

## Honor Code/Code of Conduct in International Institutions of Higher Education

Dr. Ala' Alahmad

*ELS Center Director, San Antonio*

In today's society, students are faced with many ethical decisions about which they are uncertain. Unfortunately, many of these problems are rooted not only in their academic lives, but also in the workplace. These problems stem from a lack of knowledge concerning decision-making. This problem presents an actual global dilemma. Codifying ethics in the workplace and in higher education can be an important step to promote integrity and eliminate such behavior. In some universities students know that if they are caught cheating, they would disappoint their family, damage their reputations with their professors, and possibly leave a stain on their academic transcripts (Showghi, 2004). Nevertheless, the existence of these kinds of codes of ethics cannot guarantee that students all over the world will not commit academic dishonesty. For many of these students the burden of academic integrity begins within the educational institutions. The values taught and exhibited by professors, administrators, and faculty can later be instilled within the student and carried forward to their professional and workplace lives.

### **Why Honor Code/Code of Conduct?**

Most institutions of higher education have established an honor code/code of conduct that helps to convey the basic philosophy of the institution and provide general expectations. The codes provide specific information to outline the behaviors that are prohibited by the institutions and how the conduct will be penalized (Weeks, 1999). Nadelson (2006) believed that a key goal of education should be to develop good citizens and promote moral behavior. Promoting academic integrity through the implementation of honor codes impacts faculty and students' moral development and encourages accountability for their actions.

This study has aimed to make a significant contribution to the faculty's knowledge in Jordan, and in the Middle East in general, about the issue of academic integrity. Researchers, instructors, and administrators need more tools to be aware of the processes that are involved in cases of academic misconduct (Kibler, 1993). By describing and understanding academic integrity, perhaps one can better address policies that deal with academic dishonesty.

### **Ethics in the Developing Countries**

When it comes to a developing nation, the roles of ethics and codes of conduct are often ignored. Managers and teachers alike serve as role models for employees and students. When these individuals act unethically, it encourages employees and students also to act unethically or immorally. The research indicated

that individuals in roles of authority or leadership often suffer from a lack of experience or proper guidance in terms of having an adequate code of ethics for each to follow. Humphreys (1999) suggested that the problem with many codes of ethics is that they are viewed as a clearly black and white guide of how individuals act in a particular situation. The problem, as with any formal doctrine, is that the problems are never clearly defined, and there is much gray area that is undefined (Humphreys, 1999). When individuals, especially those in leadership positions, are uncertain of how to act, the likelihood of unethical behavior is quite possible.

International businesses in the world's developing nations are faced with a number of morally challenging situations (Humphreys, 1999). As previously discussed, ethics is a part of everyday life. The decision that one makes not only impacts his or her life, but also the livelihood of existence. Hosmer (1991) has indicated that companies and managers may find themselves in an ethical dilemma or crisis resulting from having to confront forces that affect business practices. When this occurs, managers and employees are faced with having to choose between doing business or being ethical. In developed nations, business managers and decision makers are cautiously guided by corporate policy and the scrutiny of the legal system. However, in a developing nation, such rules and guidelines are not so well established.

For example, if an individual is caught stealing by a co-worker, or a student is caught cheating by another student, how is each supposed to act? This is especially problematic if the individual committing an unethical act is perhaps a best friend. In the same manner, if a manager or teacher witnesses the same acts, but understands that the individual committing this unethical act is really a good person, who because of certain circumstances is forced to act in a bad manner, then how are they supposed to respond to the issue? Going against the corporate policy makes them no less guilty.

Humphreys (1999) reminded the reader that the problem with most codes of ethics is that people tend to see them as law, that each written word is mandated. The misunderstanding is that any individual regardless of his or her status (manager, employee, teacher, or student) should come to the realization that the codes of ethics or conduct are general guidelines for how one should act. It does not and should not define each and every unethical act (Humphreys, 1999). The role of ethics is to have a “generalized” understanding of what is right and wrong and how a situation should be handled. It requires nurturing and understanding of all of the facts that are involved and that with growth and changes in society, so too should the code of ethics evolve (Humphreys, 1999).

These qualities are especially important to a developing nation. A developing nation is like a child. As a child begins to mature and gain an understanding of how life is, it must be instilled with rules and guidelines for how to act accordingly. The same can be said for a developing nation. As previously mentioned, ethics needs to be reinforced at the university level with those in positions of great influence such as teachers. How these individuals act, and the lessons that they instill in others, determines how that nation will ultimately evolve (Humphreys, 1999). Without guidance, these nations may falter from the same evils that have long plagued the developed countries in the Western and Eastern hemispheres. These plagues include corruption, embezzlement, discrimination, theft, and cheating.

