REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY FRAMEWORK AND IMPLEMENTATION ACTION AT GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Conducted by Lyn Holman
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

The issue of academic misconduct among students is an ongoing and difficult problem for all educational organisations, and particularly so for universities. Universities fulfil an important role in certifying persons as graduates holding particular qualifications and thereby informing society, including employers, professions and the general public, that they have certain knowledge and skills and are equipped, in many cases, to perform professional functions. If the assessment which underpins this certification is corrupted by dishonest practices by students, the certification role of universities can be seriously compromised. Academic integrity among students is therefore a serious issue for universities, potentially affecting their reputation, academic credibility and standing in the community.

While the issue has always been a concern to universities, there are factors that have heightened the concern in recent years, including the ability of students to access readily a wide range of electronic information with the potential for misuse, and the commercialisation of education which some claim has changed the behaviour and expectations of students.

Griffith has always had a policy dealing with academic misconduct by students. Some years ago, it recognised that there were deficiencies in this policy and the University's approach to student academic misconduct. Responding both to the heightened sector-wide concern and its awareness of its own particular shortcomings, the University instigated a process of review and improvement.

In 2007, an Academic Integrity Reference Group was established and they prepared an Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity Among Students. This Framework was adopted by the University Council in October 2007 for the purpose of conducting a trial of the new processes in several areas of the University. Subsequently, the trial was extended across the whole University. (A more detailed history of the process of development and trial is provided in the document "A Report on the Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity Among Students, February 2009")

The purpose of my review is to evaluate the Framework and the trial to inform the decision to move from a trial situation to adopting an ongoing policy with accompanying processes as the University's strategy for dealing with student academic misconduct.

The principal question that this review seeks to address is:
Has the adoption of the Academic Integrity Framework and its implementation across the University been an effective response to the problem of student academic misconduct?

The scope of the review does not extend to cover comparison with other universities, or to consider whether the University's position is one of best practice in this area. Nevertheless, it is noted that the work of the Academic Integrity Reference Group in developing the Framework involved a review of literature, including making use of the standard setting work and publications of the Joint Information Systems Committee in the United Kingdom, and consultation with a number of Australian and international universities. It is also noted that AUQA in its September 2008 *Report of an Audit of Griffith University* commended the 'University for the adoption of an evidence-based approach to academic integrity underpinned by research literature and practice.' A commendation refers to an activity that has led to or appears likely to lead to, the achievement of a goal, which in AUQA's view is particularly significant.

2.0   METHODOLOGY

In conducting this review I have drawn on four sources of information.

(i)   <u>Existing documentation</u>

Documentation consulted and in some cases evaluated include:
- the Academic Integrity Framework
- the University's Academic Integrity web site (www.griffith.edu.au/academic-integrity)
- the information pack for academic staff
- the presentation to groups of staff as part of the implementation, such as School Committees, Faculty Boards
- Information aimed at students, including 2009 Student Guide and regular student emails
- all forms and standard correspondence associated with breaches of academic integrity
- the document "A Report on the Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity Among Students, February 2009". This self review conducted by the Academic Integrity Manager was prepared as an input to my review. It provides a useful summary of the development and implementation process, gives statistical information on academic integrity cases, and reports qualitative feedback from academics who have used the processes of the Academic Integrity Framework. The self review also summarises the University's current position using the JISC Plagiarism Advisory Service Roadmap set of questions. This document is referred to throughout this report as the Self Review Report, and should be read in conjunction with this report.

(ii)   <u>Consultation with senior staff and relevant administrators</u>

I held discussions with the following staff, and sought their views on the Academic Integrity Framework, the process of developing and trialing the Framework, the administrative support for the process, resource issues, and outcomes, as well as topics specific to their role.

> Professor John Dewar, Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic
> Professor Sue Spence, Pro Vice Chancellor Quality and Student Outcomes
> Professor Kerri-Lea Krause, Director, Griffith Institute for Higher Education
> Colin McAndrew, Pro Vice Chancellor Administration
> Associate Professor Peter Healy, Chair, University Appeals Committee
> Associate Professor Anna Stewart, Chair, Academic Integrity Reference Group
> Samantha Ermer, Manager Learning Services
> Karen van Haeringen, Head of the Secretariat, Academic Administration
> Jenny Martin, Academic Integrity Manager, Academic Administration

(iii)   <u>Survey of and discussions with academic managers responsible for academic integrity in each Faculty</u>

The officer with principal responsibility for academic integrity matters in each area of the University is the Chair of the Assessment Board. In most areas, this person is the Dean or Deputy Dean Learning and Teaching, but in some cases a separate person takes this role. The eleven academic managers who fill either or both of these positions are set out in Appendix 1. A questionnaire was forwarded to each of the eleven academic managers. I then had an appointment with them to collect their responses and their comments. The results of the survey and discussions are given in Appendix 1.

(iv)   Survey of academic staff and students

I conducted a survey of a random sample of academic staff, asking questions about their level of concern with the problem of plagiarism and academic misconduct among students, their view of the University's approach to the issue and their own experience and actions in promoting academic integrity and preventing student academic misconduct. There were 63 respondents to the survey, with all campuses, all academic Groups and all academic classification levels represented in the sample. The detailed results of the survey are given in Appendix 2.

