

Student Perceptions of, and Attitudes Towards,  
Academic Integrity Intervention  
A Qualitative Case Study  
Capstone Project

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Masters of Arts Education  
(Community College)  
Central Michigan University

by

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August, 2018

### **Abstract**

Educational institutions are striving to find methods and techniques to improve understanding and knowledge of academic integrity. Since 2011, the business school in the study college has been offering a mandatory academic integrity intervention comprised of an online educational module and required quiz for all students in each year of their studies.

This case study used qualitative interviews to explore student recall, experiences, and personal impact of this intervention. Question one attempted to explore student experiences with and self-described impact on their behaviours. Sub-questions explored recall of the specific intervention content and perceived impact on academic success. A Kohlberg-based scenario explored the participant level of moral development related to attitudes towards academic integrity.

Overall, participants had consistent recall of the intervention and its' content and frequency. Their experiences with completion of the intervention were consistent across all participants. All participants felt that the intervention had value and should be offered by the college. Participants all described academic integrity as being: (a) plagiarism, (b) cheating on tests or (c) inappropriate sharing of information between students.

Differences arose in belief in the importance of academic integrity and the impact of the intervention on personal behaviour. Spectrums of perceived behaviour linked to perceived levels of morality emerged. The Kohlberg scenario, although clearly perceived as connected to similar moral issues, does not clearly link to the participants views of the morality of cheating. Of greater interest is the participant linkages to the concept that sound moral academic integrity behaviours in school are likely indicative of future moral behaviour in the workplace.

Of note, there appeared in this small sample to be no major differences between male or female responses or domestic and international student attitudes. International students did indicate that the intervention was particularly helpful to them as they feel that they are less familiar with policies and practices when they first arrive at the college.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express thanks to Central Michigan University and especially to Dr. Kaleb Patrick for his patient and insightful guidance.

I would also like to acknowledge my wonderful and supportive cohort of MA student colleagues who met at Mohawk College over the past 2 years.

Thanks to my amazing staff and colleagues at my home college, and in particular, to my interviewer, who was an empathetic, thorough and enthusiastic partner.

Last, but not least, thanks to my supportive family who have tolerated and encouraged me in my journey through my MA.

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## Chapter 1: Problem Definition

### Introduction

Academic integrity is a growing area of concern in post-secondary education (Diekhoff, LaBeff, et al., 1996; Prins, Jones, & Lathrop, 2012; Macfarlane, Zhang, & Pun, 2014). Cheating, frequently defined as either: (a) plagiarism (b) copying on exams or assignments or (c) inappropriate collaboration, is increasing on a worldwide level (Elander, Pittam, Lusher, Fox, & Payne, 2010). Literature suggests that student and faculty attitudes towards, and understanding of, academic integrity vary widely (Jurdi, Hage, & Chow, 2012). The increase in technology and availability of electronic information is making cheating easier (Heckler, Rice, & Bryan, 2013). Technology-based interventions, such as plagiarism detection software, are increasingly being utilized by institutions (Heckler et al., 2013).

In my experience, the increase in international students in the Ontario college environment is often linked to increasing academic integrity concerns. There is some evidence to suggest that cultural differences may influence behaviour and understanding of academic integrity (Doss et al., 2016). This case study explored the student experience, and self-described behaviours, of an academic integrity intervention employed at Best College's (pseudonym), business school from 2011 to present. All students in the business school had completed an academic integrity intervention, including all international students.

### The Research Problem

There is a growing trend for post-secondary institutions to consider holistic approaches to academic integrity policy and education for students as a way of addressing cheating.

Methodologies such as: (a) policy revision, (b) academic codes, (c) education modules with

verification testing, and (d) curriculum and assessment planning, are being used (Macdonald & Carrol, 2006). There is little research that evaluates the effectiveness of these types of educational interventions. Some indicative work tracking offenses related to intervention has suggested that intervention can decrease levels of academic offences (Prins et al., 2012). One study specifically suggested that education modules combined with mandatory evaluation can deter academic offences (Curtis, 2013). A better understanding of the impact of mandatory academic integrity education on deterrence is important for post-secondary institutions who are implementing and designing policy and interventions. An exploration of student attitudes and understanding of academic integrity modules can assist in effective design of interventions.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this case study was to describe and interpret the experiences of business students in Best College, (pseudonym), regarding understanding and application of academic integrity principles from completing an academic integrity intervention. Did completion of the academic integrity intervention influence their decision making and self-described behaviour regarding academic integrity?

A qualitative analysis was used to explore aspects of the academic integrity intervention with selected business students who have completed the intervention at Best College. Qualitative interviews probed the areas of understanding of, and attitudes towards, the academic integrity intervention. Utilizing qualitative interviews allowed for first-person perspectives on actual experiences of the students related to the intervention.

The academic integrity intervention discussed in this study is the online educational module and accompanying quiz administered to the Best College business students every other semester of their studies.

## Research Questions

This qualitative case study seeks answers to the following research question:

- How do business students at Best College describe their experiences with the academic integrity intervention, and how does this experience influence their decisions about following academic integrity principles and policy in their current studies?

Sub-questions further explored student understanding of policy and academic integrity after completing the academic integrity intervention.

- How do students describe academic integrity, and types of academic integrity offenses after having completed the intervention?
- Do students feel that the intervention enhanced their educational success?
- Where do the students place themselves in Kohlberg's moral development framework based on Kohlberg's original theory question?

## Boundaries of the Case

The case study is bounded by time, place and the participants. Specifically, the time of the data collection, (summer, 2018), and the time the study students completed the intervention (at least twice in their studies at Best College). Place is bounded by Best College and the business school within the college. The participants were bounded by the students within the specific study program who volunteered to participate.

## Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in Kohlberg's stages of moral development (Carpendale, 2000). Kohlberg suggests that individuals go through progressive levels of increasing moral development and reasoning throughout their lives. Kohlberg theorized that there are six stages

where people justify their behaviours at progressively higher levels of reasoning. The six stages are represented in more detail in Appendix A. Kohlberg's theory does not rank levels of morality, but rather ranks how people reason and justify types of moral decisions. The decision of a student to cheat or not cheat could be linked to the Kohlberg theory and a student's demonstrated level of moral development. One study (Emler, Tarry, & James, 2007), suggested that depending on a person's level of moral reasoning, they may have varying attitudes towards respect for authority or moral responsibility, which could also apply to academic cheating.

Another study explores the idea of Kohlberg's levels of moral development and cheating incidences and perceptions of cheating in college students in the US (Williams, Leslie, Johnson & Wales, 2012). This study evaluated the Kohlberg scale of moral development with students who reported cheating behaviour. It indicated that moral development scores were lower among students who claimed to have cheated, than those that did not. The relation of Williams et. al. (2012) findings to my study is that I am exploring if academic integrity intervention and education can enhance positive understanding and experience with academic integrity. Can improving education regarding academic integrity influence attitudes towards cheating, and by association, level of moral development?

The issue of moral development across cultures using Kohlberg's stages of moral development has been explored by Gibbs, Basinger, Grime, & Snarey (2007), who assimilated the results of moral development testing from twenty-seven countries. The results of this study indicate that all cultures have similar levels of moral development, although religious, social and language context may cause individuals from different cultures to represent moral dilemmas differently. Gibbs et al. (2007), also proposes that higher levels of moral development are frequently associated with higher levels of post-secondary education in most cultures. The study

suggests that every culture has the background and capacity to understand and develop through Kohlberg's levels of moral development. This supports the hypothesis that international students have equal capacity to domestic students to understand and interpret and internalize concepts such as academic integrity, which will be partially explored in my study.

A related study (Boom, Wouters, & Keller, 2007), suggested that people can be partially in one stage or more of Kohlberg's moral development continuum. They also suggested that Kohlberg's stages are generally consistent across cultures. Boom et al. (2007) supports the concept that improving understanding of academic integrity can improve understanding for all students of the moral issues around academic dishonesty.

### **Significance of the Study**

Academic integrity is a growing problem in academia world-wide (Elander et al., 2010). Many institutions are experimenting with methods to inform, educate and influence academic integrity attitudes and behaviours with students (Macdonald & Carrol, 2006). This study endeavored to add to knowledge in the area of academic integrity, by expanding understanding of students' attitudes and understanding of academic integrity intervention and their resulting described behaviour. Administrators and faculty can be guided to consider whether implementation of academic interventions can assist in improving understanding of academic integrity. Best College can use the study insights to assist them in continuous improvement regarding academic integrity intervention. The ultimate goal is to improve academic success by improving understanding and by conducting academic integrity intervention.

**Definition of Terms****Academic integrity intervention**

For purposes of this study, academic integrity intervention is a process used by the business school at Best College. Each business student completes an online study module and a mandatory quiz and is required to receive an 80 percent score before any grades are released in the course containing the module. The course where the intervention is offered is pre-selected by the business school and is consistent from academic year to academic year.

**Academic integrity policy**

Academic integrity policy for purposes of this study is referring to the policy of Best College.

**Business school**

The business school is a defined organizational unit in the study college and one of fourteen within the college.

**Business student**

For purposes of this study, business student is defined as a full time or part time student registered in a post-secondary business program within the business school at Best College. It does not include students in continuing education programs, or programs that may be related to business, but are not delivered by the business school. Degree students are defined as students who have transferred from a diploma to a degree program within the Best College.

**Ontario College**

Ontario College is defined as one of the 24, publicly funded, institutes of applied arts and technology in Ontario as defined by the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

**Visa status**

Visa status is whether a student is considered to be domestic or international. A domestic student is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident and paying domestic tuition fees. An international student is defined as a student studying at the college with a Canadian study visa and paying international fees.

**Limitations of Study****Researcher bias**

The researcher has been directly involved in the development and implementation of the academic integrity intervention being studied. There could have been a bias towards wanting the results to show that the intervention has been an effective deterrent to academic dishonesty. The researcher strove to ensure that the findings are presented as objectively as possible. An unbiased third-party interviewer conducted the student interviews.

**Sample.**

The study was conducted using data from one Ontario College and cannot be generalized to other post-secondary institutions. The academic integrity intervention was implemented only with business students. It may not be applicable to students in other areas of study. The qualitative sample was relatively small (10 participants) and may represent selective views.