For many of these countries to avoid the same mistakes, individuals and organizations must learn the value and roles of ethics and what

factors affect or influence people’s behavior. For example, many developing countries, according to Hofstede (1980), are very collectivistic in their cultures. As a result, their mentality is that providing for the greater good of their communities and families is the greatest concern. This is very different from an individualistic society where people value their own self-interest first. Individualism is best explained through Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1959). In such a society, individuals seek first to satisfy basic level needs (i.e. safety needs) before modifying behavior to satisfy higher level needs such as belonging; however, in a collectivistic society, individuals seek to satisfy belonging needs before they seek safety needs because of their cultures (Robbins & Judge, 2008).

The point here is that developing nations and codes of ethics associated with these countries need to take into consideration the cultures and needs of that society. According to Humphreys (1999), a universal code of ethics does not exist and will not be sufficient enough to satisfy every nation or every culture. In addition, these individuals must be taught very early on about the flexibility that is needed within the codes of ethics. This brings us back to the idea of teachers and managers as role models. The future of any nation starts with those who are willing to learn and seek knowledge. These are the individuals who will be responsible for changes and the growth of a nation. These are the same individuals who will one day influence the organizations and higher institutions of education of those countries. Teaching and helping these individuals to understand the significance of ethical behavior will help to create a more civilized society that is accepting and understanding of the flaws of others as humans and better prepare these nations for the growth and prosperity that is yet to come.

### **Institutional Guiding Principles**

Academic integrity is a value that is important for colleges and universities and requires strong and clearly written policies (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992). Student codes of conduct provide a detailed listing of student behaviors that are prohibited

and generally include statements concerning academic dishonesty (Weeks, 1999). Most policies include a statement to express the philosophy of the institution and a listing of student rights and disciplinary procedures (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992). Policies created by colleges and universities establish procedures to follow and outline possible sanctions for students violating the policies (Rhode & Math, 1988). It is not a requirement for educational institutions to develop complex policies and procedures that are difficult to understand, but the development of procedural protection for students is necessary (Pavela, 1978). Research by McCabe (2005) indicated that institutional policies are important, but students often ignore policies when they see other students cheating because they believe cheating is necessary to remain competitive. Lugg (2006) suggested that it is important that institutions establish and follow procedures that ensure due-process rights for all students.

#### **Research Questions:**

1. Do universities in Jordan have policies prohibiting academic dishonesty, and to what extent do these policies address academic dishonesty and promote academic integrity?
2. To what extent and how often is the information about the current institutional policies on academic dishonesty communicated with faculty and students in universities in Jordan?

#### **Research Design**

The methodology that was used for this study was survey research. Survey research provides a systematic approach to describe trends, attitudes, or opinions of a particular population by using data from that population (Creswell, 2003). Survey research uses questions to measure the phenomenon of interest of a particular topic (Martella, Nelson, & Marchand-Martella, 1999). It is therefore important, according to Martella et al. (1999), that questions are constructed effectively to require systematic responses.

#### **Instrument**

The survey questionnaire developed by Kibler (1992) was utilized to collect data to answer the research questions. This instrument was tested for reliability and validity by Kibler. In addition, the Cronbach's Alpha was utilized later to check for reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha for the data collected was 0.85. The items included in the questionnaire were constructed to ensure that each item could be measured by using specific criteria. The construction of Kibler's study included 54 questions that can be answered with a yes or no, or check all that apply. In addition, there were some perception questions on the following areas: promoting academic integrity, policies on academic integrity, communication, training and programs on academic integrity. However, not all questions on the original questionnaire developed by Kibler were utilized in this study. Specifically, the section on student development was not used, as it does not relate to the purpose of this study.

#### **Data Analysis**

The researcher utilized *Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS), version 16*, to analyze the data. The data file was screened for incomplete or missing entries, outliers, and was assessed for normality where appropriate. Descriptive statistics including frequency tables and crosstabulation was utilized to describe demographic information of the participants and answer the first three research questions.

The population of this study consisted of college deans and associate deans serving in four-year public and private universities in Jordan that have a published website. Therefore, only deans and associate deans with published email addresses participated in this study. It is common practice in the Middle East that the dean of the college deals with incidents of academic dishonesty. He or she may then form a committee to deal with such incidents. There were 29 public and private universities in Jordan that have a published website on the Internet (CSIS, 2011). The eligible population was determined to be 242 deans and associate deans.

