

Cheating or Sharing?  
Academic Ethics Across Cultures



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# Presenter

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# Session Objectives

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- ❑ Explore cultural influences on academic ethics
- ❑ Discuss academic issues faced by students studying in different cultures
- ❑ Examine our own concepts of academic ethics in order to apply them in context
- ❑ Become aware of resources for orienting students, faculty and administrators on academic ethics to prevent cases of misconduct

# Understanding the Problem



Center for Academic Integrity

Clemson University Rutland Institute for Ethics

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“Academic integrity is a fundamental value of teaching, learning and scholarship. Yet, there is growing evidence that students cheat and plagiarize.”

# Center for Academic Integrity

## Clemson University Rutland Institute for Ethics

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- ❑ On most US college campuses, over 75% of students admit to some cheating
- ❑ Internet plagiarism: 10% to 41%
- ❑ Majority of students (68%) “not a serious issue.”
- ❑ US high schools: 74% - serious test cheating
- ❑ 72% - serious cheating on written assignments

# Cross-cultural Perspectives

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## Russia and Eastern Europe:

- ❑ Sharing notes, talking in class OK – not hidden
- ❑ Goal is to bring the whole class level up
- ❑ Bribes routinely expected for grades

## Germany:

- ❑ Sharing of answers common, but understood as student vs. teacher; not sharing is social taboo

## Greece:

- ❑ Focus on learning concepts, rather than words
- ❑ Connecting quotes demonstrates understanding

# Cross-cultural Perspectives

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## Mexico:

- ❑ Sharing is common, but students will deny
- ❑ Professors do not expect citations in paper

## Costa Rica:

- ❑ Teamwork the rule in personal and academic life, including supporting those who do not contribute to the group

## India and Bangladesh:

- ❑ Student riots when test cheating prevented
- ❑ Exams should not be memory tests



# Cross-cultural Perspective

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## China:

- ❑ Students openly admit cheating is a way of life
- ❑ 'Intellectual property' a foreign concept
- ❑ Value: saving face, maintaining group harmony
- ❑ Cheating seen as a skill everyone should develop to succeed in the world; the world is corrupt

## Myanmar:

- ❑ Student learning seen as a task shared by group
- ❑ Worst accusation in culture is selfishness: pursuing own goals at expense of others

# Cross-cultural Perspective

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## Education in Non-Western countries:

- ❑ Focus on textbook learning
- ❑ Rote learning
- ❑ Using another author's words is a form of respect
- ❑ Loved poetry and revered scholarly arguments are learned by heart
- ❑ Students have difficulty stating own opinion
- ❑ Students have difficulty criticizing others' words

What do we consider academic misconduct?

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# Examples of Academic Misconduct

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- ❑ Plagiarism: claiming another's work as one's own
- ❑ Copying answers from another
- ❑ Unapproved collaboration
- ❑ Using notes or assistance during exams
- ❑ Lack of citations
- ❑ Falsifying lab results
- ❑ Fabricating qualifications
- ❑ Buying grades
- ❑ Falsifying identity on exams
- ❑ Destroying the work of another student

# Examples of Academic Misconduct

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- ❑ Submitting one's own work for multiple assignments
- ❑ Using translation resources without approval
- ❑ Unapproved use of technological devices, such as calculators
- ❑ Cut and paste and technological manipulations
- ❑ Breaches of classroom culture
- ❑ Sharing notes
- ❑ Not reporting observed misconduct
- ❑ Others?

