

# Responding to the Challenge of Academic Impropriety – the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) Perspective

HECA/National Forum Seminar  
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Enhancement, RCSI – on behalf  
of NAIN

# The National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) Perspective

- NAIN Background and Purpose
- The NAIN Approach
- NAIN Guidelines
- Challenges



# The National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN)

Inaugural meeting - 14<sup>th</sup>  
November 2019

Actively supporting higher education institutions to:

- effectively engage with the challenges presented by academic misconduct
- embed a culture of academic integrity among providers
- develop national resources and tools for providers to address the challenges presented by academic misconduct

## THE IRISH TIMES

Academic cheating using paid-for essays 'poses threat to integrity of third level'

Conference hears one in seven students have used 'essay mills'

© Thu, Nov 14, 2019, 16:35 | Updated: Thu, Nov 14, 2019, 16:36

Carl O'Brien Education Editor



Prof Michael Draper of Swansea University has published a report on the sharp rise in "essay mills". His research indicates that as many as one in seven recent graduates may have paid someone to undertake an assignment for them.

Academic cheating using online "essay mills" is posing a significant threat to the integrity of higher education, the State body responsible for policing standards in third level has warned.

International research indicates there has been a sharp rise in written-to-order essays and dissertations, with as many as one in seven graduates admitting to paying someone to undertake an assignment for them.

While the scale of cheating in Ireland is difficult to estimate, there have been more than 1,000 cases of students in Ireland being disciplined for plagiarism since 2010, according to figures compiled by The Irish Times.

In response to these trends, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) has established a new National Academic Integrity Network to help agree common ways to identify and prosecute academic cheating.

The new network met for the first time on Thursday and heard of how recently enacted laws make it an offence to provide or advertise "cheating services" which aim to give students an unfair advantage over others.

[Academic cheating using paid-for essays 'poses threat to integrity of third level' \(irishtimes.com\)](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/academic-cheating-using-paid-for-essays-poses-threat-to-integrity-of-third-level-1.4411111), 14.11.2019

# The Network - background

The National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) is a national peer-driven network of staff members from Irish higher education institutions, student representatives, and higher education representatives.

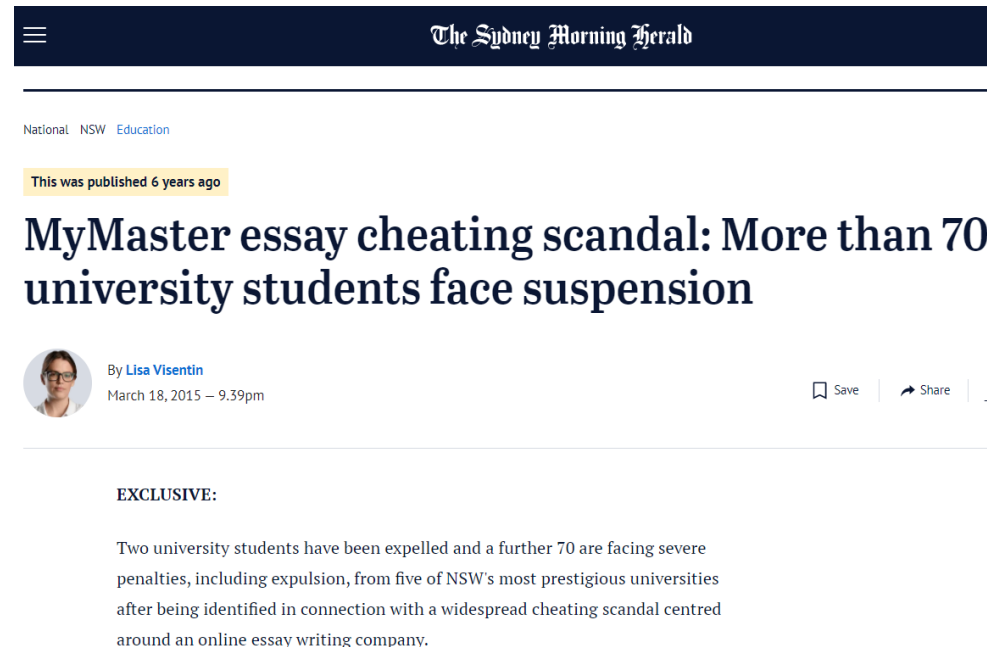
- 92 members in total representing:
  - 32 HEIs (60 members)
  - IUA, HECA, THEA (6 members)
  - NRIF, ICOS, PCHEI, SAI, LAI
  - Students - SUs (10) and USI (3)
  - Chair, NAIN
  - QQI Executive members (7)



