# The Role of Academic Integrity in Professionally Significant Qualities Development

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** In today's academic landscape, there is a growing emphasis on cultivating key qualities in students that are integral to their professional development. This study delves into the topic of academic integrity within the broader context of fostering professional attributes, with a specific focus on understanding how adherence to principles of academic integrity affects the quality of training received by aspiring professionals, namely their professionally significant qualities. Recognizing academic integrity as a crucial component of the educational journey and prerequisite of professional integrity is essential for equipping students to navigate the ethical demands of their future careers successfully.

**Purpose:** This research aims to explore the impact of academic integrity on the cultivation of traits that are crucial for the success of future professionals. The author views academic honesty not merely as a set of regulations, but as a foundational trait that enhances professionalism, critical thinking, and ethical decision-making capabilities.

**Discussion:** The importance of integrating the principles of academic integrity into the educational process as a means of improving the quality of education and training capable, responsible and ethically conscious specialists is revealed.

**Conclusion:** The article contributes to the development of understanding of academic integrity as a key element of academic culture, influencing the formation of professionally significant qualities and strengthening the ethical foundations of professional activity. The findings of the study can be used by universities to develop and implement educational programs and methods aimed at the formation and development of professionally significant qualities of students, taking into account the requirements of academic and professional integrity.

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**KEYWORDS**

academic integrity; professional integrity; professionally important qualities; professionally significant qualities

# Влияние академической честности на формирование профессионально-значимых качеств

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## АННОТАЦИЯ

**Введение:** В современном академическом мире вопрос формирования профессионально-значимых качеств студентов выходит на передний план. Исследование, посвященное изучению академической честности в контексте развития профессиональных качеств, направлено на выявление взаимосвязи между принципами академической честности и эффективностью подготовки квалифицированных специалистов. Введение в академическую честность как важный аспект образовательного процесса обусловлено необходимостью подготовки студентов к ответственной профессиональной деятельности, где честность, прозрачность и этическое поведение выступают ключевыми критериями успешности.

**Цель:** целью данного исследования является анализ влияния академической честности на формирование профессионально-значимых качеств будущих специалистов. Автор рассматривает академическую честность не только как набор правил и норм, но и как фундаментальное качество личности, способствующее развитию профессионализма, критического мышления и этической ответственности.

**Дискуссия:** Выявлена значимость интеграции принципов академической честности в образовательный процесс как средства повышения качества образования и подготовки способных, ответственных и этически осознанных специалистов.

**Выводы:** Статья вносит вклад в развитие понимания академической честности как ключевого элемента академической культуры, влияющего на формирование профессионально значимых качеств и укрепление этических основ профессиональной деятельности. Выводы исследования могут быть использованы вузами для разработки и внедрения образовательных программ и методик, направленных на формирование и развитие профессионально значимых качеств студентов с учетом требований академической честности.

## КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

академическая честность, профессиональная честность, профессионально-важные качества, профессионально-значимые качества

## INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity is viewed as a fundamental aspect of education at each stage. According to International Centre for Academic Integrity[1] academic integrity covers such values as honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage. Indeed, these values should not be treated as some abstract principles as they serve as a core for academic communities helping them to ensure tangibility of scholarly communication and put their ideals into action (Bjelobaba, 2018). In educational organizations this phenomenon is treated as firm adherence to the code of moral values, irrespective of whether students purposely plagiarize another source without giving credit or do it unintentionally. Academic integrity being a part of the academic culture of the university (Tikhonova & Raitskaya, 2022; Tikhonova et al., 2023) implies that all students have to be honest and responsible for their academic performance,

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[1] International Center for Academic Integrity [ICAI]. (2021). The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity. (3rd ed.). www.academicintegrity.org/the-fundamental-valuesof-academic-integrity

should prevent any cases of academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, fabricating or falsifying information, collusion, sabotage, and theft of intellectual property. At the core of the organization, there is a strong emphasis on integrity at an institutional level (Tikhonova et al., 2023). Establishing this kind of culture necessitates dedication and consistent effort from all levels of the organization. Upholding the essential principles of academic integrity within education involves finding a balance between upholding rigorous integrity standards and the educational mandate, alongside demonstrating empathy and care[2].

Moreover, adherence to fundamental principles and core values of academic integrity is crucial not only for students' academic performance, but also for their personal and professional development (Drach & Slobodianiuk, 2020; Kadayam Guruswami et al, 2023). Some studies (Laduke, 2013; Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020) demonstrate that students involved in dishonest activities in the academic context are prone to demonstrate a tendency to behave inappropriately during their professional life. In other words, those who used to cheat during their studies are more likely to do so in their workplace (Payan et al., 2010).

