The ABCs of Academic Integrity: Awareness, Best Practices, and Consequences

Providing the local community with an environment for effective learning; introducing the latest high-tech solutions to facilitate the educational process; and empowering society with top-notch specialists qualified to meet the challenges of a fast-changing world, are the main missions of Oman College of Management & Technology (OCMT). Staying in line with the international agenda, we at OCMT strive to foster independent thinking, creativity, mutual respect, collegiality, honesty, tolerance, and intellectual openness, inspiring our graduates to impact the community for the better. Shaping these qualities is impossible without academic integrity, which has become a burning issue in recent years.

The pillars of academic integrity

Academic honesty means equal opportunities for all students, guarantees excellent education, and fosters well-qualified specialists, ultimately shaping the future of learning, and building a better world for new generations. Here are the principles we at OCMT implement and maintain as the pillars of academic integrity, helping us to stay among the best educational institutions on the national and global levels.

1. **Independent thinking.** We believe that the modern world requires novel approaches, and creativity is the key to the numerous challenges humankind faces daily. Critical thinking and an independent mindset are essential to survive in the era of informational noise, fake news, and content chaos. Promoting originality, and non-tolerance of cheating, are crucial for encouraging young people to reflect on the burning issues, dig deeper into the subject, and come to their own conclusions instead of repeating after the others.
2. **Work ethics.** Shaping the young professionals, we believe one of our main tasks is to give them all the instruments necessary for their future careers. Since any or almost any factual information nowadays is available online, the purpose of education is to shape the mindset, not the dataset. Bold writing ethics, transparency, and honesty, along with the ability to produce original work, are among the most important principles we cultivate.
3. **Authorship attribution.** Respect toward intellectual property, correct citing, and authorship attribution are foundations of maintaining originality in academic writing. Teaching the students to double-check credibility, reference the sources, and work with information correctly is crucial in academic and professional environments, promotes honesty, and educates on originality matters.
4. **Plagiarism and AI misuse awareness.** Working with young people from different backgrounds, we realize that academic cheating is often the result of ignorance rather than malicious intention. Hence, educating the students on the definition and various

types of plagiarism, and raising awareness on the risks of AI misuse, is one of our primary missions. Explaining the long-term consequences of plagiarism and AI-related cheating, showing the alternative ways, and encouraging independent thinking and self-expression, rather than restricting and punishing is, in our perspective, an effective and healthy way to maintain academic integrity.

5. **High-tech solutions.** AI-empowered technologies are already a solid part of education, content-making, business, and everyday routines. Striving to prepare our graduates for success in the ever-changing environment, we believe that mastering cutting-edge approaches and tools is essential. Educating students on the ecological and ethical implementation of AI tools, and helping to make the most of them is a part of our curriculum; as well as a way to avoid AI abuse, protecting academic honesty.

What are plagiarism and AI cheating?

Copying from one another has been an issue since the pre-computer times when students plagiarised the works of their peers or books. The evolution of technologies has complicated the situation, creating new intricate opportunities for academic cheating. Fortunately, along with the new challenges, the high-tech tools have brought novel solutions.
Regardless of the revolutionary changes in the educational landscape, plagiarism remains one of the most significant problems instructors and students face daily.

Main types of plagiarism

By definition, plagiarism is using someone else's work without attributing the source. We would add, that in the academic environment, the way the information is used and processed also matters. The paper can not be considered original if it simply retells someone's writing, even if crediting the author. So, borrowing someone's ideas as a thesis, proof, or a ground for the work is completely normal and even needed under the condition the student mentions the source. However, the work should contain original thoughts, and all the borrowed material should be properly paraphrased, cited, and reflected on.
According to our instructor's observations, plagiarism is often caused by a simple lack of awareness. In general, we can outline two types of plagiarism occurrence.

1. **Intentional cheating.** It occurs that the students indeed copy someone's work being completely aware of it being a violation of academic norms and the repercussions it entails. While admitting that academic dishonesty should have consequences, we still tend to consider the reasons for cheating to help the students evolve and grow. Lack of time or motivation, unclear instructions, work and study overload, or underestimation of the importance of originality are the common causes of intentional plagiarism.

2. **Accidental plagiarism.** Let us be clear: plagiarism is plagiarism, and the "I did not intend to copy" argument does not eliminate the fact of cheating and the consequences it entails. However, for us as educators, it is crucial to acknowledge that often the students are unaware of committing plagiarism, and that is when implementing the writing ethics studies explaining the issue can be a huge help. So, sometimes the

learners do not cite the sources correctly or do not provide proper paraphrasing due to the lack of awareness. Moreover, it happens, that the writers repeat someone's concepts out of pure coincidence, or taking it for common knowledge facts. In this case, plagiarism-checking technologies come in handy not only to the instructors but to the students as well.

AI misuse and AI-plagiarism

AI cheating is a relatively new phenomenon that has already drastically changed the way students learn, and teachers check assignments. Talking about AI misuse, we primarily mean machine-generated content, when the students ask the chatbot to produce an assignment text instead of writing it. Apart from being cheating when used for this purpose, AI-generated text is also not original, introducing a whole new term of **AI plagiarism**.

