Chapter 19

Helping Students Resolve the Ambiguous Expectations of Academic Integrity

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Abstract Students find matters of academic integrity to be ambiguous. Many educators do not understand how this, and self-reported incidence of academic misconduct, can persist. Across Canadian higher education, students are alerted to policy via syllabus statements and awareness campaigns. Many faculty provide guidance and referrals to supports and resources. Yet, students report mixed messages that leave them unclear as to the real expectations. In this chapter, I offer an educational developer's perspective on how matters of academic integrity confuse students. I make the point, through story and review of selected research, that students encounter wide-ranging teaching and learning contexts and approaches, especially in early years of study. Next, I examine the practical limits of initiatives like standardized syllabus statements and campus awareness campaigns. I recommend contextualized course-based instruction approaches that occupy a teaching and learning space between policy awareness and general academic skill building. I conclude that instructors ought to target and reinforce areas of greatest concern with more explicit instruction in their courses.

Keywords Academic integrity · Ambiguity · Variability · Inconsistency · Disciplinary understanding

Students encounter wide-ranging teaching and learning contexts and approaches, especially in early years of postsecondary study. I make the case in this chapter that more can and should be done by educators to help students understand the contexts for academic integrity and the contextual nature of academic integrity. First, I introduce my perspective as an educational developer and then offer an invented story of “Alex”, that provides a set of plausible settings and interactions in which students try to make sense of varied messages. Next, I discuss how the research corroborates and applies to the student story. I then acknowledge the practical limits of awareness initiatives and recommend instructional approaches that together emphasize a

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contextual teaching and learning space between policy awareness and academic skill building. I conclude that instructors ought to target and reinforce areas of greatest concern with more explicit instruction about contextual and disciplinary differences where they exist. Throughout the chapter, I refer to faculty, professors, instructors, and educators interchangeably to mean those who teach in postsecondary institutions in Canada.

An Educational Developer's Perspective

In my work as an educational developer at the University of Saskatchewan, I interact with educators about ways to enhance teaching and learning at the course and program levels. Sometimes, my work includes advising on ways to prevent academic misconduct. Educators have a range of reactions when they encounter academic misconduct. Many I work with are disappointed and perplexed about the instances of academic misconduct they uncover; some ask, "Haven't students learned about *this* kind of academic misconduct before?" Over time, my answer has become, "Yes, I think many students have but maybe not in the context of your assessments or your subject area." I also add that some acts are interpreted differently or deemed less serious in other situations, and that these variations may contribute to students' misunderstandings. I go on to say that students may carry those other occasions with them and not anticipate another interpretation or different application of the same general rules. The differences students encounter may seem arbitrary and unpredictable to them. They need help to resolve the ambiguous expectations of academic integrity.

A Story of Mixed Messages

Alex is an 18 year-old, cisgender, male student who is enrolled in a general undergraduate first year with sights set on a career in a health profession. He aims for high grades, sees himself as intellectually capable, and expects to need to develop academic skills and work harder in the new learning environment. Alex is excited about university and is here to learn and achieve.

*In English, the first assignment is to read the novel, *The Great Gatsby*. Alex recalls this title on his mom's bookshelf. He reads her book and quickly realizes it is not the novel, but something called "Coles Notes," which is a synopsis. He next learns there is also a 2013 movie starring Leonardo deCaprio and he watches it. The weeks go by, and while Alex fully intends to read the book he still has not on the day of the in-class essay. He writes the essay and gets a good mark. Since Alex made it seem like he read the book when he did not, he wonders if he has engaged in academic misconduct.*

In Indigenous Studies, Alex learns about the importance of Elders in local First Nations communities. For a short paper in the course, Alex is told to use APA for

citation. In passing, he wonders why the citation style for this course is different than the one for English. When he writes about an Elder's teaching received in his Grade 12 winter wilderness field trip, he uses the APA method for citing personal communication. He has marks deducted and a direct comment that these teachings are not his to share without permission of the Elder and that this is cultural appropriation and a form of plagiarism. Alex is very sure cultural appropriation is bad and certain plagiarism is academic misconduct, but he has no idea how to avoid both of these offences and feels embarrassed to ask because he is ashamed.

