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Attitudes towards honesty and misconduct
in modern business: evidence from
business graduates

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Declaration

Disclaimer 1

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Abstract

Researchers have attempted to gain an insight into the ethics of business leaders to explain reasons for unethical behaviour that has often led to corporate scandals. The current study aims to identify business students' attitudes towards honesty and misconduct in third level education and in modern business to identify what these attitudes may have in common. The study also aims to identify how much of a focus is placed on the ethical character of students by third level institutions and businesses during the recruitment process. Knowing how students feel about academic dishonesty is necessary as a willingness to cheat during college may be an early warning sign of a willingness to engage in unethical behaviour in the workplace.

The research is performed through a literature review which identifies the extent and causes of academic misconduct, as well as the attention it receives by third level institutions. A survey administered to 238 business students in LYIT was used to gain insight into their attitudes regarding honesty and misconduct in a business and non-business context. Interviews were conducted with three HR experts from local businesses. The interviews helped to link the concept of ethics in third level education to ethics in the workplace.

A literature review uncovered numerous factors that contributed to misconduct in third level education and how this issue was dealt with. These factors included course design, dishonest students and a lack of communication regarding ethical behaviour between administration, academic staff and students. The survey results indicated that students were more unethical in terms of a business context as opposed to a non-business context. The survey findings also indicated that students regarded themselves as ethical and female students and students who worked part time took dishonest behaviour more seriously than male students and students who did not work part time. The interviews with HR recruiters indicated that ethics coverage in third level education was not seen as a significant factor by business when recruiting business graduates and aside from academic skills, graduates entering the workplace were often unprepared for the work environment.

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List of Abbreviations

LYIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
HR	Human Resources

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Prologue

In light of the current global economic crisis, it can be said that business and professional ethics is one of the most important elements of stability in finance and business. When individuals lack a moral disposition when carrying out business, their dealings can have severe consequences for society. However, for unethical attitudes of individuals to be understood, it is necessary to understand how this behaviour may develop in the first place (Davis *et al.* 1992).

Before entering the workplace, it is commonplace for individuals to undertake a course in college to ascertain a specialised qualification that allows them to enter their chosen profession. As several elements of third level education are designed to prepare students for the workplace, it is possible that students may already have developed some ethical attributes towards the workplace before actually entering the workplace, through their experiences in third level education. “Failure to deal adequately with academic dishonesty and educate students about the consequences of their behaviour constitutes a disservice not only to the academic community but to society in general” (Whitely and Keith-Spiegel 2002: 5).

1.2 Research aims and Objectives

The main aim of the research is to identify “attitudes towards honesty and misconduct in modern business through evidence from business graduates”. This can be broken down into the following research objectives:

- What are the attitudes of business students towards academic misconduct in higher education and misconduct in a business environment and how much of a link may lie between both?

Literature in this area and a questionnaire administered to business students will be used to understand these attitudes.

- What are the attitudes of Human Resource Professionals towards business ethics and the role business graduates play in organisations?

Harding *et al.* (2004) and Breaux *et al.* (2010) suggest that recruiters are primarily interested in key technical skills as opposed to ethical attributes. The validity of this assertion will be explored through the literature review and through interviews with Human Resource Professionals.

- To determine how unethical behaviour may develop when individuals are in tertiary education and to identify the methods used by third level institutions in dealing with this issue.

The literature review will explore the approaches to dealing with unethical behaviour in third level education. Students' attitudes will be assessed through a survey to gain a further insight into ethical attitudes and behaviour. As ethical behaviour is a complex concept, it is important to consider all the factors that may play a part in its creation and development. These factors may include characteristics such as age or sex or situational factors such as stress or pressure. This will be explored in the findings from surveys carried in LYIT and the literature review in Chapter 2.

1.3 Value of Research

The research will be of value to third level educators and the business community for three primary reasons:

1. Although there has been a large body of research generated in this area in an international context, little research of this nature exists in Ireland.
2. Second, the research will provide some insight into student's attitudes towards ethics in third level education which will be of interest to third level institutions.
3. The research will also take into consideration the opinions of the business community on the concept of ethics in business and education.

The research has merit for these reasons and will help to stimulate discussion of professional ethics.

1.4 Limitations of the research

The research presents itself with certain limitations which could not be overcome.

These limitations include the following:

1. There was only one year to complete the project. Therefore, a narrow time frame was a limitation.
2. Financial resources were limited which affected the research process.
3. The sample for the interviews and the questionnaires were relatively small given the population sizes of each. Therefore it is hard to make generalisations about these populations from the findings.

1.5 Structure

The paper begins with Chapter 2 which takes the form of a literature review which will identify academic misconduct, its various forms, the numerous factors that contribute to its prevalence and its possible consequences, if any, when graduates enter the workplace. The perceptions of previous authors, students and academic staff will be identified to highlight the complexity of dealing with such issues that arise from misconduct.

Chapter 3 will highlight the methodology used in the research. Both questionnaires and surveys were used to put to use the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative research. The questionnaires were issued to 238 business students in an LYIT to gain their perceptions and attitudes towards misconduct in the workplace and in third level education. Interviews with a small number of HR experts were carried out to identify their thoughts on the role of ethics in the recruitment process of graduates.

Chapter 4 analyses the data from this research and uses the literature in the area to draw various conclusions on the data findings. Data from the surveys is presented in tables while samples from the interviews are also presented to enhance the analysis.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section of the study will explore the concept of ethical behaviour in third level education. Previous literature in the area will be used to identify how much of a role ethical or unethical behaviour plays in the learning environment. Various factors will be explored that may contribute to both ethical and unethical behaviour. Literature that highlights a link between ethical conduct in third level education to that of ethical conduct in the workplace will also be explored.

There have been suggestions from the business community that there is a lack of morals among graduates entering the workplace. Voices within the business community have argued that by emphasising amoral theories such as agency theory and transaction-cost economics, business schools train their graduates to focus too much on profits (Peppas and Diskin 2001; Ghoshal 2005; McCabe *et al.* 2006). Brown *et al.* (2010) suggests that the financial education sub-discipline seems to either attract or cultivate students with personality traits that lead to less ethical behaviour. This has led to a growing interest in the concept of teaching ethics to business students (Breux *et al.* 2010; Frank 2010). Across a range of studies, (Harris 1989; McCabe and Trevino 1997; Caruana 2000; Park 2003; Rettinger and Jordan 2005; McCabe *et al.* 2006; Iyer and Eastman 2006) business students have been pointed to as being the most unethical and dishonest when compared to other higher education students. The interest in this area has gained momentum due to corporate scandals such as Enron and similar financial disasters (Rakovski *et al.* 2007; Bernardi *et al.* 2008; Persons 2009).

