



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Case Study 1

The case

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Available at <<http://aisp.apfei.edu.au/content/case-studies.html>>

Abstract

Despite designing an 'authentic' assessment based on a work related task, Bonnie discovers that one student fabricated the data for his report. As the student has already graduated, she is advised not to pursue the matter.

Bonnie, the subject coordinator in a postgraduate coursework program, designed the subject assessment to be authentic and offer students the opportunity to undertake assessment tasks that are similar to those that will form part of their work role on graduation. To this end she asked that student apply a particular framework of problem identification, analysis and evaluation to a real organisation. Those students in current employment often nominated their employing organisation as the one they would select for this case study. The subject coordinator offers to assist international students with introductions to local organisations.

Bonnie follows up with one particular international student, Edgar, who had few local contacts. However he reassures Bonnie that he has found a suitable local organisation, which he names. He indicates that the staff are very helpful and is able to provide Bonnie with the signed agreement from the organisation that she requires that all students submit well in advance of the assignment due date. Bonnie is vaguely familiar with the nominated organisation and is pleased that Edgar has demonstrated much more resourcefulness and initiative than she had anticipated.

Edgar submits the completed report on the assignment due date. It is thorough, well-written and meets all of the assessment criteria for the assignment. Edgar graduates and leaves Australia to continue his career with a qualification accredited by a national and international organisation.

One year later Bonnie comes across a report in one of the professional journals she subscribes to that looks remarkably like the report submitted by Edgar in the previous academic year. Closer examination reveals that the publication date preceded Edgar's assignment submission date by some months, Edgar was not the identified author of the published report and that Edgar's submitted assignment matches the published report apart from the substitution of the name of a local organisation in place of the one identified in the published report.

Bonnie considers that she has evidence of Edgar's falsification of data and of plagiarism. She seeks the advice of the program director. He dissuades her from pursuing the matter. He points out that the student has now graduated and is no longer in Australia. He indicates that he is concerned about the risk to the reputation of the program should an investigation reveal how easy it was for a student to falsify data for a research report and to plagiarise undetected.

Without the support of her program director Bonnie decides forego any further investigation of the matter. Instead she considers how she might re-design the subject's assessment in order to reduce the incentive and opportunity that students have to falsify research data and to plagiarise.

Case Study 2

Abstract

A student takes a calculator into an end of session exam and finds that although this borrowed calculator has a tamper-proof sticker attached it is not of the appropriate type and the calculator is confiscated.

Student E was enrolled in a postgraduate degree in one of the STEM disciplines. A subject he undertook permitted the use of an authorised calculator in exams. One of his friends lent him a calculator for exams. The friend had attended one of the off-shore locations of the University. This location carried out its business as FGH Academy. The calculator carried a tamperproof sticker as evidence that it had been assessed as meeting the requirements to be categorised as an 'authorised' calculator at FGH Academy. Student E took this calculator to mid-session exams conducted by the faculty at the on-shore University. No one checked or commented on his use of the calculator. He therefore formed the belief that the calculator he was using in exams was an authorised calculator and that the attached sticker was from some accrediting body. He had not hear of FGH Academy.

Before the start of an end of session University exam conducted by the University Examinations Office the exam invigilator checked Student E's calculator and deemed it to be not authorised because it did not carry the requisite tamperproof sticker indicating that it had been assessed by the University as meeting the requirements of an authorised calculator. The calculator was taken from the student. The student was permitted to sit the exam, but without access to a calculator. The student failed the examination (and therefore also failed the subject). The student appealed.

Case Study 3

Abstract

A student takes an eraser he has inscribed with some formulae into an exam. He decides to hide the eraser from view, but the exam invigilator notices the eraser and confiscates it and reports the matter. The student appeals the decision of the Faculty Investigation Committee

Student I was enrolled in a postgraduate degree in the discipline of business. One of his subject required knowledge of a range of formulae. Following the mid-session exam the student realised that he did not know all of the formulae as well as he needed to so (according to the student) as an aide-memoire he inscribed his eraser with two of the formulae he needed to know. Over the course of the remaining semester he forgot about this notation. He kept the eraser in his pencil case (a clear plastic case) and took this case to his end of session exam. When setting up his pens and pencils before the exam began he noticed the eraser and realised that it contained notes that would not be authorised materials. So he hid the eraser up his sleeve. He was aware of his concealment and concerned that the eraser might appear. An exam invigilator noticed the eraser at the end of Student I's sleeve, confiscated it and reported the matter.

The subject coordinator referred the matter to the Faculty Investigation Committee. The student claimed that they should overlook the matter because the inscribed formulae were not required in the exam and he was aware of that in advance of the exam: 'How could he be accused of misconduct if there was clearly no advantage to his commission of that misconduct?'. The FIC applied a low-level outcome, restricting the maximum available to the student for the subject to 50% Pass. The student appealed, citing his lack of intent as the factor the FIC needed to consider.
