

Academic Integrity at scale: whole-of-institution policy and best practice into 2023

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Prof Judyth Sachs [00:00:10]

Good morning. I'm Judyth Sachs. I'm the Chief Academic Officer from Studiosity and I wish to acknowledge that I am hosting this online conversation at the ANU from the lands of the Ngannawal and Ngambri people of the Canberra region. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the various lands on which we all work today, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this meeting. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and First Nations peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of the ACT and elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:00:50]

I'm having problems with technology today, so please bear with me. I'm having to do this on my phone so it tells you something about, how much we depend on being connected to the Internet. Today is our second symposium on academic integrity. This year has seen a variety of forms, of course, and subject delivery, online, hybrid and face to face. This year could also be called the great fatigue for both students and teachers and professional staff in universities. However, the issue of academic integrity remains central to ensuring quality and high standards of student experience and the activities of university. Over 500 people have registered in today's symposium. And today, our focus is on delivering academic integrity at scale, which remains a central responsibility in any education setting.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:01:41]

So I'm going to ask each member of the panel to introduce themselves and in particular, in a very concise way, what expertise and experience that they bring to this. Then I'm going to take some questions from the audience and hopefully at the end, if I'm still online, bring it all together. So if I could ask the members of the panel to just introduce themselves and what they bring to this this symposium today. So if I could start with you, David Sadler.

Prof David Sadler [00:02:16]

Okay. Thank you. My name is David Sadler. I'm Deputy Vice Chancellor Education at

UWA. I'm also chair of UA's DVC-A group and within that, Chair of our Academic Integrity Working Group.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:02:33]

Thank you. If we could have our colleague from TEQSA.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:02:38]

Hi, everybody. I'm Helen Gniel. I'm the Director of the Higher Education Integrity Unit at TEQSA.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:02:45]

And finally, Mark Hoffman from the University of Newcastle.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:02:49]

Morning, everybody. My name's Mark Hoffman I'm the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic at the University of Newcastle. I also Chair the Education Policy Forum for the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:03:05]

So as you can tell, we have a very expert panel. And if I could start off with some questions that have already emerged, and I'll I'll open this up to everybody and you can step in to ask who wants to answer it first. So Dale Lin from RMIT, who is here today, asks, "Students who don't trust or value the education system will cheat. Is it possible to rebuild mutual trust and respect?"

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:03:36]

I'll jump in there. Sure. I think the first and foremost is that we have to build trust in our education system. I think that's fundamental, and I think that's why this whole area is so important. The there's two sides to cheating. There's the there's the group that you mentioned. If the system's not trusted, then they'll cheat. But there's also a very significant I would say, punitive side to this that we have to deal with as institutions. If we don't have integrity as institutions, then there are significant, significant penalties for us, which we then put down to students. But I do like the premise of your question, because it says that we need to build trust and in our system and we need to make our students feel valued and acknowledge that the vast majority of students do do the right thing. And we just need to make sure that every student feels confident that they'll be treated fairly.

Prof David Sadler [00:04:37]

Yeah. I'd like to sort of add a bit to what Mark said and agree with that, but that I think we know from research that dissatisfaction with the environment is one of the contributing factors to the propensity to cheat. We also know from the QILT that learner engagement across the sector is one of the lower rated areas. There are multiple reasons why that should and can be improved. And then, if you like, how we might engage our students, perhaps especially in the co-curricular space, might actually build more confidence and more trust and actually shy us away from things like academic integrity opportunity, or lack of opportunity presenting.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:05:28]

Helen, do you want to add your piece from the regulator's point of view?

Dr Helen Gniel [00:05:32]

Oh look, I'd certainly agree that the engagement with students is crucial and, you know, really genuinely engaging students in a conversation about academic integrity, not just at the start of their studies, but all the way through, and letting them co-create and co-understand not just what academic integrity breaches look like, but but what academic integrity is and why it's important. And letting them have a really a really thorough understanding and input into the design of those things is likely to be a pretty successful way to engage them.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:06:03]

Thank you. And Dale goes on in his question. He says, Professors Bretag and Harper likewise said that cheating is a symptom, not the problem. And specifically, there are three three reasons students cheat: English as an additional language, the perception that there are lots of opportunities to cheat, and dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning environment. With QILT learner engagement low for many years, is this a bigger issue to solve in universities? Is it the 'elephant in the room' for contract cheating? Helen, would you like to respond to that second part of the question?

Dr Helen Gniel [00:06:36]

Look, it's it's such a complicated space. So, yes, there are things that we know make a student more inclined to cheat. But there's also a really broad spectrum of who cheats and why and how much. And so to kind of just assume that it's one thing and that there's therefore one linear fix, it would really be missing the complexity of the issue. So, you know, the vast majority of students are completing their degrees with integrity. You've got another chunk of students who are, you know, perhaps curious or it's an easy out or they're pressured at a particular point. And then you've got a much smaller group that are more determined to cheat. So I think it's really important to kind of stand back and think holistically. How do we as a sector and how to institutions craft policies, procedures, engagement strategies that understand that breadth of motivation and that breadth of behaviour? So it's really challenging and it is definitely an issue that is multifaceted and there's no one single solution unfortunately.