I conducted a survey of a random sample of students. For students for whom this was their first year of study at Griffith, I asked them questions relating only to whether they had received information about academic integrity from the University, the sources of the information and whether they thought they had an understanding of what they had to do to avoid plagiarism in their assignments. For students who had studied at Griffith previously, the questions included whether they had received information about academic integrity, the sources of the information, their satisfaction with support in academic writing skills, their views of the prevalence of academic misconduct among students, their satisfaction with the action of academic staff to prevent academic misconduct and their awareness of the use of text-matching software and the existence of an academic integrity Framework. The survey sample was 142 students from all academic Groups and from four of the campuses. The detailed results of the survey are given in Appendix 3.

3.0   DEFICIENCIES IN PREVIOUS APPROACH TO STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University's approach to student academic misconduct prior to the development of the Academic Integrity Framework had three major areas of deficiency.

The Policy on Academic Misconduct was an adequate formal framework for the area. It defined the various forms of student academic misconduct, and exhorted relevant academic staff to provide good advice to students on the accepted standards of academic conduct, academic writing skills, referencing conventions, and also on group work requirements. It set out penalties for academic misconduct and prescribed the procedures for dealing with alleged instances. The authority and responsibility for determining cases including penalties was the relevant Assessment Board.

The significant deficiency was a reluctance by many academic staff to deal with academic misconduct cases according to the policy, preferring to take action using their own assessment mechanisms and not resort to formal assessment board processes. Also, some areas of the University were pro-active in developing their own internal policy and processes. As a result there were inconsistencies in the application of the policy across the University. When cases were prosecuted and penalties applied, many were the subject of appeal from students and the University Appeals Committee found that on occasions the inconsistent application of the Academic Misconduct Policy caused problems in resolving student appeals.

The second deficiency was the absence of a systematic approach to the deployment of text-matching software to assist staff in detecting plagiarism by students.

The third deficiency was the lack of effective record keeping. This meant that multiple instances of misconduct by students were hard to detect and there was no reliable data to review the frequency of academic misconduct cases in various areas of the University or amongst various types of students, or to measure trends or the effectiveness of strategies.

This review will consider whether these deficiencies have been overcome.

4.0   THE PREVAILING CULTURE ON STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

In conducting this review, I was interested in gaining some insight into the culture amongst staff and students regarding student academic misconduct. I asked students (not first years) what they thought the prevalence of academic misconduct was amongst students in general. 86% of respondents thought the prevalence was "occasional occurrences" or "not aware of such behaviour, or don't know". When asked about the action of staff to prevent students engaging in academic misconduct, 71% said that they were satisfied or very satisfied, and only 7% said that they were dissatisfied (Appendix 3). Although these results cannot be classed as rigorous research on the issue, they do not indicate a widespread culture of misconduct among students.

In the academic staff survey, I asked respondents to rate their level of concern about the problem of plagiarism, academic misconduct, cheating among students, and 44% responded "serious concern" and 32% "some concern" (Appendix 2). These responses can be interpreted both as indicating that the academic pays a lot of attention to the issue because they are concerned and also that they consider the rate of incidence among students is significant. The question did not distinguish between these two situations. Consistent with these responses, the Deans / Deputy Deans Learning and Teaching and Assessment Board Chairs judged the level of concern among academic staff in their area about student plagiarism to be "extremely high", "high" and "moderate" (Appendix 1).

While these results are by no means conclusive, the pattern of responses suggests an acceptable situation or, at least, the absence of a major cultural problem. Staff consider the issue of student academic misconduct to be significant and give it a lot of attention, students think the prevalence is low and are satisfied with the preventative actions of staff.

One academic staff member raised with me an issue possibly deserving some further consideration. When students have concerns about the actions of fellow students and suspect or know that they are cheating, it is difficult for the students to raise their concerns with the University and have them dealt with effectively. The issue is complex, involving such matters as anonymity of the complainant, burden of proof, vexatious complaints, relationship between students after the event. I note that the Academic Integrity Framework makes no mention of this matter, and I suggest that it is worthy of some further consideration at some time in the future.

5.0   THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY FRAMEWORK

5.1   <u>An Educative Approach</u>

A significant feature of the University's approach to the issue of student academic misconduct is the emphasis on education and prevention. The nomenclature itself sets the tone, referring to the "promotion of academic integrity among students" in the title of the Framework and using the term "breach of academic integrity" for an instance of academic misconduct. The Framework devotes a section to the prevention of academic misconduct, covering four key areas: education of students; resourcing academic staff; reducing opportunities for students to commit breaches of academic integrity; and making students aware of the penalty system for academic misconduct; and includes detailed strategies for action in each of these areas.

The commitment to education and prevention carries into the procedures for managing academic misconduct in the Framework. The Framework takes account of the type and extent of the misconduct, the experience of the student and the intent of the student and differentiates between low level and serious cases in both the process for dealing with the case and the outcomes and penalties.