Illustration from Pixabay

# International Context

- Increased recognition internationally of the need to promote and maintain academic integrity
- Rise of contract cheating & prevalence of essay mills (frequently active cross-border)
- Consequent calls for legislative action



The Sydney Morning Herald

National NSW Education

This was published 6 years ago

## MyMaster essay cheating scandal: More than 70 university students face suspension

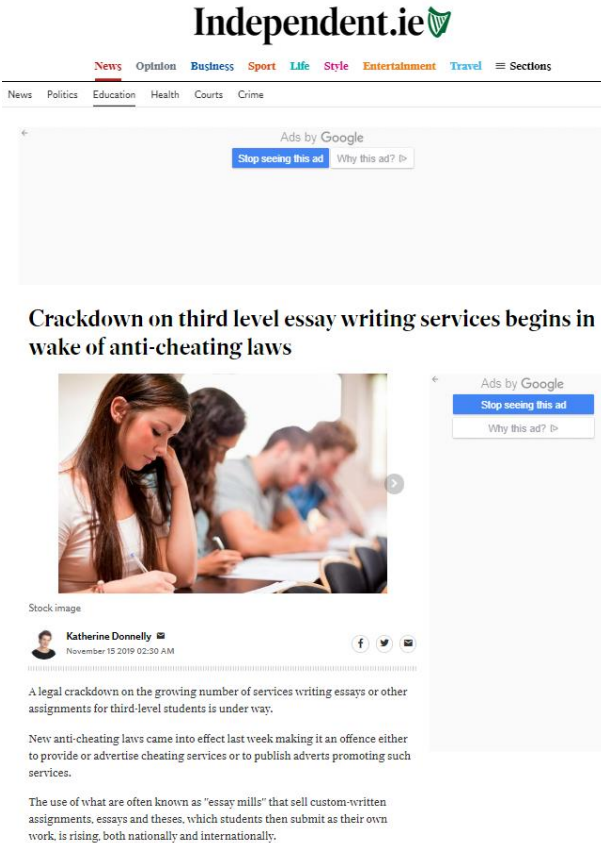
By Lisa Visentin  
March 18, 2015 – 9:39pm

Save Share A

**EXCLUSIVE:**

Two university students have been expelled and a further 70 are facing severe penalties, including expulsion, from five of NSW's most prestigious universities after being identified in connection with a widespread cheating scandal centred around an online essay writing company.

[MyMaster essay cheating scandal: More than 70 university students face suspension \(smh.com.au\), 18.03.2015](http://www.smh.com.au/news/education/my-master-essay-cheating-scandal-more-than-70-university-students-face-suspension-20150318)



The screenshot shows the Independent.ie website with a news article. The article title is "Crackdown on third level essay writing services begins in wake of anti-cheating laws". It features a stock image of students in a classroom. The author is Katherine Donnelly, dated November 15, 2019, 02:30 AM. The article text discusses a legal crackdown on essay writing services and new anti-cheating laws.

