance processes, and the commercialized environment of contemporary higher education. Certainly the multicultural nature of most Australian campuses has resulted in teaching staff needing to rethink traditional teaching assumptions and practices, particularly in relation to students' prior learning.

But the contextual factors which need to be considered when investigating potential academic integrity breaches do not relate only to international students. Speaking from the perspective of a community college in the U.S., Day (2008) suggests that, even in cases of outright fraud, contextual questions need to be asked, such as: "Did a student download a paper from the Internet because her boss required her to close the store every night for a week?...Did a student who works full time and carries a full load of courses just take too much on?" (Day 2008, p. 50).

Carroll and Appleton (2005), in their evaluation of the system of Academic Conduct Officers (ACOs) at Oxford Brookes University from 2001-2005, reported that "lenient treatment of misconduct [was]...noticeable" largely due to ACOs taking into account "extenuating circumstances". The authors quite rightly expressed concern that:

If too much regard is paid to extenuating circumstances and no criteria are agreed for factoring them into the tariff, then consistency is threatened. Alternatively, if no regard to extenuating circumstances is given, fairness becomes difficult or impossible. This issue warrants further attention. (Carroll & Appleton 2005, p.10)

However, Carroll and Seymour (2006) later collected qualitative data from ACOs and reported consistency in the application of penalties for academic misconduct, largely because ACOs disregarded mitigating circumstances:

Most cases involved judgements about mitigating circumstances to do with personal problems, financial difficulties, stress, etc. ACOs that were interviewed said they were not influenced by such matters and that these were not important in ascertaining evidence on intentionality or to the decision about the penalty. Although some respondents stressed the need for flexibility in imposing penalties, others were uncomfortably aware that flexibility could be construed as inconsistency, lack of transparency or unequal treatment and felt it should be resisted. (Carroll & Seymour, 2006, p.6)

There appears to have been a shift in Oxford Brookes University's focus from 2005 in recognizing the importance of both consistency and fairness (and the tension in achieving this), to 2006 and a more obvious focus on consistency in and of itself. However, this may be the result of the ACO model at Oxford Brookes University being revised so that plagiarism is now classified according to three distinct levels: negligent academic practice, academic malpractice, and academic misconduct, with each category providing very clear guidelines in terms of identification and 'penalty tariffs' (Carroll & Seymour 2006). The consistency of outcomes achieved by the ACOs at Oxford Brookes is also achieved through a rigorous process of induction, ongoing communication and regular face-to-face

meetings which enable "tacit and implicit criteria [being] used to make decisions" (Carroll & Seymour 2006) to be discussed. As Bretag (2008) has suggested elsewhere, this type of community of practice could also provide an avenue whereby compassionate responses to breaches of academic integrity could be explored. Experienced AIOs, such as those in Health Sciences at The University, could induct and mentor inexperienced AIOs, all the while demonstrating a deep commitment to both fairness and consistency.

It would seem to be counter-productive to argue that deliberate cases of intentional plagiarism such as buying papers from essay mills, should not receive severe penalties (see Lathrop & Foss 2000; White 1999; Woessner 2004). That is certainly not our contention. We acknowledge that the "purposeful theft of academic material constituting a substantial portion of a given assignment" (the definition of deliberate plagiarism provided by Woessner 2004, p. 319) is a clear breach of academic integrity. In addition, Carroll and Seymour make the case that

[even when outcome decisions are] considered judgements based on a range of criteria and arising from deeply held beliefs as to the importance of academic integrity, students describe the result as a 'lottery'...nuanced, tailored punishments (sic) [can cause] students to conclude that their own decisions and actions as part of their responsibilities as students are perhaps not worth the effort. (Carroll & Seymour 2006, pp. 1-2).

While Carroll and Seymour do not provide empirical data to support their assertion, we recognise that it is certainly possible that students may regard variable outcomes for academic misconduct as the result of arbitrary decision-making (a "lottery"), rather than the result of adherence to policy in tandem with careful consideration of "factors integral to the case". Despite this, we remain committed to a process which does more than seek a simplistic, formulaic approach to academic integrity based on strict adherence to a one-size-fits-all policy. In our own work as researchers and AIOs at The University, we have seen a massive shift in the last decade or so, from outrage and paranoia that 'plagiarism is on the rise' to a much more sophisticated approach that recognises the complexity of student plagiarism. Titles such as *Student cheating in the Internet Age* (Lathrop & Foss 2000), *The plagiarism handbook* (Harris 2001), and *A handbook for deterring plagiarism in higher education* (Carroll 2002), all excellent texts providing useful strategies for detecting and dealing with plagiarism, have given rise to titles such as *Pluralising plagiarism: Identities, contexts, pedagogies* (Howard & Robillard 2008) and *Pedagogy, not policing: Positive approaches to academic integrity at the university* (Twomey, White & Sagendorf 2008). The more recent books have replaced the language of 'detect and punish' with 'explore, educate and respond', and it is the latter approach which we maintain is most appropriate.

Conclusion

This paper analysed data from a Health Sciences faculty at an Australian university to determine if outcomes for breaches of academic integrity were applied consistently and/or fairly. We concluded that overall there was evidence of consistency, but that six individual cases required specific attention to

determine why the extent, level and outcome determined were apparently mismatched. Having investigated the 'factors integral to the case' in each instance, we concluded that it is appropriate at times for there to be a difference between the identified severity of an academic misconduct incident and the final outcome imposed. We have argued that while it is important for universities to have clear policy on this issue, it is just as important for those in charge of applying that policy to be adequately trained and deeply committed to both the academic integrity process and to the complex needs of students. The paper has drawn on research at Oxford Brookes University which has highlighted the need for a supportive community of practice whereby inexperienced decision-makers can be mentored by those with more experience in this multi-faceted task. The contribution of this paper has been in demonstrating that both consistency and fairness are possible and desirable in determining outcomes for students' breaches of academic integrity. Put simply, our commitment to academic integrity means little if it is not coupled with a genuine concern for our students.

About the authors:

Tracey Bretag, BA (Hons), MA, Ed.D, teaches a range of communication and ethics courses in the School of Management at the University of South Australia. She is the Editor of the *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, and the Chair of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity. Her research interests include academic integrity, internationalisation of higher education, teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), developing learning communities, new technologies, computer mediated and intercultural communication. Her most recent research has focused on academics' self-plagiarism in research publishing.

Margaret Green, MAppSc (Physiotherapy) teaches in the School of Health Sciences. She is a founding committee member of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity and is an Academic Integrity Officer in the School of Health Science.

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Appendix 1: Example of an academic integrity policy

The University recognises that academic misconduct can occur through unfamiliarity with academic conventions and all issues of academic misconduct will be considered in light of:

- a) the extent of the misconduct
- b) the student's intention and/or motivation
- c) contextual factors such as:
 - i. stage/level of program
 - ii. number of previous offences
 - iii. student's learning background
- d) convention of discipline
- e) the impact of a particular outcome on a student's progression
- f) information provided to the student about academic integrity as part of their course
- g) where applicable, information about the student held on the academic misconduct database

(University of South Australia 2008)