

## **Reflection on Academic Integrity during COVID-19**

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Beyond the widely addressed challenges and problems associated with the ongoing COVID-19 situation, there may be a few windfalls. For those of us working in the world of academic integrity, the pandemic has been a catalyst in thrusting research evidence to the front burners of post-secondary education. More than a few of us, myself included, saw what was for years a leviathan on the sides of our desk become an official job title during this year. We quickly found ourselves connecting with others from coast to coast on what has and hasn't been working in the field over the past few years. On a weekly basis, we have attended and delivered webinars, synthesizing new information, and finding congruence across borders and between colleges and universities.

Both seminal and newer literature has kept us focused during these unprecedented times. For example, Mellar et al. (2018) addressed a holistic and well-rounded academic integrity program in the importance of various cumulative levers: policy and processes, assessment design, blocking cheating sites, and assessment security technologies, such as e-proctoring software. This in itself represents a more detailed development of fundamental ideas such as those given by Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) and Bertram Gallant (2008). Indeed, when and if we take the time to step back and reflect, many of us saw encouraging signs of a successful cultural shift this year. Seeing instructors implement assessment design strategies to promote academic integrity in online learning environments continues to provide us with new evidence each term. Integrating the academic integrity perspective with those of educational technology and IT services when making informed and measured decisions in regards to the adoption of assessment security software validates pre-COVID considerations.

As the pandemic continues to morph and occupy so much of our lives, the benefits of a positive, supportive, proactive, and educative outlook towards academic integrity has provided a much-needed anchor. Negativity and incidents of misconduct can often obscure our vision. The incessant and alarmist marketing of "ed tech" companies would have us believe that their products are a panacea. Similarly, predatory file-sharing and contract cheating platforms circle like vultures, preying on stressed students with offers of help and appeals to the commodification of education.

We can look to not only our invaluable researchers – both with us and departed – but to organizations and allied individuals for inspiration. The Quality Assurance Agency in the UK and Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency in Australia, for example, provide guidance to the entire post-secondary education sector around the globe. And as a learned colleague put it, everything we do in academic integrity is *for* our students, it is not done to them.

## References

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