However, various questions arise when such assertions are made. For example, much of the research has used self reports of cheating as an indicator that a student is unethical or immoral. This may be too strong a presumption. As highlighted later in the chapter, numerous forms of academic misconduct are not egregious. Therefore, it

may not be correct to say that if a student cheats, they are unethical. Various studies have also questioned the validity of whether unethical practices that may be developed by students at tertiary level and carried through into the workplace by graduates (Groshal 2005; Moberg 2006; Brown 2010). Neubaum *et al.* (2009) suggests that this profits-first approach that critics use to deride business courses is too simplistic. Indeed, previous research that has indicated that business students are more unethical than other students due to higher self reported levels of cheating might also be unfair. Other factors such as course design may be a factor in this. These concepts will be explored through the literature review.

This research aims to expand on the point that the profits-first criticism of business courses may be too simplistic of an explanation for unethical conduct in third level education. It is difficult to gauge how ethical or unethical business students or any other students may be. McCabe *et al.* (1996) found that students who have been held to high academic standards are less likely to engage in unethical business practices. It is therefore worthwhile to gain a better understanding of academic honesty and to take into account the possible link between the development of ethical attitudes in third level education and in the workplace (Harding *et al.* 2004).

2.2 What is academic misconduct?

Academic misconduct is not easily defined and can often be a grey area (Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead 1995; Harp and Taitz 1996). Calhoun and Wood (2010) cites (Harding *et al.* 2004; Rennie and Rudland 2003; McCabe 2005) to give a comprehensive description of academic misconduct as “an offense committed by cheating in the form of copying or sharing test answers, lab reports or homework; using published material without proper citations; paying for a paper; impersonating another student in online classrooms; using papers more than once for two or more different classes; unauthorised collaboration with classmates; and finally, witnessing any of the above behaviours and failing to report the misconduct to the appropriate authority” (Calhoun and Wood 2010: 602). However, the meaning of academic misconduct and the factors that influence it are not well understood (Ryan *et al.* 2009).

2.3 Academic Misconduct in Higher Education

Academic integrity is relevant to several elements of college life and a vast amount of research has been carried out in this area as economic developments have pushed the topic to the fore in recent years (Singhal 1982; Nuss 1984; Johnston 1991; McCabe and Trevino 1993; Williams 1993; Parameswaran 2007). This research has been conducted primarily in North America and the UK while limited research has been carried out in Ireland. An international study by Teixeira (2010) suggests that many of the factors contributing to unethical behaviour among students may be similar between countries. General estimates of self reported cheating in tertiary education is usually found to be above 50% (Daniel *et al.* 1991; McCabe and Trevino 1993; Roberts and Toombs 1993; McCabe and Trevino 1997; Whitley 1998; McCabe *et al.* 2001; Mustaine and Tewksbury 2005). However, these figures should also be considered with the viewpoint that some cheating may not be egregious.

McCabe and Trevino (1993), McCabe and Trevino (1997), McCabe *et al.* (2001) and McCabe *et al.* (2006) have identified students' perceptions of cheating and levels of cheating at college level. They note that academic misconduct is on the rise internationally at tertiary level. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995), Iyer and Eastman (2006) and Parameswaran (2007) explored further the reasons for this increase in the reported levels of cheating and possible solutions. Groshal (2005), Moberg (2006) and Brown (2010) have reported on suggestions that unethical behaviour in higher education can be a predetermining factor towards unethical behaviour in the workplace.

However, perceptions on the meaning of cheating may differ as well as the methods and standards for measuring this problem so rates of cheating identified in previous studies may not be entirely comparable (Ashworth and Bannister 1997). Nuss (1984) suggests that academic misconduct has been allowed to persist largely because the academic community has not been successful in communicating the value of independent and original work to its students. Because academic misconduct is difficult to define, its presence in the third level education system is difficult to quantify and a suitable solution may be hard to find (Calhoun and Wood 2010). It

also makes it difficult to identify what effects it has on the level of ethical consciousness of graduates entering the workplace.

2.4 Forms of Academic Misconduct

Students may have similar views to academic staff, such as lecturers and tutors, on what constitutes cheating such as copying from another student or having another student take an exam (Bunn *et al.* 1992; Bernardi *et al.* 2008). However, the gravity attributed to each form may vary between student and lecturer. Plagiarism is possibly the most widespread form of academic misconduct and is perceived to be increasing in third level education (Roberts and Toombs 1993; Batane 2010). Plagiarism involves copying or using material from another source and passing it off as one's own work as well as paraphrasing material without appropriate citation (Park 2003; Kirkpatrick 2006). Students often believe plagiarism to be unintentional or accidental and take this practice less seriously than academic staff (Flint *et al.* 2006; Nadelson 2007). Plagiarism is troubling for an institution as it can be extremely time consuming for academic staff to deal with and proving intent also poses a major problem (Larkham and Manns 2002). Although some cases of academic misconduct may be deserving of the institution's formal procedures, most cheating is less egregious and employing severe sanctions does little more than to taint the student's record (McCabe 2005).

2.5 Technology and Plagiarism

The issue of plagiarism has been further complicated in recent years. Advances in online technologies and the evolution of distance learning has allowed and encouraged the creation of collages of other texts and has made the monitoring of students' behaviour more difficult (Ashworth 1997; Kennedy *et al.* 2000; McCabe *et al.* 2006; Stephens *et al.* 2007; Williams 2007; Ledwith and Risquez 2008). Simon *et al.* (2004) and Calhoun and Wood (2010) report that there have been suggestions that students could be asked to take a larger role in monitoring fellow students as they are ultimately responsible for their own actions and should be encouraged to use moral judgment to ensure the integrity of their education. However, this may be a naïve expectation as students often do not want to report a fellow student for academic

misconduct (McCabe and Trevino 1993). As technology continuously advances, prevention through the promotion of honesty should be placed as a priority above detection and punishment as the difficulty in detecting more sophisticated methods of plagiarism increases. Many institutions are now turning to plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin to act as a mix of detection and prevention to student plagiarism (Ledwith and Risquez 2008). A common misconception of educators and students with new detection software programs such as Turnitin is that it finds plagiarism. This is not the case. It only finds sequences of words in documents in its database.