Ethical behaviour is pivotal in mastering any discipline, but most of the studies in this field were devoted to medical practitioners and health-care staff because any lapses could compromise patients' safety and put their life at risk (Cleary et al., 2013; Korn & Davidovitch, 2016; Kadayam Guruswami et al., 2023). Considering integrity as a broader concept it is possible to treat it as a bunch of ethical principles, including autonomy, fidelity, privacy, and personal beliefs and values (Widang & Fridlund, 2003). They affect an individual's way of living and form so called moral integrity that perceives them to distinguish right from wrong, makes them take fair decisions, and behave according to the standards under any circumstances. These values acquired at university can help future professionals thrive.

Integrity is a fundamental aspect of "good governance", encompassing the values, principles, and norms guiding an organization's daily operations and the importance of maintaining workplace integrity, standards, and oversight. Our interactions with colleagues are vital in upholding integrity, regardless of the presence of protocols. The literature highlights numerous breaches of ethical codes, even in environments with well-established guidelines (Noelliste, 2013; Giorgini et al., 2015; Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020; Cicero, 2021). In academic and healthcare settings, employees are obligated to uphold integrity by following institutional Codes of Ethics, Conduct, and other workplace ethics guidelines, such as those related to discrimination, conflicts of interest,

transparency, and anti-corruption. Clearly et al. (2013) posit that these codes primarily address professional behavior in teaching, research, and other job responsibilities, while also emphasizing the importance of respectful and cooperative conduct among staff members. What is more, maintaining integrity can easily be limited or weakened. Upholding integrity requires personal qualities like the bravery to remain steadfast in upholding ethical standards when those in higher positions of power fail to do so (Mohi Ud Din & Zhang, 2023). This can be a challenging task, especially when met with silence, lack of support from peers and the organization, worries about retaliation, and limited job options. Choosing the easier path, conforming to group norms, fear, and limited job prospects often lead to inaction, even when someone else is trying to uphold moral integrity (Clearly et al., 2013; Cicero, 2021). Meanwhile, compliance with ethics and integrity allows to promote the environment conducive to creating productive teams and responsible and respected organizations. Thus, it is the aim of this paper to describe the influence of academic integrity on the development of professionally significant qualities, namely professional integrity, and the role it plays in ethical decision making. This paper is structured as the following: firstly, it explores the concept of professional integrity, secondly, it develops a framework of general professionally significant qualities through the prism of professional integrity, thirdly, it presents the traits and qualities that are essential for professional success, then it focuses on professionally significant qualities in different fields, and, finally, this paper highlights the significance of incorporating the values of academic integrity into the educational system as a way to enhance the caliber of education and develop competent, accountable, and morally aware professionals.

## PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

Currently, every profession necessitates thorough training for employees to deliver crucial services to society. In return, society expects professionals like engineers, architects, scientists, doctors, nurses, lawyers, bankers, accountants, journalists, HRD scholars and practitioners, and educators to perform their duties with professional integrity (Noelliste, 2013).

The construct of professional integrity has been studied from different perspectives. Most of them focus on moral principles in professional ethics (Hatcher, 2002; Pritchard, 2006; Alexandra & Miller, 2009; Noelliste, 2013). Eriksen (2015) posited that professional integrity is the quality of upholding one's promises within a specific field of work. Rozuel (2011) also strongly expressed the idea of professional integrity as the ethical duty associated with a professional position. According to Pritchard (2006), professional integrity entails staying committed to and openly advocating for the principles, values, ideas, goals, and standards of one's profession. Alexandra and Miller (2009) delved into the

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[2] International Center for Academic Integrity [ICAI]. (2021). The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity. (3rd ed.). www.academicintegrity.org/the-fundamental-valuesof-academic-integrity

ethical aspects of professional conduct by examining both the external moral principles that guide professionals' behavior and attitudes, as well as the internal moral virtues necessary to perform tasks effectively. Noelliste (2013) viewed professional integrity as a part of intrapersonal integrity taxonomy aimed to explain the cognitive barriers to ethical decisions and guide morally responsible behavior in the organizational context. Banks (2009) viewed the concept of "professional integrity" as adherence to universally recognized principles of a profession and the specific codes of conduct set forth by professional organizations while performing one's work duties. In turn, Vargas-Hernández (2020) advocated for professional integrity rooted in moral integrity and ethical principles that prioritize transparency, honesty, sincerity, moral awareness, loyalty, truthfulness, and adherence to legality. Still, most of the scholars believe that professional integrity involves a set of principles and commitments aimed at enhancing managers' performance, fostering autonomy, cultivating relationships based on integrity, ethical conduct, social justice, and teamwork.