In Math, Alex learns students can work together on the weekly assignments worth 5% each. In fact, the instructor said they should work together, because it will help them learn. She asks that they show their work on the assignments and describe the steps in their own words so that "at least I know you did some independent thinking." She reminds the students that, when it comes time for the final exam, they need to do the work on their own. After class, Alex's friend recommends he get a subscription to a specific online tutoring service and adds that she has had one since high school for tutoring help and "for when I run out of time for getting assignments done." Seeing Alex's surprised reaction, she continues, "Oh, I think this is okay, she says we can collaborate on assignments." Alex wonders—is this what the professor meant by collaboration?

In Chemistry, Alex's lab partner is repeating the course because he broke his leg and had to withdraw mid-course last year. On the second lab of the term, their lab procedure fails, and the partners have no useable data. Alex says they need to start over. His lab partner, reaching into his backpack, says "Let's just use the data I got last year, I've still got these labs." Alex insists they instead talk to the lab coordinator. The lab coordinator asks a few questions about their procedure, then gives them a data set to use. Alex's lab partner, says "See I told you, we could have just used my data from last year." Alex wonders if you are only allowed to use fraudulent data when it is provided by a lab coordinator.

In Biology, Alex writes his first midterm exam in the same lecture theatre where he takes the course. Every seat is in use and Alex notices students one row in front of him sharing answers. Alex is distracted by this and thinks the professor has detected the cheating when she walks to their general vicinity and lingers there for the remainder of the exam. Alex expects the professor will speak with the students when they hand in their exams or set their exams aside for follow up. Alex does not see any response. He wonders if these students got away with it, or if the professor just turned a blind eye to avoid the hassle.

Alex has done some things in high school that he knows constitute academic misconduct, but he has no intention of such acts while in university. Every syllabus and instructor warn against academic misconduct and the penalties sound stiff. Now, he's nearly through his first term, and Alex is surprised by what has occurred so far and is trying to make sense of what the "real" rules are for getting by and getting good grades here.

This story is my own invention. I have composed it using my knowledge of policy, research, and students' experiences in the area of academic integrity. From an organization theory perspective, Czarniawska (1997) said that "the common way of understanding human action is by placing it in a narrative" (p. 14) and that "organizational stories capture organizational life in a way that no compilation of facts ever can; this is because they are carriers of life itself, not just "reports" on it" (p. 21). My account of Alex is meant to help us to see the wide-ranging experiences of our students and to illustrate the sources of potential confusion regarding academic misconduct.

Alex's experience makes it clear that there are many possible issues in how he is making sense of the expectations. Having good intentions and asking authorities may not provide sufficient guidance when messages take many forms and come from multiple sources. Students are left to wonder about the difference between what instructors communicate as serious and what our collective actions indicate we take seriously and why. Combined, these circumstances create an environment where misunderstanding is likely, instead of merely possible. Lack of consistency, in fact or appearance, contributes to ambiguity of expectations and even confusion for our students.

Origins of Ambiguous Expectations

Researchers have found diverse perspectives on what constitutes academic misconduct among educators. Differences in how students and faculty understand academic misconduct was an important finding in a landmark Canadian study (Christensen Hughes & McCabe, 2006a). Eaton and Edino (2018), in their review of Canadian literature, acknowledged the complexities of academic integrity across disciplinary boundaries and recommended more discipline-specific research. Disagreement on definition is a problem for researchers in this area as well. Definitions are "murky in reality" and guidelines have a "wobbliness" because of different meanings and histories of groups setting those definitions and guidelines, according to Blum (2009). For example, Barnhardt and Ginns (2017) chose to define cheating as an intentional academic deviance. Such a definition could be contested by many academic misconduct policy makers who frequently say a lack of awareness when a student reasonably ought to have known is not an acceptable defense, as is the case in the regulations at my own university (University of Saskatchewan, 2017).