Prof David Sadler [00:07:32]

I would agree with that. And I think also it's worth us thinking through, if you like, the trends. So what are the subject clusters? What are the if you like, the cohort clusters? And also not to understand it as a monolithic issue. There are there different levels of cheating and obviously there's the opportunity to intervene on an educative basis if it's a relatively naive part of that cheating spectrum. So I think whilst I agree the premise of the question. I think the answer is much more nuanced and much more complex.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:08:14]

I'd just like to support that. And if - that there is a spectrum of cheating and a spectrum of reasons for this, and one that we one thing that we see at universities is a not insignificant group of students that have either been sucked in to cheating because they didn't see what was happening to them or have done something that once it's pointed out to them, no, you can't do that. And they never appear again on our academic integrity records. So there is a significant educative component to it. And the other part is that there are many a number a cohort of students who feel extremely pressured and therefore providing support for them also addresses that issue implar.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:09:01]

So Justin Brown's made an interesting observation. He Googled the assignment title and

said that 90% of contract cheating cases I deal with starts with "I googled the assignment title" indicating answer-seeking rather than problem solving behaviours. So is it in fact part of the issue one of behaviour as well as integrity? And if it is about behaviour, what are the behaviours that we have the responsibility in universities to inculcate and instil in students?

Prof David Sadler [00:09:30]

Yeah. Can I jump in on that one? Because I think that that is I think the real heart of the challenge. We tend to focus on contract cheating, i.e. students downloading answers to assessment questions. There's another side to this which is file sharing, uploading, downloading questions. And certainly at my institution, we've had a big campaign with students, an educative campaign about the challenges of uploading. And of course, what unites those is whether academics actually vary their questions from semester to semester or year to year. The more they don't, the more there is the opportunity to upload and to download. And I think that's that that is right at the heart of the question. It's not necessarily the student behaviour that's the issue here, it's the, the behaviour of, of the whole institution.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:10:29]

And I think David that's why that creating that positive integrity culture in an institution where it's everybody's responsibility and it's recognised as such is so crucial because there are poor practices in academics as well as their practices in students and there are, there are policy gaps and there are training gaps. Institutions need to recognise that staff like students come from a variety of backgrounds, they come from previous employment. So it's not just about make sure once you're here, you, you update your assignments. It's don't reuse assignments that you've been using for five years, somewhere else that are already out in the wild. So there's a whole range of things that that really can be addressed, but it's just that it's such a broad issue that, you know, institutions and individuals run out of steam sometimes. But it's just one of those things that we have to keep trying to identify and close gaps.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:11:20]

Both David and Helen have touched on the issue, that it's the nature of assessment. I think there is a challenge to telling students when that they shouldn't be Googling to find some guidance, when in every other aspect of our lives, the first thing we do is to Google, to answer some question we have. And to then assume that there will be one small part of what these students are doing in their entire lives where that is not allowed. Whereas if we address the nature of the assessment, then that to make that not a not a viable solution, then we've essentially addressed the issue.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:12:01]

So we're referring to, in fact, perhaps the nub of the problem is, is the nature of assessment, and is that where the focus should be or should be? Should it be some other focus?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:12:16]

I'd say that there's two ways, I mean, there's two approaches being taken. One is essentially to continually try and win the arms race of technology on cheating. And by the nature of arms races universe, you will always be somewhat behind. The other way of doing this is to get to the front of the front of the curve and look at means of assessment whereby the tools that are a part of the arms race, arms race are no longer useful.

Prof David Sadler [00:12:45]

Yeah, I would agree with that. And I think no one no one approach is foolproof. So it has to be a complex ecosystem. The educative, the assessment and even some of the sanctions processes, if you like, maybe reduce the incidences or de-emphasise the opportunity. The technological interventions and other interventions are about detection of something that's already happened. So I think what we we have to understand that there are multiple levers, none of which are perfect in and of themselves.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:13:24]

Yes. And I think we do have to keep doing both. I mean, you see that at the institutional level. Yes. It's really important to educate students and equip them at the start of their journey. It's also important to take action where a student has breached academic integrity policy. So it's a bit the same on a sector scale. I mean, yes, we can keep trying to address the demand for cheating services, but I think there is a role for trying to address the supply of them as well. And I think, you know, the assessment conversation is really crucial, but a few things that can sometimes get overlooked is, you know, it's a bit easy to say if it was authentic assessment, students wouldn't cheat. We've yet to find something that has never been cheated. I mean, students cheated well, before there was technology, the students impersonated each other in an exam. So there's nothing that's actually completely 100% cheat proof. And to imagine there is again it ignores the bigger question about the positive integrity culture and why students should be practicing with integrity and why that matters as they enter their professional career.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:14:23]

So is this also a socialising aspect of student? Shouldn't happen, just in universities. It should start in schools. And part of that socialisation is, in fact, honesty and integrity are a core part of civic life. So. Is that. Is that where we need to start Helen? And if so, what ideas do you have? And then, David, you might like to make an input too, but what, what part do we have to actually, we're seeing the symptom in universities, but it's starting elsewhere.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:14:54]