Critics suggest plagiarism detection software services such as Turnitin may have increased the focus on detection and punishment over instruction. They suggest the service is inappropriate as it automatically points to plagiarism and does not distinguish between whether it is intentional, unintentional, a mechanical mistake in citing sources or a technical error. Critics state that this may undermine learning and suggests that lecturers are too inept to design classroom assignments that teach students how to write properly (Carbone 2001; Ledwith and Risquez 2008). Gannon-Leary *et al.* (2009) states that much of what Turnitin claims to detect can be avoided by careful assignment planning and teaching. Plagiarism Checker (2009) found that plagiarising from various sources such as periodical databases was less likely to be detected than from others. Barrett and Malcolm (2006) found that plagiarism was often detected where there was none. A study by Sutherland-Smith and Carr (2005) found that lecturers who used the software were disappointed with the results following initial expectations as the software only detected text matches but did not distinguish between correctly referenced and non-referenced text.

Despite the criticisms, plagiarism software can be useful if applied by institutions in an educational manner and to address extensive 'copy and paste' behaviour (Batane 2010). Considering a lot of plagiarism results from a lack of skills in proper citation, using the software in an educational context pays positive and proactive attention to the issue and serves as a disincentive to plagiarise online sources (Ledwith and Risquez 2008). Batane (2010) recorded a 4.3% level decrease in the level of plagiarism in an institution where Turnitin was introduced. However, if students are able to write properly but still choose to plagiarise, then this could be a sign of

problems in other areas such as the students' lack of responsibility towards their learning environment. Batane (2010) states that this is why some educators say that "even though the use of commercial plagiarism software such as Turnitin is a welcome development in terms of assisting to quickly spot plagiarism, it can become a quick fix to the underlying problem of why students plagiarise in the first place" (Batane 2010: 8). If this behaviour carries on to the working environment, it may be difficult to detect as the graduate may be adept at avoiding detection.

2.6 Characteristics and triggers of academic misconduct

In order to identify strategies that prevent academic misconduct, it is necessary to consider the factors that influence it. Various factors may contribute to academic misconduct while others may help to prevent it (Christe 2003; Iyer and Eastman 2006). Individual factors such as gender and religion can influence levels of cheating as well as situational factors such as perceived stress and pressure (McCabe *et al.* 2001; Smyth *et al.* 2009). A major factor in academic misconduct is how fellow students behave. In a business environment, unethical behaviour may be promoted by peers but derided by regulatory bodies (Moberg 2006). In third level education, contextual factors such as cheating behaviour by peers, or their disapproval of it plays a more significant role than individual factors such as age and gender (McCabe and Trevino 1997; McCabe 2005; Nadelson 2007; Bernardi *et al.* 2008; Rettinger and Kramer 2009). Moberg (2006) suggests that covering up for a fellow student in an educational context can be mirrored in a business environment in later years which can be seen in many corporate scandals where documents are shredded or the internal auditor looks the other way in the face of fraud. Regardless of the institution's guidelines, if students see others cheating and getting away with it, they are likely to conclude that it is necessary to cheat to remain competitive (Rettinger and Jordan 2009). This suggests that institutions that place too much focus on the detection of academic misconduct may in fact be contributing to it by signalling cheating is prevalent. This also suggests that prevention of academic misconduct through promoting honesty and integrity is a better approach than detection and punishment, as the focus will be placed on honesty rather than dishonesty.

Academic staffs such as lecturers and tutors are often left with the responsibility of dealing with academic misconduct. They often try to raise the costs of cheating to the student by raising the probability of apprehension and punishment (Bunn *et al.* 1992). Methods used to achieve this include scrambling multiple choice questions, using different versions of the examination and separating students from each other to reduce density (Bunn *et al.* 1992; Ameen *et al.* 1996; McCabe *et al.* 2006; Bernardi *et al.* 2008). Where these methods are not used, students may conclude that academic staff are aware of cheating but are deciding to ignore it. This may increase the problem as students may feel they will get away with academic misconduct (McCabe 2005; Parameswaran 2007). Rettinger and Kramer (2009) suggest a worthwhile strategy for prevention is to hold a student who witnesses academic misconduct accountable. This creates an unpleasant obligation on both the student witnessing the act and the student carrying out the act and succeeds in lowering the social acceptability of the form of academic misconduct.

Mellema (1991) suggests that academic staff often facilitate academic misconduct rather than prevent it as they do not see many of these measures as obligations. Therefore, they feel they are not required to go beyond the call of duty and are not breaching said obligations by ignoring academic misconduct. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995) and Nadelson (2007) believe that the use of policing measures and severe punishments in the face of suspected cheating can actually lead to an increase in the prevalence of academic misconduct rather than a reduction, as many students may not fear or respond to these measures. Policies and standards should be continuously communicated to students as institutions should not assume that the students they teach share the same moral understanding (McCabe and Trevino 1993; Eisenberg 2004; Burrus 2007). Constant dialogue between student and lecturer can also increase the student's level of motivation. Students who are more motivated by learning and less motivated by grades often report less cheating (Franklyn-Stokes and Armstead 1996; Simon *et al.* 2004; Rettinger and Jordan 2005). Creating a greater sense of loyalty and community can benefit the learning environment. This strategy can also be applied to academic staff. Academic staff who feel a greater sense of membership to the academic community within the institution are more likely to feel a sense of responsibility to "go beyond the call of duty" to maintain a culture of honesty (Simon *et al.* 2004).

Understanding the relationship between student and lecturer may depend on the degree of communication between them, the standardisation of practices within an institution and the level of understanding of the consequences of academic misconduct (Davis *et al.* 1992; Schmelkin *et al.* 2008). Honour codes in institutions can be used to clarify moral standards, the meaning of cheating and its consequences (Bunn *et al.* 1992). An honour code should be communicated to students consistently. Studies show that academic misconduct is less common in institutions with honour codes and students should become actively involved in the establishment of rules and guidelines that are endorsed by an honour code for it to be fully integrated into the institution (Mc Cabe and Trevino 1993; Simon *et al.* 2004; Mc Cabe *et al.* 2006).