**Delimitations****Respondent bias**

The qualitative interviewing does not establish the undetected fact of whether the interviewee has committed academic dishonesty. The study explores their understanding and attitudes towards the intervention. It is possible that their responses could have been influenced by whether or not they have actually committed academic dishonesty.

### **Sample**

The researcher chose to use selected students in the Best College who have had at least 2 years of exposure to the academic integrity intervention. The sample (10 students) provided the necessary insights regarding student understanding and attitudes but cannot necessarily be generalized to all students.

### **Overview of the Literature**

I have divided the literature review into three main themes to illustrate the background for this study. First, I will discuss student and faculty perceptions. Second, the issues of demographics and technology are discussed. Third, a review of the literature around intervention is presented. I have discussed the definitions and historical context in the introduction to this chapter.

A Canadian study on student attitudes toward cheating, (Jurdi et al., 2012), suggested that student attitudes on this subject can be both situational and individual, and factors such as gender, ethnicity, age and level of student can influence their view of academic dishonesty. A similar study of faculty attitudes (Shephard, Trotman, Furnari, & Löfström, 2015), concluded that faculty attitudes also vary, and there is often faculty disagreement around what is cheating and who should be responsible for deterrence. These variations are important for understanding the context for implementing and evaluating interventions.

In reviewing the concept that there are differences in the likelihood of various groups to cheat or not cheat, some studies suggested that personality and motivation play a role (Jordan, 2001). Also, academic orientation and situational factors such as: (a) academic level (b) overall grade achievement (c) year of study (d) subject of study, are contributing factors. Jordon (2001), suggests that the more senior the student is, the less likely they are to cheat. My study evaluates



some of these attitudinal and demographic factors, such as sex and visa status and also qualitatively considers overall attitudes to academic integrity intervention.

In the area of demographics, there are several studies that suggest that ethnic or cultural background can influence a student's level of understanding of policy and their propensity to cheat, (Doss et al., 2016; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2010; Payan et al., 2010). Payan (Payan et al., 2010), suggested that different cultures have different views of types of cheating. Indian and some Chinese cultures are comfortable with collaborative cheating and some other cultures are more comfortable with individual actions. My study considered levels of cheating among domestic and international students.

In the area of intervention, there are studies that look at different approaches to intervention and consider the concepts of using multiple interventions as well as the concepts of education versus deterrence, (Griffith, 2013). The idea of using different types of policy, education and orientation as well as modifying curriculum and evaluations are common themes, (Prins et al., 2012; Elander et al., 2010; Macdonald & Carrol, 2006). One study in particular (Choo & Paull, 2013), proposes the concept that academic integrity can be learned gradually in stages, which supports the concept of Kohlberg's theory of moral development as a framework for stages of moral development around academic integrity. One study of intervention using an education module followed by mandatory testing (Curtis, 2013), suggests that intervention can be an effective tool for student understanding and deterrence.

Overall, building on the existing literature, this study provides insight to themes such as intervention effectiveness, student attitudes, and moral development as it relates to academic integrity.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This literature review is a foundational overview of intervention techniques aimed at improving student awareness of, and adherence to, academic integrity values, policies, and procedures in post-secondary education. The review explores four dimensions of this subject. First, it discusses definitions and levels of academic integrity. In particular, the varying definitions of types of academic dishonesty, as well as short contextual history of the research regarding the degree to which this is a problem in post-secondary education are reviewed. Second, building on an understanding of the definitions, this review explores student and faculty levels of understanding of academic dishonesty and the degree to which they each believe certain behaviours to be academically dishonest. Third, the issue of student motivation and demographics and the tendency of certain groups to be perceived or be more academically dishonest is explored. Fourth, the evolving area of intervention and student education regarding academic dishonesty is reviewed. This final area looks at the literature around academic dishonesty prevention and education including: policy, academic codes, educational modules, training, testing and technology. The role of penalties and deterrence is briefly discussed in the fourth section. A short overview is provided of related case study research.

It is important to understand the definitions regarding this subject in order to explore the validity of interventions and student education. Institutions need to be clear about what specifically the intervention is trying to achieve. If institutions define academic integrity differently, they will possibly not have similar attitudes and actions relative to policy and student and faculty education. In the intervention section of this review, interventions aimed at creating a positive integrity environment, and interventions aimed strictly at deterrence and punishment.

This review draws on world-wide literature on this subject with some emphasis on academic papers and studies regarding the North American and Canadian post-secondary environment. Additionally, to provide relevance to the Ontario college environment, there is a focus on literature discussing academic dishonesty in undergraduate education, as opposed to graduate education.

### **Definitions**

The terms “academic integrity” or “academic dishonesty” are represented differently, and often interchangeably, in various areas of literature. One school of thought represents academic integrity broadly as the “values, behavior and conduct of academics in all areas of practice”, (Macfarlane, 2014). Another study suggested that the manner in which an institution defines academic integrity will impact how the institution implements policy and education on this subject, (East & Donnelly, 2012). East and Donnelly (2012), used the foundational definition of: “academic integrity means being honest in academic work and taking responsibility for learning the conventions of scholarship” (p.1), to explain and promote the concept of a holistic comprehensive institutional approach to this subject.

Wager (2014), expanded on this thinking and used the interchangeable terms of integrity and dishonesty to refer to specific types of academic transgressions often characterized under the term “cheating”, such as plagiarism, cheating on tests, and inappropriate collaboration. This approach is often characterized as the lack of or absence of integrity, (Macfarlane, 2014).

A theme in much of the literature is that, despite the definition, academic dishonesty is widespread and is increasing in the US (Diekhoff, Labeff, et al., 1996), in Australia, (Marsden et al., 2005), in Canada (Prins et al., 2012), in Europe (Elander et al., 2010), and in China (Macfarlane et al., 2014). Given the prevalence of academic dishonesty as an issue in higher

education around the world, it is relevant to explore this subject and how to best create student and other institutional practices for education on academic integrity to help to maintain integrity and value.

### **Types of Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty seems to have two general categories: (a) cheating on tests, and (b) cheating on assignments and essays (Marsden et al., 2005). In addition, the theme of collaboration is also important in the field of research on dishonesty (Elander et al., 2010).

### **Student Perceptions and Attitudes towards Dishonesty**

A Canadian study on student attitudes regarding academic integrity (Jurdi et al., 2012), divides student attitudes and behaviours into two categories: (a) individual, and (b) situational. The individual theory suggests that a student's personal background including age, level of student, ethnicity, and gender will influence their views and perceptions of dishonesty. Jurdi (2012), suggests that academic behaviour, or a tendency to be very committed to learning and good grades, can predict levels of academic dishonesty.

On the situational side, peers, environment and opportunity can play a role. Jurdi (2012), surveyed undergraduates at the University of Regina about what they would define as being cheating. The respondents defined being "extremely dishonest" on a five-point scale as: (a) completing exams for others, (b) purchasing a paper, (c) writing a paper for someone else, (d) looking at someone's else's exam while taking the exam, (e) using cheat sheets, and (f) providing false reasons for missing an exam. Other items, like: (a) submitting the same paper for more than one course, (b) using sources and not referencing and, (c) doing less than one's share of a group project, were considered to be largely not dishonest by most of the students. The main point of this study was that different acts are considered by students to be more or less

dishonest and not all students agree on the definitions. Also, plagiarism-related examples were not as likely to be perceived as dishonest as other types of examples. There was also indication that cheating yourself, as opposed to helping someone else cheat, was more serious. It was perceived to be less dishonest to help someone else cheat.

The significance of understanding student's attitudes and definitions is that in order to help educate students, and potentially lower academic dishonesty, it is important to understand what students perceive to be dishonest and how they define academic dishonesty.

### **Faculty Perceptions and Attitudes towards Dishonesty**

Various studies interviewing faculty discussed below have shown that there is frequently disagreement among faculty regarding: (a) the nature of the problem, (b) what should be done about it and, (c) who should be responsible. This ambiguity can lead to a wide variation in effectiveness of institutional strategies.

In a faculty study conducted in Australia (Shephard et al., 2015), it was determined that university faculty believe that academic integrity is very important, but faculty disagree widely on how, and by whom, it should be taught and who should handle misconduct. Shephard et al., (2015), postulated that it really does not matter who should teach academic integrity or handle misconduct. What is important is that all areas of the institution recognize the problem and take on appropriate roles to address it.

A similar study (Lofstrum et al., 2015), placed faculty in 5 categories: (a) teachers of rules and values (b) gatekeepers (c) teaching-oriented reformers (d) academic integrity modelers, and (e) academic integrity skill-builders. Depending on the grouping, faculty felt more or less responsible for teaching or enforcing academic integrity policies and principles. There was considerable disagreement around: "how academic integrity should be taught, by whom and if it

can be taught at all” (p. 444). There is also confusion around the idea of student collaboration and when is collaboration productive learning and when does it become cheating. The significance is that, in order to create a positive and effective academic integrity environment, some level of consensus needs to be reached.

Boehm (2009), surveyed college faculty and administrators in the US, and suggested that both faculty and administration agree that the most effective ways of improving academic honesty are through: (a) faculty training (b) classroom strategies including effective evaluation and electronic detection services (c) a clear honour code with definitions of dishonesty, and (d) indicating academic dishonesty offences on a student’s transcript.

### **Audiences and Reasons for Cheating**

There are three themes in literature about who is cheating and why they cheat. Based on a better understanding of who and why, many institutions are attempting to create programs and interventions to control cheating. The first theme is that there are different psychological motivations and situational influencers for different groups to cheat, (Jordan, 2001; Koh, Scully, & Woodliff, 2011). The second theme is around ethnic and cultural differences and proposes that students are more, or less, likely to cheat depending on their cultural background, (Payan et al., 2010). The third theme promotes the hypothesis that the pervasiveness of technology and social media is causing cheating to increase among all student groups, (Hernandez, 2015; Griffith, 2013).

### **Psychological and Situational Motivations**

Jordan (2001), conducted a study of undergraduates in the US evaluating motivation, attitudes, social norms, and knowledge of policy as predictors of cheating. Jordan (2001), concludes that students who have strong extrinsic motivations such as external personal success

and a need to prove oneself to others, are more likely to cheat than students who are studying for the mastery or love of the subject. He also concluded that social norms were influential.