This two tiered approach in the policy and its implementation is a strength and appears to be working effectively. The senior officers who I interviewed commented favourably on this aspect. The Deans / Deputy Deans Learning and Teaching and the Chairs of Assessment Boards were asked explicitly about the balance between education and imposing sanctions,

and with one exception they responded that the balance was correct (Appendix 1; see also Appendix 1 for information on the dissenting view).

Also, I consider the response of academic staff to the question about their level of satisfaction with the University's response to student academic misconduct to indicate general support for the educative approach of the Framework, as only 15% expressed dissatisfaction and 55% were satisfied or very satisfied.

A performance indicator for the effectiveness of the approach in the Framework is the frequency of repeat breaches. If an educative response is an effective outcome for a student's first low level breach of academic integrity, then the rate of second breaches should be low. The early indications in this regard are promising. During the trial period, using the statistics for the three areas of the University that have been involved for three assessment periods, the rate of repeat breaches is less than 10 per cent.

It is recommended that the rate of repeat breaches be monitored each semester and reported to the Committee of Chairs of Assessment Boards and the Learning and Teaching Committee as a performance indicator for the Academic Integrity Framework.

5.2 **Promotion of Academic Integrity**

The Framework, as its title implies, places a heavy emphasis on the promotion of academic integrity to staff and students. Over the past 18 months, considerable action has been undertaken to put this commitment into practice.

The effectiveness of the action can be judged from the following:

- Of the surveyed students, 96% said that they had been given information about academic integrity / academic misconduct / plagiarism / cheating; of the First Year students in their second or third week at the University, 92% said they had received such information and 96% responded that they considered that they had a reasonable understanding of what they had to do to avoid plagiarism in their assignments (Appendix 3);
- Students gave a positive response to the question about their satisfaction with the level of support and training they had been given in academic writing skills, proper procedures for quotations and referencing and careful use of paraphrasing (67% positive satisfaction level, Appendix 3);
- 85% of students referred to their lecturers as the source of information about academic integrity, and 81% referred to the Course Outlines in this regard also (Appendix 3);
- In the academic staff survey, 63% of staff expressed satisfaction with the action taken by the University to promote academic integrity to students (Appendix 2);
- The responses of academic staff to the questions concerning their consideration of the opportunities for academic misconduct in the design of assessment items and concerning their attention in their courses to academic writing skills and avoiding plagiarism indicate a good level of commitment to these matters (Appendix 2, questions 4 and 5).

Learning Services have developed an on-line tutorial – the Academic Integrity Student Tutorial. The tutorial contains modules with a quiz at the end of each module so students can test their knowledge of academic integrity, referencing styles and avoiding plagiarism. Students are being advised by their lecturers about the tutorial and can enrol themselves or in some cases, Course Convenors may enrol whole classes. Staff were advised about the tutorial on March 24 and by April 6 there were 1362 users enrolled, the vast majority being students. The good response to the launch of the tutorial is indicative of a high level of awareness of academic integrity issues.

While the majority of academic staff surveyed considered that they took good action on designing assessment items and promoting student skill levels to mitigate the occurrence of

student academic misconduct, the views of the Deans / Deputy Deans Learning and Teaching and Chairs of Assessment Boards were not as positive. Half of this group considered that academic staff in their area use assessment practices that are less susceptible to plagiarism to very little extent if at all; and four of the ten respondents considered that the performance of their area for promoting academic integrity and giving students the knowledge and skills to avoid academic misconduct was just average. These academic managers considered that there was scope for improvement in their areas on both of these issues (Appendix 1).

I conclude that the actions to date to promote academic integrity have been effective and that there is a good level of awareness among staff and students. I do not consider that additional promotional strategies are needed at this stage. The need is for the action to be sustained, and for strategies to be periodically reviewed and refreshed. I make specific mention of the University's Course Outline System as an important vehicle for communication to students that appears to be particularly effective. This system should be supported to ensure that it maintains its current effectiveness. It is possible that over time, either through a drop off of commitment of academic staff or through students becoming careless because of over-familiarity, the effectiveness of Course Outlines may reduce. The University should be vigilant against such a situation.

5.3 The Process of Developing the Academic Integrity Framework

The University deserves commendation for the way it carried out the project of reviewing and improving its approach to student academic misconduct. The Self Review Report summarises the process that was implemented during 2007 and 2008. The strengths of the process were:
- good leadership provided by Associate Professor Anna Stewart, including her contribution of a soundly based theoretical framework relating to human behaviour;
- evidence-based approach, drawing on published literature and the experiences of other universities;
- good administrative support provided by Karen van Haeringen, initially and then Jenny Martin;
- effective consultation across the University;
- well managed initial trial, including obtaining feedback from all staff using the Framework during the trial and good responsiveness to the emerging issues.

The senior University managers I consulted with expressed their satisfaction with the process of developing the Framework, and a similar response was obtained from the Deans / Deputy Deans Learning and Teaching and Assessment Board Chairs (Appendix 1). A number commented that it was an excellent example of a well managed and effective review, development, implementation and change management process.

It is noted that the resources that were directed towards this process were significant, and included funding for a research student to undertake a literature survey and for visits to other institutions. Clearly one of the factors supporting the success of the process was the level of resources the University was able to direct towards this issue.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY FRAMEWORK

6.1 The Process of Managing Academic Misconduct Cases

The Academic Integrity Framework specifies in considerable detail the process to be followed in managing each alleged breach of academic integrity. The process has been devised through the consultation process at the Academic Integrity Reference Group and refined through the initial stages of the trial.