2.7 Student's Perceptions of Academic Misconduct

Various studies have found that students often take the concept of academic misconduct less seriously than educators (Nuss 1984; Adkins and Radke 2004; Braun and Stallworth 2009; Gannon-Leary and Home 2009). A study by Bunn *et al.* (1992) found that over 70% of the students surveyed either considered cheating not to be a problem or to be a minor problem only. Neubaum (2005) suggest that it would be worthwhile for institutions to focus on cultivating more ethical attitudes in students. Brown *et al.* (2010) points out that this is difficult as an individual's personality traits are not easily influenced. These unethical attitudes may develop from factors within the learning environment. Davis *et al.* (1992) and Mc Cabe (2005) suggest that students find fault with academic staff members who do not act on obvious cases of academic misconduct and with academic staff members who take it upon themselves to punish suspected cheaters without affording them fair procedures through the academic process. They also may see institution guidelines on academic misconduct as unclear and rarely discussed by educators.

There is a strong moral basis for a student's perception of cheating, such as values of friendship and good learning (Ashworth and Bannister 1997). Kohlberg (1985) stated that individuals go through stages of moral development and were faced with moral dilemmas that were influenced by the act and the interpretation given to the act. He stated that it is not the act itself, but the reason for carrying out the act that determines

a person's moral stage of development. Frank et al. (2010) analysed this theory and suggests that students consider following rules to avoid punishment first and only then to serve their own interests. Then students are led through consideration of what is necessary to live up to what is expected and what is necessary to keep social institutions functioning. This concept could be used by institutions to identify the factors that students deem important when behaving in a way that keeps social institutions functioning.

2.8 The role of educators

Staats *et al.* (1992) and Giacalone (2007) suggest that institutions should use the character of their graduates as a marker for excellence. This in turn could influence businesses in their recruitment policy which would also be a reward for raising ethical standards in institutions. Ghoshal (2005) suggests that a lack of morals in the workplace should be tackled through promotion of honesty and integrity and institutions should place a greater focus on this concept. For ethical behaviour to be promoted and nurtured, unethical behaviour has to be dealt with appropriately. Various authors believe that academic staffs need to clarify their expectations for appropriate behaviour in their courses and share this responsibility with their students which may convince students that they are moulding their own education (Mc Cabe and Trevino 1993; Whitley and Keith-Spiegel 2002; Mc Cabe 2005). This would likely be difficult to implement and would require the institution to support academic staff in their discipline of students. This support would help to reduce anxiety and stress of staff dealing with these issues and may even encourage them to tackle academic misconduct.

Mc Cabe (2005) states that many of the suspected cases of cheating are dealt with privately in the classroom. The reasons for this will be explored further in Section 2.9. This makes it difficult for an institution to identify repeat offenders. The institution would likely benefit as a whole if this inconsistent practice was not seen as the only course of action by lecturers. Nuss (1984) suggests that consistent and ongoing opportunities for discussing the policies and procedures with students and academic staff must be developed by the institution. Parameswaran (2007) highlights the issue of overcrowded classrooms which creates problems as staff may feel

overburdened and unable to monitor students or pursue suspected cases of academic misconduct. A study by Graham *et al.* (1994) found that 79% of academic staffs surveyed reported having caught a student cheating but only 9% penalised the student. Parameswaran (2007) states that academic staffs that ignore academic misconduct cannot claim moral responsibility for their students even though they are not the cause of this behaviour. The author also suggests that academic staff members should design their courses in a manner that reduces academic misconduct rather than increases it. Levy and Rakovski (2006) found that business students were less likely to select a module if they perceived the lecturer to have a zero tolerance policy to academic misconduct. This shows that differing methods of dealing with academic misconduct by academic staff are likely to create confusion among students and means students constantly have to adapt their method of work to the style of a particular lecturer.

2.9 The perception of educators

For the causes of academic misconduct to be understood, it is important to explore how the perspectives of academic staff towards their institution can impact on strategies for deterring academic misconduct (Simon *et al.* 2003). How seriously academic staffs perceive academic misconduct to be may differ to that of students so it is important for academic staff to understand student perceptions to enable them to communicate expectations and monitor behaviour (Nuss 1984; Cloninger and Hodgins 1986; Christie 2003; Iyer and Eastman 2006; Schmelkin *et al.* 2008). For some staff, definitions are influenced by notions of assumed core values such as intellectual ownership and integrity. However, these values may not be shared by students, and raises challenges for the way students are involved in dialogue about plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (Flint *et al.* 2006). Emotion plays an important role for academic staff when dealing with misconduct and many lecturers may be hesitant in broaching the issue of dishonesty due to the negative emotions involved. There may even be a danger that students' grades are inflated if academic staffs feel sympathy for their students (Keith-Spiegel *et al.* 1998; Sonner 2000). McCabe (2005) suggests that academic staff may have the belief that they are paid to be teachers, not police, and that, if students have not learned the difference between what is right and wrong by the time they get to college, it is not up to them to teach them. Cohen and

Pant (1989) found that academic staff in their study believed that few tangible rewards are given to academic staff for incorporating ethics into their courses.

Various authors believe that lecturers may perceive formal procedures to be overly bureaucratic and legalistic and due to the range of behaviours and the different scales involved in cheating, it can be difficult for academic staff members to identify whether the offence warrants these formal procedures (Keith-Spiegel *et al.* 1998; Larkham and Manns 2002; Barret and Cox 2005; Mc Cabe 2005). Instead, academic staffs may use an informal approach which can lead to problems as there may be a danger of staff placing too much value on their personal judgement (Johnston 1991; Flint *et al.* 2006; Simon *et al.* 2003; Nadelson 2007). Academic staff may feel they are doing the student a favour by dealing with academic misconduct privately. It is therefore important for the relationship between academic staff and the institution to be strengthened so both parties work together. Mc Cabe (2005) states that it is important for academic staff to use informal methods within the classroom to engage the student in moral and ethical issues, but also to employ the formal approach when appropriate.

