National Academic Integrity Network

Note of Meeting of 18 January 2020

1. **In Attendance**: Ross Anderson UL; Eileen Buckley-Dhoot IBAT; Kenneth Carroll TUD; Patrick Connolly Mary Immaculate College, UL; Declan Courrell St Angela's College, NUIG;, Sean Delaney Marino Institute of Education, TCD; Sharon Flynn IUA; Michael Hall IT Tralee; Jason Healy ICD; Louise Higgins AIT;, Matthew Kelleher (for Lori Johnston) DBS; Thomas Kelly DCU, Seamus Lennon GMIT, Karen Jones NCI, Karolyn McDonnell IT Carlow; Kevin Mitchell TCD; Jim Murray THEA; Frances O'Connell AIT; Marie O'Neill CCT; Patricia O'Sullivan HECA; Aisling Reast Hibernia College; Anne Looney DCU Institute of Education; Brendan Ryder DkIT; Roisin O'Connell THEA; Catherine O'Donoghue AIT; Cora McCormack AIT; Violeta Morari CIT; Joyce Senior UCD; Dajana Sinik NCISU; Simon Stephens LYIT; Elizabeth Tobin UCD; Nora Trench-Bowles IUA; Padraig Walsh QQI

   Steering Committee: William Kelly (Chair); David Croke RCSI; Yvonne Kavanagh IT Carlow; Kevin McStravock USI,

   QQI: Sue Hackett; Bryan Maguire; Karena Maguire; Grainne Mooney; Sarah O'Connell Alison Quinn; Deirdre Stritch

Non-attendees: Celine Blacow IADT; Aodhmar Cadogan IT Sligo; Callaghan Commons DCUSU; Siobhan Cusack UCC; Marian Duggan LIT; Lorna Fitzpatrick USI President; Martina Genockey USI PR; Michele Glacken IT Sligo; Grant Goodwin DBS; Aine Kennedy IT Tralee; Georgia-Louise Mawson TCD; Kerstin Mey UL; Adam McAuley DCU; Claire McLoone LYIT; Aine McManus Griffith College; , Michelle Millar NUIG; Aidan Mulkeen MU; Finbarr Murphy IBAT; Terry O'Brien WIT; Paul O'Donovan UCC; Pol O'Dochartaigh NUIG; Lia O'Sullivan IUA; Lewis Purser IUA; Jason Quinn ITSSU; Denis Ryan ICHAS, Joseph Ryan THEA; Orla Thornton AIT; Des Walsh CIT

1.   Opening by Chair and Review of Previous Meeting

At the outset of the meeting, the Chair welcomed members.
A summary of the previous network meeting in January 2020 was provided, following which the note of the previous meeting was approved.

2.   Matters arising not on the Agenda

No matters were recorded.

3.   Updates from Working Group 1 (Identification of Common Definition and National Good Practice Guidelines)

Yvonne Kavanagh (Working Group 1 convenor) presented an overview of the membership, work and outputs of Working Group 1. The group has produced draft documents in respect of each of the three deliverables identified for the group and these have been circulated to NAIN members for feedback:

1. Identify and agree common definitions and establish a national lexicon to be agreed by the larger network;
2. Identify and agree Principles of Academic Integrity; and
3. Collate current approaches to the prevention, detection and sanctioning of academic misconduct and review the international guidance available to identify and disseminate interim draft national academic integrity good practice guidelines

The first two of these deliverables are almost completed pending feedback from network members. The third, guidance for the sector, is at an early stage and members were asked to provide observations on the early-stage draft document circulated in advance of the meeting.

It was advised that the working group, in producing the draft national lexicon and principles, looked at best practice nationally and internationally and at the outputs of the QAA (UK); TEQSA (Australia); the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI) and the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI) in order to avoid duplication of work already done elsewhere. The ENAI definitions as set out in its glossary have been adopted, where national definitions were absent. The aim of the lexicon is to agree definitions and common understandings across the sector. NAIN members were requested to:

1. Agree the definitions as listed.
2. Agree the role of the ENAI definitions/glossary

The working group has also developed *Supporting Principles of Academic Integrity,* which were circulated to Network members in advance of the meeting. The draft principles of academic integrity align with the following perspectives to assist in addressing the draft national guidance document (discussed under item 5 below):
　　(i) Institutional
　　(ii) Developmental
　　(iii) Operational

It was proposed that that HEIs would have regard to these principles in developing, enhancing or refining their own approaches. Members were asked to agree the principles and to work towards a common approach to their usage at institutional level. It was also confirmed that a student friendly/ accessible language version of the principles would need to be developed.

