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Academic integrity in the creative arts

20 June 2022

Documents

 Academic integrity in the creative arts (PDF, 491KB)

1. Academic integrity in the creative arts: a special case

The creative arts encompasses many fields of study and practice, including:

- performing arts, such as dance, drama, and theatre
- media arts, such as film and screen-based works
- interactive works, such as digital games and experimental art
- music, including composition, recording, and performance
- visual arts, such as painting, photography, design, sculpture, and mixed media
- literature, such as literary fiction and children's literature.

Work produced during a course of study in the creative arts may differ from assessment in other disciplines in the following ways:

1. It is **non-text-based**: work may consist of a performance, video recording, digital or interactive work, music composition, audio recording, or physical artefact.

2. It is **creative**: works demonstrate individual authorship, incorporating original and subjective elements.

While breaches of academic integrity, such as plagiarism and contract-cheating, can occur in the creative arts, defining academic integrity, and detecting breaches of integrity in creative arts works is complex because:

- Creative practice occurs within established artistic traditions and networks of influence. Creative works may adapt, reference, or integrate elements of pre-existing creative works as a legitimate form of creativity.
- The distinction between copying, inspiration, and coincidence in a creative work can be contested, as demonstrated by the frequency of copyright and plagiarism disputes in this area:
 - In 2013, the song 'Blurred Lines' was the subject of a copyright dispute. Songwriters Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke were successfully sued for infringement by the estate of Marvin Gaye, who argued that the song intentionally copied Gaye's song 'Gotta Give It Up'.
 - Visual artist Damien Hirst has been publicly accused of plagiarism by multiple artists who argue that Hirst's works show overwhelming similarities of subject matter, technique, and style to their own.
- Creative works are not typically produced under examination conditions: they are usually the result of a lengthy creative process in which the creator engages with various research materials, sources, and often collaborators.
- Common understandings of appropriate uses of non-text content, such as video, audio, and images, can be shaped by external influences such as social media and not aligned with academic, industry, and legal practices.
- Expectations and requirements surrounding the use of existing materials can vary by task, medium, and discipline (e.g. performing, remixing or composing a musical work).
- Creative works can consist of multiple elements (e.g. a film includes a script and a soundtrack).
- Attribution practices for non-text materials (e.g. a music score or performed work) are medium- and discipline-specific, and can be unfamiliar to students.
- While similarity detection tools for non-text works exist (e.g. Shazam for recorded music, Google Image Search, and YouTube Content ID for video), these are not integrated into learning management systems.
- Similarity detection tools rely on matching submitted content to online databases of content. Databases may be incomplete, or tools may be unable to match content due to manipulation of the submitted work.

2. Academic integrity as authentic learning

Integrity, and ethical conduct more broadly, is crucial for creative arts practitioners.

Academic integrity practices of attribution and citation help to develop awareness of ownership and permitted use, which connects to the following ethical, legal, and practical considerations in the creative arts:

- Copyright constitutes a legal framework for ownership and usage. Relevant areas to the creative arts include moral rights; fair dealing; assigning and licensing rights; fees and ownership; and rights specific to particular media, such as artistic works, dramatic works, musical works, cinematograph films, and sound recordings.

See: [Australia Copyright Council](#), [Arts Law Centre of Australia](#)

- Creative Commons provides a standardised set of copyright licenses and tools that allow creators to grant a range of copyright permissions for creative works.

See: [Creative Commons](#)

- Currently, Australia does not offer legal protection for traditional cultural heritage. The Australia Council for the Arts has developed protocols that outline ethical conduct when engaging with Indigenous cultural material, peoples, and communities.

See: [Protocols for using First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property In The Arts](#)

- The terms of use defined by online media platforms, including video and audio streaming services, social media, and hosting platforms, constitute a further area for consideration in the sharing, distribution, and (re)use of creative works.

3. Embedding academic integrity in the curriculum

Blythman, Orr, and Mullin (2007)¹ recognise that there can be "confusion over rules of acceptability" when it comes to using the work of others in creative practice.

Popular misconceptions over authorship and permitted use, combined with wide availability of online media and numerous types of non-text content, contribute to this confusion.

This can be addressed by embedding discussions of academic integrity, and ethical conduct in the creative arts more broadly, within creative arts curricula. Strategies include:

- Exploring and defining concepts such as authorship, originality, remix, homage, and pastiche.

- Analysing works which creatively adapt, re-use, and build on pre-existing work, e.g. [Roy Lichtenstein's Drowning Girl](#).

- Discussing public plagiarism and copyright disputes relevant to the discipline, including legal and ethical perspectives, evidence, and outcomes, e.g. [George Harrison's 'My Sweet Lord'](#).

- Exploring the purpose of an artist's statement, exegesis, or reflection in relation to creative works.

- Providing detailed guidance on discipline-specific practices for citation and attribution.

- Clearly indicating resources and materials that may, or may not, be used within an assessment, and reasons why.

- Integrating real-world industry practices into assessments, e.g. compiling a cue sheet to record all songs and compositions used in a film or television production, in line with [APRA AMCOS guidelines](#).

- Discussing ethical and legal concepts in using and attributing non-text materials, including online materials and social media content, e.g. moral rights, procedures for obtaining and recording permission, public domain, fair dealing.

- Reviewing social media platforms' terms of use, in relation to content ownership and usage rights for both uploaders and other users, e.g. [TikTok's Intellectual Property Policy](#), [YouTube's Copyright and Fair Use Policies](#), [Instagram's Intellectual Property FAQ](#).

4. Institutional academic integrity policy and the creative arts

An increasing number of disciplines outside the creative arts are employing creative and non-text assessments (e.g. podcasts, videos, and interactive media) as digital production tools become more available.

Institutions therefore must develop academic integrity policy that relates to creative arts disciplines as well as creative assessment types. An inclusive policy might:

- Develop a culture of awareness for academic integrity in creative non-text works, e.g. designing institutional resources relating to usage permissions and attribution, for instructors and for students.

- Ensure academic integrity training integrates non-text examples and case studies, including creative assessment and beyond written contexts.

- Consider beyond academic integrity concepts such as plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and contract cheating, beyond written contexts.

- Reinforce the relevance of academic integrity to copyright, creative practice, and professional practice beyond educational contexts.

5. Designing assessment for academic integrity

Major creative works produced during a course of study are not assessed against a correct or model response, but use complex criteria that may include creativity and originality, demonstration of discipline-specific techniques, and critical awareness.

Potential strategies for designing creative arts assessment with academic integrity in mind include:

- Scaffolding assessments to include the drafting and ideation process, e.g. written proposal, work-in-progress presentation, and submission/ performance of final work.

- Integrating a complementary assessment such as an artist's statement, exegesis, or reflection incorporating discussion of the creative process including aims, influences, and research undertaken; statement of authorship; written transcription of creative aims, if relevant (e.g. script, transcript, or score); disclosure and acknowledgement of resources; personnel, materials, and works; informing the final creative work.

- Including a *viva voce*, demonstration, or presentation on the finished creative work, allowing assessors to clarify required details and to determine originality of ideas and techniques.

- Constraining assessment parameters (e.g. limiting technique, topic, or form) to reduce the opportunity to appropriate existing creative works.

- Requiring students to explicitly relate creative practice to their individual circumstances, background, creative aims, and learning goals.

Notes

1. Blythman, Margo, Orr, Susan, and Mullin, Joan. (2007). *Reaching a consensus: plagiarism in non-text based media*. London College of Communication, University of the Arts London.