2.10 Criticism of educators

“Student dishonesty is a privileged crime because crime and punishment often seek only one criminal. Faculty who are indifferent to or aid student dishonesty are rarely indicted. Even when they are a cause, they are only seen as the solution” (Parameswaran 2007: 263). Neubaum *et al.* (2009) and Brown *et al.* (2010) found that although educators did not necessarily have a negative effect on the ethical beliefs and actions of their students, they did not have a positive one either which may lead to an increase in unethical behaviour. Nuss (1984) and Bunn *et al.* (1992) suggest that in some cases, academic staff may not report academic misconduct which results in students witnessing a lack of action on the part of academic staff. Various reasons suggested for this behaviour include the time it takes to confront the issue, lack of assistance from the institution, a lack of evidence, a lack of courage and a lack of training for dealing with academic misconduct (Keith-Spiegel *et al.* 1998; Milem *et al.* 2000; Parameswaran 2007; Staats *et al.* 2009). From a practical perspective, it may simply be easier to ignore or tolerate academic misconduct as dealing with it may

lead to more paperwork and the aggravation of appearing in front of administration who may not be supportive (Levy and Rakovski 2006; Bernardi *et al.* 2008). Parameswaran (2007) suggests that academic staffs who allow dishonesty are morally responsible for their students' actions as only the level of seriousness changes between cases. A study by Ameen *et al.* (1996) found that 70% of the students surveyed thought more should be done to stop cheating. Giacalone (2007) states that it is up to educators to develop a realistic sense of professional responsibility in order to raise ethical awareness in organisations and society and for this to become reality, educators need to take their role in ethics education more seriously.

2.11 Ethics linked to accounting curricula

The concept of ethics education at tertiary level is a relatively current issue. Moberg (2006) suggests that a problem with ethics education is that there is a focus on issues and models rather than the organisational situation in which ethical decisions are made. This may mean that organisational contexts or situations rarely receive much attention. Frank *et al.* (2010) states that this problem could be resolved through more active learning exercises by exposing students to real life professional experiences in which the consequences of unethical behaviour are explored. Peppas and Diskin (2001) and Frank (2010) state that accounting educators should be worried because group course work often focuses on written and verbal elements which is generally the type of work where academic misconduct takes place. This factor can be linked back to the research that suggests business students may be more unethical than other students due to higher levels of self reported cheating. The course design may be playing its part in accommodating higher levels of cheating. Allmon *et al.* (2000) suggests that ethical training should be used to nurture notions of ethical community building so societal issues are fully explored in education.

Breaux *et al.* (2010) found that recruiters for an entry-level accounting position do not value ethics being taught in the accounting curriculum when recruiting for entry-level accounting positions. Companies often focus on functional competencies such as the ability to pass a CPA exam, writing ability and critical thinking. This finding may result from a number of reasons and may suggest that ethics mixed in with the main subjects may suffice for ethics education in terms of graduates finding work

placements. However, it is unfair to expect students to take academic conduct seriously if the institution does not deal with it effectively and it has little bearing on getting a job. Business ethics is often advertised by accountancy firms as being of high importance (Steckel 2008). However, if hiring individuals with a strong ethical stance is not taken seriously, it may suggest that firms 'taking a stance' on ethics in their workplace may be more of an advertisement for their shareholders, rather than an active policy. Putting in place a culture of honesty and putting ethics into action rather than talking about it in the classroom is likely to develop students' ethical attributes to a greater extent.

A study by Peppas and Diskin (2001) found little difference in ethical attitudes of those students who had taken a course in ethics with those who had not. Possible reasons for this finding may be that teaching ethics adds little value or that the subject could be taught more effectively as academic staff with a business background may not possess the skills to teach ethics effectively (Brown *et al.* 2010). Cohen and Pant (1989) and Giacalone (2007) suggest that business educators may place a similarly low level of emphasis on ethics education to that of students as they may believe that the inclusion of this subject will not have any influence on the accounting profession. Adkins and Radtke (2004) found that accounting educators placed a lower value on both business ethics and the goals of accounting ethics education than students. Another concern is that adding ethics courses may add additional costs to accounting programs and to institutions that are already facing budget problems. It is therefore important that ethics education actually adds value (Breux *et al.* 2010). This may be achieved if the ethics education plays a role in entry to the profession. Bedford *et al.* (2001) suggest that business programs should be updated and focus on developing assignments that evaluate the skills and knowledge acquired by the student on the course. Institutions should also require students to use research methods for classroom reports and increase student participation to increase activity levels in the classroom. However, before introducing curriculum reform, business educators need to develop a much fuller picture of why students, tomorrow's business leaders, make unethical decisions (Neubaum *et al.* 2009). This can be identified at college level where it is more accessible to develop the student's capacity for lifelong learning and ethical practice.

2.12 Conclusion

Investigating the concept of ethics attributes of graduates prior to entering the workplace has produced a large body of research. This section has focused on the literature related to factors such as; “how ethical behaviour is communicated to students in third level education”, “the challenges in making students responsible for their actions”, and “how ethical education in third level education may be transferred to the workplace”.

From reviewing the literature it's fair to say that there are multiple factors involved in students behaving unethically. Age, sex and course all may play a part. However, there are various fundamental issues that may play a part in this behaviour such as unclear communication of ethical values by institutions, peer pressure, and larger class sizes. It may be difficult to deal with issues. However, the rise in academic misconduct internationally is coinciding with calls from the business community for more focus to be placed on this area by educators due to the seemingly continuous emergence of corporate scandals (Peppas and Diskin 2001; Ghoshal 2005; McCabe *et al.* 2006; Breaux *et al.* 2010; Frank 2010). Therefore, this is an issue that is unlikely to go away. With regard to accounting education, some critics point to the curricula structure as a point of concern. Suggestions include increased student participation updated assignments that focus more on skills and knowledge acquired.

The majority of this literature has come from North America and the UK. Little research has been carried out in Ireland regarding ethical attributes of students who may enter the workplace. By surveying third level business students from the North West and interviewing professionals at the frontline of graduate recruitment, I hope to gain a more detailed insight into the possible link between ethical behaviour in third level education and its place in the workplace.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will identify and explain the methodology adopted and will include a description of the research problem, research process and the data collection methods used. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) state that research methodology refers to the systematic process of collecting and analysing information in order to increase the understanding of the phenomenon concerned.

3.2 Research Process

Secondary research was carried out in the area of academic misconduct which involved an in-depth analysis of the literature available. This research involved reviewing literature, books and publications. This enabled specific objectives and aims to be drawn for the research project. These objectives are set out in Section 1.2. After the secondary sources of information were explored and reviewed primary research was carried out through the use of interviews and surveys.

3.3 Research Philosophy

Collis and Hussey (2003: 46) state that the research philosophy depends on the way the researcher thinks about the development of knowledge. It therefore affects the researcher's approach to the study. The two main categories of research paradigm are positivism and interpretivism. The categories offer contrasting views regarding the development of knowledge and its acceptability through that development (Saunders *et al.* 2007).