Discussion on the draft lexicon and principles noted the importance of fully referencing the national guidance on research integrity to avoid duplication and ensuring that the approaches adopted to academic integrity in T&L are consistent with, and complementary to, those adopted in research. The work of the network in this area should thus be communicated to the research community and associated groups working in the area of ethics and academic integrity. It was proposed that the definition of academic integrity could be expanded to include research that leads to an award (note that this is in the discussion document too). It was confirmed that some of the definitions have been drawn from national guidance on research integrity.

The possibility of crossover between research for the purposes of an award and non-award related research, for example in the context of doctoral studies was raised and the work of the National Forum for Research Integrity was mentioned. It was proposed that the common messages in both sets of guidance for such cases should be identified. It was agreed that in the short term, these issues will need to be resolved at institutional level.

What is being proposed by the Network is a set of principles which should not contradict the research integrity principles, but how these will be used in terms of dealing with particular cases of misconduct is up to individual institutions. The discussion focused on the message for postgraduate researchers is that both sets of principles apply.

Action 1: Feedback from Registrars and other staff members to be submitted by the NAIN member on the WG#1 documents, i.e.:

> a. *the Lexicon,*
>
> b. *Principles and*
>
> c. *interim draft Academic Integrity Guidelines document (see Item 4)*

The institutional feedback should be submitted to the NAIN Coordinator (Sue Hackett) at academicintegrity@qqi.ie as soon as possible for sharing with the WG.

The Lexicon will be amended as appropriate thereafter by WG 1 in response to the feedback. It will then be uploaded to the QQI Academic Integrity webpage*.*

4   Interim Draft National Academic Integrity Guidelines

An interim draft document setting out the indicative content of proposed interim national academic integrity guidelines was circulated in advance of the meeting for consideration by Network members. It was proposed that these interim guidelines, having regard to the Principles as agreed, be developed over the summer, for circulation in the autumn when they might usefully support HEI staff.

Feedback proposed that the current document be separated out into two documents or more: a report on the activities of the working group, and then a streamlined set of guidelines.

Specific feedback included that some sections may not be required: e.g. Section 3.1.1 on ethical principles may not be needed; similarly, the text on risk management.

It is intended that the interim guidelines will be presented to the network later in the year.

5.   Updates from Working Group 2 (Establish the nature and extent of current academic misconduct in Ireland in order to develop prevention strategies and identify areas for dedicated enhancement activity).

David Croke (Working Group convenor) introduced and provided an overview of the outputs of Working Group 2. The group has focused primarily on objective no 1: *establishing the nature and extent of current academic misconduct in Ireland* as a benchmarking exercise.

It was pointed out that currently, unlike other jurisdictions, Ireland only has anecdotal information on the nature and extent of academic misconduct. Gaining a better understanding of the issues will allow the development of more targeted and effective responses at national and institutional levels. The immediate priority of the group, therefore, was developing

> 1) a Registrar's Questionnaire: this is for the registrar in each HEI to complete to provide quantitative benchmark data, and
>
> 2) a Staff Survey aimed at eliciting the views, levels of awareness and experiences of academic and professional staff.

A draft of the Registrar's Questionnaire and a related overview document, as well as the draft Staff Survey and a document setting out implementation issues, were circulated to Network members in advance of the meeting.

The Questionnaire, directed at Registrars, aims at enabling the development of a national baseline dataset on:

a) suspected and confirmed cases of academic misconduct;

b) the types of misconduct involved; and

c) how many cases resulted in the imposition of sanctions.

The group has already received a lot of constructive feedback on the acceptability of the questionnaire. Network members were asked to approve the questionnaire for implementation as soon as possible.

Action 2: *Each NAIN Member to liaise directly with their Registrar and relevant colleagues in order to complete the Registrar questionnaire. The completed questionnaire to be returned by the NAIN member to the NAIN Coordinator (Sue Hackett) at academicintegrity@qqi.ie* ***not later than COB Friday 17th July as agreed*** *for distribution to WG#2.*

It was acknowledged that the manner in which institutions record the data may not accord with the headings in the survey, so some caveats may be necessary (e.g. in terms of identifying which heading some cases should fall under). Some providers may not record the level of detail to respond as requested, as institutions may not have made these kinds of distinctions in the past. For example, plagiarism and contract cheating may not have been identified as separate instances in the past. Nonetheless, any information is valuable and will be happily received. It is not intended that there should be an exhaustive re-examination of past breaches of academic misconduct in order to complete the questionnaire. The information returned will be treated confidentially as preliminary in nature and to be built upon in future iterations.

Staff Survey: the proposed Staff Survey instrument is intended to capture staff views and experience on the following:

- Individual awareness of Contract Cheating

- Student awareness of Academic Integrity

- Detection in submitted coursework

- Individual experience of academic misconduct by students

- Institutional approach to suspected academic misconduct

It is intended that the survey will go to all HEI staff.