In a study involving 24 academics from five distinct disciplinary areas, Borg (2009) found varying responses to what constitutes plagiarism and collusion, based in both personal experience and discipline. Different interpretations appeared to be rooted in thinking like a member of the discipline, valuing collaboration versus individual work, and norms for appropriate use of the work of others. In Susan Blum's (2009) multifaceted study of plagiarism, she observed that disciplinary assumptions underpin authorship and the subsequent rules of citation, adding that: "Different reasons govern each one, and different responses are appropriate for violations of each one" (p. 160).

Related to the matter of definition, faculty judgements about academic misconduct exist on a continuum of seriousness (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003). In particular, matters of collaboration and collusion can be debated from a number of stances (Barrett & Cox, 2005; Sutton & Taylor, 2011). Collusion, also referred to as unpermitted or unauthorized collaboration in many policies, depends on context and intent may be a consideration (McGowan, 2016). How do students know what help *is* permitted? To Alex, it seems his professor has indicated collaboration on math assignments is permitted among classmates, but to his friend this seems extended to other collaborators. We can presume the professor did not mean to permit the outsourcing of assignment completion to a third-party commercial service, also called “contract cheating” (Lancaster, 2020). However, it could be asked what the reasons are to restrict the collaboration if students follow the same principles of learning communicated by the Math professor, that is, putting answers into their own words and, being prepared to work alone on a final exam? I have heard educators say their evaluation of seriousness depends on type, weighting, or importance of the assessment task in other respects. I have also heard seasoned faculty add that they know there is a divergent opinion on these topics in their own departmental hallways where the disciplinary culture is presumably shared at least to some extent. All of this is complicating and significant in terms of its implications as it leaves the new student, like Alex, uncertain and unprepared to meet a mix of standards.

I further explore the examples from Alex’s experience using the notion of *signature pedagogies* (Shulman, 2005). Signature pedagogies are the teaching and learning practices based in assumptions about teaching and learning in different professions and subject areas. I depart here from Shulman’s focus on the professions, and use his concepts of surface structures, deep structures, and implicit structures to illuminate the kinds of experiences for our students that allow ambiguity of expectations to occur.

Surface Structure Experiences

The surface structure of pedagogy “consists of concrete, operational acts of teaching and learning, of showing and demonstrating, of questioning and answering, of interacting and withholding, of approaching and withdrawing” (Shulman, 2005, pp. 54–55). It is common for first year students to take a breadth of introductory courses, meaning they interact with varied “operational acts” of multiple disciplines from the position of novice or newcomer. Alex is surprised in his first term. He is surprised because he is noting a difference between what was anticipated and what subsequently occurred (Louis, 1980) at an operational or surface level.

Surprise can illicit positive or negative emotions. Alex may feel embarrassed, ashamed, concerned, uncertain, pressured, worried, distracted, and even relieved that the rules are not as strict as he first thought. Alex has unmet and undermet expectations of instructors, peers, and self and these are often sources of surprise for newcomers in unfamiliar organizations (Louis, 1980). Alex expects an instructor to intervene

during obvious exam cheating. He expects peers not to pay web-based third parties to complete their assignments or to want to copy last year's lab reports. He expects he, himself, is the kind of student who will in fact read the book before writing an essay as though he did and that he is someone who will cite, with sincere respect, the First Nation Elders whose teachings he values. The problem of mixed messages is greatest in early years of study where students meet the traditions of multiple disciplines or are new to postsecondary standards for what constitutes plagiarism. Surface structures are the first impressions that can form long lasting misunderstandings.

