



## Responses to Student Plagiarism are Inconsistent

De Maio, C., Dixon, K., & Yeo, S. (2019). Academic staff responses to student plagiarism in universities: A literature review from 1990 to 2019.  
<http://www.iier.org.au/iier29/demaio.pdf>

Academic staff responses to college student plagiarism are inconsistent and frequently not aligned with institutional expectations and guidelines.<sup>1</sup> Such irregularities can affect an institution's reputation and integrity. The current paper explores possible reasons for uneven application of policies and makes recommendations for encouraging consistency.

Research shows that faculty and staff either tend to ignore issues of cheating and academic dishonesty or respond in an informal way, inconsistent with policy. Violations are taken on a case-by-case basis, which often results in either under-reporting or non-reporting, even when faculty are required to report. Such trends appear to be consistent across the years, locations (Australia and the United Kingdom), and academic disciplines.

Possible reasons for failing to report academic dishonesty include:

- too time consuming
- too stressful or difficult
- lack of clarity or trust in institutional procedures
- lack of support
- lack of evidence
- fear of student retaliation
- not believing incident is serious enough
- lack of consensus about what constitutes plagiarism

Colleges and universities can take steps to encourage consistent reporting. First, build trust in the system. Faculty who are more trusting of their institution are also more likely to follow institutional guidelines. Second, have clear and consistent policies that are easy to follow and practical to implement. Third, teach students proper referencing skills so that they avoid plagiarizing. Finally, ask faculty to share with each other their views about plagiarism to reveal possible inconsistencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff in this context implies faculty and administrators.