Network members were requested to

a) Discuss and agree the survey instrument at the meeting

b) Give views on the implementation issues identified

Some general feedback included:

- Have **Librarian** included as a title;

- Add a question in relation to whether HEIs induct their staff in relation to academic integrity;

- Maybe rephrase the wording to ensure that respondents are clear as to what information is being sought;

- It was agreed that piloting the survey would be a good idea in advance so that issues can be picked and addressed before formal roll out.

- The soundness of the instrument will depend on take-up response. Consider how to ensure maximum response levels.

- The survey is long - suggestions for reducing it are welcome.

The value of a student-focused campaign (including student focus groups) as a means of raising awareness and gathering data from students was also raised, It was stated that the WG#3 is working on this.

The network also proposed the development of an e-learning module that could be dropped into a VLE and rolled out nation-wide. This initiative was warmly welcomed.

Action 3*: The NAIN member to collate their institutional feedback on the draft Staff Survey and related implementation issues. This feedback should be submitted asap to academicintegrity@qqi.ie not later than* **COB, Friday 17th July 2020.**

On receipt of the feedback, Working Group 2 will progress work on an updated staff survey to reflect the feedback from Network members, which will be piloted with a small number of volunteers prior to its finalization (details to be announced on this later). The aim is to circulate this survey to staff for their completion, through the NAIN members in the Autumn.

6 WG#3 (Communications) Update

The Communications Working Group (Working Group 3), chaired by Kevin McStravock, met for the first time at the end of April 2020 and again last week to agree an initial draft of the communication strategy.

The group is comprised of a 50:50 split of student representatives and HEI staff.

The plan of the group is to run a Student Campaign regarding academic integrity, what this means and behaviours and practices that can be adopted to support students in understanding what it is and preventing them from engaging with it.

In this regard, the group has a particular focus on student-facing communications, especially in terms of improving the knowledge of students in this area. The language and tone of any outputs of the group will reflect the best ways of reaching students. It is intended, therefore, that any communication messaging emanating from the group will be non-threatening and supportive.

It was acknowledged that there is a balance to be struck in communicating support to students, but also the consequences of misconduct and use of essay mills. It was also noted that there are different student audiences and messaging may need to be targeted to reflect these different groups.

It was agreed that here will be a benefit in holding the focus groups for students in order to identify current levels of awareness and experiences and challenges faced as proposed.

The communications produced will link very closely to the lexicon produced by Working Group 1 and will ensure the language used is accessible to learners. The group intends to develop targeted messages speaking to student motivations. There may need to be tailored messages for international students known to be targeted by essay mills. The messaging will be inclusive of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The National Academic Integrity Day (see Section 6 below) in October has been identified as a target date to launch the materials produced. Most HEIs will be in week 3 or 4 of term at that

stage. The plan is that this will be followed up by additional messaging timed to suit the stage of the academic year, such as deadlines for assessment etc. The group is still determining what those outputs will be. It is hoped that outputs will be delivered through social media, to be supported, if possible, by individual HEI messages.

Students will voice the messages in the multimedia content, as, it was highlighted that typically, students are more prepared to listen to other students in multimedia content.

7   Update on National and International Developments

National Academic Integrity Day

This was proposed as Wednesday, October 21st, to reflect the same date as planned by both ENAI and ICAI. This was agreed by the meeting members.

The proposal is that the NAIN will organise a schedule for this day to include international speakers, probably webinars. There will be a link up as possible with ENAI and/ or ICAI as well.

There may be further activities organized both by the NAIN and by individual HEIs in the same week as the 21st. The audiences are both HEI staff and enrolled students.

It was suggested that there could be some media promotion around this week.

Actions:

4   *NAIN members to share this event and dates with their institution for their information, insertion in calendars and individual HEI activity planning.*

5   *A suggested schedule for Oct 21st to be shared for NAIN members' comment.*

Please note the planning and administration of the day to be facilitated by QQI.

Revised QAA Guidance

Following a review of its 2017 guidance for HEIs on the issue of contracting cheating; the agency has today (18 June 2020) published revised guidance "Contracting to Cheat: How to Address Essay Mills and Contract Cheating". This is a very useful document, which has been circulated to all Network members.

Proposed Webinar for September 2020

It was agreed that there is a value in the Network hosting a national webinar in mid-September, focused on raising awareness of the issues and resources available. This will take place prior to HEIs commencing the new academic year.

It was agreed that the webinar would target academic staff within institutions. Some proposals for possible speakers and content were raised – it was proposed that it would be very useful if it could focus on designing online assessments to enable academic integrity to be upheld.

Communication to be shared on this to NAIN members for their institutions once it has been organized.

6   2020 Plenary meeting dates:

It was agreed that there would be two more plenary meetings to be held on:
- Thursday, 15th October 2020
- Thursday, 10th December 2020

It was also agreed that working groups will convene meetings between times as appropriate and necessary.