Yeah, I think that's true. And I think, you know, we should recognise that the divide between tertiary and secondary is an artificial divide. It's how we parcel up our education system, but it's really about a continuum of learning for the individual. And so I think those sectors, you know, do need to be interconnected. And I think, you know, certainly from the government level, increasingly, that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to reach out more and make sure that the initiatives that we have are understood and where useful adopted. And similarly, finding out what is actually already happening in the primary and secondary sectors that we can we can build upon. Because, as you say, they they don't they don't just come to us. They come to us with that entire 12 years already ingrained. But and, you know, the competitive nature of, you know, people say, well, if university wasn't so competitive, people wouldn't cheat. But society's competitive. Students are being, you know, indoctrinated into cheating in a whole range of, you know, settings from a very young age.

Prof David Sadler [00:15:50]

Yeah, I think that. But I mean. That's right. I think, you know, we we have to understand that both legitimately and illegitimately, everybody seeks a, you know, a kind of graduate advantage. And so my sense is understanding the the higher education sector

sits in a complex ecosystem. So there's the the students we receive from the high school and who have had 12 years of education. But there's also the ecosystem of higher education. So we've all got pathway colleges, we've got transnational. All of that needs to be reflected, I think, in this culture of integrity. And Mark, I think earlier made the point that that's an institutional culture that needs to to actually overlay all of the the specific initiatives that we then do to challenge bad practises around academic integrity.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:16:48]

Yeah. I just support that. The, the, the, the, we take, we can't take people from other places and then suddenly put a different bar onto onto academic integrity. It's a, it's an education ecosystem and there are many pathways. And the premise of the initial question I think is quite right. We do still get a large proportion of our students out of the high school system and that would it would be good to have a consistency of messaging between what universities expect and what's expected in secondary education and the various pathways. And then we have our own internal processes for students which who come out of systems such as international students, it's less easy to control.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:17:36]

So I'd like to now move on to another question. And Helen, I'd like I'd like to really get a sense from you because you're the TEQSA person legislation has kicked off blocking several websites. What's next? We have questions about whether there is more more to do regarding cheating sites advertising. Are there indicators that it's working and will this...

Dr Helen Gniel [00:18:11]

You're breaking up a bit Judyth but I think I've got the essence of the, of the question. Yeah. So, look, my Higher Education Integrity Unit that I lead does have the responsibility within TEQSA of enforcing and enacting the government's anti-cheating legislation, which targets the providers of cheating services, not the students. So so far we've blocked 42 of the most popular essay writing bespoke essay services and actually, well, spoiler alert, 3 hours early, but at 2 p.m., the media release will go out saying we've just blocked another 110, which are the next biggest ones. So that's 150 sites now. We do a lot of web traffic analytics so that we can see what's happening and it's helping us really target our approach. So although there's far more sites than that out there that 150 sites that we've now blocked make up over 70% of all Australian traffic to those kinds of sites. So it is a it is a targeted approach, but we absolutely recognise that this isn't a problem you can just legislate your way out of. It's not something that this will solve in and of itself. But we think that the alternative of allowing these businesses to just operate in plain sight is really unacceptable. And I think the government having this legislation and us following through and taking action makes it easier for institutions to message to students that these services are not just distasteful, they are illegal under Australian law and you should not use them.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:19:38]

Helen. What's what's. There's a whole conversation going on about what's happening in high schools and that, in fact, you know, high schools seem to be rife with some of this bad behaviour. Does TEQSA have any oversight over what's happening in schooling?

Dr Helen Gniel [00:19:53]

Look, we don't under our act, our powers only extend to those providers that we regulate that offer higher education Awards in and of Australia. But certainly we reach

out to our colleagues in state state government to let them know the kind of things that we're up to and the trends we're seeing. But we don't have any actual regulatory authority over what's happening in the secondary system. Um, yeah. And I just, I did see another question come through about the, the social media. And so that is something that we're also very focussed on. We have someone whose full time job it is to just to work with the social media companies. And we have had over 700 posts, profiles and advertisements removed from those because we know that, you know, students, it's actually mostly students that report those ads to us. So a lot of students are actually just as annoyed, and frustrated as academics. So we have a lot of students reporting ads that they targeted with, and then we work with the companies to have those removed.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:20:49]

Look, somebody just put in "I work in an academic skills and help students refine their ideas. What's collusion and what is cheating?" And anybody can have a go at that.