Deep Structure Experiences

The deep structure of pedagogy appears in the "assumptions about how to best impart a certain body of knowledge and know-how" (Shulman, 2005, p. 55). These assumptions exist in sequencing of content, selecting learning activities and assessing learning. They become implicit as time passes and the immersion in discipline deepens. For the educator who has achieved expert status, it is difficult to remember what it was like to be a novice for whom academic practices and expectations are not yet internalized. Relevant to matters of academic misconduct, use of certain assessment methods becomes an accepted practice. Professors who branch off into other types of assessment, even if known to provide better evidence of learning or improve academic integrity, may be breaking "rules of appropriateness, taken for granted understandings" (Knight & Trowler, 2001, p. 52) of their academic workgroup and with negative repercussions.

Alex needs to make sense of an overflow of varied experiences. Sensemaking is the way we create order in our organizational lives (Weick, 1995). Alex is accumulating experiences, reflecting to some extent as he goes, but he is not in a position to step out of the learning environments to recalibrate and resolve his uncertainty. From social cues and peer interactions, he is coming to understand that his concern for these matters is overinflated and unnecessary given the context. The next math assignment, the next in-class essay, the second citation protocol with or without guidance about citing Elders, the next lab report, and the next midterm exam are all around the corner for Alex. His sensemaking means he is determining what is okay and what is not, but any resolution or coherence is not coming from the collective expertise of his educators. Alex does not yet sufficiently understand or question the context in which a lab instructor recognizes students' missteps and supplies what they need (a useable data set) for the next step in their learning. Alex lives in his world as it is. In the absence of more explicit instruction, the ambiguity and confusion grow. This is a problem for postsecondary institutions that depend on clear expectations for academic integrity as a foundation for fair assessment and for scholarship more broadly.

Implicit Structure Experiences

The implicit structure of a signature pedagogy has “a moral dimension that comprises a set of beliefs about professional attitudes, values, and dispositions” (Shulman, 2005, p. 55). Extended, it is akin to the organizational culture (Schein, 1985) of a pedagogical community and may be known to members and also hidden from conscious view. How students come to grasp the system of shared assumptions, values and beliefs that govern how people behave is a matter of academic enculturation (Gilmore et al., 2010). For example, in some professional programs of study, it goes relatively unquestioned that students must handle fast-paced, high volume, high stakes expectations. When I have worked with such programs on curriculum renewal, a hidden curriculum has become apparent to me. Despite evidence that less content coverage, more active practice with priority learning outcomes, and better life balance for students could deliver improved retention of knowledge and achievement of most-valued skills, the faculty would not reduce curriculum load. This suggests an implicit structure for attitudes, values, and dispositions among graduates for handling extreme workloads and high-pressure situations. For Alex, at this point in his undergraduate career, we would not expect him to be grappling with implicit structures yet. But he is being introduced to these unstated or hidden expectations in each of his five courses where there may be subtle pulls exerted in five directions that may contribute to an overall sense of ambiguity.

In this section, I have explored the essence of teaching and learning relationships that create expectations for academic integrity and some of the potential origins of their ambiguity for students. Figure 19.1 positions the learner (possibly Alex) at the centre and depicts a cycle of diverse (especially in early years of study) course subjects (represented by icons related to the five courses in the story). Surrounding these course experiences are common kinds of general awareness building initiatives

Fig. 19.1 A student experience of mixed academic integrity messages

that may also impact expectations, the practical limits of which is the topic of the next section.

Awareness Initiatives and Their Practical Limits

Awareness initiatives tend to be general by design, given the intended reach across an entire student body. Here, I argue that as a result of this general approach, awareness initiatives have practical limits that educators and policy-makers need to acknowledge.

Awareness initiatives or requirements are a common institutional level approach to try to reach all students with a consistent message regarding academic integrity. These are typically in place not only for the benefit of students but because academic integrity is important for institutional credibility and reputation writ large. Beyond institutional walls, there is a concerning relationship between academic misconduct and workplace misconduct (Nonis & Swift, 2001; Lucas & Friedrich, 2005). Thus, academic leaders want to be able to show internal and external institutional stakeholders that strategies are in place to address academic misconduct.

