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**Improving student learning**

**by combining accessibility/inclusion with academic integrity**

This project brings together inclusion and academic integrity. We define inclusion as follows: **Inclusion involves celebrating differences in all aspects of who we are as individuals with every person respected, valued and supported.  We aim to integrate it within our practice to enhance engagement, participation, learning and choice for all.**

# **Academic Integrity – Truths and Myths**

## **Information for the instructors**

| **Type of activity** | Sorting activity (with cards) and discussions/Find Someone Who. |
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| **Mode of delivery** | In-person. Activity can be adapted for hybrid and online classes. Suggestions for adaptations are marked with an icon of a computer screen in instructions below. |
| **Aim** | To help students identify and critically evaluate the ‘truths’ and ‘myths’ surrounding the issues of academic integrity breaches. |
| **Suitable for** | * students who have already developed some understanding of the rules surrounding academic integrity. * students of any discipline. * small and large groups. |
| **Resources** | Cards. |
| **Time** | Approx. 30-60 minutes. |

## **Rationale and Inclusivity**

When students understand reasoning behind academic integrity rules, they are more likely to comply with them. By engaging with the ‘truths’ and ‘myths’ surrounding this issue, the students will learn to think critically about the issues, rather than just memorise what the rules are.

One of the reasons students might not understand why the rules around academic integrity are so important is cultural disconnect. If they are from a culture where copying is an acceptable way of learning, they may struggle to understand why it is not acceptable in the UK. A sense of disconnect might occur not only in students who have arrived from overseas, but also in those who might be the first in their family to attend university, mature students and others. Understanding the reasons for academic integrity is an important part of the acculturation process to help students access their course in a meaningful way. In addition, thinking critically and justifying opinions is an essential academic skill.

## **Activity structure**

1. Warmer. The instructor welcomes the class and provides an overview and aims of the activity. The instructor asks students to:

* recall institutional rules surrounding academic integrity (this can be done as a whole group discussion or in a form of a true/false quiz appropriate for your institution).
* think about reasons why students should follow these rules.



In online, hybrid or technology-rich learning environments, the instructor may choose to use a polling application, interactive presentation software, an interactive online whiteboard or ask students to record their ideas in a chat box.

1. Main task. The instructor cuts out and distributes the cards for Task 1 from the Resources section below. Students are placed in pairs or small groups and are asked to consider if they agree or disagree with the statements written on the cards (alternatively, the instructor may ask students to sort the cards into ‘myths’ and ‘truths’ or ‘true’ and ‘false’ categories). Students are asked to provide reasons for their opinions. Instructors are encouraged to adapt, add or change the arguments depending on the context when appropriate. The number of statements to consider may be reduced depending on time constraints in the lesson.

In online, hybrid or technology-rich learning environments, the instructor may choose to use an interactive learning technology application for this task (e.g. sorting activity). Students participating in class online work in breakout rooms.

1. Possible follow up activity: Find Someone Who. Students are asked to talk to other students and try to find someone in the class who has a different opinion on any of the statements from the cards. Students are then asked to explain their reasoning to each other.
2. The instructor brings the students back together for a whole group check and discussion.
3. Students are asked to discuss reflective questions related to the activity (e.g. How did this activity go? Did you learn something new? Has anyone changed their mind on any ‘myths’ or ‘truths’? What have you learnt from this activity?)

## **Resources**

**Task 1. Main task. Cards.**

Instructions for students:

| Sort the cards into two categories: agree and disagree (or myths and truths or true/false). |
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| 1. Students are still learning. Many of the academic integrity errors they make are accidents. | 1. It is unfair on students who have done their own work to be awarded the same degree as someone who cheated to gain theirs. |
| 1. The value of a degree is that it shows you have achieved a certain standard of knowledge. If you cheat, you reduce the value of that degree for everyone who takes it. | 1. In some countries, students are allowed to submit an assignment with has a lot of similarity to existing texts. Why is it so strict in the UK? |
| 1. It’s normal to ask your friends and family for help with your assignments. That isn’t cheating. | 1. Copying something you have written in previous years is still using your own work. |
| 1. Professionals use degree courses to achieve their qualifications. If you found out your doctor or lawyer had done this, would you trust their professional judgement? What about an airline pilot? | 1. It is important that academic conventions are standardised, so it is clear to anyone from the academic community that this is your own work. |
| 1. If you cheat once in a course, even in a minor way, that means you do not gain the skill that you were supposed to learn on that course. Whenever that skill is called upon or needed in the future, you will find yourself in a very difficult situation. | 1. Students might not feel trusted when they are told to submit their work to Turnitin software. |
| 1. It is difficult to cite everything and unlikely that all the citations will be checked, therefore it isn’t really important to get citations right. | 1. What’s important are grades, and not how you obtained them. |
| 1. Authorship is very important in our culture. Not crediting authors or taking credit for the work of others can be thought of as a form of stealing. | 1. It is the responsibility of students to find out what the rules are at university. There are always opportunities to ask if something is OK and students should use them. |

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| 1. The idea of academic integrity doesn’t depend on the percentage of the text being matched. Instead, it depends on whether the work has been presented in an honest way as the student’s own work. | 1. It is a waste of time for lecturers to have to mark and give feedback on a piece of work which is not your own. You will learn nothing from that. |
| 1. The rules seem very complicated and picky. Surely only very obvious cases of cheating should be subject to any sort of penalty. Minor issues should be ignored. | 1. In many cultures, copying is seen as a reasonable form of learning. Handing in copied work shouldn’t be too big a deal. |
| 1. Cheating can be creative and a skill in itself. | 1. Students can get into real trouble and open themselves up to problems later on if they cheat early in their career. If found out, this can affect them even years later. |

For further information, please contact the Project Institutional Lead, Anna Krajewska at [anna.krajewska@bil.ac.uk](about:blank).

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