

Case Study

Avoiding Plagiarism

University of Canberra, Australia

Introduction

The University of Canberra (UC) is committed to providing world-class student-centred education which is engaging, adaptive and innovative. Previously the Canberra College of Advanced Education, UC attained university status in 1990 and currently has around 17,000 students and 1,000 staff. In addition to its main campus location in the suburb of Bruce, UC partners with four Technical and Further Education institutions across Australia, as well as having offshore students based in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Bhutan.

Supporting students

UC's Study Skills team is part of the Student Engagement directorate and provides students with a range of support services (both online and face-to-face). UC recognises that learning to write academic assignments requires practice over time and is committed to providing students with advice on academic integrity. The standards expected from students are outlined in the Student Charter and the Student Conduct Rules.

Decision to purchase *Avoiding Plagiarism*

An in-house Academic Integrity Module (AIM), consisting of Moodle books and associated quizzes, has been in use at UC since 2009, and a digital badge has been awarded for AIM completion since the beginning of 2014. In mid-2014, a decision was made to update the contents of AIM to make it more interactive, allowing for students to test their learning of the key concepts as they progressed through the module, and also to include more up-to-date information relating to ghost writing and collusion.

The Epigeum *Avoiding Plagiarism* module was selected as a cost-effective solution, and key academic staff including all Associate Deans (Education) and unit convenors, were invited to provide feedback on the AP module in late 2014. As a result of feedback from unit convenors, Study Skills staff incorporated additional pages in the *Avoiding Plagiarism* module to incorporate more APA referencing information. All students and staff were informed of the change to the new module prior to it being made live in June 2015. Students who had completed AIM and received a digital badge prior to the changeover were not required to complete the new module.

Implementation of AIM

All students at the University of Canberra are required to complete the Academic Integrity Module at some point during their studies, and some units of study incorporate the AIM as an assessment item or hurdle requirement. For example, students enrolled in the common first-year unit Foundations of Professional Practice (FPP) are required to complete the AIM before they submit their first assignment.

Students are automatically enrolled into the Academic Integrity Module which consists of the Epigeum *Avoiding Plagiarism* course and end-of-course quiz, plus links to additional resources. In Moodle, this is set up using conditional release, so that students cannot access the quiz until they have viewed each section of the course. Students are required to answer 16 out of 20 questions correctly to pass the quiz and are allowed 10 attempts to do this.

Digital badging

Once they pass the quiz, students are awarded a digital badge which appears on their Moodle profile page and can be used as evidence that they have completed the module. In the first 9 months of 2016, over 3800 students completed the module and passed the quiz.



A Moodle customisation enables the display of a 'badges' column in the enrolled users list so that unit convenors can check for AIM completion in their own unit Moodle sites. If a student has earned a digital badge for completing the AIM in 2014 or 2015, they are not required to repeat the module in 2016. However, students are encouraged to revisit the module to refresh their knowledge of the types of plagiarism and good practice in referencing when they need to.

Framing the materials

The landing page for the AIM gives students key information such as the estimated time needed to complete the online course, instructions for accessing the accessible (plain text) version, and a video walkthrough on how to check that they have been awarded a digital badge. Within the Epigeum course, some of the 'pods' have been customized to signpost students to institution-specific information.



The bigger picture

Positive feedback has been received from staff and students in regards to the contents and usability of the *Avoiding Plagiarism* course and associated quiz.

The AIM is a key component of UC's strategy for supporting students as they learn to write assignments and reference appropriately. Other forms of support include:

- Drop-in sessions with the Study Skills Learning Advisors (Monday to Friday in the library on the Bruce campus)
- One-to-one sessions with Rovers (students) – face-to-face in the library or on the phone
- The Study Help site in Moodle which contains additional resources to help students develop their skills around academic writing, conducting research and referencing
- The library website which provides advice on referencing and on specific referencing styles (Australian Guide to Legal Citation, American Psychological Association, Chicago, Harvard, Vancouver).

Avoiding Plagiarism works well alongside other anti-plagiarism software. Students can also run their assignments through Urkund, a text-matching tool, to check the academic integrity of their written work before they submit it for assessment. When using Urkund, it's very important – both for students and for staff – to use good judgement in deciding how to use the generated report. Urkund simply recognizes and highlights text that matches another source and calculates a percentage of matched text. It is up to the student or staff member to decide whether the matched text constitutes plagiarism, e.g. whether it has been referenced correctly in the assignment.