Prof David Sadler [00:21:01]

Yeah, I think that's a really interesting one. And that's at UWA, I think Guy Curtis is in the in this thing and he will be able to comment as well on the chat. But we did an amnesty for students who were uploading. So file sharing. And in that process we had to really educate the students and indeed shaped some of our own policies better, around what is reasonable collaboration and what is actually illegitimate and misconduct behaviour. And obviously when you've got the capacity for students to through a teamwork assessment to actually share documentation, that becomes a more challenging question. I just want you to comment on the blocking thing, though, I think. I mean, I absolutely agree with what Helen said, and I think it's absolutely important that we can continue to do it. There are, of course, of course, it's the exact example of what's not foolproof, though, because it's more than there been more companies. It's also, of course, we can only block through our servers. So once the student's off campus, they can access. And I think the the issue with the file sharing is another example because some of these companies operate across the grey boundary of the legitimate and the illegitimate. And then what do you do with those? So I think, you know, the question you asked, Judyth is a good one and it probably is and has to be sort of run through the lived experience about the difference between collusion and genuine collaboration.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:22:55]

So do we actually have to name and give guidelines about what what the threshold is for collaboration and appropriate support? And then what becomes a breach of integrity? And if so, what might that look like?

Prof David Sadler [00:23:11]

Yeah. I mean, so, you know, I'm very conscious of the group that we're speaking through. We do provide services of support to students, essay writing skills, etc. that never should go into and therefore the essay will look like this if you see what I mean, and so I think analytically, intellectually, it's clear what's the difference. It's just about how you put that down on paper and and in guidance.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:23:43]

It is. I just want to support what David's saying that it is. And the challenge is that it is it's difficult to define an explicit boundary. And the I mean, and the way to articulate that is the student shouldn't get advantage from doing it. But then again, providing guidance on writing essays is essentially that. And the a lot of it is I think it comes around to assessment design. And I think we need to have key assessments where identity

verification is unquestioned. And I accept also that there will be other types of assessment where it's sort of sharing of ideas, for want of a better word, does actually happen. I just want to reiterate, David, the blocking of sites. It's never going to, we're never going to block 100% of sites, but it sends really important signals and it does make. It does shrink the size of the problem and not insignificantly.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:24:41]

On the on the assessment because I think it's sort of always the core of the problem because yes, you need to give examples and clear guidance, but you can't be overly prescriptive because one of the very things you're trying to develop in these people is, is that ability to make judgements and to make judgements in really nuanced and tricky, tricky situations. So so it's a really hard one. I mean that, that critical thinking is one of the key things that hopefully students are graduating with. So we shouldn't expect that we have to micromanage at every point, right up to the end of a PhD and explain everything that that's something that the people are trying to develop while they're at university. So yeah, but Mark, picking up on your point, I really think there's a lot of there's a lot of value in the conversation about if we can no longer ensure the integrity of every single assessment item, how do we ensure the integrity of the graduate outcomes? How do we ensure that someone is actually, you know, fit to receive an award? And what does that look like? Because, you know, is it a is it an annual or a six monthly viva or something that's far more intensive but less frequent? But how do institutions, when they can no longer ensure every single piece of assessment has integrity, still maintain the integrity of their award?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:25:51]

Listen, that's core to the to an approach, that I have to say that I've personally become more and more comfortable with. But ultimately we're giving an award. And so we need to create, I suppose, smaller number of significant pieces of assessment which don't assess each course, but essentially assess the outcomes of what we're trying to give on the for the award. And the reason that we tend to step away from sort of so we say identity-verified assessment is it's a really very resource intensive to provide vivas, face to face, face to face exams. But if we actually move away to sort of make a more holistic look at what we're assessing, then that issue becomes less significant. And certainly that was in the chat as well. We found that vivas are actually a very effective way of addressing assessment when there's when there's issues in question and also to to essentially provide a quality check. Now, vivas in their own right have challenges. Not every student is well set up to do a viva. So training to do vivas is important. But by the same token, it's it's a very good skill. Once you are once you graduate, being able to present what you know in a space of a pressured situation is an important, important skill. So just need to be careful about how we actually provide explicit grading on a viva type assessment as distinct from whether the student understands the content or not.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:27:24]

Yeah. And I think, you know, when when people move the conversation to if we just went back to face to face exams, we've never had problems again. There are very good pedagogical reasons why we moved away from just doing that. And we shouldn't let assessment security completely trump pedagogy.

Prof David Sadler [00:27:39]

And and face to face exams are not foolproof either. So. So we don't solve that problem either.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:27:48]

David the idea of the amnesty has come up in quite a bit of the chat. Can you just elaborate on that in terms of how you managed it? But what were the pitfalls and what were the risks and what have the benefits been?

Prof David Sadler [00:28:02]

Okay. So the pitfall the biggest pitfall is knowing what to do afterwards. So what we did, we recognised that we were getting a, a growing number of academics having problems in that they, their work was being uploaded onto some of these sharing sites. And then it gets really challenging in terms of the takedown policies. So we've put some effort into central support for takedown as well. So the request is to take down. But working with our Student Guild, we went on a, if you like, a bit of a campaign of education around file sharing and in that obviously tried to do our best in terms of looking at the legitimate versus illegitimate boundaries, then announced a period of amnesty where students who had done it would not face penalty. And then after the period of amnesty, obviously the full force of the student misconduct policy would apply, but the justification for that full force applying is we gave them the opportunity to tell us they'd done it and that we had, if you like, provided a much stronger education campaign. So it was an educationally driven policy, if you like, around it. The challenge has come and we had lots and lots of students actually declare and lots and lots of students ask whether this was legitimate or illegitimate, which was a very good conversation. But the problem has come subsequent to that, which is for students who have arrived subsequent to that amnesty period and who then engage in file uploading, file sharing. Have we provided, if you like, the full educational direction and what do we do in that context? So and do we run another amnesty? So that's the debate we're having at the moment.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:30:08]

