Managing Academic Integrity Risks in Micro-credentials

ANU Micro-credentials (M-C) follow the same [Academic Misconduct](#) rules, policies, and procedures as ANU courses, but run on a shorter time-frame: a known driver of academic integrity breaches.

Further, online sites explaining [how to plagiarise to avoid detection](#), making [past assessments](#) available, offering [paraphrasing apps](#) or [provide ghost-writing services](#), make it easier than ever to cheat. As no detection technology is cheat-proof, we need to minimise the drivers behind academic misconduct and the opportunities, as well as use detection and enforcement. The best prevention and diagnostic method reported in research is having the opportunity to get to know participants and respond to issues in a timely manner, but many strategies will help manage the risks:

1. **Make your expectations clear** from the start, verbally and in writing.

What to do:	Because plagiarists:
• Flag that **you will be checking assessments**.	- often think that no one cares or is checking.
• Give **field-specific examples of referencing**.	- may not understand the requirements
• Give a concrete **assessment deadline schedule**.	- may have poor time management stress.
• Discuss the **professional standards** of their field	- think that plagiarism has little consequence.

2. **Design assessments** to reduce the opportunity and drive to plagiarise, for e.g.

- Set **unique final topics** such as critiquing ideas from class discussions, or unique data.
- **Scaffold the final assessment** so part of it is done stepwise throughout the course, helping participants to manage their time, as well as ensuring they have had the opportunity to engage with the assignment question, create drafts and clarify queries early.
- **Gather evidence of participants' writing and speaking styles** during the course, so that they can be compared to check for ghost writing, or stooges in oral exams.
- **Set short reflective tasks or journals** (written or oral). For a deterrent and for evidence participants understood the task: this can be cross checked in an academic integrity interview.
- **Give participants opportunities to prepare** for assessment such as mock assessments.

    See more ideas on assessment design strategies in the table on the next page.

3. **Check any suspect written assessments** as well as a random sample of assessments through multiple plagiarism checker tools, such as [Grammarly](#), [Small SEO Tools](#) or even [Google](#). Each can detect different kinds of plagiarism.

These check against what is available online but not necessarily against what students have submitted in the past or detect ghost writing, and often have difficulty with papers submitted through paraphrasing apps. It is often easier to design assessment well than to prove plagiarism.

Further reading:

- Bretag 2017 "[Key findings from university students survey](#)." Contract Cheating and Assessment Design Symposium.
- Simkin and McLeod 2010 [Why Do College Students Cheat?](#) *J Bus Ethics* **94,** 441–453

Assessment design strategies

Strategy: Reduce the duration and weighting of any final examination.	
Why or Why not?	*How?*
This lowers the stakes through marks redistribution, reducing the temptation to cheat and making organising another person to sit the assessments more difficult. However, some tasks may need a longer duration and series of scaffolded questions for participants to develop a good answer.	- Create a series of test quizzes or smaller stakes assignments that are applied progressively and only include what is essential to be tested under invigilated exam conditions. - Use non-googlable questions (application of concepts rather than formulaic responses), e.g. responding to specific scenarios, giving images to interpret. - Provide clear procedures for technical support during online assessments, so there's no confusion between attempting to get technical support cf attempting to cheat. - Provide ways (e.g. photographic ID checks) for invigilators to authenticate the candidate, and record this in case it needs to be cross checked.

Strategy: Consider non-invigilated exam formats, such as open book and take-home exams	
Why or Why not?	*How?*
Extended time and access to real-world resources lowers participant stress, reducing the drive to cheat. As participants are not invigilated, combine with other means of ensuring it is the participants' own work e.g. scaffolding parts of the assessment, matching writing style samples and/or questioning / reflective tasks.	- Ensure questions or topics are clear and have detailed rubrics so that participants know how to answer and what will be assessed. - Ensure that there is a need for individual initiative or creativity, in answers so that it is more difficult to simply google and copy. - Choosing from a randomised list of topics can prevent participant coordination or collaboration where you want participants to work individually. - See University of Newcastle guide on <u>Open Book Exams</u>

Strategy: Group projects in which students collaborate to complete	
Why or Why not?	*How?*
It is less likely that all students in the group will agree to cheat, so they keep each other honest. Not as useful where the skill being assessed would be used individually in real life.	- Randomly allocate groups so that participants are unlikely to collaborate on cheating. - Randomly allocate different topics to each group or have participants partly design their own (approved) topic. - Have groups establish a group process and rules, have a system of reporting breaches of rules and consequences. - Have group marks as well as individual marks to ensure each participant strives to achieve as well as help their group members.

Strategy: Oral questioning or reflective reporting	
Why or Why not?	***How?***
Ensures participants are checked for authenticity. Oral exams can be time consuming for large cohorts if done synchronously, unless they are marked at the same time.	- Supplementing assessment with oral questioning or reporting that contains element of reflection helps to ensure the participants did the work or understand it well. - If the work is written, ensure participants keep writing in the same document as well as keep backups so the dates and times of editing are catalogued in the document metadata.

Strategy: Project completing work-like tasks and research	
Why or Why not?	***How?***
Participants put more individual and creative effort into tasks that are clearly relevant to their goals and workplace needs. Can be more time-consuming to mark in large cohorts.	- Randomly allocate different topics or have participants design, or partly design, their own (approved) topic. - Ensure the marking rubric is appropriate for a wide choice of topics and that approved topics will be covered by the rubric. - Ensure the project is complex enough to require a unique response rather than a formulaic standard response.

Strategy: Oral assessments using voice or video	
Why or Why not?	***How?***
If synchronous, allows assessor to explore participants knowledge beyond rote knowledge Not suitable where the ability to produce written work is being assessed, and can stress participants, particularly those with language difficulties.	- Oral presentation in which participants explain in their own words what they learned from reading through certain resources. - An interview with students on a topic. - A role-play scenario mimicking a real life application of skills or knowledge learnt during classes - Students could be required to record their response on video or audio and submit within a certain time limit.

Strategy: Multimedia assignments	
Why or Why not?	***How?***
Unique outcomes can be more difficult to copy. Need to include a reflective component and can be more time-consuming to mark.	- Give students guidance about what media might be useful e.g. video, image, voice, text. - Ensure the marking rubric captures what is essential for participants to demonstrate, whatever means they choose. - Ensure participants understand the rubric and what they need to demonstrate in the assessment.