The process needs to satisfy a number of criteria:
- It must embody the principles of natural justice for students accused of academic misconduct; in particular, students must have the right to present their case throughout the process, and each allegation must be judged on its own merits without reference to previous incidents.
- Student confidentiality must be protected.
- Good documentation and record keeping must be in place; in particular, correspondence to students should be of good quality and include standard wording and also be able to be customised to the situation.
- The responsibility and authority for decision making should be clear and the balance between decision making at the Course Convenor level and at the Assessment Board Chair level should be appropriate and effective.
- Cases should be handled in a timely manner. The Framework requires that cases be completed within four weeks of the lodgement of the *Concern about a Possible Breach of Academic Integrity Form.*
- While still maintaining the burden of proof on the relevant academic staff member, the process should take account of the heavy workload of academic staff and not be unduly burdensome.
- The process needs to be supported by effective central record keeping to identify repeat incidences for a student across different courses, and also to allow statistical analysis and review.

The Deans / Deputy Deans / Assessment Board Chairs generally expressed satisfaction with the administrative processes supporting academic misconduct case management (Question 6, Appendix 1). The senior University officers I consulted with were also generally positive about the processes. The academic staff who I surveyed who had dealt with a case under the Framework gave a positive satisfaction rating to the process (11 of 14 respondents in this category said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the process) (Appendix 2). The feedback to the Academic Integrity Manager by the Course Convenors at the conclusion of each case also indicates a relatively high satisfaction level, as reported in the Self Review Report.

My assessment is that the current administrative processes are well designed, are generally meeting the criteria outlined above, and are operating effectively. The role of the Academic Integrity Manager is crucial to the process. The load on the Course Convenors is predominantly related to the burden of proof, and there is no shortcut in this area. Improvement in the load on Course Convenors should be achieved when the new Academic Integrity Management System is implemented as this will smooth some of the flow of forms and correspondence and provide the Course Convenor with certain supporting information on-line in an efficient manner. (see section 6.3)

6.2 **Use of Text Matching Software**

In conjunction with the development of the Academic Integrity Framework, the University investigated the selection and implementation of suitable text matching software. This project was undertaken under the Electronic Repertory Suite Project Board, which was chaired by the Chair of the Academic Integrity Reference Group and included some of the same members.

The outcome of the process has been the implementation of SafeAssign software. The software has been made available through the University's Learning Management System, Blackboard, and is available for staff to implement on their course web sites. The software can assist staff in plagiarism detection and can also be used by students to check their assignments before submission.

The software has been available since 2008. However there has been limited effort to date to support and promote the use of SafeAssign. Data included in the Self Review Report indicated a relatively low rate of use of SafeAssign. It is noted that no breaches of academic integrity dealt with up to February 2009 were based on detection via SafeAssign.

I included questions on the familiarity with and the use of SafeAssign in the staff and student surveys. Students (not first years) were asked whether their lecturers had advised them about SafeAssign. A positive response was given by 74% of the sample (Appendix 3). Academic staff were asked whether they had made use of SafeAssign (Appendix 2). 19% said they had used it, either once or multiple times; 41% responded that they were aware of the software and intended to make use of it; only 14% said that they were not aware of the software. Some of the remaining respondents indicated that the use of the software was not applicable in their area (for example, where assessment was not based on textual work by students). A small number of respondents (10, 16%) said that they knew of the software but were unlikely to use it. A number of negative opinions were expressed by these respondents, and also by some of the respondents who had used or were intending to use the software. The negative opinions included problems with the software, and most frequently, concern at the workload it placed on Course Convenors.

The survey of Deans / Deputy Deans Learning and Teaching and Chairs of Assessment Boards elicited responses to the question about the level of use of SafeAssign in their area divided between "some level of use" and "very little use, if at all" (Appendix 1). Some of these academic managers indicated that they had recently taken action or were about to take action to actively encourage the use of SafeAssign in their area.

It is apparent that there are practical issues associated with SafeAssign that still need to be addressed for a successful roll out of the facility. I am of the view that academic staff need some guidance on the various ways in which the software can be deployed effectively, including ways to manage the workload associated with its use. It is likely that academic staff also need more training in the interpretation of the reports from the software. Evidently some universities have adopted the position that all text based assignments submitted by students must be accompanied by a report from the institution's text matching software. If Griffith wants to adopt such a policy position, a number of practical issues need to be attended to, and the negative views of some teaching staff about the software need to be addressed.

It is recommended that further attention be given to the policy and practical issues associated with the use of SafeAssign across the University and the change management support for the deployment of the software be improved. The aim should be to effectively embed the use of SafeAssign as an important aspect of the University's approach to promoting academic integrity among students.

6.3 Academic Integrity Management System

During the trial of the Academic Integrity Framework to date, the Academic Integrity Manager has been using a relatively simple Filemaker Pro database for central record keeping. Planning for a more sophisticated and functionally rich Academic integrity Management System has been undertaken and a submission for funding to develop such a system has been approved by the University's "Supporting University Business Board". The design and development of the System is currently on hold pending the decision on the future of the Academic Integrity Framework.