Do any of the other members of the panel want to comment on what might be happening in both their experience and practise?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:30:19]

We've found that when we start doing random vivas that it's actually a surprisingly low proportion of students that were cheating. That doesn't mean that it's not acceptable. And I think we when when we start having this discussion, we all realise that sort of academic integrity is paramount to the integrity of education. But we also need to nuance it, that the vast majority of students are in fact doing the right thing and we can't be treating everyone as a criminal. And so this becomes I think this is actually one of our one of our challenges. A positive, supportive environment is not one that sort of puts in place that you're assuming everyone's a criminal. And so this is a challenge to essentially walk quietly but have a very big stick. And that means also that you need to have good detection methods and be providing good assessment.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:31:19]

Okay, look, let's move on to the impact on staff. So there are some questions about the role and impact on staff of integrity initiatives. Are staff on the frontline for cheating defenceless to preserve the brand equity of Australian higher education? Or as we are here today, to discuss are there policy level and holistic initiatives that can put institutions on the front foot? So is it at the is it at the at the behest of individuals, or is it at the behest and the responsibility of institutions themselves? Mark, do you want to have a go?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:31:59]

I'll start. Listen it's both. Certainly you have to have the policy framework to support whatever whatever you're doing at the university level. But the policies will ultimately be implemented by the teaching staff. They're the ones who are going to do a lot of the a lot of the detection, and we need to be supporting them because we do recognise that detecting and addressing integrity issues is challenging. It's emotionally challenging for staff. It's time challenging. So we need to it's it's both. It's both policy and it's also staff training and staff support.

Prof David Sadler [00:32:38]

Yeah, I would agree with that. And I think one thing that we're here trying to do is to train and empower a network of school-based Academic Integrity Officers, if you like, that can work with unit coordinators and work with staff and that has multiple benefits. I think it shares the the stress and the burden, but it also allows a greater consistency of reporting. So I think it is a problem. It's been a problem forever. I mean, you know, so before contract cheating, just standard plagiarism was an issue for every academic to to chase down. And so this is not a new problem. But but how we provide the the supportive environment to our students and to our staff, I think is a key piece of....

Dr Helen Gniel [00:33:35]

The environment key in removing the irritants academics. So, you know, again, it's very multifaceted, but there's stuff that we know because academics tell us and say in the literature that institutions don't do well but discourages them. So the work's not valued they don't feel supported to follow it up. The policy is not clear. The reporting system is clunky or manual. They never get told what happens in response once it goes centrally. So these are irritants and they add up and they matter. So I think institutions have a role in trying to reduce those irritating factors for academics. Academics absolutely have a role. And, you know, it's it's a question of integrity for them, as well, it's their personal integrity to say, okay, this is time consuming, but I really believe this student cheated. I have a responsibility to follow up on it. So it's all of those things and everyone, you know, TEQSA, government, institutions, governing bodies, academic boards, you know, everyone has a role in this. Everyone has responsibilities and that does include students. I don't think we should not be afraid to say that students also have responsibilities.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:34:38]

I mean, we just need to look at the fact that no student wants to be in a course where it's known that people cheat and no academic person, no lecturer wants the reputation out, that people that are cheating in their course and getting away with it.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:34:54]

So there's a comment here that says academics of time-poor, under pressure etc meaning they may ignore breaches of academic integrity, and research shows this is the case. So how do we how do we manage the structural workload issue around the broader cultural political issues within the institution? Mark, do you want to have a go?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:35:21]

Listen I'm actually gonna refer back to that Helen there, because she essentially addressed that we need to provide to get rid of the irritant factor because that's it's the irritant factor and that extra bit of work that will cause people when they're pressured to, to gloss over it. So it's it's as David said, we've also got sort of integrity advisers now based in based in every school. And that's been transformational because they can then become a go to person to answer the question. And also also, they're allocated space to

provide support. And we need to acknowledge this, that it's it's a part of the role of a lecturer. And this is we support lecturers to do many other parts of their activity. We need to be supporting them to do this as well.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:36:10]

David, do you want to make a comment?

Prof David Sadler [00:36:13]

Well, I think in a way, it's it is what I previously said. I think the Helen's absolutely spot on when she talked about the irritants, because I think irritation with, you know, what happens to to the academic or the casual member of staff if they dare to sort of report something? What happens to the the information after that? The kind of workload that's involved in chasing things down. These are definite irritations and problems. So how we provide direction in terms of why we're doing this, how we mitigate in terms of the numbers of cases by educational policy. And then I think how we provide school-based resources, such as the Academic Integrity Officers, are part of that kind of response. It's not it's not going to go away. So that's the issue. It's just how we manage this better.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:37:18]

Can we can we move on to the the general area of artificial intelligence? And is the sector prepared for the continued growth in the sophistication of what artificial intelligence can do..... Ahead of technology or work with it? And Mark, you and I had a brief conversation about this the other day. So can I ask you first?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:37:48]

Are institutions prepared for it? I don't know what every other institution, but it's certainly the preparedness varies, but it's certainly on the radar of every institution. There's no doubt about it. But I sort of come back to what I was saying before. There's no way that an institute or the institution or anybody can win that race. They can always do better. And so we need to actually address it by core pieces of assessment, which which essentially cover it cover it by making artificial intelligence advantage is not not about able to be to be realised.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:38:26]

So you're....