# Language Acquisition Issues

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- “Patch writing” as a transition to language independence
- Students are taught to mimic academics to improve writing skills
- Feeling that student cannot improve upon what has already been written

# Current Approaches to the Problem



# Common Methods for Handling the Problem

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- Honor codes
- Syllabus statements
- Basic message:  
“Plagiarism and cheating are not allowed and consequences are serious”
- Detection
- Penalization



# Inherent Problems in the U.S.

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- ❑ Academic dishonesty is defined differently across campuses, disciplines and departments
- ❑ Students are educated about academic dishonesty in different ways
- ❑ Sanctions for academic honesty violations vary and are inconsistent
- ❑ All of this is intensified for the visiting student

# Challenges with Detection Programs

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- Proving plagiarism can be burdensome on faculty
- Results from are mixed and do not indicate unintentional plagiarism
- Devices derive from Western mindset\*
  - Emphasis on “catching” rather than supporting new members of the community
  - Non-natives become disproportionately identified and scrutinized

\* Niall Hayes and Lucas Introna, Lancaster University Management School

# Challenges with Penalization Practices

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- ❑ Institutions, departments and instructors differ greatly in their views on penalization
- ❑ Steps leading to penalization are inconsistent
- ❑ Penalization practices are inconsistent
- ❑ May not indicate unintentional misconduct
- ❑ Emphasis on punishment rather than support

# Challenges of Study Abroad Programs

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- Nuances of US study abroad student advising vs. international student advising
- Challenges vary by type of program
  - Faculty-led, short-term
  - Study center abroad
  - Direct enroll
  - Language immersion
- Mistaken assumption that English-speaking countries are “not that different”; lack of interest in preparation

# Approaching the Problem with Cultural Understanding



# Approaching the Problem with Cross-cultural Understanding

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- Small group work: case studies
- Presentation of a model for cross-cultural training

# A Model for Cross-Cultural Training

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1. Acknowledge that plagiarism and cheating are not universal concepts
  - share experiences with students
  - provide examples of expectations
  - academic ethics as cultural constructs

# A Model for Cross-cultural Training

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## 2. Identify sources of difficulty

- “common knowledge”
- collaborative work vs. cheating
- group vs. individualist focus of society
- teacher-centered vs. learner-centered
- collaboration vs. competition model
- reporting on others: honor or betrayal?
- research & citation conventions
- recognizing own writing style
- student–teacher access



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- pressures on international students
- ownership of intellectual property
- differing classroom cultures
- technology dependence of students

# A Model for Cross-cultural Training

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3. Acknowledge contradictions of US academic expectations
  - role of syllabus, US & abroad
  - how to seek help with clarification of expectations, or with citation
  - Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) handout: "Avoiding Plagiarism"

# Purdue University OWL:

## Intellectual Challenges in U.S. Academic Writing

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- ❑ Develop a topic based on what has already been said and written but write something new and original
- ❑ Rely on opinions of experts and authorities on a topic but improve upon and/or disagree with those same opinions
- ❑ Give credit to researchers who have come before you but make your own significant contribution
- ❑ Improve your English or fit into a discourse community by building upon what you hear and read but use your own words and your own voice

# A Model for Cross-cultural Training

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4. Provide specific training on citation
  - citation standards of different disciplines
  - ungraded practice papers
  - paraphrasing - instruction and practice
  - collaborate with campus writing center
  - differing writing and style guides in use
  - alert US students to possible differences in expectations abroad
  - actual examples of good and bad citation

# A Model for Cross-cultural Training

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5. Encourage students to learn expectations of host culture
  - be prepared
  - if cultural expectations clash with home culture norms, look for the value in them
  - make conscious decisions about any values that cannot be accepted
  - know resources for resolution of problems