Students who believed that cheating is quite widespread were more likely to cheat than those who did not. Another related study (Marsden et al., 2005), reinforced the idea that academic orientation and situational factors play a role in the likelihood of a student to cheat, as do factors such as age, gender, overall GPA, year of study and subject area. More mature and senior students have tendencies to cheat less than their counterparts according to Marsden (2005).

A related study among business students in Australia (Koh, et al., 2011), indicates that time pressure and weighting of assessments impacts the likelihood of cheating. If the student feels that there is more at stake, they are more likely to cheat. Koh (2011), also indicates, similar to Jordan, that family, society, peers and friends, the cost of education and workload have influences on the propensity to cheat.

A study of deterrents to cheating suggested that there are motivations to cheat and also motivations to not cheat (Diekhoff et al., 1996). Diekhoff et. al., (1996), is frequently quoted as a foundational study in exploring deterrence, suggested that; (a) embarrassment of being caught is the most effective deterrent to cheating, followed by (b) fear of “F” in a course, or (c) institutional reprisal. Other factors such as guilt and disapproval of friends are deterrents, but to a lesser degree. This study indicated that negative deterrents do have some impact and this concept will be discussed further in this review under the concept of intervention.

In summary, the literature suggests that students are influenced to cheat based on a variety of factors including their: (a) personality, (b) social situations, (c) personal pressures, and (d) demographic status. Also, students can potentially be deterred from cheating by a variety of negative consequences and positive influences.

### **Ethnic and Cultural Influences**

A student's cultural and ethnic background may be influencing them to cheat. The idea that foreign students have different contexts for what constitutes cheating, is often suggested. In a comprehensive literature review on this subject (Doss et al., 2016), proposed that international students in the US are less likely to understand what constitutes a breach of academic integrity. This review discussed that there are many factors contributing to this including: (a) lack of familiarity with language, (b) pressure to be academically successful, and (c) lack of understanding of policy or procedures. The concept of plagiarism may not be understood in some societies or may be perceived as an acceptable practice (Doss et al., 2016). The Doss et al., (2016), study looked at attitudes to plagiarism as a necessary evil among undergraduate domestic and foreign students and concluded that there are some statistical differences in surveying foreign students that indicate that they more likely to believe that plagiarism is necessary. There were no other significant differences, in evaluating attitudinal factors towards cheating between domestic and foreign students (Doss et al., 2016).

A European study (Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2014), suggested that it is important to “identify the differences in beliefs about academic integrity between cultures” and to recognize “that behaviours that are viewed as dishonest in one cultural context may be appropriate in another”(p. 30). Yukhymenko-Lescroart (2014), compared US and Ukrainian students' attitudes and beliefs about academic behaviours. There were significant differences between the groups and US students were significantly more likely to consider aspects of plagiarism to be wrong than the Ukrainian students. Interestingly, both groups thought equally that behaviours such as getting information from previous test takers, comparing homework, collaborating on projects and assignments were not wrong. This study suggests the importance of academic integrity



education and of using specific examples of academic dishonesty as a means of helping students to understand academic dishonesty in a new cultural setting.

A US study of marketing students from multiple cultures (Payan et al., 2010), suggested that there are two types of behaviours in students: (a) cheating “unilaterally” or alone, or (b) cheating collaboratively, or in association with others. Depending on a student’s personal and cultural background, they may be more likely to participate in one or the other of these types of behaviour. Payan et al. (2010), suggested that students from India, China, and some European countries tend to have collectivist views and American, Russian, British and some European students tend to be more individualistic in their attitudes and behaviours around academic dishonesty. The researchers suggested the need for clear directions and examples for students, especially in group projects, as well as training on effective class techniques for business faculty.

Jurdi (2012), suggested that to understand academic integrity behaviour, one has to understand the student’s attitude towards that behaviour. This understanding is dependent on the student’s “beliefs, perceptions and evaluations” (p. 2). Jurdi (2012), suggests that interventions must understand student’s attitudes towards academic dishonesty, including all categories of students.

### **Technological Influences**

As access to information, the internet and social media become increasingly pervasive, there is more and more concern use of these technologies for cheating. A study conducted in Canada and China (Hernandez, 2015), looked at the concept of cheating for undergraduate students through the use of social media. Hernandez (2015), reported high use of social media for collaboration, although the Chinese students indicated that they were more likely to use other people’s work online or to rent or buy assignments or essays online. This study reinforces some

of the concepts regarding international students, but also indicates that technology overall can enable cheating.

A 2013 study in the US (Heckler et al., 2013), discussed the growing trend in digital plagiarism and described it as “rampant” (p. 230). Heckler et al. (2013), conducted a study of Turnitin (a plagiarism detection software), detection data in undergraduate students, including students who did and did not have Turnitin employed. Their conclusion was that students who knew they were being monitored had lower rates of plagiarism. They also discussed that detection is only effective when it educates students that there has been a breach of ethics and why there was a breach of ethics. Heckler et al. (2013), claimed that because of technological innovations, technological interventions are essential.

### **Intervention**

There is a growing area of literature that explores various types of academic integrity interventions and multi-faceted institutional approaches. A common new theme is that there is a need to take a “holistic approach” across institutions, which can be defined by a combination of tools including: (a) policy, (b) academic codes, (c) orientation and student resources for all students, (d) education modules, (e) verification testing attached to modules, (f) curriculum and assessment planning, (g) faculty training and (h) marketing. Using technology to detect cheating and specific training interventions for international student pre and post departure from their home country are also suggested.

In a UK paper advocating for a holistic approach (Macdonald, 2006), the concept that students need to be provided with education and guidance was put forward. MacDonald (2006) suggested that education and guidance can be achieved through giving students information and skills, promoting curriculum design and assessments, especially formative assessments, fair

institutional procedures and regulations. MacDonald (2006), referred to an example at Oxford Brookes University where Academic Conduct Officers enforce policy to ensure consistency across the institution. A similar process was put in place at Sheffield Hallam University (Macdonald, 2006), where academic panels to evaluate misconduct were put in place as well as new policies and procedures. In this case the paper advocated for including student and faculty education and training on both proper academic research and on policy.

Also in the UK, a study on understanding authorship was conducted at three London Universities (Elander et al., 2010), where students completed a survey to understand their perceptions of what original authorship was, and how it differed from plagiarism. Following the survey, students attended seminars on effective authorship and then were interviewed. This study indicated that practice and examples gave students a better understanding of how to approach their writing and differentiate between their work and simply citing or copying other's work. 86 percent of students felt that the intervention helped them to avoid plagiarism (Elander et al., 2010).

A study at Brock University, in Ontario, Canada, demonstrates the need for a comprehensive approach (Prins et al., 2012). The Faculty of Health Sciences at Brock implemented a new academic integrity approach which included: (a) new policy, (b) an oversight committee, (c) training for students, faculty and administrators, (d) a new informational website, (e) assessment design training for faculty, (f) new processes for invigilation of exams and (g) reporting annually on misconduct statistics. Students participated in surveys before and after the institutional changes. Reports on offences indicated that "students self-reported perceptions of misconduct and frequency of misconduct" were significantly reduced (p. 6). A new governance structure at Brock using the strategies in the study has been implemented. Jurdi (2012),

discussed earlier under motivations, also suggests that there is a need in interventions to use a balance of education and prevention and detection techniques.

In another example supporting a holistic approach, a review of twenty-two academic integrity websites from Ontario universities was conducted (Griffith, 2013). The study looked at imagery, language, videos and clarity of the websites and compared sites that had an educational approach and sites with a punitive approach. The study concluded that the amount and frequency of information on academic integrity is increasing on university websites. Griffith (2013), also suggested that comprehensive sites that encouraged learning and application were more effective than the sites strictly reviewing policy and penalties.

Choo & Paull (2013) proposed an interesting new model: the gradual release of information for understanding plagiarism. This model suggested that it is important to have both staff and students evolve their understanding over time and as their academic experience grows in order to better prevent plagiarism. The “gradual release” includes an understanding of plagiarism detection software, instructional education in a student’s first semester, a review of assessment procedures and process of “systematic education apprising staff and students of their responsibilities” (p. 294). This concept is interesting in that it suggests a gradual continuous process, although it may not go far enough in detailed recommendations of the specific interventions over time.

Curtis (2013), looked at undergraduate student’s understanding of plagiarism post completing an educational module. The module was delivered in a first-year psychology course and included eighteen tasks that a student completed through their course management system. The tasks were randomized and students had to successfully complete the task before they moved on to the next task. Students were surveyed after completing the modules and were

compared with students who had not completed the modules. Curtis (2013) indicated that students who completed the modules had significantly better understanding of plagiarism than those that did not (p. 10). The students who had completed the modules also reported that plagiarism was more serious than those who had not completed the modules (p. 12). This study recommends that implementation of student mastery modules around academic integrity is an effective way of teaching academic integrity principles.

A study (Hill, 2009), which surveyed college administrators at multiple institutions in the US, suggested that both faculty and administration agree that the most effective ways of improving academic honesty are: (a) faculty training, (b) classroom strategies including effective evaluation and electronic detection services, (c) a clear honour code with definitions of dishonesty, and (d) indicating academic dishonesty offences on a student's transcript. Hill (2010), called for the need for more research to understand student's motivations for and understanding of academic dishonesty as well as the effectiveness of various types of interventions. Similarly, studies of best practices around academic integrity in the US and the Netherlands (den Ouden & van Wijk, 2011, Lee & Partridge, 2011), suggested that there are positive indications that academic integrity interventions such as: policies, education modules, use of detection and prevention technology, faculty training and promotional information can be effective, but there is not enough concrete research done in this area at this time.