Summing up the definitions above, we define professional integrity as the ability to perform professional activities in an honest, professional and ethical manner, which regulates the behavior, work ethic, and communication practices of professionals. Professional integrity ensures that employees can trust that leaders will prioritize professional standards above their personal interests. Moreover, the ability to maintain professional integrity in the workplace has a powerful impact on productivity, performance and reputation.

The value of professional integrity is usually based on two reasons, fidelity and assurance (Eriksen, 2015). The first reason can be treated as the commitment to the core objectives of the profession. For instance, in medical ethics, professional integrity is often framed as faithfulness to the specific goals of the profession, such as preserving life and promoting health, whereas in education it encompasses not only teaching academic basics, but also considering the needs of students and obligations towards parents, community and society[3]. The second reason is viewed as reliability, specifically in discussions about corruption and conflicts of interest, professional integrity is highlighted as the quality that provides confidence in role holders' ability to prioritize professional standards over personal gain. In other words professional integrity is directly related to personal integrity and moral values. Tang, Chen, and Sutarso (2008) argue that many individuals acquire their moral values and ethics from their parents. However, Pritchard (2006) highlights the important role of primary and secondary institutions in imparting moral education to children to enhance their moral development. This is reflected in programs such as "character education" and "values clarification", which focus on virtues like trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citi-

zenship (Sojourner, 2012). In this light thriving on academic integrity that acquaints young people with its basic values, namely, honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage[4] appears to be pivotal for universities as well. The university should not only focus on imparting technical and theoretical knowledge to its students, but also on fostering their moral growth and purpose. Professional education cannot be separated from ethical development; it should encompass not just acquiring skills and expertise, but also cultivating personal integrity and ethical conduct. Upholding high standards of academic integrity is essential for achieving academic quality and giving ethical significance to all university activities (Bolívar 2005; Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020) .

## PROFESSIONALLY SIGNIFICANT QUALITIES THROUGH THE PRISM OF PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

Characteristics and qualities that are important for the successful performance of professional tasks by an employee in a specific position are defined as professionally significant. They imply a system of personal qualities, professional abilities, and attitudes that are desirable for achieving efficiency and success in professional activity. What is more, they ensure high standards of the result of professional activity.

Some scholars (Yarullina & Nikishina, 2021) differentiate between the qualities that are essential for a profession and professionally significant qualities. Professionally important qualities refer to characteristics, skills, and professional expertise that influence the effectiveness and success of one's professional endeavors. On the other hand, professionally significant qualities include interests, attitudes, and character traits that shape an individual's approach to their professional responsibilities and overall outlook on professional development. Employers have strict criteria for prospective professionals, requiring them to be competitive in the job market and exhibit both an active lifestyle and essential professional qualities. These qualities are crucial elements of a specialist's professional competency. Developing these important qualities is a vital and foundational requirement for a specialist's future career success (Shadrikov, 2002; Karpov, 2022).

### Traits and Qualities that are Essential for Professional Success

A theoretical framework aimed to explain the origin and growth of personality traits that are essential for professional success was proposed by Zeer (2013). This framework includes (1) motivational aspects (such as the drive to effectively respond to professional challenges, ambition

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3  NAE (2020). Code of ethics for educators. https://www.nea.org/resource-library/code-ethics-educators

4  International Center for Academic Integrity [ICAI]. (2021). The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity. (3rd ed.). www.academicintegrity.org/the-fundamental-valuesof-academic-integrity

for success, and the urge to present oneself positively, etc.); (2) cognitive elements (comprehension of professional tasks, evaluating their importance, familiarity with problem-solving techniques, anticipating changes in the work environment, etc.); (3) operational-activity components (personal characteristics, skills, perception abilities, cognitive processes, emotional intelligence, and willpower that align with the demands of professional responsibilities).

In addition to this, four main categories of qualities that are essential for professional success are identified (Karpov, 2016):

(1) absolute qualities that are necessary for carrying out the activity at a minimum acceptable or normatively set average level;

(2) relative qualities that determine the potential for the subject to achieve high quantitative and qualitative performance in the activity (referred to as mastery);

(3) motivational readiness to engage in a specific activity (high motivation can compensate for deficiencies in other important qualities);

(4) anti-professional qualities that act as barriers to successful performance in a particular field. Unlike the qualities in the first three categories, these qualities have a significant negative correlation with the parameters of the activity.