# A Model for Cross-cultural Training

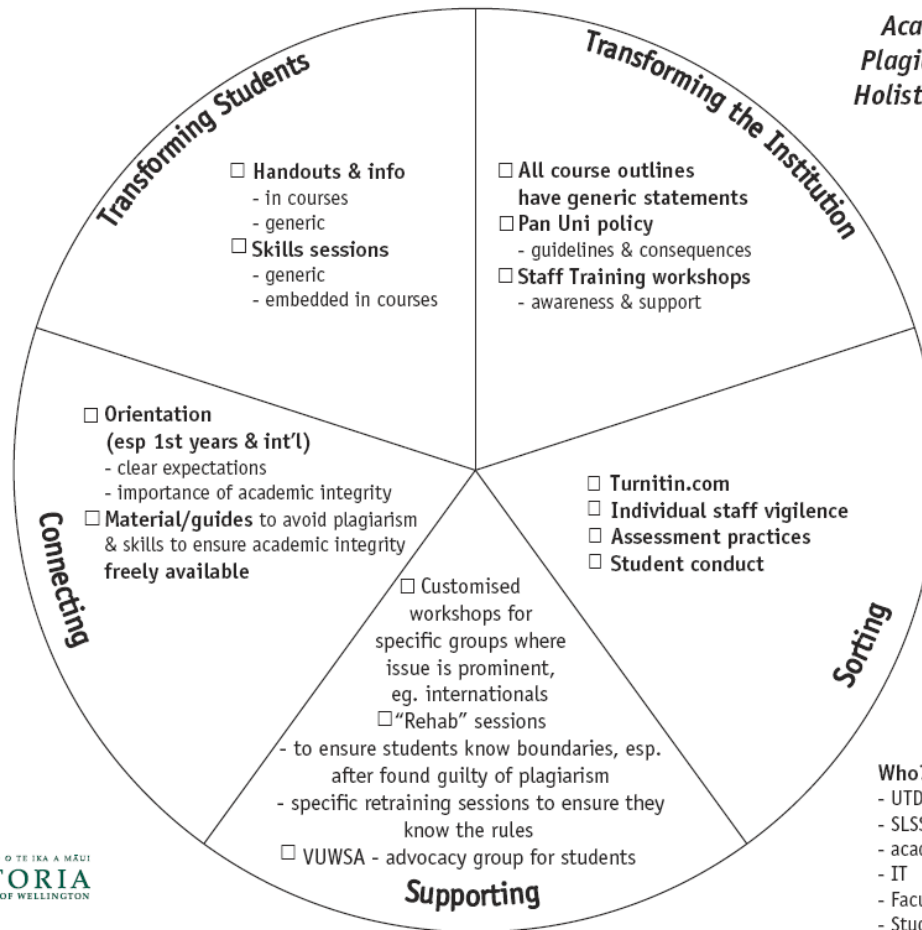
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## 6. Consider real-life realities

- what if you end up in panic, at deadline, unable to finish?
- brainstorm options
- severity of consequences for plagiarism vs. other options

# Cultural Spotlight: New Zealand

*Academic Integrity & Plagiarism Issue in the Holistic Beatty-Guenter Retention Model*



**Who?**

- UTDC
- SLSS
- academic staff
- IT
- Faculties/Schools
- Students

# Checklist of Questions for Study Abroad Advisors

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- What kind of study abroad program is your student planning to attend?
- How and by whom will assessment be done?
- How will the program handle grade appeals?
- Do you have resources at hand to research differences in education systems and concepts of academic honesty?
- Will you or the program prepare your student?
- How will you handle conflicts between host institution and home institution expectations?



# Checklist of Questions for Study Abroad Advisors

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- How will academic misconduct, as deemed by the host institution, be handled by your institution?
- What will you do if you discover the instructor has been too lenient on your student?
- If entering a foreign language setting, is your student truly ready for academic writing?
- Where can you turn for support if a situation becomes difficult?

# Resources and Training Others



# Key Resources

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- ❑ Center for Academic Integrity, Clemson University Rutland Institute for Ethics [www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org)
- ❑ University sites: guidelines for students, honor codes, suggestions for faculty
- ❑ TESL-EJ (Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal) articles <http://teslej.org/about.html>
- ❑ NAFSA's *US Classroom Culture* [www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org)
- ❑ Institute for Study Abroad, Butler University: Academic Differences section [www.ifsa-butler.org](http://www.ifsa-butler.org)
- ❑ Interactive on-line quizzes

# Online Training Resources

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□ Indiana University:

[Interactive plagiarism knowledge test](#)

□ University of Southern California:

[Don't Do This! Quiz on Academic Integrity](#)

□ Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL):

[Safe Practises: An exercise](#)

□ Goucher College:

[Plagiarism by Paraphrase Risk Quiz](#)

Thank you.

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