## New legislation commenced in Ireland in November 2019:

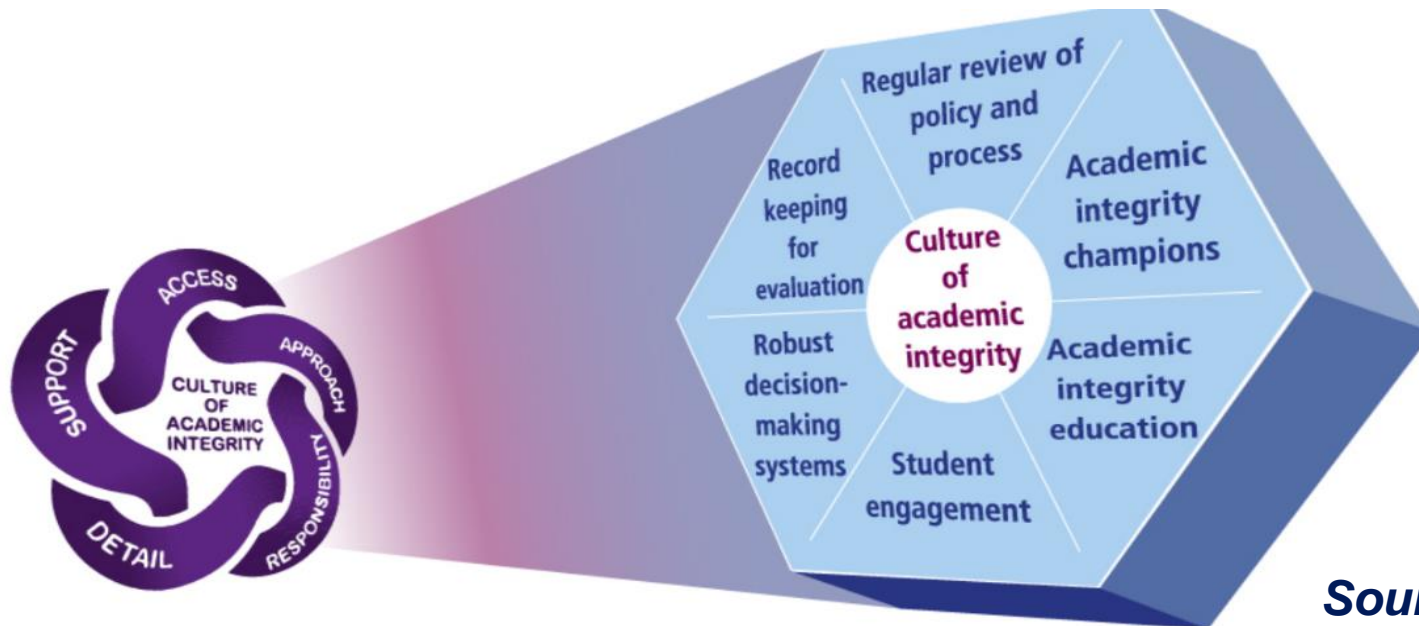
- Section 43A provides a statutory basis for the prosecution of those who facilitate cheating by learners; who advertise cheating services and who publish advertisements for cheating services.
- QQI is responsible for bringing prosecutions under this Section of the Act.

[Crackdown on third level essay writing services begins in wake of anti-cheating laws - Independent.ie](https://www.independent.ie/news-irish/education/crackdown-on-third-level-essay-writing-services-begins-in-wake-of-anti-cheating-laws-37777777.html), 15.11.2019

Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training)(Amendment) Act 2019

# The Network – A Multi-Faceted Approach

- Establish the nature of academic misconduct practised in Irish HEIs.
- Identify appropriate measures HEIs can take to both prevent and address academic misconduct.
- Inform communications strategies and enhancement initiatives in this area.



Source: Bretag & Mahmud (2012)

# Establish the nature of academic misconduct practised in Irish HEIs

## Academic Integrity:

National Principles and  
Lexicon of Common Terms

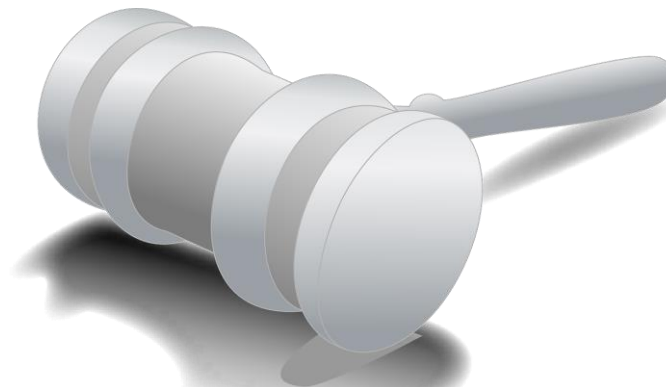


- The current landscape of academic integrity in Ireland:
  - What issues are HEIs detecting?
  - What is the scale of the detected problems?
- Develop and agree a common discourse to use in the field, i.e., a lexicon of agreed terms.
- A common language across HEIs to assist identification, measurement, and development of policy and practice.