Albeit the machine-produced text may sound as unique, and even the plagiarism-checking tools may not flag any similarities to the sources, AI-generated content cannot be considered original by definition. The thing is, the AI model is incapable of creating anything from scratch. The way it operates is by composing the output based on enormous amounts of already existing content it has been trained on. So, AI uses all this data to produce the relevant text, without attributing the incorporated resources. Hence, the result of its operation is content based on someone else's work without referencing the authors, which is a blatant example of plagiarism.

The way to withstand this kind of challenge is to enable the teachers to catch AI traces and potential plagiarism; educate the learners on the importance of authentic efforts; and encourage them to use AI in a constructive way that helps them benefit from the new technologies.

Best practices to uphold academic integrity

We at OCMT prioritize productivity and constructive feedback. Therefore, automatising the teachers' routines, and providing our students with the instruments to help them learn from their mistakes and upgrade their skills, has been a huge boost for the learning process in our institution.

PlagiarismCheck.org has empowered our college with the toolkit that helps our instructors check the assignments faster and more effectively, saving time for teaching and development; our students master the writing skills and educate themselves on the plagiarism and AI misuse issues; and make the educational process seamless and coherent. What tools do we use and how do they impact the institution's workflow?

- **Plagiarism detector.** The tool compares the document we apply for the check to the content online and some other sources. We can also add papers from our own database–other students' papers, for example–to catch groupmates copying from each other. As a result, instructors get a similarity score, that tells them whether the text was plagiarized, and a report that shows the sources where the matches were found.
- **AI detector.** This instrument shows how likely the text has been chatbot-generated. We recommend our instructors use it as a compass in case of doubts. The detector is never a final judgment, but a helpful way to confirm or eliminate the concerns, as the AI

detector flags the likely machine-generated part, and based on this information, the teacher can talk to the student to find out whether the work was done authentically.

Both tools are integrated into **Moodle**, the Learning Management System used at OCMT. This way, the teachers and students can check for AI and plagiarism and exchange feedback right on the platform. From our experience, seamlessly integrating the detectors into the workflow is the key to guarding academic honesty, since mastering new tools requires time and effort, and facilitating this process is crucial for effective learning.

How plagiarism and AI checkers help to guard academic honesty in our institution

1. **Catching academic dishonesty.** AI and plagiarism detectors automatize the teachers' routine. The tools do not replace human judgment, but excellently highlight the cases that require attention, so the instructors can focus on things that matter without exhausting manual comparison of the papers to the sources.
2. **Preventing cheating.** Knowing that the teachers use plagiarism and AI-checking software, the students are cautious and conscious about composing their assignments.
3. **Guarding the reputation.** Our graduates and published works tell more than any booklet or website. Ensuring we foster well-qualified specialists aware of working ethics, and publish original authentic content is a critical part of our development strategy.
4. **Educating the students.** Checking for similarities teaches the students about plagiarism issues: they can catch accidental copying, and work on their mistakes even before submitting the paper to the teacher, polishing their writing skills, and improving their knowledge.
5. **Shaping values.** Implementing AI and plagiarism detection in the institution demonstrates the importance of authenticity, originality, honesty, and independent thinking. This way, we promote the mentioned principles among our students and establish academic integrity as one of OCMT's core standards.

Results

After implementing the plagiarism and AI-checking tools into the college's work processes, we have outlined the following changes in our teachers' routines and students' results.

1. **Teachers have more time for other tasks.** Automating the checking routine saves time and energy, leaving room for inspiration, creativity, and development. Our instructors particularly appreciate the tools' integration into the LMS, as mastering and using them daily did not require additional effort.
2. **Evaluation of students' papers has become easier.** Human judgment is still the final decision we rely on, but plagiarism and AI-detecting tools accelerate the process significantly. Teachers see the questionable parts, do not waste time on plagiarised assignments, and evaluate the students' works based on facts instead of guessing.

3. **Students feel more confident working on the assignments.** Being aware of the risks of accidental plagiarism, the learners use the detecting tools to catch similarities and perfect their papers even before submission.
4. **The amount of cheating in academia has decreased.** Knowing that the instructors check for AI and copying, students tend to present original assignments rather than risk facing plagiarism consequences.
5. **The awareness of plagiarism and AI misuse issues has improved.** Checking for plagiarism and AI, students educate themselves on the types of plagiarism, and the ways to evade it. Moreover, they are looking for steps to avoid cheating accusations, thus improving their writing and editing skills.
6. **The college's graduates are well-qualified and prepared for the professional challenges.** AI has already become an indispensable part of work and education, so understanding all the opportunities and issues it presents is crucial for any expert.
7. **The institution's reputation is safeguarded.** We feel confident in the originality of all the papers we present and are proud of the young experts we foster.

To sum up, we believe that modern high-tech tools offer solutions to the challenges educators and students face in the fast-paced world. Our key to upholding academic integrity is empowering the students with approaches and instruments to benefit from AI technologies instead of banning and restricting them. As a result, OCMT is proud to provide the education that prepares young professionals for navigating the ever-changing environment and guaranteeing academic honesty and success at all levels.