In the Canadian context some institutions present campaigns where academic integrity messages are broadcast through various venues to attract student attention and increase awareness (Lock et al., 2019). They can emphasize values (Benson et al., 2019), skill building and policies and penalties (Stoesz & Yuditseva, 2018). Often campaigns are strategically timed at a point in an academic term when students may be under some pressure and may benefit from the reminder to stay on the academic integrity track. Some campuses participate in awareness campaigns coordinated at the provincial level (McKenzie et al., 2020). Since 2015, the International Day of Action against Contract Cheating by the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI, 2021) has been another opportunity for awareness specific to the problem of students outsourcing academic work to third parties. In my own institution, awareness initiatives are occurring at regular intervals and are designed for broad application to a general student body, with some aspects targeting the specific needs of first year or international students. Workshops and resources on topics like time management and paraphrasing explicitly incorporate the benefit of skills of this kind for avoiding academic misconduct.

A common awareness requirement is for instructors to include links to the institutional statements about academic misconduct in course syllabi or outlines. Called policies, regulations, or standards—these typically provide broad definitions and procedures that can reach across diverse contexts of study, research and authorship (Stoesz & Eaton, 2020). However, because a single definition of academic misconduct does not exist (Lang, 2013), policy makers may use definitions that are easier to agree upon and leave more ambiguous matters to be dealt with elsewhere (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003). At the institutional level, as McGowan (2016) put it, “it is unrealistic to expect academics to be able to identify every type of action students may take that could compromise academic integrity, nor to identify every type of

interaction that would be acceptable collaboration” (p. 238). Each institution must settle on its definitions, nonetheless, and these will usually leave instructors with the responsibility to apply the definitions in their contexts and according to their own judgment of seriousness. This is important to note, as it places responsibility squarely on the shoulders of instructors to educate students for academic integrity in their own course contexts. Despite this, some instructors admit to ignoring academic misconduct for because of insufficient evidence, seriousness, and time or emotional energy to do what is procedurally required (Coren, 2011).

As an educational developer, I fear some instructors conclude that providing links to policy information and other resources is sufficient, that is, they think they have done their duty with respect to making students aware. Likewise, I worry instructors note well-orchestrated awareness campaigns and centralized supports and think that these cover their students’ specific needs. Instructor assumptions regarding the application of academic integrity principles in their own course or program may not be apparent even to themselves (Borg, 2009; Sutherland-Smith, 2013). This insufficiency has been studied with respect to matters of plagiarism in particular, including findings in one study that only half of students read the policy and that confusion remained (Gullifer & Tyson, 2014). For example, students at six Quebec universities said they expected to be taught the knowledge and skills to avoid plagiarism, while professors said they expected the students to already be competent in this respect (Peters & Cadieux, 2019).

Student actions should be seen as depending on more than their exposure to policy information. Just as “cheating” may have various definitions among students (Wei et al., 2014), personal definitions of plagiarism exist among faculty, often informed by disciplinary differences, and these impact judgment on what constitutes academic misconduct (Flint et al., 2006; Borg, 2009). It is important to recognize the impact of contextual factors like peer loyalty, class size, group learning, and alienation from the learning process (Ashworth et al., 1997). Pre-existing competencies and educational interventions aimed at building academic skills and awareness have received little attention in the research. Some studies conducted outside of Canada have found in-person instruction, web-based tutorials, and hybrid programs to improve awareness, attitudes toward integrity, and competence in key skills, but few have studied the effect on incidence of misconduct (Stoesz & Yuditseva, 2018).

I do not intend to be dismissive of these initiatives and requirements that focus on general awareness, skill-building, and student agency and responsibility when it comes to academic integrity. Rather, I caution that these have practical limits in terms of bringing clarity to students about what is expected in their individual courses. I argue that it is important to see these awareness initiatives as necessary but not sufficient when it comes to explaining the rules, equipping students to follow them, and enforcing the rules in the learning environments we create in postsecondary education. Recommendations for contextualized, in-course instruction appear in the next section.