A comprehensive approach using a four stage institutional implementation model was proposed in a qualitative best practices US study (Gallant & Drinan, 2008), advocating for reform in approaches to academic integrity. In stage one, recognition and commitment, organizations must recognize that academic dishonesty is a pressing issue and be prepared to create a "sense of urgency" (p. 31), to take action. In stage two, response generation,

organizations need to decide how they want to respond potentially through policy, honour codes, student education and potentially faculty training. In stage three, response implementation, organizations need to have an integrated approach to putting the responses in place. Finally, in stage four, institutionalization, the initiatives become part of the “routines, processes and structures” (p. 33) of the institution. This model may seem like simple common sense but the authors pointed out that most institutions do not take a thoughtful and systematic approach to implementing a strategy to improve academic integrity in their organizations. A simple model may help to gain momentum and acceptance.

In the past ten years, the International Center for Academic Integrity, has been growing in membership and contributions to scholarship. This organization aims to “foster an environment of integrity in educational institutions”. There is an active chapter in Ontario. One service that they offer is an Academic Integrity Assessment Guide, which is a way for an institution to evaluate itself in terms of academic integrity and helps to guide institutional processes for improvement. In many ways it mirrors the four-step model put forward by Gallant (Gallant, 2012). There are suggestions for readings and resources. Although this seems to be in a stage of infancy, there is potential for ongoing addition of these type of guides and best practices.

In the area of interventions specifically aimed at international students, one study of multiple institutions in the US (Romerhausen, 2014), called for the need for clear and deliberate international student handbooks that provide information about culture, instructional styles, and relationships with instructors and academic honesty. This study suggested that the provision of these types of handbooks in most post-secondary institutions in the US is increasing, but more work is needed on broader approaches to pedagogy, and intercultural understanding to improve academic integrity.

One type of intervention, honour codes, which seem to have been in existence for the longest of any type of intervention, have some literature available around effectiveness. In two studies in this area (Dix, Emery, & Le, 2014, Sledge & Pringle, 2010), honor codes were examined for awareness and effectiveness in terms of student knowledge of academic honesty and number of academic offences. Both studies concluded that a clear honour code is an effective umbrella for a multi-pronged approach to academic integrity. Combined with student training, clear language on syllabi, speakers, faculty training and honour councils, honour codes can play a useful role.

### **Related Case Study Exemplars**

There are a few closely related case study examples that explore either cases related academic integrity or cases related to the teaching of moral concepts. An Australian case study (Ford & Hughes, 2011) of plagiarism education in a dental school is one such example. The study required participants to attend a mandatory educational workshop and to participate in an interview regarding their attitudes, impressions and ideas around plagiarism. Participants felt that the workshop enhanced their understanding of plagiarism and in interviews they stressed the importance of controlling and monitoring plagiarism using tools such as Turnitin.com.

A case study in Hong Kong with academic staff (Li, 2012) interviewed academic staff to understand how their pedagogical practices and their personal views impacted how they addressed student plagiarism. It was concluded that faculty application of educational information in class and their decision to utilize Turnitin.com were important differentiating factors in identifying and deterring plagiarism.

A case study relating to morality in education (Rissanen, Kussisto, Hanhimaki & Tirri, 2018), explored how teachers mindsets and attitudes impacted their ability to teach moral

concepts. The relevance to this study on academic integrity is that as a case study, it demonstrated that a variety of attitudes and behaviours are at play when conveying moral issues, similar to teaching academic integrity concepts.

In conclusion, this review has explored a cross-section of studies and discourse in the area of academic integrity. This is a growing issue in post-secondary education. There are a variety of definitions of academic integrity or dishonesty, but despite the definition, it is a pervasive problem. Students and faculty may have differing and varied levels of understanding of academic dishonesty, however, there seems to be some general agreement that there is a need to address this issue in institutions. Academic dishonesty occurs in most student demographic groups and may or may not be more frequent among foreign students. Technology, and the increase in easy online access to information compounds the problem.

Institutions are attempting to find way to implement policy, codes, training for students and faculty and a variety of interventions. There is literature to suggest that there is a need to educate about the types of academic integrity, penalties and overall academic institutional integrity implications of academic dishonesty. There is room for further research on the interpretation and effectiveness of intervention.



### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Case studies allow for the exploration of real life situations or processes within certain defined boundaries (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This case study used a single instrument approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018), where one case explores a particular issue or problem. Yin (2018), suggests that case study research is ideal for exploration of “how” and “why” questions, such as the questions to be explored in this study. The single case that was the basis of this study is the experience of students who have completed an academic integrity intervention at Best College.

This study can be best be described as a “critical” case (Yin, 2018), where there is a clear set of circumstances around which certain assumptions or theories may or may not be true. In this case, academic integrity intervention may or may not be having an impact on students’ experiences and decisions about academic integrity. Qualitative interviews explored student experiences with the academic integrity intervention. Additionally, interviewing explored if there is a theoretical underpinning to the impact of academic integrity intervention. Qualitative open-ended interviews were used in this study to allow for conversational exploration of attitudes and understanding, allowing for clarification and follow up where appropriate.

#### **Research Question**

This qualitative case study sought answers to the following research question:

- How do business students at Best College describe their experiences with the academic integrity intervention, and how does this experience influence their decisions about following academic integrity principles and policy in their current studies?

Sub-questions further explore student understanding of policy and academic integrity after completing the academic integrity intervention.

- How do students describe academic integrity, and types of academic integrity offenses after having completed the intervention?
- Do students feel that the intervention enhanced their educational success?
- Where do the students place themselves in Kohlberg's moral development framework based on Kohlberg's original theory question?

Qualitative interviews explored aspects of the academic integrity intervention with business students. The interviews probed for understanding of, and attitudes towards, the academic integrity intervention. The basic Kohlberg dilemma question was used to link students to the study theoretical framework (McLeod, 2013).

### **Population and Sample**

Individual interviews were conducted from the population of full-time degree business students, studying in the summer, 2018 semester, who had completed the academic integrity intervention in at least two previous semesters (total population approximately 100). Students were approached by their faculty coordinator, who had no connection to the study, by email and through in-class announcement to volunteer to participate. A purposeful sample of 10 participants was selected with an equal cross-section of male and female students and included both visa and non-visa students proportionate to the population of the school.

### **Data Collection**

The data for the study was collected by a third-party interviewer in, approximately 30-minute, audio taped interviews. The interviewer used a semi-structured interview guide with some allowance for probing questions. The interview guide used a face validity process 7/28/2018(Leedy & Ormrod, 2015), with two volunteer validators to ensure clarity and logic of the interview questions. The interviews were transcribed via voice to data software, with manual

verification. The interviews took place in private interview rooms at the study college. The interviewer asked each participant to sign an informed consent form. The researcher did not directly conduct the interviews as they had direct knowledge of the subject, the participants and the intervention. The researcher is an administrator in the study school but had no direct teaching responsibilities with the study students or direct knowledge of the students.

A comprehensive process was used to brief the third-party interviewer. The interviewer was an experienced administrator with knowledge of academic integrity processes. The researcher met with the interviewer and reviewed the entire proposal and the research guide. The questions were reviewed in detail, including examples of where probing questions would be appropriate. The interviewer and researcher checked in regularly to review the transcripts as the interviews progressed.

### **Instrumentation**

10 individual semi-structured student interviews with business students were conducted. The instrument was a semi-structured set of questions (Appendix C). This instrument was used because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the ability to explore the case elements in a conversational format. Students may have wanted to discuss their knowledge and attitudes towards academic integrity in a group setting, particularly if they might have participated in academic dishonesty (Alsuwaileh, Russ-eft, & Alshurai, 2016). By using semi-structured student interviews, the interviewer posed the main structured questions, but had some flexibility to probe for additional clarifying data. Case study research lends itself to use of semi-structured interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015), along with possibly using supporting documents or observations. Cresswell (2018), concurs with Leedy & Ormrod (2015) that interviews, as well as observation and document analysis, where relevant and appropriate, are recommended

methodologies for case study research. In this case, the intervention materials were used for document analysis to triangulate with data from the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative data was transcribed and reviewed and analyzed for keywords, phrases and themes. The researcher transcribed the audio interviews and created detailed notes using selected theme areas. Key phrases and themes were coded for analysis. There are some schools of thought, (Saldana, 2016), that suggest that it is best to review and absorb the initial data and emerging themes, and then choose the emerging themes – emergent design. Other perspectives, (Saldana, 2016), suggest that the coding methodology should be chosen at the time of the research design. In this case, themes evolved from the data analysis.

This study used some In Vivo coding, or “living coding” (Leedy and Ormond, p. 310), as one method of first level coding to allow for “close examination of the respondent’s actual words” and “interpretation of phrases that represent attitudes and behaviours”, (Saldana, 2016, p.106). For example, a response such as: “plagiarism is when you copy something and do not cite it” could be an initial code. The main method of coding was concept coding to bring out basic ideas and concepts. Axial coding was used for triangulation (Cresswell, 2018), to compare one source of data and codes to others to ensure validity of the data. The main themes of the study emerged through the Axial coding. This study can be described as using an “emic” (Cresswell, 2018, p. 91), as the researcher has an inside perspective of the case or phenomenon being studied. As such, the coding and data analysis were carefully cross-checked and triangulated to ensure validity. The module from the academic intervention was used as a document analysis to compare the language and content in the intervention to the interview

responses. All paper copies of the coding analysis and any notes were destroyed after the study was completed.

The data will be kept on a secure external drive and will be retained in a secure locked location at the researcher's home for the duration of the study. Following the study, the data will be retained for 5 years and then the thumb drive will be destroyed.

### **Ethics**

As the study involved human subjects, the study was submitted for ethics review at Central Michigan University (CMU), and at Best College and was approved by both in June of 2018. The researcher submitted a Research Review Application with required documentation to the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at CMU. Once CMU provided approval, an application was submitted to the IRB at Best College and was subsequently approved and deemed to be low risk.

To maintain confidentiality, participants were sought through personal class presentations by the program coordinator of the degree programs, and students signed up using a hard copy sign up form. Students signed a release form prior to starting the interview and were informed that they were not required to answer any questions that they did not wish to and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time and their interview would be erased. No names or identifying information were included in the interview. Students are referred to by numerical order in the transcripts and by random alpha codes in the final report. All data and recordings were maintained in a secure locked office.

### **Timeline**

This study took place in late June, 2018.