The survey was distributed to 242 (N) participants. Sixty (60) participants completed

the survey, which represented a response rate of 25%. To analyze the descriptive profile of the 60 participants, a frequency distribution was determined for types of institutions: private and public. Of the 60 responses, 21 (35%) participants were deans and associate deans serving in four-year private colleges, and 39 (65%) participants were deans and associate deans serving in four-year public colleges.

**Question 1:** Do universities in Jordan have policies prohibiting academic dishonesty, and to what extent do these policies address academic dishonesty and promote academic integrity?

Participants were asked if their institutions had an honor code/code of conduct that addresses academic dishonesty. The participants' responses indicated that 61.7% of the institutions have an honor code, while 38.3% of the institutions did not implement an honor code/code of conduct.

Deans and associate deans who reported having an honor code/code of conduct in their institutions were asked a series of questions regarding implementation of the honor code in their institutions (See Table 1). Deans and associate deans have shown commonality in their responses to most of the questions in relation to honor code/code of conduct. A rate of 96.4% of the participants reported that their honor code specifies prohibited behavior. While 89.3% of the respondents reported that their institutions define prohibited behavior.

When asked whether or not the honor code of their institutions states the consequences for engaging in prohibited behavior, 89.3% of the respondents answered yes. A total of 75.0% stated that their honor code/code of conduct describes a method for reporting violations. Despite the existence of a method for reporting violations, 71.4% indicated that their honor code/code of conduct did not obligate students to report committed violations. The participants indicated that the honor code/code of conduct was provided in writing to students. Although a written honor code/code of conduct was disseminated to students, 82.1% of the responses indicated that students were not required to

affirm their commitment to the honor code/code of conduct. Only 17.9% of the respondents indicated that students were required to affirm their commitment to the honor code during their admission to the institute and at the beginning of courses.

Interestingly, as shown in Table 1, 75.0% of the respondents indicated that the honor code/code of conduct is disseminated in writing to faculty/staff, but a total of 60.7% of the respondents stated that faculty/staff were not required to affirm their commitment to the honor code/code of conduct. Only 39.3% of the respondents indicated their obligation to the honor code/code of conduct.

Faculty who affirmed their commitment to the honor code were asked to do so either when hired, on contract renewal, at the beginning or conclusions of courses, and/or on other occasions. The results showed that a total of 63.6% affirmed their commitment to the honor code/code of conduct when hired, and a total of 27.3% on contract renewal. These were the highest percentages that were checked by the participants.

Furthermore, 88.9% of the participants indicated that the code of conduct in their institutions identifies who has the authority to implement sanctions. The majority of the participants (63.9%) specified that their institutions did not have one particular office on campus responsible for coordinating efforts to promote academic integrity (See Table 1).

Table 1

*Honor Code/Code of Conduct Questions*

Question	Yes % (n)	No % (n)	Total % (n)
Does your honor code specify prohibited behaviors?	96.4 (27)	3.6 (1)	100 (28)
Does your honor code define prohibited behaviors?	89.3 (25)	10.7 (3)	100 (28)
Does your honor code state consequences?	89.3 (25)	10.7 (3)	100 (28)
Does your honor code describe how to report violations?	75.0 (21)	25.0 (7)	100 (28)
Does your honor code obligate students to report others' violations?	28.6 (8)	71.4 (20)	100 (28)
Is your honor code disseminated in writing to all students?	67.9 (19)	32.1 (9)	100 (28)
Is your honor code disseminated in writing to all faculty/staff?	75.0 (21)	25.0 (7)	100 (28)
Does the code of conduct identify who has the authority to implement sanctions?	88.9 (32)	11.1 (4)	100 (36)
Is there one office on campus responsible for coordinating efforts to promote academic integrity?	36.1 (13)	63.9 (23)	100 (36)

**Question 2:** To what extent and how often is the information about the current institutional policies on academic dishonesty communicated with faculty and students in universities in Jordan?

Deans and associate deans were asked when academic dishonesty was discussed with students and faculty, as shown in Table 2. The majority responded, at a rate of 66.7%, that the beginning of each course was a great

opportunity to discuss the topic of academic dishonesty. A total of 63.9% respondents indicated that new student orientation was also a perfect time to discuss academic dishonesty. A response rate of 36.1% of the deans and associate deans indicated that they used the new faculty and staff orientation to discuss academic dishonesty. Participants were asked to check all answers that apply.