The scope of the Academic Integrity Management System includes enhanced support for Course Convenors dealing with student academic misconduct cases. Currently, the exchange of information, forms and copies of student correspondence between the Course Convenor and the Academic Integrity Manager is predominantly by email. The new System will have a web interface that will provide on-line forms, and provide for the Course Convenor a set of student related information that is essential to support their management of the case, such as the student's GPA and academic record.

The development and roll out of the Academic Integrity Management System will bring significant benefits to the implementation of the Academic Integrity Framework by streamlining the work of the Course Convenor and the Chair of the Assessment Board, and by improving the functionality available to the Academic Integrity Manager in monitoring

cases, supporting academics, maintaining records and compiling statistics. I recommend that the development project be proceeded with.

6.4   Committee of Chairs of Assessment Boards

The Academic Integrity Framework gives a key role to the Committee of Chairs of Assessment Boards. This committee is responsible for monitoring the application of the Framework across the University and for monitoring that all students who are found to have breached academic integrity are treated consistently and equitably across the University's programs.

The members of this committee, the Chairs of the Faculty Assessment Boards, gave a mixed response to the question about the value of the committee to them in their role as Assessment Board Chair. The responses of the 7 Chairs were:

1 Not valuable at all	1 response
2 Little value	2 responses
3 Neutral	1 response
4 Valuable	3 responses
5 Very valuable	0 responses

The respondents who were not pleased with the committee referred to difficulties in scheduling meetings, poor attendance, and general lack of usefulness to them, but they generally considered that the committee had the potential to be a forum for the consideration of a wider range of important assessment related matters.

The operation of this committee needs to be monitored and improvements made to its operation where possible. I understand that a review of the University's Assessment Policy and assessment practices is about to be undertaken, and this activity should involve the Committee of Chairs of Assessment Boards.

7.0   OUTCOMES

7.1   Statistics

I asked the Deans / Deputy Deans / Assessment Board Chairs what their view was of the number of student academic misconduct cases in their area (Appendix 1). The responses were:

Too high	1 responses
A little high	2 responses
Acceptable	5 responses
Too low, missing too many cases	2 responses

The actual statistics of student academic misconduct cases that have been dealt with under the trial of the Academic Integrity Framework are presented in the Self Review Report. These statistics are based on the initial trial period involving the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Education and the Science, Environment, Engineering and Technology Group, covering a period of 11 weeks at the end of semester 2, 2007 and semester 1, 2008, plus the second trial period involving all areas of the University covering semester 2, 2008 up to the time of the production of the Self Review Report.

I have aggregated the sets of data in the Self Review Report in order to present some summary statistics in order to attempt to answer several questions.

(i)   *How do the number of cases of student academic misconduct under the Framework compare with the number of cases prior to the Framework?*

The number of cases being dealt with appears to have increased. The most appropriate comparison is the number of cases dealt with in semester 2, 2008, when the whole

University was involved in the trial, which was 248 cases, to be compared with an estimate of the number of cases in 2005 (whole year) which was 257, and in 2006 (possibly not quite the whole year), which was 109. However it must be noted that there were no central statistics for 2005 and 2006 and it is possible that not all cases are captured in the statistics.

Hence the number of academic misconduct cases that reached the level of a formal recording almost certainly has increased since the trial of the Academic Integrity Framework. This is indicative of more academic staff dealing with cases using the formal policy, which is a good outcome.

(ii) *What are the characteristics of the student academic misconduct cases dealt with during the trial?*

The table summarises all cases across the trial period according to the seriousness of the case (Level I, II or III), and according to the type of breach.

Total cases	465
Seriousness Level I	31%
Seriousness Level II	31%
Seriousness Level III	38%
Type of breach	
Plagiarism	82%
Cheating	5%
Collusion	14%
Other (including buying essays, falsification of data, etc)	3%

It would be of interest to see whether the above ratios persist over future years, or whether the extended experience under the Framework causes the ratios to change.

(iii) *What is the distribution of penalties applied during the trial?*

The table summarises the outcome of the cases across the trial period. Note that many students are given more than one of the listed outcomes, so the percentages represent the frequency of outcomes/penalties within the total set of outcomes/penalties (greater than the number of cases).

Total Cases	465
Outcomes / Penalties	
Warning	24%
Reduced mark	25%
Nil mark	17%
Resubmission	10%
Supplementary Assessment	3%
Referred to Learning Services for study skills support	15%
Fail	2%
No case to answer	3%
Other	1%

Again it will be interesting to see whether there are changes in the above ratios over time.

(iv) *What are the characteristics of the students in breach of academic integrity?*

According to the data in the Self Review Report, 36% of the academic misconduct cases are international students. This rate is in excess of the general student population, where about 23% are international students.

The data also indicates that 10% of the academic misconduct cases are students who have been or are being dealt with under the University's Policy on Academic Standing, Progress and Exclusion. Thus these students are low GPA students who may have received a warning or have been placed on probation for unsatisfactory academic performance. I am not aware of the proportion of the general student population who are in this category, but it is likely to be a little lower than 10%.