### **Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

This qualitative case study explored the experiences of business students at Best College regarding understanding and application of academic integrity principles after completing an academic integrity intervention. This study explored whether completion of an academic integrity intervention influenced their decision making and self-described behaviour regarding following academic integrity policy and principles. Secondary questions regarding module content, definition and understanding of academic integrity, and level of moral development were also explored. Participants provided suggestions for possible future improvements of academic integrity education at Best College. A scenario question based on Kohlberg's theoretical principles explored participant moral development.

IRB permission was granted by CMU and the study college. A purposeful sample of degree students who had completed the academic integrity intervention at least twice in their studies were selected. Approximately 100 potential participants were contacted by their program coordinator in-class and were asked to volunteer. The researcher did not contact the participants directly. A third-party interviewer was utilized. The IRB application identified that the researcher has direct responsibility over the students and the administration of the academic integrity intervention and was in a position of power.

Ten study participants completed audio-taped one-on-one interviews of approximately 30 minutes each. Qualitative interviews were used in order to probe the areas such as understanding of, and attitudes towards, the academic integrity intervention. Utilizing qualitative interviews allowed for first-person perspectives on actual experiences of the students related to the intervention. The 10 participants signed informed consent forms and were notified of their right to skip any question that they wished to, or to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants

were not asked for any personal identifying information and their responses were alpha coded from A to J to preserve anonymity. All verbatim comments in this report are referred to by the student alpha code.

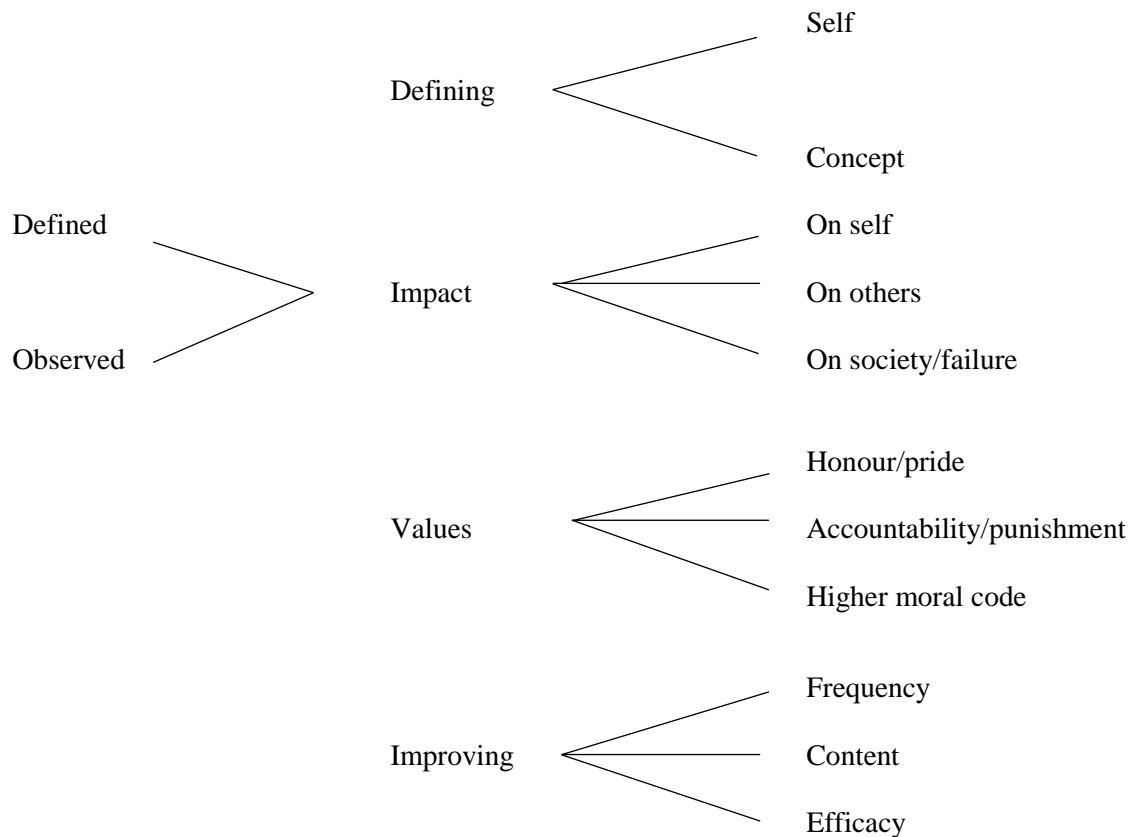
Table 1 (below) provides descriptive information regarding the participants. Five were female and five were male. Three participants were visa students and seven were domestic students. This demographic distribution is exactly proportional to the 30%/70% visa/domestic student makeup of the student population in the business school studied, and the approximate 50%/50% split between males and females (Best College, 2018). The participants were from the Bachelor of Commerce degree programs studying in the summer of 2018. Participants were from a mix of 3 disciplines: (a) Accounting, (b) Human Resources and (c) Digital Marketing. All students had transferred from a diploma to a degree program and had completed the academic integrity intervention at least twice in their studies at Best College.

	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Degree</u>
A	F	Visa	Accounting
B	M	Domestic	Human Resources
C	F	Domestic	Human Resources
D	F	Domestic	Marketing
E	M	Visa	Accounting
F	M	Domestic	Accounting
G	M	Domestic	Marketing
H	F	Domestic	Marketing
I	F	Domestic	Human Resources
J	M	Visa	Human Resources

Transcripts were downloaded using voice transcription software and manually verified by the researcher. The verified transcripts were reviewed by the third-party interviewer for accuracy. Analysis was completed by repetitive listening to the recordings and review of transcripts. Initial

colour coding and margin notations were used to search for common themes. The transcripts were also reorganized to review responses grouped by questions, rather than by participant. Based on this first review of the data, participant responses were concept coded (Saldana, 2016) with the model in Figure 1 (below) emerging. The concept coding used inductive reasoning to explore descriptions of the impact and participant experience of the intervention in terms of the impact on themselves, and the impact on others. Participants defined and described academic integrity and what it meant to them and the related impact of the intervention in both contexts. The ideas of: (a) impact on self (b) impact on others and (c) impact on work and society emerged. Information about definitions of academic integrity and recall and interpretation of the intervention were uncovered. The concept of academic integrity as a moral issue emerged.

Figure 1 Concept Coding

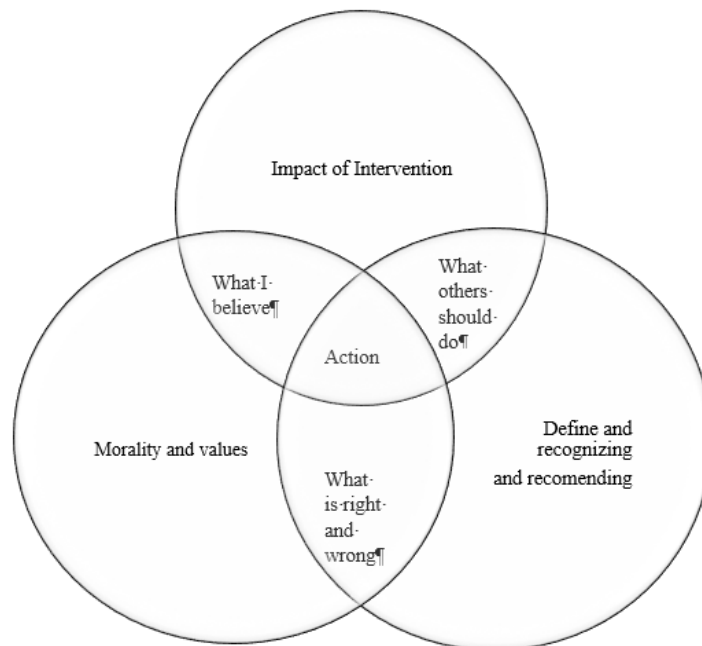




Concept coding was then translated using Axial coding (Saldana 2015) to interrelate themes and concepts through deductive reasoning. Table 3 (below) gives a visual representation of the concepts emerging from the Axial coding. There was a relationship between how participants view the impact of the intervention on themselves and others. There also seemed to be a relationship with how they define and describe academic integrity. These concepts are part of the participants view of themselves, and of others, and of what is, in their perception, morally right or wrong. Based on these views, implied behaviours or actions emerge. The three areas of coding converge with possible actions for: a) the individual b) the faculty and c) Best College. In Vivo coding (Saldana, 2016) of the transcripts was used to bring out particular quotes used in the discussion of themes by research question.

Figure 2

Axial Coding-3 Themes



## Results of the Study

**Research question one:** How do business students at Best College describe their experiences with the academic integrity intervention, and how does this experience influence their decisions about following academic integrity principles and policy in their current studies?

**Theme: Defining, recognizing and recommending** All 10 participants recalled having completed the intervention and they described that the intervention was a PowerPoint module and an accompanying quiz. They were all aware that they had completed the intervention several times in their studies. Nine participants recalled completing it at least once a year and one participant thought that they had completed it every semester of their studies. Six participants mentioned that they had completed it in their current summer term in their ethics class.

When asked about recall of the content of the intervention, eight of 10 recalled that the quiz was 20 questions and that it was required to achieve 80%, or 16 out of 20 to pass the quiz and successfully complete the module. Four participants mentioned that students have unlimited time and attempts to complete the intervention. Two participants mentioned that you must complete the quiz in order for any grades to be released in the course.

Participant recall seems to be quite accurate when compared to the document analysis of the intervention itself. Table 4 (below) shows that of the sixty-five slides in the lesson, thirty five percent of the lesson discussed policy and process, thirty seven percent describes types of academic offenses, of which twelve slides or eighteen percent are scenarios. Eight (12%) of the slides discuss penalties.

<i>Table 2 Topic Emphasis – Academic Integrity Intervention PowerPoint Lesson</i>		
<u>Topics</u>	<u>Number of Slides</u>	<u>%</u>
Introductory/Summary/Title	10	15
Definitions/Policy/Description	14	21
Academic Integrity Process	10	15
Penalties	8	12
<u>Types of offences</u>		
General	3	5
Plagiarism	14	21
Group Work	2	4
Cheating on Tests	4	7
Total	65	100
<i>Note: Slides with scenarios 12 (18%)</i>		

A similar pattern emerges in analysis of the quiz outlined in Table 3 (below) where the questions are divided between: (a) definitions, (b) policy, (c) process, and (d) types of offenses. Forty four percent of the questions are presented as scenarios. The descriptions of the participants were accurate in terms of describing both the PowerPoint module and the quiz.