Recommendations to Help Students Resolve Ambiguous Expectations

There is no silver bullet for the persistent problem of academic misconduct. Contextual factors related to academic misconduct rather than characteristics or dispositions of students is where educators can find the most influence, and the most hope. That is, many of the strategies known to promote and enable learning also reduce incidence of academic misconduct. The environment in which students engage in misconduct is, as Lang (2013) puts it, “the most relevant contextual factor of all” (p. 17).

In their comprehensive book, Ambrose et al. (2010) discuss how postsecondary educators may overestimate their students’ prior knowledge; or they may underestimate the range of experiences that may have distorted students’ interpretations about the learning environment. Addressing confusion on points of difficulty makes learning more effective and efficient while decreasing factors that may push students to consider misconduct to hide their own shortcomings. Thus, here I offer recommendations for contextualized, in-course instruction to explain rules and their application, to equip students to anticipate and recognize relevant academic misconduct errors, and to make the steps for enforcement predictable and transparent for students.

Explain

Rules for assessments and their rationale require explanation. Instructors can link them to the rules in a discipline and describe how the boundaries the rules provide are good for learning and assessment of learning. Explaining this early in a course in general terms to provide an overview, and then adding additional details when the assessment due dates are nearer at hand will provide specific information when students are more attuned to it.

A lesson that uses a concept from the subject area or discipline of the course can situate the importance of academic integrity in more relevant terms. Using a scenario-based exercise consisting of a sample of violations can allow students to think about the personal and public issues associated with academic misconduct. Trautner and Borland (2013) presented such an exercise in detail that includes disciplinary thinking and disciplinary relevance and they reported it clarified understanding among students. Current events in a discipline may provide examples of ethical breaches that can become important points of dialogue about pressures and poor decisions that translate directly to unwanted student experiences in a course. Being explicit about how these relate is important, otherwise students may not see the connection. In Alex’s Indigenous Studies course, this could be a lesson on how notions of academic integrity in higher education require decolonizing (Lindstrom, 2022) and that referencing conventions are only beginning to provide guidelines on teachings of Elders, community-based and sacred knowledge. This would be followed by instruction on “the interconnected principles of relationality, reciprocity

and respect” (Poitras Pratt & Gladue, 2022) for academic integrity and under what conditions an Elder’s teachings can be cited and the appropriate method to do so.

Equip

Students may need to develop their understandings and skills in the context of course assessments. This need is likely most apparent in matters of academic and professional writing and appropriate use of accepted referencing protocols. In early years, the referencing protocol expectations may, unfortunately, appear ad hoc to students. In later years, students are specializing and have the opportunity for more focused practice on the one or two protocols typical in their subject area. Some senior students may even come to understand how the disciplinary underpinnings and epistemologies are reflected in those conventions. Regardless of requirements, students need to feel comfortable to ask questions about the rules for academic integrity without repercussions or negative reactions. Practice allows students time to understand their errors and improve. In Alex’s math course, this could look like allowing collaboration early on for weekly assignments, and then insisting students work more independently as the term progresses as explicit preparation for the individual work required of them on the final exam.

Reinforcing academic integrity expectations when students are most vulnerable to the temptations of misconduct is wise as are appropriate extensions or smaller late penalties to alleviate the pressure, where possible. It can help when instructors show that they know about the shortcuts students consider and the temptations they face and then give them the direction and tools they need to overcome them. This may include advising students on acceptable and unacceptable kinds of help.

A lesson that teaches students to recognize the more subtle or threshold differences in “rule-breaking” that tips the offence over into the realm of academic misconduct for an individual instructor makes the contextual nature of academic integrity explicit. For writing, using examples of effective and less effective paraphrasing or citing is common. Short situations or scenarios that point out the more subtle differences can contextualize this explicitly for students (see example in McGowan, 2016, p. 241 for situations used in a computing science context). For Alex’s Chemistry lab, a lesson on what makes data fraudulent in research compared to the acceptable variations on lab data that can be provided in a lab experience to allow for learning objectives to be achieved would help.