There is also a classification system suggested by Karpov (2022) that categorizes the key qualities of a specialist based on the level of their development and consistency. Various groups of significant qualities are recognized to delineate an individual's functional capabilities from diverse perspectives. This system encompasses: (1) functions that play a crucial role in professional success and may vary in their trainability and stability within individuals; (2) functions that require inherent characteristics that are difficult to cultivate, while others can be developed through training and education; (3) functions vital for professional success that may be more vulnerable to disintegration over time due to the demands of intensive and prolonged work. These qualities need to be identified through psychodiagnostics to predict future success in aspiring professionals and should be incorporated into training programmes. It is urgent to focus on some principal qualities while designing such programmes. Scholars (Klimov, 2003; Karpov, 2016; Mishina, 2019; Karpov, 2022) believe that the following principal qualities are essential for specialists, among them (1) civic attributes reflecting an individual's moral and ideological values; (2) participation in a team or society; (3) approach towards work, profession, as well as interests and inclinations in a specific field; (4) the capacity developed by important qualities applicable across various activities like broad-mindedness, depth of understanding, and flexibility; (5) specific capabilities essential for a particular job, profession, or a specialized group; (6) skills, habits, knowledge, and experience.

The professionally significant qualities possess a dual nature, being both innate and developed through gaining pro-

fessional experience, reflecting their binary expression. In his research, Kyveryalg (1980) has identified two key aspects of qualities that are crucial for professionals. The first aspect is social, which encompasses elements such as conscious work discipline, teamwork, commitment to common goals, self-improvement, self-worth, creativity, and diligence. The second aspect is technical, which necessitates specialists to possess some technical and organizational-economic knowledge and skills. Moreover, professionally significant qualities reveal certain features. They are socially important, developed in alignment with the societal and governmental needs in a specific direction and extent. Such qualities demand a comprehensive professional development system for aspiring specialists and implementation through the principle of molding a well-rounded, creative individual with a high level of professional competence.

## Professionally Significant Qualities in Different Fields

The issue of professionally significant qualities development in different fields has been studied with the focus on the specificity of each area. For instance, Mishina (2019) clarified the concept of professionally significant qualities of an economist. For an economist it is crucial to have essential attitude-related qualities consisting of standard attributes such as situational professional motivation, knowledge of professional ethics, and stable civic stand, as well as supplementary qualities including dominant professional motivation, professional values, and a strong civic identity and behavior. Also, individual and personal qualities and abilities encompass standard traits like emotional balance, discipline, objectiveness, and integrity along with supplementary attributes like mental flexibility, professional mobility, and the capacity for self-education and self-development. Moreover, there are some special qualities and abilities that include standard analytical, synthetic, and prognostic abilities, as well as supplementary skills like critical thinking, lean thinking, and project thinking. Lastly, social and personal qualities and abilities should involve standard characteristics such as sociability and conflict resolution skills, in addition to supplementary traits like client orientation and team building prowess (Mishina, 2019).

Cultivating essential qualities in occupational safety professionals, according to Karpov (2022), should be grounded in the overarching responsibilities of specialists dedicated to upholding various aspects of state security. These responsibilities include: upholding the law, safeguarding the country's population with dedication, performing work duties conscientiously and honestly, demonstrating bravery, initiative, and discipline, following the directions of superiors, continuously enhancing professional knowledge and skills, fulfilling obligations and adhering to legislation regarding the protection of people and territories, maintaining readiness of emergency rescue equipment, respecting traditions, aiding endangered colleagues, preventing reckless behavior,

valuing the honor and dignity of all individuals, remaining vigilant, executing rescue operations diligently and thoroughly, supporting order and discipline, and abiding by the Code of Honor governing personnel in civil defense, emergency response, and disaster relief organizations.

Having carried out their survey, Eltsova et al. (2007) revealed that a successful model of a technical university graduate should encompass both professional and personal attributes. The feedback from employers clearly highlights the distinction they make between the essential professional skills and personal traits of an engineer. Notably, employers prioritize personal qualities (Eltsova et al., 2007). The key personal attributes that are highly valued in an engineer include diligence, passion for their profession, thirst for self-improvement, effective communication skills, integrity, articulacy, proactivity, and the ability to make autonomous decisions. Concomitantly, professionally relevant skills encompass proficient computer literacy, solid theoretical comprehension of their major, experience in creating technical documentation, proficiency in working with engineering systems, the ability to navigate regulatory guidelines and technical literature, and a good command of technical English.