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:38:28]

Is so is that academic, and artificial intelligence is also being used to detect breaches as well. We need to keep that in mind.

Prof David Sadler [00:38:40]

So I just.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:38:42]

I'm just getting some help from my. So sorry, David. Why don't you....

Prof David Sadler [00:38:48]

Yeah, yeah. Sorry. I think in answer to your question, Judyth, no, I don't think we're prepared for it. And I think we're on the upward slopes of of trying to think about what how we might deal with it. And actually, the value of a network like today is perhaps to share some good practice in this. But and I don't feel that we're ready for it at the moment, I think, you know, but. Guy Curtis again to we were talking about this the other

day and he made a very wise comment, I think, which is that this is almost exactly the same debate we had- And I can say this because I'm old enough - when calculators were introduced. And in a way that forced the re-examination of of what we do in in both the academic and the assessment design, in the kind of more mathematical statistical areas. And I think in some respects that, you know, I don't really know what all that means in terms of implications, but I do think we need to to think about authentic assessment. And it might be that this is there's these kind of spot vivas or whatever it might be. But but we do need to think about other ways of addressing this because it it sure as day is coming and it's here. So let's let's understand that we don't have an immediate answer. This is exactly the point that Mark made earlier about an arms race of technology. We we're always behind, so.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:40:29]

So I think, again, it comes back to why it's important that students understand what they are getting. Well, what are they at university or a higher education institution for? I mean, it's almost existential. What is a degree for if you can just outsource everything or get A.I. to do it, what is it that you've actually learnt or gained other than the piece of paper at the end? It's almost an existential question. What is the value that we're offering to students by enrolling them in these? Especially if we get to a point where we say, Well, you you can use A.I. as much as you want. I mean, I question how we're going to add value to that. Like, what is it that we're going to add to that you then can't use A.I. for I think they're really the right questions, but they're really challenging questions to actually think about deeply and to work out what what we're saying we're offering and students are developing and, you know, engaging students in that conversation is crucial. They will have ideas about this.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:41:29]

So we continue getting back to as as I'm sort of reading over the chat. There are two issues that are important. One, one is assessment and one is the work contract of people that do the teaching and the people that do the marking and that sessional staff are paid using particular approaches and methodologies. And so they are also time poor. So how can we how can we manage these two sort of parallel forces of feeling that assessment is necessary? Because you've got you've got to actually identify what students know. And then the people that do the assessment, then do it quickly and hence miss some of the issues of integrity. So what what advice would you give to the people in your institution to try to manage these two parallel but complementary challenges?

Dr Helen Gniel [00:42:30]

Can I just say as a headliner there, one of the things that gets a bit lost is, I mean, checking that somebody knows what you think they should know is only one of the values of assessment. There's actually a whole range of reasons why we give students assessment, because it's a crucial way of giving them feedback for their own development and learning. So that's that's the other part of this that, you know, just catching a student, cheating and working out who's cheated, that's not the primary reason for doing assessment in the first place.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:42:57]

Yeah.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:42:57]

I couldn't agree more.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:42:59]

Yeah, I think that's the other part of it, of course, is, is that not all assessment should be considered equal. And we at the moment, we generally tend to weight assessment based on the volume of concepts that are being assessed. But we could just as easily weight the assessment on the I suppose the the level of our level of confidence in the integrity of that assessment. And I agree with Helen, that assessment is core to the learning process. The feedback is is what's really important, the integrity that leads itself to the value of the piece of paper that you you're alluding to. So if we then essentially just restructure how we resource assessment and toward the heavier levels and the higher levels of resource, we're also seeing where we have to do the more resource intensive high levels of, I suppose, the integrity and verification of who does it and but don't then we continue with the other assessments, but we reduce the weighting on them and make sure that we're providing providing the effort there is to provide the feedback to that assessment.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:44:12]

So do we actually need a more public debate within the universities about the purpose of assessment and why it's important? Because I think that for some students, they just see it as part of the ritual of going to university. "I've got tests to do" because how they've been socialised and educated in schools.