<i>Table 3 -Topic Emphasis – Academic Integrity Intervention 25 Questions</i>		
<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Definitions	4	16
Types of offences	5	20
Penalties/Process	5	20
Scenarios	11	44
Totals	25	100
<u>Topics</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
General Policy	2	8
Penalties/Process	2	8
Group Work*	2	8
Double Submission*	2	8
Copyright*	3	12
Cheating on Tests*	4	16
Plagiarism*	10	40
Totals	25	100
*Types of academic offences (68%)		

**Theme: Impact of intervention on self and others.** Nine of 10 participants described themselves as being a good student, or an above-average student. One participant described themselves as an average student. This is subjective and based on their self-assessment and belief. Substantiation was offered from various participants in terms of “being on the President’s honour roll”, “having good study habits, or “being organized and handing things in on time”, or “getting good grades”. This context was established to lead into the discussion of academic

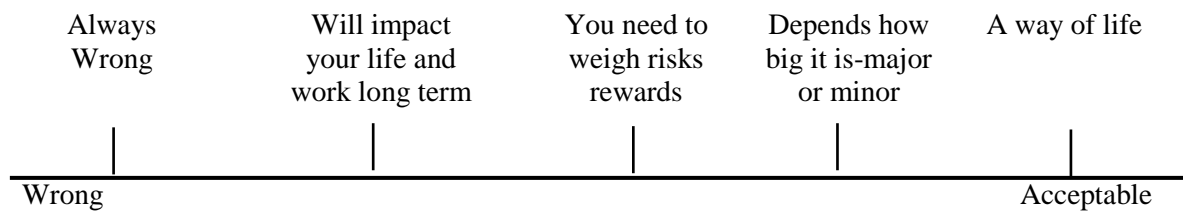
integrity. As all participants identified themselves as being an average or good student, it would seem that they have similar views of their academic performance.

When describing the impact of the intervention, participants described the impact in various ways, including whether the intervention impacted their own behaviour and how it impacted the behaviours that they have observed in others. Figure 3 (below) suggests a continuum of thought processes derived from comments from a number of interview questions. When describing observations of types of cheating, participants seem to differentiate between what they observe and what actions of others mean to them.

Figure 3

Continuum of Impact of cheating

Observing Others



The continuum suggests that views of observation of others cheating can range from the behaviours being perceived as being always wrong to being largely acceptable. In observing others, descriptive comments emerge such as this comment from participant E:

You can tell them about academic integrity and what it is, but unless that student has already got it in his head that I'm going to be a good student or going to be a bad student, it's still subjective to the type of person they are.

Some participants describe classmates behaviour as not necessarily impacting them such as this comment from participant B:

It's not like that I am not going to tell people not to do it, because I just don't care. I want them to do good. It really doesn't really matter to me what they do. It's just it's upsetting and disappointing.

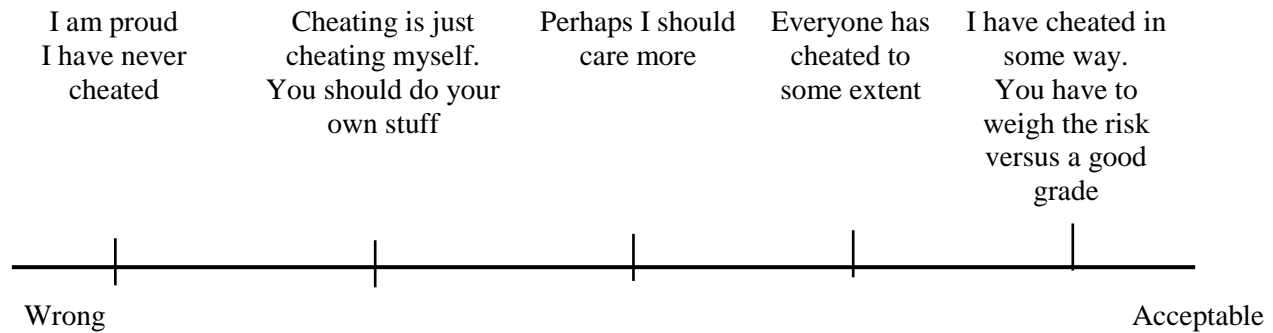
Some participants relate academic integrity to future impact on behaviour in the workplace and suggest that if you cheat in school, you may have similar behaviour in the workplace, and the intervention is helping you to learn moral principles while you are in school. This seems to make cheating of others more unacceptable in their view. Examples of this from participant A and E are below:

If you cheat in school maybe they will give you a second chance to correct your bad behaviour. But, if you were at the workplace, nobody will give you a second chance because everybody wants that work and wants to get that job. So, if you cheat, or if you do something like steal the work from other people, you'll be fired and someone else will replace you. You have to be aware that academic choices are very important.

They want to make sure you are honest because you're going through to earn a professional designation and you don't want to be cheating your way to that because in the end you're cheating yourself.

When considering their own behaviour, some participants are very specific that cheating is always wrong, whereas others feel that there are potential gradations of right and wrong as illustrated in the continuum of thought in Figure 4 (below).

Figure 4

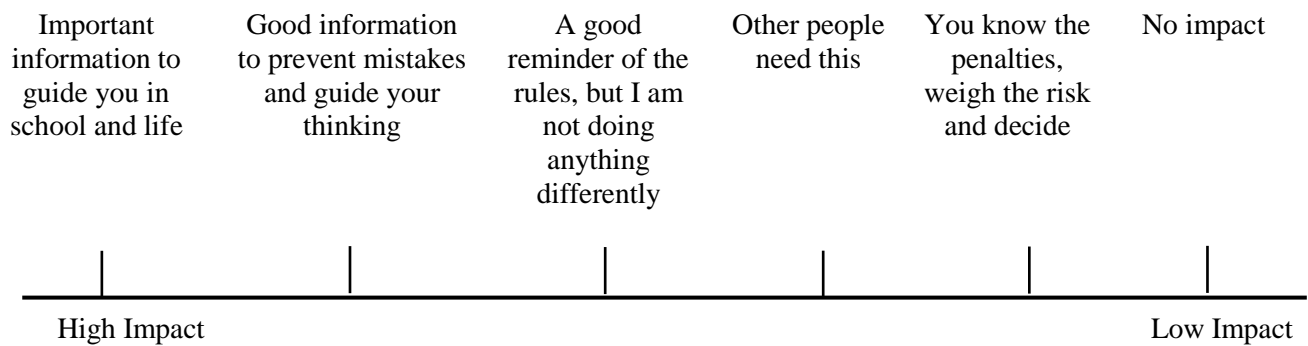
*Continuum of Impact of cheating*Governing Myself

Participant F provides an example of the idea that others feel that cheating is ok to some extent if that is what you need to do to be successful:

I feel like, in and of itself, students all do what they feel like they need to do to succeed. It's in a competitive environment. People will do what they feel they need to do. It's not maybe ethical or not right. They feel like this is what I need to do to succeed in this course or yet to be able to continue on to reach my end goal.

**Theme: Morality and Values** The theme of morality and values as it relates to the impact of the intervention emerges across the interview questions. There seems to be a variation of thought in terms of the impact of the intervention as outlined in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5

Impact of Intervention on Behaviour

To demonstrate the perception of cheating as it relates to describing the impact of the intervention on participants own behaviour, participant D and A say:

It helps to ensure that you wouldn't. I think it's not that I would before because the consequences are pretty detrimental. But it just really instilled in my brain exactly what not to do and that what the outcome would be even if you were to do something as small as working on an assignment with someone and submitting a similar answer can result in something. So, you were more aware of the risks associated. I was more aware of the risks and more careful when citing and using references and assignments.

In some instances, if you help someone else to finish their assignment, to some extent it's an academic offence. But the quiz gave us the scope of what is an academic offence. If you go beyond the scope, you will have an academic offense. So, the quiz clearly told us what the scope is and you cannot cross the line.



Participant E and G and I describe whether the intervention affected their decision to follow academic integrity principles and demonstrate that the module links punishment or penalty to action:

It outlines the punishments for the offenses. You know I could very well be expelled from school. You know what kind of consequences are going or come from that.

It is basically because of the discipline or any disciplinary actions. The risk is too high.... They teach you about the risk in the module.

It helps to remove the liability and the rate of crime.

Yes, but it's basically because of the discipline or any disciplinary actions. There are risks. The risk is too high. There's many questions about what happens if you get caught. This module's like the risk versus reward is way too high. Its' really in everybody's best interest to not cheat or to not go and commit an offense in any way.

**Research question two:** How do students describe academic integrity, and types of academic integrity offenses after having completing the intervention?

Participants were asked to define academic integrity, explain the term academic offense and then describe the content of the module. Definitions followed a theme of honesty. Below are some typical responses from participant C, F, H.

I would say academic integrity is similar to being honest with your college. It outlines different rules and standards regarding cheating and sharing your words and how you should be acting as a student and it gives you a guideline of what is appropriate and what is not.

Honest effort. Acting ethically with your school. Giving credit where credit is due.

I think it's just upholding your standards and making sure you are doing things by the book and making sure you're citing and you're not stealing other works.

In defining academic offenses, nine mentioned plagiarism, five mentioned cheating on tests and three discussed sharing information inappropriately among students, such as test information or assignments. In describing the module content, participants mentioned that the module covers: (a) college policy, (b) types of academic offences and (c) penalties. Four participants mentioned that there were scenarios about different types of offences in the module. Two mentioned the concept of using the same assignments in more than one course, or double submission as a concept that was covered that they were not familiar with previously. Participant recall seems to be quite accurate when compared to the document analysis of the intervention itself. Table 4 (below) shows that of the 65 slides in the lesson, 35% of the lesson discussed policy and process, 37% describes types of academic offenses, of which 12 slides or 18% are scenarios. Eight (12%) of the slides discuss penalties.

