

The non-alignment of academic staff responses to student plagiarism with academic integrity policy and procedures in Australian public universities: Issues and recommendations for institutions of higher learning

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Maintaining academic integrity is an area of major importance for today's institutions of higher learning. In Australia, most universities have in place academic integrity policies and procedures for responding to student plagiarism. One of the aims of these documents is to ensure there is a consistent, institution-wide approach to responding to student plagiarism. Despite this aim, responses by academic staff to incidences of student plagiarism do not always align with the responses expected of them by their institution as set out in these institutional documents. This paper presents the findings from a mixed methods study of over 200 academic staff in four Western Australian public universities. Using focus groups, an online survey and semi-structured interviews, and analysing the data using descriptive statistics, document analysis and a grounded theory approach, the findings suggest that academic staff either follow, partly follow or ignore the procedures for responding to student plagiarism as mandated by their institution depending on a number of factors including the educational level of the student involved. The researcher proposes a 'three view' model for better understanding why academic staff respond to student plagiarism in the ways they do and makes recommendations which may lead to better alignment of academic staff responses and the responses to student plagiarism expected by institutions.