Prof David Sadler [00:44:33]

Absolutely. We need that. Absolutely. And perhaps the best example I can think of is when we were all forced to be away from campus during the worst of the pandemic. What did that mean for where the assessment debate hadn't really happened and where most units had to be assessed by some kind of proctored online examination? Suddenly we had a problem about how do we deal with challenges to academic integrity in that proctored environment. And that lack of understanding, if you like, the diversity of assessment, the assessment for particular purposes, as opposed to a much more knee jerk reaction to we used to have a face to face exam, therefore we must have an online exam. I think led to some significant challenges, but it also got us through a crisis. So I understand the the benefits of it. But but but absolutely, to answer your point, we do need a very serious conversation in every institution and across institutions about assessment purposes and assessment strategy.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:45:54]

Mark, do you want to make a comment, or Helen?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:45:57]

I just I agree with everything that David says there. And there's not a deep understanding of what assessment's about. Assessment is a part of learning, feedback of what you do, and then improvement is the way we we learn many things outside of university. Human life in general, but it's often looked on, as essentially a part of collecting the piece of the piece of paper. Well, I think I mean, David mentioned students. I actually think it's actually a very important piece to have a discussion to have with staff as well.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:46:32]

Helen?

Dr Helen Gniel [00:46:33]

No, I just completely agree. And I think, you know, from the institutional point of view that comes back to, well, how well are we supporting this process if our academics don't have a really solid understanding about assessment theory and pedagogy - how are we bridging that gap? What are the kind of mechanisms that we're going to put in place to to promote the conversation and the questioning and support the actions that come out of it?

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:46:57]

Look as as you're all talking, I'm thinking of the role of academic governance and the academic Board or academic Senate has a significant role in any institution in the universities to sustain academic quality and standards. What what what role do you think the academic board should have in starting to bring forth these sorts of debates about the future and the form of assessment?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:47:26]

In most institutions, I think it's it's the pivotal the pivotal group. I mean, that is the place where all academic issues essentially come together. We often look at it as essentially a it's set up very often as a as a governance mechanism, but it's whereby it's essentially the gatekeeper at the top of the pyramid. But when we look at the composition of academic boards, it's it's very important for a strategy development because policies need to follow strategy. And that is where we need to have the academic board leading the debates in these issues.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:48:04]

So how can you, as particularly the two Deputy Vice Chancellors who are members of academic boards in your institutions and have been members of academic boards in others, how can that start to be really one of the priorities for the academic board? Because, you know, brand education is certainly becoming questioned because of the poor behaviour of some of our students and I deliberately say some, not all. The majority are doing the right thing.

Prof David Sadler [00:48:35]

So I think you're right, Judyth. But I think firstly there has to be, if you like, a serious conversation about why change is needed. So because it's you know, we are challenging in many respects entrenched cultural and custom in terms of things like assessment. So an important role for academic board and its subcommittees would be to gather the data. So what are the trends? Where are the hotspots? What are the educational interventions, etc.? And for that to be part of the package of of information that leads to a conversation about broader strategic change. I think overloading the agenda of an academic board meeting is a problem. So there's an important function for specialist subcommittees. And then if you like to have a much more complex conversation, that academic board itself, I wouldn't say any. I mean, I'm speaking for my own institution. We haven't got that right yet. But it is, I think a it's a necessary offshoot. And actually issues over the course of the last two and a half years have made it much more important so to do. I think.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:50:14]

Yeah. I think just following up on that, David, you know, academic boards don't have to do everything themselves and that's probably not even, you know, desirable because you want that conversation to be broad-based and for lots of people across the institution to be engaged. But Academic Board has a really crucial, crucial role in making

sure that it is being done, y'know. And that does come back to the data, the recording, the reporting and really questioning those things. So academic board not over-relying on whatever a subcommittee has put up to them and say, well, I'm sure the subcommittee did it right, you know, but really interrogating some of those and saying, well, why does this faculty have more? And what happened in response? Did we review the policies, did we review the training, like what was actually done, report to us what you did in response to it?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:50:59]

My perception of the Academic Board I'm familiar with and speaking also to presidents of academic boards, is that what we're actually saying is well understood. What needs a lot more development is actually the implementation. I mean, most academic boards do set aside a piece in their agenda for strategic discussion and the subcommittees do look at look at those issues. But it's less explicit in the charters of academic boards. And hence, I think it's fair to say it doesn't get the weighting that it needs.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:51:39]

Look, there's a question here from Paula Sanderson from Falmouth in Exeter. And Paula asked the questions, "how do you manage quality in transnational education students?" And I know Paula, and so this is clearly an issue that she's having to manage at the moment. But I think others would probably be managing it who are dealing with lots of transnational students. So any any suggestions that you might like to give to Paula in terms of how to manage transnational education students?

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:52:19]

I think a combination of ensuring they do the same assessment under the same conditions and then having QA tools in place. The bigger challenge around that is it's actually to it becomes quite resource-intensive is when where the difficulty comes in. And so you then need to look at the factor into your value proposition for being involved in transnational education.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:52:45]

Couldn't, couldn't agree more Mark, it's really crucial that people don't underestimate the resourcing that's involved in a really successful transnational education partnership and a really solid student experience for those students. There's a lot of there's a lot of architectural elements that need to be right. So policies that apply across locations and assessments and boards of examiners. So really, as much as possible that you're bringing that that education location into your academic governance structure so that it's, you know, it has the same rigour and is strictly comparable and just really not in underestimating how much energy is required to maintain that relationship with your partner.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:53:24]

Yep.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:53:27]

There's another question and it's about reporting and it's come up several times. And do you think that the reporting of breaches of academic integrity within an institution, but also reporting it to TEQSA does have a deterrent or is it just becomes one of the many responses to verification around quality and standards?

