

Chapter 6

What Is Cheating?

Definitions by International Pre–University Pathway Students

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ABSTRACT

The Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT) is one of a growing number of private providers partnering with universities to attract international students early in their commitment to tertiary studies. EIBT offers diploma programs that comprise the equivalent courses as the first-year of a Bachelor's degree in Business, Information Technology (IT), or Engineering at the destination Higher Education Institution (HEI). EIBT provides a period of academic acculturation for international students whose English proficiency and/or previous academic results are below direct entry requirements. In 2015, 200+ 'new' students were required to complete a mandatory online questionnaire during orientation. First-person narrative data was derived from students' responses to the open-ended question: What is cheating and why is it wrong? The findings provide insight into their understandings, which has helped facilitate opportunities for faculty to mitigate opportunities for academic misconduct in the context of this Institute.

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1998, the Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (EIBT) is a private pre-university pathway provider that has partnered with two South Australian universities to attract 'international' students and secure their tertiary destination prior to them satisfying direct entry requirements (Fiocco, 2006). EIBT offers diploma programs with the same or approved equivalent eight courses that constitute the first-year of a Bachelor of Business, Information Technology (IT), or Engineering at the partner institution (Velliaris & Breen, 2014; Velliaris & Coleman-George, 2014; Velliaris, Willis, & Breen, 2015a, 2015b; Velliaris, Willis, & Pierce, 2015). A distinct advantage of EIBT diplomas is that students can complete the equivalent of their first-year university degree in a minimum of two-trimesters (i.e., approximately 6-months), rather than two-semesters (i.e., 12-months/one calendar year).

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The impetus for this research was recognition that the diversity among EIBT students has implications for lecturers and the Academic Integrity Officer (AIO), who face a range of academic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and social challenges to navigate so that the Institute can provide an optimal learning environment to enable its international pathway students to be ‘university-ready’ (Velliari & Coleman-George, 2015c). Each trimester, there is considerable diversity within EIBT’s student population, with individuals from countries/regions including: Bangladesh; Cambodia; China [mainland, Hong Kong and Macau]; Colombia; Egypt; France; India; Indonesia; Iran; Kenya; Malaysia; Nepal; Nigeria; Oman; Pakistan; Saudi Arabia; Singapore; South Korea; Sri Lanka; Taiwan; Uganda; and Vietnam. With reference to Table 1, international student intake is presented over the last three-years whereby trimesters are indicated by the year (e.g., 2012, 2013, etc.) and then by the entry; February (-01), June (-02) or October (-03).

EIBT’s international students need to fulfil the same level of academic achievement as their Australian peers while they attempt to navigate a new cultural terrain, an education system with different rules and expectations than in their home country, and often, in English as an Additional Language (EAL). They may experience difficulty adjusting to Western pedagogical practices such as problem-based, real-world, self-directed, and student-centered approaches (Velliari & Warner, 2009) and Western dialogical practices such as debating, persuading, questioning, and refuting (Major, 2005). Academic demands together with adjusting to an unfamiliar setting, may place those students at ‘greater risk of academic failure’ (Li & Gasser, 2005) and potentially, the temptation to engage in cheating.

According to Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997), oftentimes, there is the assumption that the definition of cheating is universal and that students’ understanding of the term is universal. Their qualitative study, however, found that students often do not have a deep understanding of cheating. Pre-university pathways are ideal institutions for acculturating international students in the kinds of behaviors that demonstrate AI whereby the mastery of academic language and learning skills and the norms and practices of Western HE conventions are made explicit (Velliari, Willis, et al., 2015a). In agreement with Schmelkin and colleagues, (2008) it is conceivable that ‘student perceptions of academically dishonest behaviors will lead to greater concordance in their definitions of these behaviors’. And, significantly,

Table 1. Citizenship/ethnicity of EIBT students over the past three years

Country	2012-03	2013-01	2013-02	2013-03	2014-01	2014-02	2014-03	2015-01	2015-02	2015-03
Australia	7	9	5	2	4	3	5	5	2	2
China	113	154	139	137	205	202	256	305	247	252
Hong Kong	48	65	51	50	51	29	30	27	25	33
India	-	5	8	9	12	10	10	10	5	7
Indonesia	-	2	4	6	4	1	4	3	2	2
Kenya	-	-	1	3	5	5	5	6	3	3
Macao	2	3	3	1	3	3	-	20	18	15
Malaysia	6	14	12	9	16	17	17	6	4	4
South Korea	7	7	5	3	3	3	2	2	3	6
Vietnam	10	10	12	11	19	24	26	23	15	18
Other	13	17	9	14	19	18	19	17	13	20
Total	206	286	249	245	341	315	374	424	337	362

Note: Trimester 1 in 2012 (= 2012-01), Trimester 2 in 2012 (= 2012-02), and Trimester 3 in 2012 (= 2012-03) etc.

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