This data on student characteristics is in accordance with the general impression among University staff that poor performing students and international students are more likely to engage in academic misconduct.

The above data illustrates the type of analysis that can be done with good central record keeping. It is recommended that statistical reports of student academic misconduct at University level and Group level, including longitudinal trends, be prepared annually and provided to the relevant committees and academic managers.

7.2 **Consistency**

An important characteristic of a good approach to student academic misconduct is that it is applied consistently across all areas of the University. The University should strive to achieve consistency on the following dimensions, across all Faculties, in all courses. I comment on each aspect on the basis of my review and interaction with staff and students.

(i) *Promotion of academic integrity and provision of support for good academic practice among students*. As discussed in section 5.2, there is evidence of good consistency in this area.

(ii) *Detection of possible breaches of academic integrity*

Many of the senior managers and the Deans / Deputy Deans / Assessment Board Chairs I interviewed remarked that the effectiveness of the Academic Integrity Framework relied on individual academics being prepared to be vigilant in detecting possible breaches and to take the action necessary to deal with instances correctly. They expressed the view that the new Framework, with its provision for educative responses, its clear processes and support from the Academic Integrity Manager, improved the likelihood of Course Convenors, lecturers and tutors taking appropriate action.

In the survey of academic staff, it would be unlikely that I would pick up any indication of staff admitting that they ignored student academic misconduct. Nevertheless, a small number of respondents did intimate to me that the workload involved in gathering the evidence and corresponding with the student and others to bring the case to resolution was too burdensome. They preferred to avoid the administrative load and respond to the problem by other methods, such as reducing marks for the assignment on grounds such as "lack of originality". Some referred to large class sizes and lack of support for their teaching load.

The qualitative feedback from academic staff who had used the Academic Integrity Framework, as reported in the Self Review Report, contains a number of references to academic staff avoiding the use of formal processes to deal with student academic misconduct.

(iii) *Following standard procedure in investigation and interaction with the student(s)*

Because of the importance of natural justice for the student, and the potential for academic misconduct cases to be the subject of appeal or even legal action outside the University, it is important that staff adhere to the procedure set out in the Framework and use the standard wording in correspondence with the student. The procedures have been designed to ensure that rights are protected and grounds for appeal are reduced. The Academic Integrity Manager has noted that when staff take their own action initially without reference to the Academic Integrity Framework and then subsequently invoke the Framework processes, the cases are usually more difficult and complex than those where the specified procedure is followed from the beginning.

(iv) *Application of penalties*

A consistent approach to judging the severity of the breach of academic integrity and applying appropriate penalties has been greatly enhanced by the Academic Integrity Framework. The two significant aids to such consistency are the use of the Seriousness Matrix and the role of the Academic Integrity Manager. The Seriousness Matrix is provided to all staff who lodge a *Concern about a Possible Breach of Academic Integrity Form* and completion of the matrix assists staff to categorise the breach as Level I, Level II or Level III against objective criteria. This categorisation is then used by the Academic Integrity Manager to guide the next step of the process and is also used by the decision maker in deciding the penalty.

The Academic Integrity Manager is not a decision maker in the process, but is able to monitor and guide the steps involved in managing each case and monitor the consistency of the outcomes and the penalties.

The Deans / Deputy Deans / Assessment Board Chairs were supportive of the Seriousness Matrix as an effective tool for achieving consistency and also supportive of the role of the Academic Integrity Manager as an aid to consistent application of the Framework (among other things) (Appendix 1).

It is also noted that under the Framework, the Committee of Chairs of Assessment Boards plays a role in monitoring consistency across the University (see section 6.4).

On each of these dimensions there is evidence that the Academic Integrity Framework has improved the consistency in the University's response to student academic misconduct. While the survey of academic staff detected a small number of negative views, the majority response of "satisfied" to the question "Do you consider the University takes appropriate action to deal with instances of academic misconduct by students?" (Question 3) and also the good level of satisfaction with the process amongst those who had dealt with one or more cases of student academic misconduct using the new Framework (Question 10), suggest that the University is well placed to improve the level of "buy-in" of academic staff to the processes in the Framework (Appendix 2). I am also of the view that in some cases, academic staff with negative views are basing their views on historic processes and may not have engaged with the new Framework yet.

In order to continue to improve the level of involvement of academic staff with good practice in dealing with student academic misconduct cases, I suggest that the most effective strategy is to involve academic colleagues, such as Program Convenors and First Year Advisors, to actively promote the benefits of the new Framework to staff in their areas. Each staff member who is reluctant to conform to the Framework is likely to have their own reasons and concerns, and is not likely to be influenced by missives from a central source. The argument that using the Framework to deal effectively with a first breach of academic integrity significantly reduces the likelihood of subsequent breaches is a strong argument and should be promoted to staff. Also the views of staff who have used the process should be promoted to other staff as their views are likely to be helpful to their colleagues and useful in promoting consistency. When the deployment of SafeAssign is improved as discussed in section 6.2

and when the Academic Integrity Management System is implemented (section 6.3), many of the current concerns of academic staff should be reduced and a higher level of consistency should be attainable.

I emphasise that my review did not detect anything above a few isolated negative views about University processes for dealing with student academic misconduct. Nevertheless, I recognise that it is highly likely that there is some level of non-compliance among academic staff, the extent of which is generally hidden.