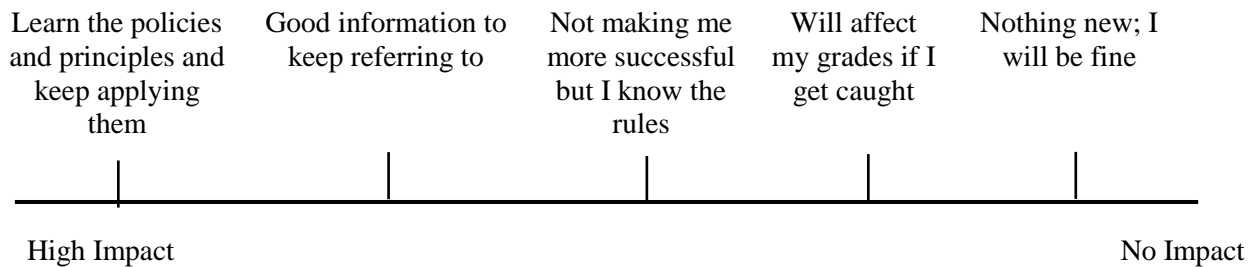
**Research question three:** Do students feel that the intervention enhanced their educational success?

In general, most participants felt that the invention aided success as it helped them to know what not do to and what the rules are. They describe the impact on success as helping them to not do something wrong. Punishment or penalties are mentioned as a deterrent that helps them to know what they need to do to be successful. The intervention itself was not seen as something that improved success strictly on its own merits. Figure 6 demonstrates the range of comments from a positive view of the intervention helping to ensure that a student knows the policy, being good information to keep being reminded of, through to a view that academic offenses will

impact my grades if I am caught, or a view that the intervention is a reminder but nothing that the participant felt they did not already know.

Figure 6

Impact of Intervention on Academic Success



Participant J represents the high-impact view of the intervention as aiding success.

Oh yes, there is a major connection. As I said you need to know academic integrity and you know how to give credit to a source and you need to know how to fairly and honestly do a test. That links to your grades and everything, because if you're doing something which is just to dishonesty and through cheating, then absolutely you're not going to be able to get that A plus or 100 percent or 95 which you would have gotten if you had followed the rules and regulations and if you've been following the academic integrity module.

Participant F represents the mid-continuum view.

I feel that it can help because it kind of lays out what you have to do. Like the things that you have to know and things that you should know to be able to be successful in your courses.

Participant G represents the participants that felt that the intervention had little impact on success.

I don't really think it has to impact academic success at all. The only way that they can really gauge your academic integrity is that you have offenses where if you don't have offenses and how well you do on the quiz. I really don't think it really affects that too much.

**Research question four:** Where do the students place themselves in Kohlberg's moral development framework based on Kohlberg's original theory question?

Participants varied in their responses, scoring from a level two/three type of response up to a four/five level response. Level two/three is characterized by a response that the druggist was wrong and the man had to do what he had to do. Level four/five would indicate more of focus on what is right for society in terms of human rights and the greater good.

Some typical two/three comments are comparing the responses to the participant responses regarding whether they felt that an academic intervention impacted on their success or their behaviour responses varied from high to low belief in the impact of the intervention. There doesn't seem to be a clear correlation between the Kohlberg scenario and the perception of the impact of the intervention. For example, as illustrated in Table 11, participants B, D, G and I, who scored relatively high on the Kohlberg scale, might or might not feel that the intervention impacted their success or behaviour. Similarly, the lower-scoring Kohlberg participants did not have a clear correlation between their Kohlberg score and their perception of the intervention. Directionally, participant C and E suggest that there might be a correlation but this is contradicted by participant E.

Table 4 <i>Spectrum of Kohlberg Results Versus Impact of Intervention</i>			
<u>Participant</u>	<u>Kohlberg Intervention</u>	<u>Success</u>	<u>Behaviour</u>
A	4/5	High	High
B	4/5	Medium	Medium
C	3/4	Low	Low
D	4/5	Medium	Medium
E	2/3	Medium	Medium
F	2/3	High	Medium
G	4/5	High	Medium
H	3/4	Low	Low
I	4/5	Medium	Low
J	4/5	High	High

One the most significant results of the Kohlberg scenario is that there was some correlation of the scenario back to themes of school and life such as this comment from participant C:

I think it's similar to many situations at school. Well I don't think it's acceptable, but you are weighing the consequences.

There were responses to the scenario (Appendix A) which may indicate that a new scenario to reflect the Kohlberg morality theory may be needed for future explorations. Four participants expressed skepticism about the scenario in the context of modern practices. For example, they referred to crowdfunding as an alternative and raised the issue that there is universal health care in Canada, which makes the scenario unrealistic in their opinion to evaluate. This scenario would not happen in a universal health care environment in their opinion and experience. They offered an opinion, but their immediate reaction to the scenario was that it

was not a real or relevant example, which may suggest a need for new development of scenarios to explore the Kohlberg theory.

### **Demographic Assessment**

There was very little directional variation on the impact of the intervention between males and females. They each had similar mixed opinions. Between domestic and international students there seems to be a small amount of difference. In particular, international participants were slightly more likely to mention that they did not have the familiarity with academic integrity policies such as this comment from participant J.

I came from another country where we didn't have any rules and regulations. So, I didn't have any idea. But after I went through the module I knew how much to use from online and how to cite in APA and what things I could do and not do. I just had to prepare myself to stay away from these offenses and not get in trouble.

Three domestic students mentioned that they already had familiarity with academic integrity from high school, so they felt that the intervention had less impact on them. The idea of familiarity coming into a postsecondary environment seems to be the only differentiator mentioned.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Summary**

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the experiences of business students at Best College in relation to their understanding and application of academic integrity principles from completing an academic integrity intervention. This study explored whether completion of an academic integrity intervention influenced their self-described decision making and behaviour towards following academic integrity policy and principles. Secondary questions regarding module content, definition and understanding of academic integrity, and level of moral development were also explored. Participants provided suggestions for possible future improvements of academic integrity education at Best College. A scenario question based on Kohlberg's theoretical principles explored overall participant moral development.

Permission to conduct research was provided through the IRB's first from CMU followed by the study college. 100 possibly participants were contacted by their program coordinator and 10 volunteers were selected based on a purposeful mix of male/female and domestic/visa students. A third-party interviewer conducted the interviews as the researcher had direct responsibility for the studies of the students and the administration of the intervention.

Participants were from the business school degree programs and had all completed the intervention at least twice in their previous studies at Best College. The third-party interviewer used a semi-structured interview, with some opportunity for clarification.

Qualitative interviews were selected as an effective tool to collect data as they allowed for dialogue and deeper understanding (Cresswell, 2018). Ten semi-structured, approximately 30-minute, interviews were conducted which produced significant amounts of data. Interviews were transcribed initially, using voice-to-text transcription software, and then verified manually.

The data was analyzed using a case-based approach starting with Concept Coding and moving to Axial Coding – inductive to deductive. Information from document analysis of the intervention educational module and quiz questions was compared to participant responses.

### **Conclusions**

Four research questions were explored. In the following analysis findings are related to the research questions and aspects of the literature review.

**Research question one:** How do business students at Best College describe their experiences with the academic integrity intervention, and how does this experience influence their decisions about following academic integrity principles and policy in their current studies?

The findings of this study indicate that students who have completed an intervention at least twice can recall the process and content of the intervention. Participants had mixed views about the degree to which the intervention influenced their decisions to follow academic integrity policy and principles, and the degree of seriousness of different types of cheating. They all agreed that it was important to have the intervention as part of their studies. Participants stressed the need to “know the rules” and some suggested that they always strive to follow academic integrity and some felt that some forms of cheating a bit less serious. Some were very concerned about colleague’s behaviour around cheating and other said that it doesn’t really concern them if others got a good grade through cheating.

The study participant’s varied views of different types of cheating being more or less serious, relates to the Jurdi (2012) study which showed that plagiarism and cheating on tests were very serious, but perhaps, double submissions or issues with group work might be considered to be less serious. The Jordon (2001) study concluded that motivation, social norms and knowledge of policy are predictors of likelihood to cheat. According to Jordon (2001), the



more extrinsically motivated a student is, and the more aware they are of policy, the less likely they are to cheat. Most significant is the Curtis (2013) study which examined student understanding and behaviour after completing an intervention and concluded that education modules significantly improved understanding of academic integrity. Students in the Curtis (2013) study felt that plagiarism was a much more serious offense after completing an academic integrity module, than those that did not complete a module.

Diekdorff (1996) suggested that motivations to cheat or not cheat are important. The embarrassment of being caught, followed by fear of an “F” in a course or institutional reprisal were significant deterrents in the Diekdorff (1996) study. Yukhymenko- Lescroart (2014) suggested that some students see plagiarism as more serious than getting information from previous test-takers, comparing homework or collaborating on assignments.

**Research question two:** How do students describe academic integrity, and types of academic integrity offenses after having completed the intervention?

Participants in this study stated that academic integrity is “being honest” and “not cheating”. They describe plagiarism, cheating and tests and collaboration on assignments as being the most common forms of cheating. Other types of offenses were mentioned by some participants such as, double submissions and getting information from previous test takers. The correlation of their knowledge to the document analysis of the actual intervention seems to be quite consistent. They are aware of the definitions, types of offenses, policy and penalties that are outlined in the intervention. This study did not evaluate students that did not complete an intervention however, the fact that they have good recall of the information suggests that the intervention is having an impact.

Wager (2014) suggested that using terms like integrity and dishonesty and cheating interchangeably is common when describing academic integrity and that the most common forms of cheating described by students are: (a) plagiarism, (b) cheating on tests and (c) inappropriate collaboration. Another approach suggests that the definition of academic dishonesty is a lack of integrity (Macfarlane, 2014). The findings of this study and of the literature are similar.

**Research question three:** Do students feel that the intervention enhanced their educational success?

Participants had varied views of whether the intervention was impacting their success. The most common response indicated that the intervention was a “good reminder”. They suggested that the intervention helped them to know: (a) the rules, (b) the types of academic offenses, and (c) the penalties. The intervention aided their success by helping them to not cheat, and subsequently be impacted by a serious penalty, which could hurt their grades. Three domestic participants stressed that this type of information is introduced in high school. Two international students mentioned that they were not familiar with academic integrity policies and practices and the module was very helpful in educating them and helping them to be successful as they were aware of what they needed to do to follow the rules. Also, the sample of this study was relatively senior students who generally describe themselves as above average or good students. This indicates that they had more familiarity with academic integrity than more junior students, and some felt that the intervention had less impact on their current success as they were already familiar.