Collis and Hussey (2003) state that interpretive research normally produces qualitative data, uses smaller samples, is connected with generating theories, reliability is low as the findings may be difficult to replicate and validity is high as the findings are more likely to present a fair and true picture. The interpretive approach allows the researcher to explore the patterns behind the responses, rather than just identifying the responses.

A positivist approach may be adopted when gathering quantitative data as one of the aims is to identify and measure social structures. The social structures involved in the current study are the attitudes of business students towards ethics in third level education and the workplace. By using a positivist approach, the researcher hoped to achieve high reliability.

3.3.1 Research Philosophy Adopted

The choice of research philosophy depends on the research aims and objectives which can be found in Section 1.2 of this thesis. Both a positivism and interpretivism philosophy was chosen as a small number of theories that were already identified were tested. The interpretivism philosophy involved using a semi structured interview with three HR experts and the distribution of questionnaires to business students in LYIT. The interview questions had been developed in researching the literature in the area. The qualitative data obtained helps to highlight areas that may not have been fully explored in the literature. The problem with positivism philosophy is the risk of observer bias. However, through the use of the questionnaire, the researcher aimed to minimise this risk. The questionnaire was more quantifiable in nature as the majority of questions adopted a Likert rating scale.

3.4 Research Approach

Arguments can be separated into two categories: deductive and inductive. A deductive argument is one in which a conceptual and theoretical structure is developed and then tested by empirical observation. If the premises are true, then it follows on that the conclusion will also be true (Collis and Hussey 2003).

An example would be:

All men are mortal (Premise)

Socrates was mortal (Premise)

Socrates was mortal (Conclusion).

An inductive argument is one in which a theory is developed from the observation of empirical reality and involves moving from individual observation to statements of general patterns or laws (Collis and Hussey 2003).

An example would be:

Socrates was Greek (Premise)

Most Greeks eat fish (Premise)

Socrates ate fish (Conclusion).

3.4.1 Research approach adopted

An inductive approach was used for the majority of the research as theories were further developed from previous research and discussed in various ways. The arguments raised from the primary and secondary data could not be considered fact, rather opinion. This approach was deemed more suitable as the research aims to examine the concept of unethical behaviour rather than basing research around pre-defined definitions of ethics. Adopting the inductive approach involved developing the theory from data collection through semi structured interviews and questionnaires.

3.5 Research Focus

The research has three main classifications:

- Exploratory
- Descriptive
- Explanatory

Exploratory research is used when there is little information and the aim is to discover new relationships, patterns, themes, ideas and so on (Hair *et al.* 2007). It is often used to investigate the possibilities of undertaking a research study or to develop, refine or test measurement tools or procedures (Kumar 1999).

Descriptive research is designed to obtain data that describes the characteristics of the topic that is being researched (Hair *et al.* 2007). Saunders *et al.* (2007:596) describes descriptive research as research for which the purpose is to “produce an accurate representation of person, events or situations”. Descriptive research can be used as an extension to exploratory research (Robson 2002).

Explanatory research is described by Hair *et al.* (2007) as causal research as it tests whether or not one event causes another. This type of research attempts to clarify

how and why there is a relationship between two aspects of a situation or phenomenon (Kumar 1999).

3.5.1 Research Focus Adopted

An exploratory and descriptive approach was adopted. The exploratory research took the form of opinions of HR professionals regarding the ethical issues that arise when hiring graduates. This was achieved through the use of semi-structured interviews. The interviews used during the research process were an ideal way to “find out what is happening and to seek new insights” (Robson 2002: 59). These insights were those of HR experts towards the concept of ethics in third level education and ethics in the workplace. The descriptive research was in the form of the literature review and the findings from the primary research. The literature described the factors that arise when considering the concept of academic misconduct and how this may impact business education and modern business itself. Chapter 4 describes the quantitative results from the surveys and integrates the semi structured interviews into the findings. This enables the reader to get a clear picture of patterns and trends that arise.

3.6 Data Collection

There are two specific types of research that can be adopted: quantitative and qualitative. The data required will dictate the research tool used. Qualitative research involves the collection of data that is subject to analysis and interpretation, focusing specifically on assessing knowledge and opinions that may not be validated statistically (Domegan and Fleming 2001). Collis and Hussey (2003: 13) state that a qualitative approach is more subjective in nature and “involves examining and reflecting on perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities”. Dilley (2004) states that comprehension and understanding, which are key components of qualitative research, are conditional, philosophical considerations that are necessarily individualistic. Collis and Hussey (2003) state that a quantitative approach involves collecting and analysing numerical data and applying statistical tests to the data. This approach is objective in nature and concentrates on measuring phenomena.

To make the findings as robust as possible it was decided to use a mix of both qualitative and quantitative research. This mixed methods approach of triangulating qualitative and quantitative research can be seen in a study Mc Cabe and Trevino (1993) which was a large scale survey of more than 6000 students at 31 academic institutions. For such a large scale project, it was unrealistic for the researcher to use only qualitative data. However, this type of data was useful to give insights into why students cheated. Therefore, using a mixed methods approach is suitable to identify trends using quantitative data and to gain insights into the reasons for these trends using qualitative data.. In the current study, the use of interviews for qualitative research and surveys for quantitative research allowed the researcher to gain a detailed insight into the attitudes of business graduates towards ethics and the ethical issues that arise when graduates enter the workplace. Creswell (1999) states that with the legitimacy of both qualitative and quantitative methods, mixed methods research is expanding. Hanson and Grimmer (2005) state that mixed methods may occur, for example, when a modest number of interviews are used to orient questions used in a survey which was the case in the current study.

3.7 Data Collection

There are a number of data collection techniques available. These include observation, interviews, surveys and case studies. The technique chosen generally depends on the research objectives. Questionnaires and interviews were deemed most suitable to fulfil the research objectives as they would provide useful qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires were used to identify the attitudes of business students towards ethical behaviour. It was deemed appropriate to use quantitative analysis through a larger sample to get a more comprehensive view on these attitudes. Questionnaires were identified as the ideal way to do this. The semi structured interviews helped to place the research further into a business context rather than just a third level education context. The following sections focus on the methods of interviews and questionnaires.

