How well do academic integrity policies and procedures apply to non-text assessments?

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Concerns regarding plagiarism and collusion in higher education have generated an extensive literature on the causes, composition and consequences of these practices, and the development and implementation of academic integrity policies. Although many disciplines use non-text-based assessments, such as computer programs, databases, spreadsheets, images and visual designs, the literature deals primarily with prose text.

This paper reports the results of a national survey of academics and students who use non-text-based assessments, principally in computing or visual design. The survey investigated perceptions of the adequacy of current academic integrity policies, how academics and students ensure adherence to these policies, and how academics detect and deal with breaches of academic integrity.

The results reveal that a combination of education and assessment design methods are used to ensure compliance with academic integrity policies, that academics rely heavily on manual methods to detect breaches, and that they use both educational and punitive measures when breaches are detected. A consensus emerged that the current suite of academic integrity policies and associated educational efforts are inadequate for addressing issues related to assessments of these types. Participants perceived that existing policies and procedures regarding academic integrity are not always rigorously implemented for non-text-based assessments. A number of differences were evident between the views of academics and students, and between the computing and visual design streams. Future research could explore these differences more extensively and guide the development of discipline-specific guidelines, policies and procedures for non-text-based assessments.