Breaches of Academic Integrity

Think

Discuss

Do

How might schools and colleges handle situations when students breach academic integrity in tasks submitted for internal assessment? What are the issues involved, and what is TASC's position on the matter?

Standard 7 of the Standards for Providers requires schools and colleges to ensure that students are given explicit and appropriate instruction regarding academic integrity. Recent audits of policy and procedures addressing Standard 7 have identified some common opportunities for improvement, including the clarification of:

o how schools and colleges support staff in the teaching of academic integrity
o the specifics of what will be taught, when and by whom
o how the teaching and learning will be co-ordinated and monitored.

Additionally, consideration needs to be given regarding the significance of teachers as:

o having subject- or discipline-specific knowledge and understanding of academic integrity issues to share with their students. In computing this may be the use of others' code sequences, in music the use of others' tunes, in English the use of others' characters or plots, in art the adaptation of others' artworks, and in science the use of others' data
o role models. Teachers cite/reference the sources of ideas, images, words and data of others used in their own teaching and learning materials.

Some points for consideration:

• In considering how a school or college might handle unacknowledged use of the ideas, images, words and data of others in internally assessed student work it is useful to consider how TASC deals with such matters in the external assessment context. TASC has a process whereby suspected breaches of academic integrity in folios and projects are investigated. If a breach is found, a report is prepared for the Conduct Review Committee. The report identifies the nature, scale and scope of the breach and, when possible, the unacknowledged sources. The Committee gives case-by-case consideration and decides on a consequence/penalty proportionate to the nature of the breach. These can include: a formal warning; the removal of the unacknowledged material and reassessment; a 'capping' of assessment to C ratings; assigning 'z' ratings to all criteria assessed; giving a Limited Achievement (LA) award for the course; and cancellation of all TCE achievements.

It would be unfair if the first time a student realised that there were very serious consequences for breaches of academic integrity was when an externally assessed folio or project was identified as having not met the requirements. It is expected that such consequences would have been explained to students and *modelled* by their school/college.

- Individual schools and colleges must consider the nature of the consequences/penalties that they will apply to breaches of academic integrity in internally assessed student work. Course providers need to develop responses that take account of the special characteristics and needs of their student cohort, and the school's ethos. In some cases, schools and colleges may wish to align their response to breaches of academic integrity with others in their system or network. This method would have advantages regarding the development of a common approach between various like or similar schools/colleges, and the collaboration involved in sharing ideas on the matter.

- Schools and colleges are encouraged to consider the following issues when developing or refining their responses to breaches of academic integrity:
    - the scope and scale of the breach – is it a few lines of text, a single image, or the entire work? Did it involve material central to the assessment, or subsidiary in focus?
    - the nature of the breach – did it involve a 'copy and paste' from an internet site, or was a fellow student coerced into completing the task on behalf of the offender?
    - the frequency of the offending – is this the first time this individual has offended, or have they done so on multiple occasions?

- In addition to the application of any penalties, schools and colleges are encouraged to consider breaches of academic integrity as opportunities to develop a learner's understanding of:
    - the nature and importance of academic integrity
    - when and how to cite/reference sources.

- So, what does TASC expect?

    A fair and reasonable approach for dealing with breaches of academic integrity that:

    - takes account of issues such as the scope and scale, nature, and frequency of breaches, and where consequences are proportional to the offence
    - helps students understand why academic integrity is important, and supports them to achieve such integrity in the future
    - is articulated and documented, and openly shared with teachers, students, and parents (as appropriate)
    - is consistently applied within the learning community (e.g., teacher A and teacher B both apply the same consequence for the same kind of breach)
    - allows a student to present their side of the case and/or an opportunity to show that they did not breach academic integrity.

THINK As a teacher, what is my professional position on these issues? What do I think should be the response to various kinds of breaches of academic integrity? What support do I need in my teaching of academic integrity?

DISCUSS As a school/college, how and when do we have professional discussions about this topic? How can we work towards a whole-of-school consensus on these issues? How can our staff best be supported in their roles?

DO What actions are needed at our school/college? Who is going to drive them? What are the timelines? How will we measure their success? What are the likely impacts on our students if we delay or take no action on these issues?