3.7.1 Interviews

Any person to person interaction between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind is called an interview (Kumar 1999). Interviews are an effective means of gathering valid and reliable data pertinent to the research question(s) and

objective(s) (Saunders *et al.* 2007). They are key to many forms of qualitative educational research (Dilley 2004). The structure of the interview event shapes the meanings made (and conveyed) by both the interviewer and the respondent (Dilley 2004).

In a structured interview, “the interviewer uses an interview sequence with predetermined open ended questions” (Hair *et al.* 2007: 196). The interviewer reads out each question and then records the response on a standardised schedule, usually with pre-coded answers. These interviews are useful in descriptive studies as a means of identifying general patterns (Saunders *et al.* 2007).

An unstructured interview is conducted without the use of an interview sequence which allows the researcher to elicit information by engaging the interviewee in free and open discussion on the topic of interest (Hair *et al.* 2007). This lets the interviewee develop their own ideas and pursue their own train of thought (Denscombe 2005).

Semi structured interviews “have an overall structure and direction, but allow a lot of flexibility to include unstructured questioning” (Hair *et al.* 2007: 197). Additional questions may be asked which helps to further explore issues that arise. In the current study three semi structured interviews with HR experts in the local area were carried out. As each of the interviewees had similar roles, it was deemed sufficient for three interviews to be carried out as major variations in the responses were not expected. The semi structured interview format was chosen as it allows greater flexibility. The experts were selected from companies in the same area as LYIT as the questionnaires were carried out in LYIT. This provided more of a link between the interviews and questionnaires as the HR experts would come into contact with graduates from LYIT so they would have encountered similar attitudes that may have been identified in the questionnaire sample. The interview questions were not sent to the interviewees beforehand as the researcher felt that responses might have been rehearsed if this had been done which may have reduced the scope of honest discussion.

The researcher goes beyond what is directly said in an interview to work out structures and relations of meaning not immediately apparent in a text (Kvale 1996,

cited by Dilley 2004). The interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees using a tape recorder. Full transcripts of the three interviews can be found in appendices (iii-v). This allowed the interviewer to fully concentrate on questioning and listening as it was not necessary to write down the key points raised during the interview. This also cut down on interviewer bias as the recording could be listened to a number of times for clarity.

3.7.2 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a list of carefully structured questions, chosen after considerable testing, with a view to eliciting reliable responses from a chosen sample. The aim is to find out what a selected group of participants do, think or feel. Questionnaires are descriptive in nature as they are largely concerned with the what, where and how questions (Saunders *et al.* 2007).

The questionnaire was designed and developed with a mix of questions based on previous studies and original questions that were based on issues that arose from the literature review. By using some questions from previous studies, it allowed comparative analysis in these areas descriptions of any differences or similarities in the results. The questions were chosen based on the research objectives from Section 1.2. The questionnaires were handed out during class time which boosted the response rates.

Once the questionnaire design was complete the researcher pilot tested the questionnaire on a student in LYIT. A number of minor amendments were made. The final questionnaire had a diverse mix of questions. The majority of the questions used a Likert scale using variables such as “not serious (1)” or “very serious (5)”. These types of questions made it relatively straight forward for the respondents to complete the survey which was important as the questionnaire was quite substantial. A number of questions placed the student in a hypothetical ethical dilemma and asked the student what they were likely to do. This helped to gain a better insight into the attitudes of students towards ethical decision making.

The questionnaire can be found in Appendix (i). The first section of the questionnaire aims to identify students’ general views towards misconduct. These questions help to

identify how ethical students believe themselves to be. The second section looks at students' attitudes towards academic misconduct in third level education. This section contains a number of scenario based questions that helps a student to hypothetically place themselves in such a situation which encourages insightful and truthful responses. The third section looks at students attitudes towards misconduct in a business context. Although it was expected that most students would state that unethical conduct was serious, it was interesting to see the levels of seriousness they gave to a number of different behaviours that may be seen as more or less serious by others. This was useful in gaining further insight into students' attitudes towards honesty. Overall, the mix of questions gave an in depth look into the perceptions and attitudes of business students towards ethical behaviour in a business context and a non business context which allowed insight into whether these attitudes may be connected.

The researcher wished to administer the questionnaire to as many business studies students as possible in LYIT. This included the Administration Management Degree, the Bachelor of Business Studies Degree, the Accounting Masters Programme and the Marketing Masters Programme. The Sports Development and Coaching Degree was not included as these students were out on placement at the time the questionnaires were being administered. The sample size was made up of the following:

Administration Management	Years 1-4:
Total population: 133	Total responses: 59 Response rate: 44%
Bachelor of Business Studies	Years 1-4:
Total population: 291	Total responses: 157 Response rate: 54%
MA in Accounting	Year 5
Total population: 18	Total responses: 17 Response rate: 94%
MSc in Marketing:	Year 5
Total population: 6	Total responses: 5 Response rate: 83%

Out of a total sample size of 448, the researcher got 238 responses which gave a response rate of 53%. The relatively high response rate provided the researcher with valuable feedback.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire was analysed using Microsoft excel. This enabled a comprehensive analysis of the data results. The researcher decided to use the mean responses from questions as a method of comparison. The mean overall response was obtained for each question as well as the mean for the sub-categories such as age, gender and working status. This allowed analysis of patterns to be developed. For example, the researcher was interested whether there would be any major differences between the responses given by males and females. A detailed profile table is given in Chapter 4 as well as tables showing mean results for each question. Further details of the response profiles can be found in Appendix (ii). Further analysis carried out on the survey results can be obtained on request. As the interviews were recorded, the discussions could be examined closely to bring ethical issues to light that may occur when recruiters are hiring graduates. The full interview transcripts are contained in appendices (iii-v).

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues must be taken into consideration when conducting research. All primary research was conducted with integrity and confidentiality. With regards to the recorded interviews, permission was obtained from the individual before recording the interview. Questionnaire respondents were given full anonymity.

3.10 Conclusion

The research was undertaken to establish attitudes towards honesty and misconduct in modern business through evidence from business graduates. The research is exploratory in nature leading to descriptive research. Results from survey questions will be quantitative while results from the semi structured interviews will be qualitative. Data analysis is performed through Excel. The findings are shown in Chapter 4 while the conclusion and recommendations are shown in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to study and analyse the data collected during the primary research. This involves exploring the responses to the questionnaires in order to establish business students' attitudes towards ethics in third level education and in the workplace. This chapter also involves a review of the transcripts from interviews with HR professionals in order to ascertain their views on this area of research.