8.0 RESOURCES

It is apparent that the University has invested a considerable level of resources in the development and trialing of the Academic Integrity Framework to date, the most significant direct costs being the support for the research and institutional visits during the investigation phase, the implementation of the text matching software, development of the on-line Academic Integrity Student Tutorial, and the position of the Academic Integrity Manager. This level of resources has contributed significantly to the success of the project to date and reflects the commitment of the University to achieving improvements in this area.

An important question therefore is the level of resources necessary to sustain the approach to student academic misconduct as prescribed in the Academic Integrity Framework, if this is adopted as the ongoing position of the University. In my view the resource implications can be summarised into five categories.

(i) *The Academic Integrity Manager*

The position of Academic Integrity Manager is critical to the effective operation of the Academic Integrity Framework. The Academic Integrity Manager is the pivotal person managing each student misconduct case, supporting the academic decision maker through the steps of the process with forms, draft correspondence and advice as needed. The Manager maintains the records, and is thereby able to ensure that a student's past history, anywhere in the University, is taken into account in deciding a penalty. The Manager also plays an important role in raising awareness and promoting the Framework. The position is similar in many ways to the position of Manager of Research Ethics.

The Deans / Deputy Deans / Assessment Board Chairs were asked their views on the role of the Academic Integrity Manager and the response was overwhelmingly positive (Appendix 1). The majority of respondents were adamant that the position was critical to the operation of the Framework.

To date, the Academic Integrity Manager has been employed on temporary funding. For the Framework to continue operating, the position will need to be funded on an ongoing basis. The position currently is at HEW 7 and is within the Secretariat in the Academic Registrar's Office. This location is ideal in my opinion and the classification is probably appropriate. Because of the nature of the position, needing to give priority to cases whenever they arise, the position needs to be predominantly full-time. However, the distribution of cases throughout the year is uneven and it is possible that the position could take responsibility for providing administrative support for other processes that might be compatible with the workload of managing academic integrity. Processes such as student misconduct, student grievances or student appeals are possible candidates in this regard.

The work of the Academic Integrity Manager generates additional load on the operation of the Secretariat such as clerical support and resources for promotion, publications. The extent to which these can be accommodated within existing budget provisions is not a matter I can comment on, but is likely to be an order of magnitude below the requirement of securing funding for the Academic Integrity Manager position.

(ii) *The Academic Integrity Management System*

As discussed in section 6.3, I support the development of the Academic Integrity Management System to improve the efficiency of functions for the Academic Integrity Manager and also to reduce the administrative burden on the academic staff dealing with student cases. I understand that funding for the development of this System has been earmarked already, and I recommend that the project be proceeded with.

(iii) *SafeAssign Change Management*

As discussed in section 6.2, the University needs to support the roll out of SafeAssign with some more effective change management. This may have some resource implications for Information Services, but it is essential for the University to gain the benefit from the investment to date in this software.

(iv) *Load on Academic Staff*

During my review, comments have been made about the workload on academic staff generated by the Framework. While recognising that promoting academic integrity to students and managing breaches of academic integrity generate work for academic managers and Course Convenors, I am of the view that the process set out in the Framework is as considerate of the load on academic staff as is possible while still maintaining the correct role of the academic in assessment decision matters. In my view, academic staff who follow the procedure in the Framework and who are supported by the Academic Integrity Manager, will find the process not unduly burdensome and quite compatible with their normal teaching duties. The caveat is possibly the use of SafeAssign and I have indicated that more work needs to be done to find the most efficient ways to use the software.

(v) *Load on Learning Services*

The educative approach of the Framework generates additional clients for Learning Services. This additional load is compatible with the charter of this section. My consultation with the Manager of Learning Services confirmed that this area has responded appropriately to the trial of the Framework. The implications for the resources of this section are not apparent to me, but are likely to be able to be dealt with through normal University budget processes.

9.0   OTHER MATTERS

9.1   Concerns of Particular Areas of the University

I wish to comment on two areas of the University in respect of which some specific concerns were raised by the representatives I consulted with.

In respect of the Griffith Law School, both the Dean, as Chair of the Assessment Board, and the Deputy Dean Learning and Teaching raised some reservations about the Academic Integrity Framework in their discussions with me. Prior to the roll out of the trial of the Framework, the Law School had a highly developed internal process for promoting academic integrity to their students and dealing with instances of academic misconduct. Their processes involved the Dean as Chair of the Assessment Board as the decision maker in virtually all cases.

The Law School was represented on the Academic Integrity Reference Group and, as I understand it, the views of the Law School representative were taken into account during the development of the Framework, and the final position was acceptable to the Law School representative.

Nevertheless it is clear that there is still some disquiet in the Law School. In brief, their concerns relate to:

- the educational response to a first time, low level breach. They are of the view that all breaches should attract a penalty.
- the obligation on the Law School to disclose all matters relating to academic misconduct when a graduating student applies for admission to the legal profession. This includes instances when no penalty was invoked. I understand that there have been some concerns over confidentiality in this process, but these should be able to be resolved if they have not been already.
- the role of the Academic Integrity Manager. I am of the view that the Law School's concern on this matter is the result of a misunderstanding and I have asked the Academic Registrar (the supervisor of the Academic Integrity Manager) to resolve this particular concern.