Enforce

Students need to know under what circumstances and in what ways suspected academic misconduct, as governed by institutional policy will be addressed. While there are a range of approaches to enforcement used across Canada, instructors

usually are responsible to set the rules for their assessments, flag suspected concerns, and engage with local policies and procedures for appropriate follow up. Students thereby learn what their professors find as acceptable by their action and by their inaction. Where consistent with policy, instructors can interact with students about the apparent misconduct and its causes to understand the nature and extent of the error.

It is important, however, to avoid treating all students as though they will cheat when given the opportunity because this contributes to mistrust and offends the majority of students. Rather, it is valuable to create an accurate expectation for vigilance and follow up. This way students can know where the policies ask instructors to apply their expert judgement as an educator and handle matters as teachable moments, and where it will be elevated to the procedures outlined by local policy. Walking students through what will occur when their instructor is faced with suspected academic misconduct can be another vivid deterrent. When instructors are clear on their follow up, it not only explicates the commitment, but will allow quick follow through because the personal steps have already been established. This can help with some of the fatigue, the frustration, the feelings of insult or self-doubt that are known barriers to instructors' follow up (Coren, 2011).

A lesson that requires students to rank the severity of several relevant forms of misconduct compared with the instructor's ranking allows for useful discussion of any differences that exist. Using a list of behaviours that is likely to generate "it depends" responses in determining whether they are academic misconduct or not can bring nuanced distinctions to light (see Christensen-Hughes & McCabe, 2006a, and Higbee et al., 2011 for examples of such lists). A lesson of this kind requires students to consider the relative seriousness and compare their responses to those of their instructor. Students, for example, may rank severity based on the amount of work or effort circumvented by the misconduct rather than other criteria like ethical norms (Colnerud & Rosander, 2009). Discrepancies in ranking should be discussed and the instructor's rating of seriousness must become clearly the one for students to adopt in the course. Acknowledging to students how personal thresholds for follow up may differ among instructors in the same program, or in other subject areas, or in earlier or later years of study situates multiple approaches to enforcement further. Helping students to see that the context of a course matters and the policy has different applications in different courses may help resolve the ambiguity.

In summary, faculty need to become aware themselves of the diverse practices and contexts that students encounter (McGowan, 2016) and provide the contextualized course-based instruction to explain the practices, equip the students with the knowledge and skills, and then enforce the rules (as depicted in Fig. 19.2 below). Looking back to Fig. 19.1, we can imagine contextualized instruction encircling each subject area icon, demonstrating that the students are learning about the context for academic integrity in all courses.

Fig. 19.2 Key actions for resolving ambiguous expectations of academic integrity at the course-level

Concluding Remarks

As an educational developer, I interact with and try to make sense myself of the disciplinary differences and diverse approaches for teaching and learning across my own university. There is a forgetting that happens by those of us immersed in the work of postsecondary institutions (Scutt & Hobson, 2013). We are also immersed in our own scholarship and teaching practices and life responsibilities. It is hard to step outside of our own years of experience to recall what it was like to be new to all of it. In my experience, returning to the multiple contexts of the student experience, inside and outside of our virtual and physical classrooms, usually allows a more grounded, holistic, and multi-faceted understanding.

The story of Alex is meant to situate the reader in the subjective lifeworld of the student who is a newcomer to the expectations of postsecondary study. Students are experiencing a range of courses and mix of messages from the institution, their instructors, their peers that include the messages that come from actions and inactions. Considering the potential origins of ambiguity of expectations, we see the need to contextualize the guidance from awareness campaigns, policy statements, and skill building resources and services explicitly through direct instruction. In this chapter, I call on postsecondary educators to recall the time and place when expectations for academic integrity were new for us and, now to do more to help students understand the context for academic integrity and the contextual nature of academic integrity.

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