The analysis of research in the field of professionally significant qualities in different areas reveals that these qualities are area-specific. Each profession requires peculiar expertise, yet some key professional qualities remain significant irrespective of the field. Among them there are some ethical requirements, for instance, ability to distinguish between personal interests and professional duties and dedication to honesty in communication and advice given to staff, peers, and others associated with the institution. Meanwhile, each professional has to be capable of recognizing and utilizing a decision-making framework for ethical choices (Noelliste, 2013). They need to possess skill in balancing institutional policies and resources with informed decisions based on facts and data and be ready to acknowledge the influence of personal values on decisions and seek input from colleagues when necessary. Here such characteristics of professional integrity as honesty, trustworthiness, accountability, transparency, and respect for others become essential.

## DISCUSSION

Academic integrity goes beyond just avoiding cheating behaviors like copying during exams or plagiarizing; it involves actively engaging with learning and work to produce high-quality outcomes focused on genuine learning. This includes using proper methods, putting in real effort, and using good skills. Ultimately, academic integrity means making the most of all learning opportunities (Bjelobaba, 2018). In a university setting, promoting academic integrity serves the dual purpose of fostering the acquisition of essential competencies and skills for a chosen profession,

as well as cultivating a strong ethical framework for making principled decisions in any situation including the working environment (Bolívar 2005; Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020). Professionally significant qualities encompass a consistent and deeply ingrained attitude that an individual holds towards their profession, themselves, work, people, and objects (Mishina, 2016; Karpov, 2022). These qualities also involve a specific set of motives, behaviors, and approaches that define how these relationships are expressed. Therefore, the term "professionally significant" emphasizes the integration of both internal and external factors, highlighting the dynamic interaction between personal identity and external actions (Levitan, 1991).

In their turn higher education institutions must demonstrate a commitment to fostering a culture of academic integrity (Tikhonova et al., 2023). By raising awareness and consistently enforcing ethical standards, universities can strengthen and mold the ethical behavior of their students and future graduates (Kadayam Guruswami et al, 2023). The university campus serves as an ideal setting to educate individuals and promote ethical behavior within and beyond its boundaries, fulfilling its duty to the community and the world by cultivating more ethical and socially responsible citizens who excel in all aspects of their lives. The lack of a strong civic culture is often evident in the everyday actions of citizens, especially within organizations (Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020). Research by Rujoiu & Rujoiu (2014) has shown a connection between students who cheat and unethical behavior in the workplace. Therefore, qualities like integrity and ethical conduct, demonstrated through actions like decision-making, conflict resolution, and accountability, are highly sought after by employers (Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008). These traits are also vital for fostering trust in inter-organizational relationships (Connelly et al. 2018).

Professional integrity is formed by social responsibility and some other social elements that professionals inherit to maintain high standards of competence and conduct in the entire full range of professional activities and not just for themselves. Professional integrity results in a significant level of personal consistency and fosters stronger social bonds. Individuals who uphold honesty contribute to the cohesion of society and work towards the collective benefit of all. Professional integrity involves competences shared by all members of the profession and joint responsibilities for conduct. Irrespective of the field it appears to be among professionally significant qualities considered to be pivotal for an expert (Vargas-Hernández, 2020).

A key aspect of a professional's ethical conduct is their understanding of the risks and consequences of engaging in academic dishonesty, as well as the opportunities to do so (Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020). Merely convincing students of the importance of upholding integrity standards is not sufficient. It is crucial to establish an environment where cheating or deception is difficult to carry out. Students must

be persuaded to act with integrity throughout their college years and be informed of the consequences of their misconduct. This will instill a positive behavioral pattern that extends beyond academia, shaping them into ethical professionals, business people, and citizens.

## CONCLUSION

Academic integrity plays a crucial role in the educational process, encompassing not only the avoidance of dishonest behaviors such as cheating and plagiarism but also active engagement in learning, striving for quality outcomes, and employing proper methods. In the context of university education, academic integrity contributes to the development of essential professional skills and the formation of ethical principles that will guide decision-making in both professional and everyday life.

Educational institutions play a vital role in fostering a culture of academic integrity, ensuring that students develop high moral standards that persist beyond their academic careers. The cultivation of professional integrity and an understanding of the consequences of academic dishonesty lay a solid foundation for responsible behavior in professional life. Ultimately, this contributes to the strengthening of social cohesion and the greater good of society.

Despite the significance of academic integrity in the educational process, many questions remain that require further investigation. First, research is needed to identify the most effective methods of teaching academic integrity and their impact on students' long-term behavioral changes. Second, it is essential to study how different cultural contexts influence the perception and practice of academic integrity among students from various countries. Third, it is important to explore the role of digital technologies in supporting or undermining academic integrity, particularly given the growing popularity of online education. Finally, the impact of academic integrity on professional career success and how employers evaluate these qualities during the hiring process should be considered.

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