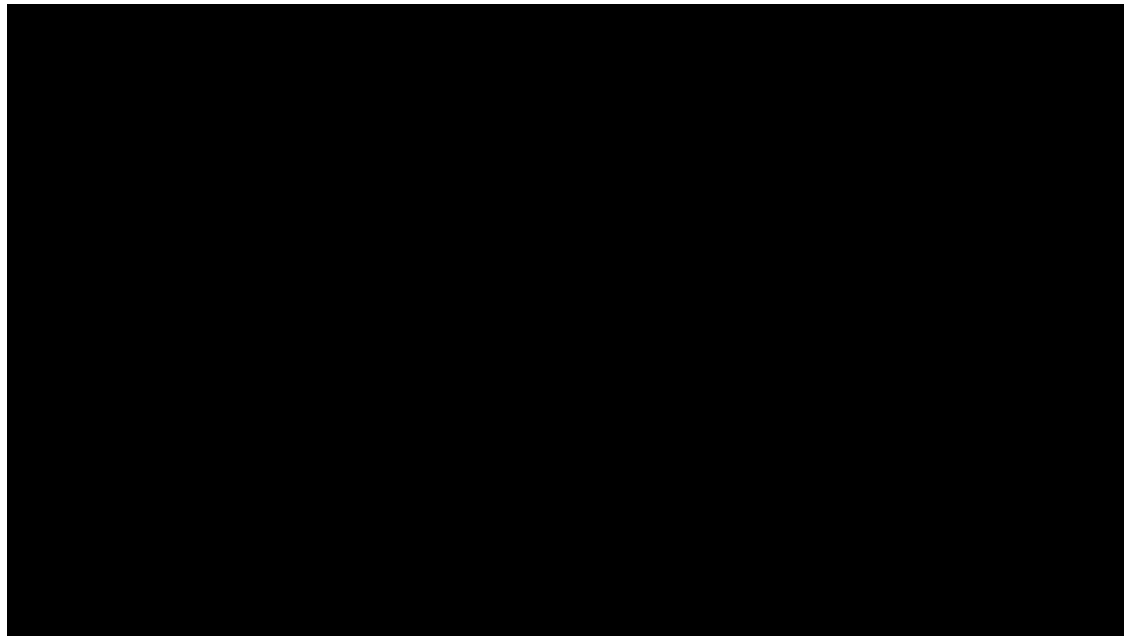
# Identify appropriate measures HEIs can take to prevent & address academic misconduct

- Areas for enhancement activity to support a culture of academic integrity in Irish HEIs.
- Good practice with regard to prevention of, and addressing suspected and confirmed instances of, academic misconduct.
- Procedures for the reporting and prosecution of instances of cheating under the recently amended legislation.



# Inform communications strategies and enhancement initiatives

- Raising awareness of academic integrity.
- A dedicated communication strategy.



YOUR WORK. YOUR ANSWERS. YOUR ACHIEVEMENT.



**DOWN**

1. Arranging for another to complete work on your behalf, whether or not payment is involved.
2. What honesty, truthfulness and integrity earn.

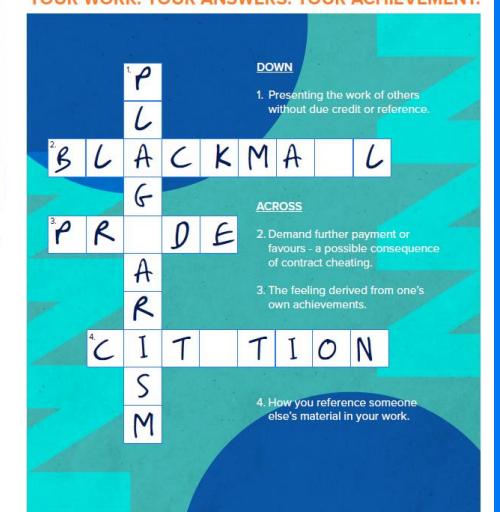
**ACROSS**

1. An agreement between two or more parties.
2. Acting with integrity by correctly using information to gain credit.

For advice, support and resources, see <https://myownwork.qqi.ie/>



YOUR WORK. YOUR ANSWERS. YOUR ACHIEVEMENT.