In giving prominence to the concerns of the Law School, I do not wish to indicate that the Academic Integrity Framework should be modified to respond to their concerns. I suggest that there should be further discussion between the Dean of the Law School and the Chair of the Academic Integrity Reference Group, either now or at some time in the future after the Law School has had more experience of the Framework, and that the lines of communication be kept open.

The Deputy Director Learning and Teaching at the Queensland College of Art shared with me that the College had paid virtually no attention to the Academic Integrity Framework. As less than 25% of assessment within the QCA is text based, the prevailing view was that the Framework was of little relevance to them. However the Deputy Director recognised that the issue of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism of images, was a significant issue within the College and there was a need for the staff to engage with the issue and develop approaches that were consistent with the Framework but relevant to the different type of assessment used within the QCA.

I note the views of the QCA Deputy Director Learning and Teaching and suggest that there be some follow up to ensure that some attention is given to the issue within the College.

9.2 Policy Organisation

In making a recommendation that the Academic Integrity Framework be approved for implementation as the University's approach to student academic misconduct, I offer comments on the organisation of the policy in this area.

Since the Framework has been implemented in trial mode only, the Policy on Academic Misconduct has not been rescinded and technically is still in effect. This existing policy will need to be rescinded if the recommendation to approve the Academic Integrity Framework is accepted.

In my view, the University still needs a Policy on Student Academic Misconduct (possibly titled "Policy on Breaches of Academic Integrity by Students") as a companion document to the Framework. The University's formal policy on student academic misconduct is highly likely to be the subject of consideration in an external legal case at some time in the future, and so the contents and presentation should be prepared bearing this in mind. In fact, the University may wish to have the policy checked by the University's solicitors. Therefore, my recommendation is that the University approve a short, tightly worded policy encapsulating the important essence of the Academic Integrity Framework that is needed for legal considerations and is likely to be enduring (as opposed to needing to be updated regularly to take account of improvements to processes and systems). I recommend that the policy contains the definitions of academic misconduct, the essential elements of the procedures for dealing with cases regarding protecting students' rights, their privacy, and their right to representation, the authorities for decision making, the penalties that may be applied and the right of appeal.

If this approach is adopted the current *Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity to Students* should be modified to refer explicitly to the policy and duplication between the policy and the framework should be kept to a minimum. All references to promoting academic integrity should be retained in the Framework only and the detailed description of the process for managing cases, including the use of specific forms and correspondence, belongs in the Framework. In my view the process for handling academic misconduct on the part of research students could be included in the Framework.

10.0   SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In section 3.0, I outlined three deficiencies in the University's dealing with student academic misconduct before the Framework was introduced. I consider that the Framework has generated significant improvement in each of the problem areas. The consistency in dealing with cases is greatly improved and there is an apparent increase in the willingness of academic staff to deal with cases using the formal policy. The lack of text-matching software has been remedied and the Academic Integrity Manager maintains central records with benefits to all involved in the process.

The feedback from staff who have dealt with student cases using the Framework, as reported in the Self Review Report, together with the majority views of Deans / Deputy Deans Learning and teaching and Chairs of Assessment Boards, academic staff and students obtained in this review, all support the conclusion that the adoption of the Academic Integrity Framework and its implementation across the University has been an effective response to the problem of student academic misconduct.

Therefore, the principal recommendation of this review is:

Principal Recommendation:

That the policy and processes set out in the *Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity Among Students* be adopted as the policy and processes for dealing with student academic misconduct across the University.

Other recommendations arising from this review and supported by the discussion in the body of this report are:

Recommendation 1: That, in implementing the principal recommendation, the University approve a policy for dealing with student academic misconduct that satisfies all the legal requirements, together with a companion document, a Framework, modified from the existing Framework, that deals with promoting academic integrity and prescribes the process for dealing with breaches of academic integrity.

Recommendation 2: That the position of Academic Integrity Manager be funded on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 3: That the project to develop and implement an Academic Integrity Management System be proceeded with.

Recommendation 4: That, in order to effectively embed the use of SafeAssign text matching software as an important aspect of the University's approach to promoting academic integrity among students, further attention be given to the policy and practical issues associated with the use of SafeAssign and the change management support for the deployment of this software be improved.

Recommendation 5: That annual reports of student academic misconduct statistics be compiled at University level and Group level, including trend statistics, for presentation to relevant committees and academic managers.

Recommendation 6: That the rate of repeat breaches of academic integrity be monitored each semester or year and reported to the Committee of Chairs of Assessment Boards and the Learning and Teaching Committee as a performance indicator for the Academic Integrity Framework.

Recommendation 7: That, in order to improve the consistency with which student academic misconduct is dealt with across the University, academic managers, such as Program Convenors and First Year Advisors, should actively promote the benefits of the Academic Integrity Framework to their colleagues in their areas.

Recommendation 8: That some consideration be given to the issue of the appropriate process to follow when a student makes a claim that another student is in breach of academic integrity and that some explicit guidance be given in the Academic Integrity Framework in due course.