Table 2  
*Discussing Academic Dishonesty/Integrity*

	<i>n</i>	%
Discussed During		
New student orientation	23	63.9
Beginning of each course	24	66.7
New faculty/staff training/orientation	13	36.1
Graduate teaching assistant training/orientation	10	27.8
Faculty/staff in service training	9	25.0
Other (please specify)	5	13.9

Deans and associate deans indicated that a statement on academic dishonesty was printed in the student handbook at a rate of 72.2%, while 55.6% stated that such statement existed in the faculty/staff handbook. A total of 36.1% believed course syllabi to be a good source to include a statement that encouraged academic integrity. In addition, information, as a means of communication about academic dishonesty/integrity to student, was included in writing. A total of 72.2% of participants indicated that academic dishonesty is prohibited. Also, 69.4% of the respondents indicated that a definition of academic dishonesty was provided to students. Finally, a total of 58.3% of the participants indicated that types of academic dishonesty were also communicated to students.

Correspondence was a means of communication for addressing academic dishonesty. A total of 75.0% of participants indicated that correspondences on academic dishonesty were sent to faculty, were 36.1% of the participants answered that students received correspondence on academic dishonesty. In addition, when asked about the types of information these correspondences included, 52.8% of the participants indicated that efforts to reduce academic dishonesty were included the most. Finally, data on academic dishonesty received 30.6% of the response rate.

Another noteworthy finding was in the response rate of the efforts to promote academic integrity in the campus press or other media sources. The survey question asked, "Are announcements about efforts to promote academic integrity included in the campus press or other media sources?" Of the respondents,

58.3% answered "no." Also, interestingly, when asked if the case results of an academic dishonesty were included in the campus press, deans and associate deans answered "no" with a response rate of 77.8%.

### Conclusions

**Conclusion 1.** The data collected from the deans and associate deans indicated that not all of their institutions have policies that promote academic integrity and address academic dishonesty. 61.7% of respondents reported having policies that promote academic integrity and prohibit academic dishonesty. These policies consist of specifying prohibited behaviors, describing methods of violations, and stating the consequences of committing an act of academic dishonesty. In addition, these policies also include the dissemination in writing to faculty, staff and students. The study also found that students are not required to affirm their commitment to the honor code/code of conduct. On the other hand, only 39.3% of the response rate indicated that faculty/staff are required to affirm commitment to the honor code/code of conduct when hired.

As a result of this research question, it was reasonable to conclude that the percentage of these universities that have policies to address academic dishonesty and promote academic integrity was not significant enough.

**Conclusion 2.** The study found that communication efforts to inform students and faculty/staff regarding academic integrity and academic dishonesty were not sufficient. A total of 58.3% of the participants indicated that there were no efforts to promote academic integrity in

their campus press. The most common form of communication with faculty/staff, and students regarding academic dishonesty policies and procedures is in the student handbook, faculty/staff handbook, or course syllabi.

As a result of this research question, it was reasonable to conclude that communication efforts to inform faculty/staff and students about anticipations regarding academic integrity and academic dishonesty are not sufficiently promoted in the Jordanian universities.

### Future Research and Recommendations

**Recommendation 1.** This study included four-year public and private universities in Jordan. This study should be replicated with the inclusion of community colleges in Jordan since the number of students attending these colleges is increasing. Adding these colleges will increase the pool of participants and thus increase the response rate. This may help to understand whether the responses and outcomes were isolated to four-year private and public universities in Jordan or all institutions of higher education in Jordan.

**Recommendation 2.** Increase efforts to improve communication regarding academic dishonesty issues. More deliberate use of campus public information or media services should be utilized to create an open forum to discuss and promote academic integrity. It is important that the topic of academic integrity is discussed at all levels of the college community. The use of educational programs designed to help battle the issue of academic dishonesty should be expanded and efforts should be publicized and supported.

**Recommendation 3.** The study also should be replicated to identify whether or not culture has an effect of the results of this study. The reason why culture might have an effect is because a lot of neighboring countries send their children to seek higher education in Jordan. According to Anbusi (1999), because of its prime location, Jordan is considered one of the premier nations for neighboring countries to send their children to receive a higher education. This is due to the fact that, according to Al-Tall (2000), Jordan has private and public institutions as well as community colleges, and it produces a skilled worked force.

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