Marsden (2005) concluded that more senior students are less likely to cheat than more junior students. Doss et al. (2016) suggested that international students are less likely to

understand what constitutes a breach of academic integrity and that in some societies, plagiarism may be perceived to be an acceptable practice in some societies.

**Research question four:** Where do the students place themselves in Kohlberg's moral development framework based on Kohlberg's original theory question?

The participants in this study had responses to the Kohlberg scenario varying from level 2/3 to level 4/5. There did not seem to be a direct correlation between their response to the scenario and their belief in the value of the academic integrity intervention. The most important finding seems to be that despite their Kohlberg response, they all felt that the study college should have the intervention and that it has some value.

Rissanen et al. (2018) suggested in a recent case study exploration of teaching moral education principles that, a variety of attitudes and behaviour among faculty and students can impact the ability to teach moral concepts. This applies in general moral and ethical concepts and to the moral aspects of understanding academic integrity. Similarly, my study also had a variety of attitudes relating to morality as demonstrated by the Kohlberg scenario and in relation to attitudes around academic integrity.

### **Participant Recommendations**

Participants were asked to suggest ideas for the study college to improve academic integrity education. Suggestions such as having faculty cover the information in class in addition to having student complete a module online and more effective test and exam proctoring were mentioned. It was suggested that it should be more interactive and more example or scenario based and that perhaps a different level of module for more senior students would be appropriate.

There is literature around the importance of a “holistic approach” to academic integrity education (Prins et al. 2012). Along with training for students and faculty, areas such as informational websites, new processes exam invigilation and reporting of misconduct statistics can be effective (Prins et al. 2012). Macdonald (2006) advocates for more effective assessment design and cites examples of use of academic panels to evaluate misconduct as well as new policies and procedures. Choo & Paull (2013) advocate for gradual release of information starting in more junior levels of degrees and more sophisticated information shared with more senior students. Case-related literature on academic integrity suggests that faculty attitudes and beliefs about academic integrity and their use of educational information in class and Turnitin.com are effective deterrents to cheating (Li, 2012).

### **Recommendations**

There are a number of recommendations that can be derived from the findings of this study. This study sought to explore student experiences and behaviours relating to academic integrity as a result of having completed an intervention. Participants were also asked to provide suggestions for improvement of academic integrity education going forward. The following recommendations are proposed:

1. Continue to offer a mandatory academic integrity intervention comprised of an educational module and a quiz on an annual basis in the business school at Best College. Other schools at Best College may also benefit from implementing this intervention.
2. Determine ways to make the intervention module more interactive using video or other techniques other than PowerPoint to convey information. Consideration should be given to using more scenario-based information in both the module and the quiz.

3. Consider offering different modules for different levels of students such as, an introductory module in level one and a more comprehensive module in upper levels.
4. Encourage faculty to provide a comprehensive lesson to accompany the intervention, rather than having the students complete the intervention completely separately from their regular course content.
5. Evaluate how to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to academic integrity using suggestions from the students and from literature and best practice such as: a) an honour code, b) comprehensive information on the college website, (c) an academic integrity officer, (d) faculty training and materials for teaching and promoting academic integrity.
6. Future explorations of the Kohlberg theory of moral development may require a new scenario, potentially taking into account modern practices in fundraising, social media and healthcare or whatever societal practices a new scenario might focus on.

### **Implications for further research**

There are opportunities for further research in the area of academic integrity intervention. New modules could be developed and student research could be conducted to determine reaction and efficacy of the changes. Qualitative analysis of linking usage of the intervention with actual academic integrity results could be explored. Comparative studies with peer schools also experimenting with intervention could add to learning and shared best practice.

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## Appendix A

## Kohlberg's Levels and Stages of Moral Development

<b>Level 1 - Preconventional</b>	<b>Stage 1 - Heteronomous Morality</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is right is defined as obeying rules to avoid punishment.</li> <li>• Individuals justify actions based on avoidance of punishment the superior power of authorities.</li> <li>• They do not consider the rights or concerns of others.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2 - Conventional</b>	<b>Stage 2 - Individual, Instrumental Morality</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the rules if it is in their best interest to do so</li> <li>• They understanding that other people have needs and interests that may conflict with their own</li> <li>• Right is defined by what is fair, an equal exchange, or an agreement</li> <li>• Pragmatic perspective – ensures satisfaction of their own needs and wants, while minimizing the possibility of negative consequences to themselves.</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3 - Postconventional</b>	<b>Stage 3 - Interpersonally Normative Morality</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right is defined as meeting the expectations of those to whom one is close and carrying out appropriate, acceptable social roles</li> <li>• Concerns center on maintaining a good personal image and gaining others approval</li> <li>• Shared feelings, agreements, and expectations take precedent over individual interests</li> <li>• A generalized social system does not yet exist.</li> </ul>
<b>Levels 3 - Postconventional</b>	<b>Stage 4 - Social System Morality</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals view the social system as made up of a consistent set of rules and procedures applying equally to all.</li> <li>• Right is defined as upholding the laws established by society and carrying out the duties agreed upon.</li> <li>• Individuals behave in a way that maintains the system and fulfills societal obligations.</li> </ul>
<b>Levels 3 - Postconventional</b>	<b>Stage 5 - Human Rights and Social Welfare Morality</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laws and social systems are evaluated based on the extent to which they promote fundamental human rights and value</li> <li>• The social system is understood as a social contract freely entered into to protect members rights and ensure the welfare of all</li> <li>• Moral obligations and social relationships are based on making and being able to depend on agreements.</li> </ul>
<b>Levels 3 - Postconventional</b>	<b>Stage 6 - Morality of Universal, Reversible, and Prescriptive General Ethical Principles.</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morality involves equal consideration of the points of view of all involved in a moral situation.</li> <li>• Decisions are based on universal generalizable principles that apply in all situations such as the equality of human rights.</li> <li>• This stage was based on a few individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr. with formal training in philosophy and a demonstrated commitment to moral leadership.</li> </ul>

(Patton et al, 2016, p. 339)

## Appendix B

**Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development****Interview Question**

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So, Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug-for his wife.

Question:

Should the husband have done that?

Evaluation of Answer:

Level 1 – It is bad to steal. Need to ask first. Punishment might come from doing this.

Level 2 – Make deal – the druggist was charging too much – fair trade for something else. Punishment is still a guiding factor.

Level 3 – druggist is bad, loving husband just trying to save his wife - he should steal the drug. Identifies with the values of family and community. What others will think of them.

Level 4 – need to follow the law – even though his intentions are good – it is still against the law. Society as a whole.

Level 5 – although not in agreement for breaking the law, the wife's right to life is also a moral right that must also be protected. Morality and rights over laws.

Level 6 – make decisions from the others party's shoes – impartiality must be used.

Based upon the information Retrieved from:

<http://ww3.haverford.edu/psychology/ddavis/p109g/kohlberg.dilemmas.html>

## Appendix C

**EDU 776 Interview Guide****Overview of study**

This study is a research study for a degree in education with Central Michigan University. We are looking at your understanding of academic integrity, academic offenses and your recall and understanding of the academic integrity module and quiz which is completed in various courses in the business school. We will be asking your opinions and thoughts about that module and about academic integrity, or cheating, in general. At the end you will be asked to respond to a short scenario question.

If at any time you feel you would like to not answer a question, or discontinue the interview, just let me know.

**Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about yourself? Probe for program, level, length of time at college. Are you a domestic or visa student?
2. How do you describe yourself as a student? Example, are you a really strong student? An average student? Why?
3. How would you define academic integrity? What does that term mean to you?
4. What, in your opinion, is an academic offense? Can you name any types of academic offences? Probe for what the types of offenses mean to them - if they can define them or provide an example.
5. Can you recall completing an academic integrity online module and quiz at any point in your studies at college? (Yes/No) Do you recall when or in what course?  
  
If yes, can you describe the module for me? If yes, complete questions 6 and 7, if no, skip to question 8.
6. If the answer to 5, is positive: Do you think that the academic integrity module helped you to have a better understanding of academic integrity? Why or why not? If they say it helped, in what way did it help?

7. Did completing the Academic Integrity module affect your decision to follow academic integrity principles or policies? Why or Why not?
8. Have you experienced classmates cheating in some way during your time at college? If yes, are you comfortable describing that situation. How did that cheating make you feel?
9. Do you think it is a good idea for Fanshawe students to have some form of Academic Integrity training? Why or why not?
10. Do you feel that Academic Integrity training helps you, or your classmates, to better achieve academic success? Why or why not?
11. Do you have suggestions for how the college can educate students about academic integrity?

Now, I would like to share a short scenario with you. Share the scenario on a separate sheet of paper.

In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So, Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug-for his wife.

Question:

Should the husband have done that?

If simply, yes/no, ask for respondent to explain their thinking.

## Appendix D – Informed Consent Form

**Informed Consent Form**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

This study is a research study for a degree in education with Central Michigan University. We are looking at your understanding of academic integrity, academic offenses and your recall and understanding of the academic integrity module and quiz which is completed in various courses in the business school. We will be asking your opinions and thoughts about that module and about academic integrity, or cheating, in general. At the end you will be asked to respond to a short scenario question.

- You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods used.
- The discussion will approximately one hour and will be audio taped to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words. The tapes will only be heard by myself and the researcher for the purpose of this study. The study is completely anonymous and no names will be used the report. The information will only be used by the researcher and the professor.
- There are no know risks to participating in this interview and there is no compensation for being a participant.
- If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
- In the event you choose to withdraw from the study all information you provide (including tapes) will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.
- Insights gathered by you and other participants will be used in writing a qualitative research report for the course EDU 776 at Central Michigan University.
- Though direct quotes from you may be used in the paper, your name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous.

By signing this consent form I certify that:

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Print full name here) agree to the terms of this agreement.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_