Prof David Sadler [00:53:50]

So I would try a bit of an anecdotal answer to that question. We have a system whereby, you know, there's a automated kind of system whereby the cases are uploaded and then of course we look at the trends. I'm much more interested and we've asked much more question, many more questions where there are very low numbers being reported. And and the why am I doing that? Because I'm not sure if you like whether that's actually a real sort of demonstration of what's actually happening. So I'm not penalising it. Wouldn't there be a penalty at all for for, you know, significant numbers because at least we know that things are being chased down.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:54:48]

I just want to essentially reiterate what, back up what David said. It's lower levels of reporting, particularly at low, low levels of breach. That is that it is very often the significant red flag because the low levels of breach and addressing those is one of the most powerful ways of addressing the larger problem. And the more than what tends to be required for formal reporting is very often that the higher breaches are sort of it. But whereas provided the sort of reporting for low levels of breaching comes into the system, it becomes a a lot more constructive process.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:55:29]

Yeah. I mean, I think the reporting is absolutely crucial. I would love to see public reporting. I'd love to see all institutions reporting publicly because students thinking that nobody gets caught is part of the problem. Students need to understand that, that there are penalties and sometimes very severe penalties for breaching those policies because academic integrity is is a absolutely crucial and core component and pillar of our education system. So I think the reporting is really important and I think the educative response in the first instance, which, you know, to the best of my knowledge all institutions have, is completely appropriate and really, really crucial. Again, it's another form of feedback for students. It's a way for them to learn and it shouldn't go away.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:56:11]

I just need to jump in. My concern with compulsory reporting is it then can drive processes inside institutions which can reduce the level of reporting due to reputational impact have been very successful in detecting and reporting. Yeah.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:56:27]

I think those are the right. You're right that those are the risks. But then it can drive institutional processes in a good way as well, because that's the same at a faculty level, right, some faculties might be thinking, oh, we want to be the good faculty. But in fact, really low levels bring more scrutiny than less.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:56:46]

So look, the last question I'd like to pose to all of you is imagine that we are reconvening in three years' time. What sort of conversation do you think will you hope we are having in three years' time about academic integrity, both at the individual, systemic and organisational level?

Prof David Sadler [00:57:11]

I'm going to I'm going to sound a bit bitter here, Judyth. I was asked to chair the UA Academic Integrity Group in 2017 after the "MyMaster" and the Four Corners issues. My sense is that and we know challenges to academic integrity have been there for the entire history of higher education. So I don't think we're in three years' time we're going

to be talking about the end of it. I think what we're we're going to be talking about is what is the next challenge over the horizon?

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:57:51]

[to someone off screen] I'll come and tell you what the problem is.

Prof David Sadler [00:57:52]

And maybe, maybe we've made some advances in some of the assessment discussion. But but I, I just think it's something that's just constantly evolving and we're constantly having to address.

Prof Mark Hoffman [00:58:10]

Well, I have to say, I tend to tend to agree. When we look back sort of five years, you can extrapolate out the next five years. We will be having this discussion, but we'll be discussing different aspects, different features, different tools around academic, academic integrity. I think we're moving quite well as we're addressing the current issues very well. But I think aside from the discussion around trying to change society's culture across the whole of society, I expect that there'll be there'll be different aspects that I'm not completely confident will address the societal issues within the next five years.

Dr Helen Gniel [00:58:52]

Yeah, I don't think that the fact that we'll keep talking about this should be seen as failure. I think it's just reality that this is an issue that will continue to evolve and and so will our response. And I think Australia has come a really long way in developing a much deeper understanding about why students cheat and what can be done and how we can support them. And that's work that will continue.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:59:14]

Look, we are now we have one minute to go. And in summing up, can I just say thank you for bearing with me? Because doing this on my phone, not being able to access the wifi at the ANU and having a battery that was about to collapse has been a stressful activity. But I think there are a number of points that have come up today that are really important, that are about assessment. And, you know, why do we assess how do we assess and having clarity around the purpose of assessment? And that idea of feedback been so important, I think needs to be really socialised into students. Workload for both academics, tutors and students needs to be thought about. Reporting both as a as a way to measure the quality and standards, but also perhaps hopefully as a disincentive. And also technology, you know, artificial intelligence is both a burden, but also an enabler. So how can we make sure that, in fact, the enabling aspect of AI is not something that compromises issues of academic integrity? And finally, thank you to the three speakers who were really engaged, candid and thoughtful in your responses. And as somebody wrote, an hour is not long enough for this really important topic. But I think we have traversed all those issues that I just summed up before, and it's just been a really terrific hour that I've spent with you today, albeit very stressful. So thank you all. And keep keep on the lookout for our next webinar and symposium. Thanks very much.

Prof Mark Hoffman [01:00:51]

Thank you.