**DOWN**

1. Presenting the work of others without due credit or reference.
2. Demand further payment or favours - a possible consequence of contract cheating.
3. The feeling derived from one's own achievements.
4. How you reference someone else's material in your work.

**ACROSS**

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# Inform communications strategies and enhancement initiatives

**ESSAY MILLS and CONTRACT CHEATING** are forms of academic misconduct where a person uses a third party to assist them to produce work.

They do not give the 'A-standard' essays they advertise.

They disguise themselves as Student Support services, but in reality, they target and manipulate students.

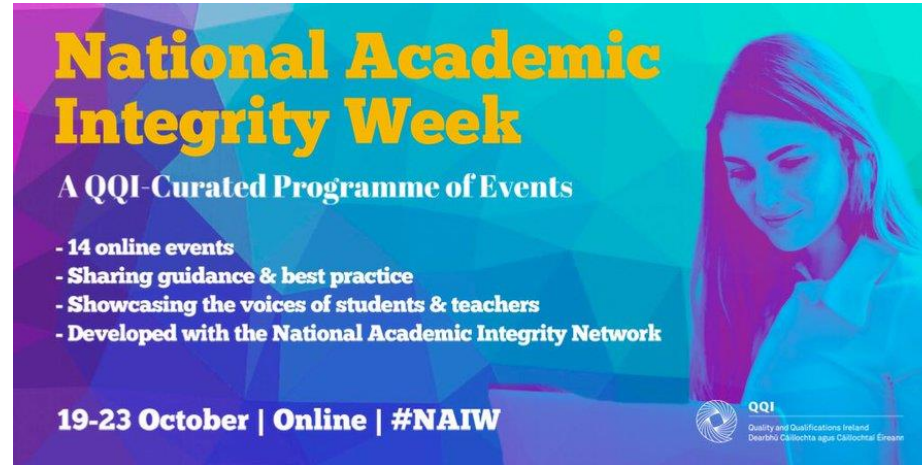
**Be aware and don't risk it!**

If you need support, please reach out to your Students' Union or Academic Support Office

**USI** Union of Students in Ireland  
**NN** National Academic Integrity Network

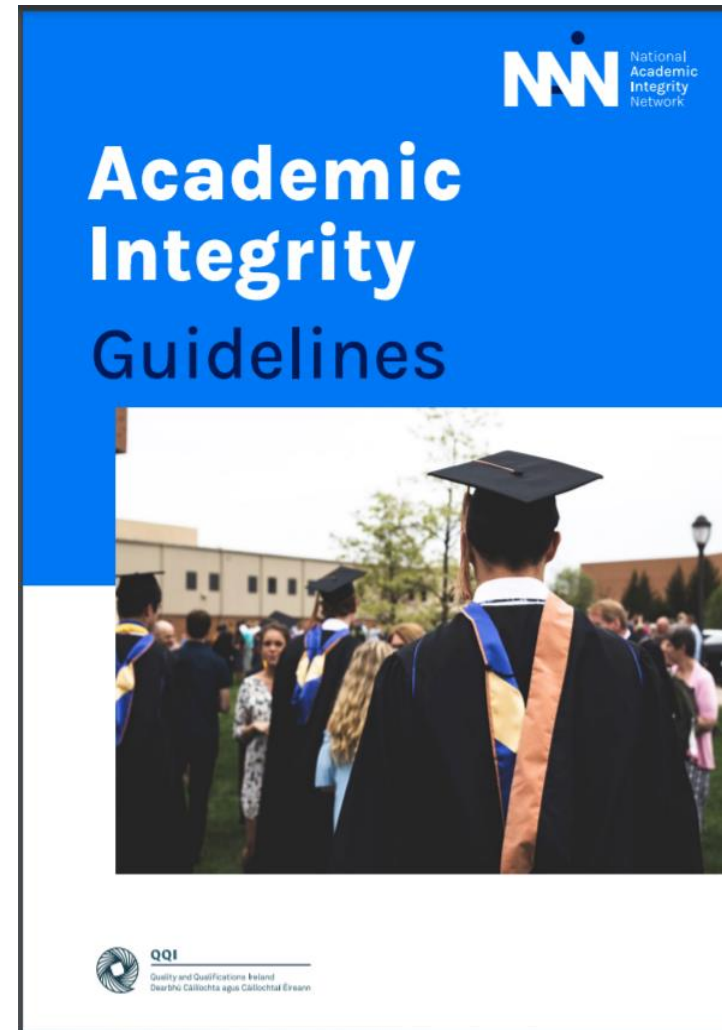
#MyOwnWork #AcademicIntegrity #SayNoToContractCheating

