



CASE STUDY

Promoting a culture of academic integrity at Griffith College with academic skills training

Background

Located within the Griffith University Southport (Gold Coast) and Mt Gravatt (Brisbane) Campuses, Griffith College is embedded within the Griffith University community. It offers students an opportunity for entry to higher degree programs, with extra support and services available for each student to succeed.

Griffith College is committed to ensuring an easy transition from college to university and believes that all people, no matter their background, have the potential to excel when given the appropriate tools and support to do so. As part of this commitment, skills such as academic writing, referencing, and essay planning are taught at the start of the first trimester to support students with their further studies at college and beyond.

Implementation

Griffith College started using Epigeum's online training course Academic Integrity in 2019, but 2021 has seen Griffith College's Academic Skills Course reimagined after a college-wide review. The new course combines three of the five online student-facing modules from Epigeum's Academic Integrity, which students are expected to complete in their own time, with in-person classes. The three modules are hosted on Griffith College's Virtual Learning Environment, allowing students to access

the modules week-by-week. Subject lecturers teach the in-person classes, enabling the course to be tailored towards each discipline's needs, whether Health Care or IT.

For this case study, we spoke to Patricia Jones, Program Convenor Diploma of Health Care at Griffith College who has been directly involved in the development and implementation of the new structure and increased focus on Epigeum's Academic Integrity modules to support this course.

“The course aims to enable students to develop academic writing skills along with the relevant academic language. The course consists of three main areas, which are interwoven throughout the trimester. Learning is maximised by ensuring that basic skills are consolidated before more advanced skills are introduced.”



The first area covers general learning skills relevant to a university and a professional context providing the important factor of future relevance and the immediate need of students to link to the programme of study that they choose, such as Nursing. It includes skills related to academic integrity, individual learning approaches and strategies and analytical and critical thinking.

The second area focuses on skills required to extend students' learning beyond lectures and textbooks. Students will learn how to recognise different types of texts, search databases, understand the production of research, read the literature analytically and critically, and apply knowledge to 'real world' contexts.

The third area is concerned with the skills students require to learn how to 'own their work' and display information in the most effective manner. Among the written skills addressed are: citation and referencing skills, paragraphing, developing an argument, and using literature to support an argument.

The Academic Skills Course is a requirement for all students at the college, however it does not contribute towards students' final grades. The first trimester is front-loaded with the

Academic Skills course, which provides a guide to studying with integrity, emphasising the positive values, skills, and behaviour necessary throughout their studies and post-graduation. The course eventually tapers off towards the end of the trimester, before exams begin. This sets students up for success, providing a solid foundation of skills to support students to do well in their exams and assignments.

Staff are also required to take the 5 staff-facing modules of Academic Integrity. This ensures that every member of the university community, both staff and students, is on the same page regarding what constitutes best academic practice in their role. The staff course is set up on a dedicated site for staff alongside PowerPoints, FAQs and policies around academic integrity.

Patricia believes there are several benefits for staff: "The availability of a dedicated person that all staff can approach with questions on any academic integrity issue from simple things such as how to process a breach, is it a breach, and what penalty they should apply, is incredibly beneficial. Staff can access support in a timely manner and not simply be advised to read the Policy or go to the site." Importantly, Patricia is well known and is a teacher and



programme convener, so has the same interactions as other staff with the students and the Policies that Griffith College uses.

The Academic Integrity Matters site is an inclusive area where information can be found, and staff can engage on a Padlet to ask questions or provide articles of interest.

These two key elements of a dedicated site and person provide a very real, active and focused approach to making academic integrity a positive part of a student's journey. It is a topic that teachers can discuss openly with the knowledge that there are simple processes in place for teachers and administration staff to manage all aspects of AI.

Outcomes

While it is still early days, Griffith College has seen a decline in integrity breaches in Trimester 1 of 2021 compared to the same trimester in 2020 down from 6.7% to 2.9%. Breaches could be anything from cheating on exams – such as copying and pasting answers from the internet – to poor referencing and collusion. Occasionally, students aren't even aware they are in breach, and Griffith College always aims to take an educative response to any such violations. Patricia acknowledges this decline in breaches is due to both the Academic Skills course and the engagement with academic integrity from both students and staff members.

Griffith College provides a yearlong pathway into various university courses. Patricia believes learning about Academic Integrity sets students up for future success, which is proven by students attaining the same, or even surpassing, the academic achievements

of those who have taken pathways straight into university.

“I feel that after completing the modules, staff are better informed and have current knowledge on all aspects of academic integrity and can make more informed judgments with a focus on understanding the student's perspective and cultural factors that impact on integrity. Of course, my “rose tinted glasses” do know that sometimes students simply cheat, and this is when firm penalties are needed but always in conjunction with a student interview.”

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“With the restructuring of the Academic Skills courses, with the embedded Academic Integrity student-facing modules, teachers have more confidence in knowing that all students are exposed to this learning. It is structured and not adhoc, enabling them to refer to these aspects such as referencing, but not needing to dedicate time to teach this in their courses.”

Outlook

Griffith College is currently assessing the success of the entire Academic Skills programme with the embedded modules from Epigeum, to see what changes may be needed to improve the course in the future. Patricia is keen to make sure the course is appropriately customised for each subject across the college.

Find out more about *Academic Integrity* and how it can support a consistent and unified approach to integrity training at your institution