# Inform communications strategies and enhancement initiatives in this area



# NAIN Academic Integrity Guidelines

- Developed following an extensive process of consultation.
- Addressed to all staff in HEIs.
- Advice on:
  - Upholding academic integrity.
  - Preventing academic misconduct.
  - Detecting academic misconduct.
  - Dealing with academic misconduct.



# Upholding Academic Integrity

- A strategic approach.
- Teaching, learning, and assessment policies which promote positive behavior.
- Nominated staff and learner representatives with particular responsibility for upholding academic integrity.
- Clarity and consistency in relation to academic misconduct.
- Staff training and awareness-raising.
- Supports for international learners.



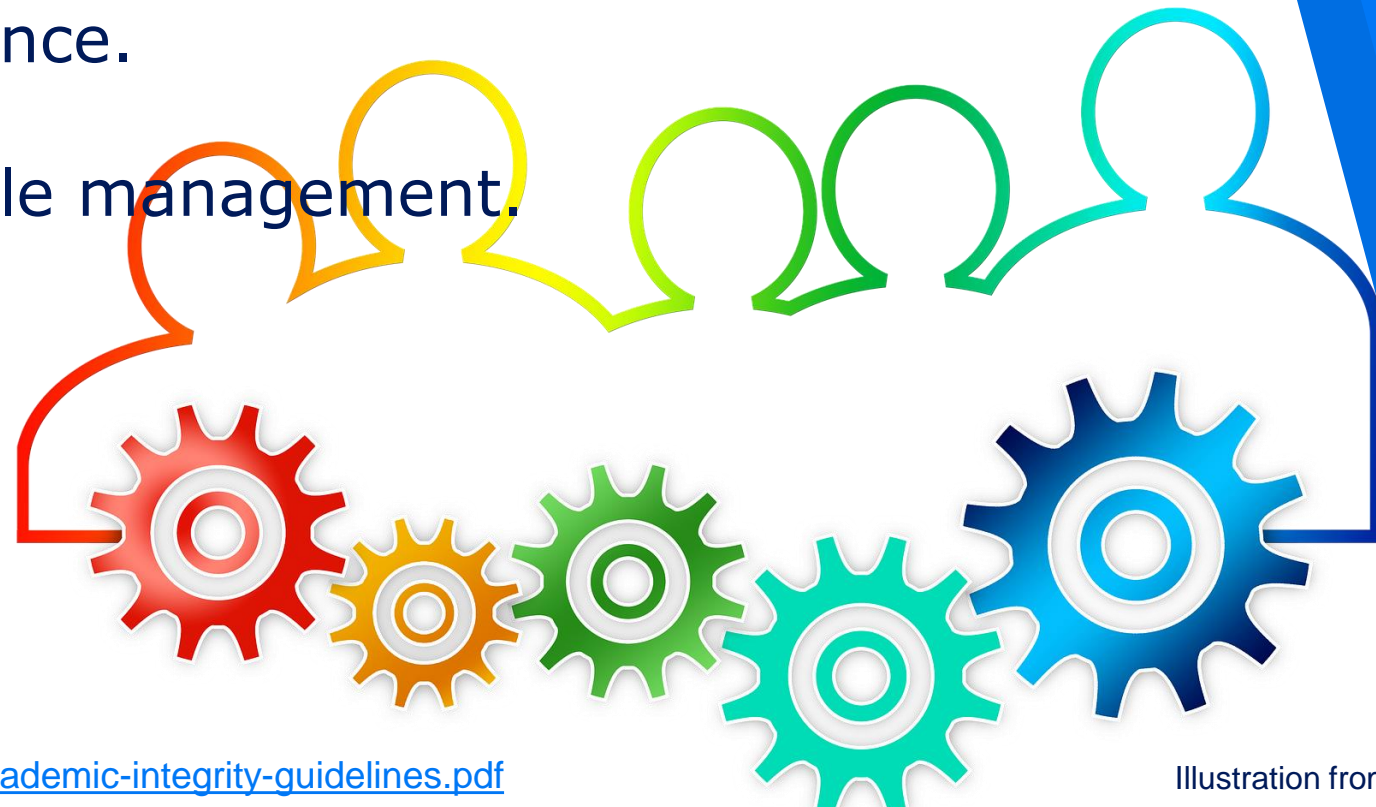
# Upholding Academic Integrity

## –the student perspective

- Students can be *'bombarded on social media'*
  - 'Every tweet about struggling with an essay gets replies from bots offering help with assignments.'*
- *'Everything gets lost in the high number of emails'* – there is a need to communicate in different ways.
- The issue is not whether or not they know about their institution's regulations but knowing where they can access help.
- No student sets out with malice ... more understanding from institutions about what constitutes academic integrity and how they can support students is needed.
- Librarians and counsellors are key sources of support

# Preventing Academic Misconduct

- Resources to support good practice.
- Conversations with learners.
- Definitions and examples.
- Training for learners.
- Supports and guidance.
- Staff training.
- Assessment schedule management.





# Detecting Academic Misconduct



- Agreed institutional policy approach to detecting academic misconduct.
- Staff training in recognizing signs of academic misconduct.
- Support for staff in investigation of suspected incidences.
- Detection systems made known and explained to learners.
- Evidence is collected based on raised suspicions.

Illustration from Pixabay

# Dealing with Academic Misconduct

- Clarity in procedures for investigating and responding to academic misconduct.
- Learners have access to supports if the subject of an investigation of misconduct.
- Learners made fully aware of the relevant legislation.
- Records maintained.

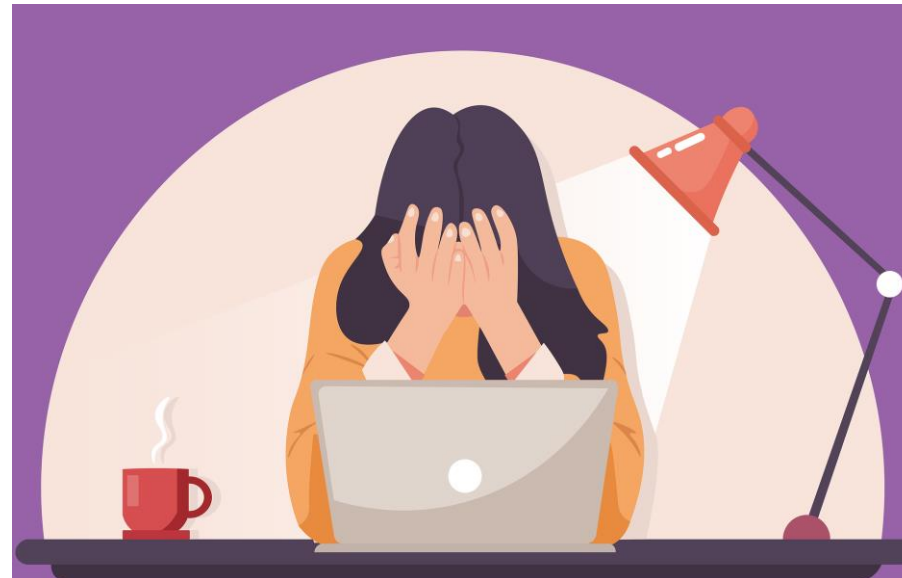


Illustration from Pixabay

# Challenges



Illustration from Pixabay

- External environment:
  - Changes in assessment.
  - Access to contract cheating.
- Supports for individuals:
  - Learners.
  - Staff.
- Institutional:
  - Academic Misconduct and Integrity policies.
  - Support services.

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