4.2 Analysis of survey results and the interview findings

The questionnaire was issued to students at Letterkenny Institute of Technology from the Administration degree (years 1-4), the Business Studies degree (years 1-4) and students from the Accounting Masters (Year 5) and the Marketing Masters (Year 5). **(A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1)** At the end of the data collection period a total of 238 responses were received, yielding a 53% response rate. **(Response results can be found in tables in the current chapter and in Appendix ii)**

A semi structured interview was conducted with a HR consultant and two HR managers in local companies. The objective of the interviews was to gain insight into issues related to ethics that arise when hiring graduates and how the current economic climate has affected companies' policies on human capital. The interviews also provided insights into how employers assess graduates entering the workplace and how they assess their progress through training. The interviews highlight possible changes in companies' human capital policies that may have arisen due to the changing economic environment **(A transcript of the interviews is included in Appendix III-V)**

4.3 Demographic Results

The questionnaires were issued to different years during class time over a one week period. This was done with the help of lecturers and the questionnaires were collected once completed which boosted the response rate.

	Responses	%			Responses	%
18-21	111	47%		1 st year	50	21%
22-25	62	26%		2 nd year	43	18%
26-30	29	12%		3 rd year	77	32%
31-40	17	7%		4 th year	46	20%
40+	19	8%		5 th year	22	9%
Total	238	100%		Total	238	100%
Male	48	30%		Working	120	51%
Female	114	70%		Not Working	118	49%
Total	162	100%		Total	238	100%

	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	5 th year	Total
Working	17 (34%)	13 (30%)	41 (53%)	32 (70%)	17 (77%)	120
Not working	33 (66%)	30 (70%)	36 (47%)	14 (30%)	5 (23%)	118
Total	50 (100%)	43 (100%)	77 (100%)	46 (100%)	22 (100%)	238

The responses were analysed in terms of the entire population. These responses were further broken down in terms of the person's age, sex, course year and whether they worked part time during college or not. The response rates for each category are shown in table 1 above. The following sections cover the findings from various subject matters that arose during the questionnaires and the interviews. Readers are directed to appendix (i) for full information on the survey questions and appendices (iii-v) for full transcripts of the interview.

4.4 General views of misconduct

	i) Honesty is always the best policy	ii) Other people's welfare is more important than mine	iii) Misconduct is only serious if it affects others	Average 1 A
Overall	4.32	2.86	2.14	3.11
1 st year	4.32	2.92	2.34	3.19
2 nd year	4.21	2.83	2.66	3.23
3 rd year	4.43	2.83	2.25	3.17
4 th year	4.28	2.85	2.35	3.16
5 th year	4.24	2.9	1.95	3.03
Working	4.27	2.94	2.33	3.18
Not working	4.38	2.78	2.36	3.17
18-21	4.35	2.82	2.54	3.24
22-25	4.21	2.9	2.25	3.12
26-30	4.21	2.79	2	3
31-40	4.24	2.76	2.06	3.02
40+	4.58	3.17	1.94	3.23
Male	4.35	2.71	2.3	3.12
Female	4.32	2.84	2.7	3.29

This question was adapted from Saunders and Wenzel (2008) and identified the ethics principles of students. Students were asked to read each statement and state how strongly they either agreed or disagreed. The overall mean response for each part is given at the top and this is then divided into categories for course year, work status, age and gender.

In the study by Saunders and Wenzel (2008), a mean overall response of agreement of 5.02 was received on a Likert scale of 1-6 for the concept that honesty is always the best policy. This compares with a mean overall response of agreement of 4.32 out of 5 in the current study which is relatively similar. There were no major variations within the sub-categories for this part as most individuals agreed to this statement relatively strongly.

For the second part of the question (Other people's welfare is more important than mine), the current study's overall mean of 2.86 out of 5 compares lower than that of the Saunders and Wenzel study's mean of 3.65 out of 6 and indicates a slight level of disagreement. Within the overall mean response in the current study, it is interesting

to note that females and students that worked part time agreed more strongly with the statement than males and students that did not work part time respectively.

For the third part of the question (Misconduct is only serious if it affects others), the current study's overall mean of 2.14 out of 5 was also relatively low and was not a question asked in the Saunders and Wenzel study. As in part two of the question, females and students that worked part time agreed more strongly with the statement than males and students that did not work part time respectively.

Overall, students strongly agreed that honesty was the best policy and were in slight disagreement with the other two statements. These general attitudes suggest that the students surveyed considered themselves to be relatively ethical in nature.

Table 3: Response results for question.1 b from questionnaire (1=Not serious, 5=Extremely serious)

Appendix i=	i)	ii)	iii)	iv)	v)	vi)	vii)	viii)	Average 1 B
Mean	4.48	4.7	4.4	4.57	4.61	4.66	3.68	3.44	4.32
1 st year	4.64	4.78	4.48	4.72	4.76	4.78	3.86	3.68	4.46
2 nd year	4.14	4.44	4.07	4.37	4.35	4.28	3.32	3.52	4.06
3 rd year	4.43	4.65	4.32	4.48	4.53	4.61	3.79	3.31	3.77
4 th year	4.63	4.83	4.59	4.65	4.67	4.84	3.78	3.48	4.43
5 th year	4.68	4.91	4.59	4.73	4.86	4.95	3.5	3.32	4.44
Working	4.62	4.86	4.53	4.74	4.76	4.82	3.75	3.53	4.45
Not working	4.35	4.53	4.23	4.36	4.45	4.5	3.53	3.34	4.16
18-21	4.32	4.32	4.26	4.5	4.56	4.59	3.68	3.33	4.2
22-25	4.6	4.76	4.41	4.55	4.65	4.74	3.55	3.44	4.34
26-30	4.66	4.83	4.59	4.76	4.72	4.79	3.76	3.52	4.45
31-40	4.76	4.82	4.65	4.88	4.71	4.94	3.88	3.59	4.53
40+	4.53	4.53	4.42	4.42	4.47	4.37	3.83	3.79	4.3
Male	4.31	3.85	4.25	4.31	4.46	4.5	3.15	3.02	3.98
Female	4.6	4.78	4.45	4.6	4.65	4.77	3.94	3.61	4.43

This question identified students' attitudes towards general actions that could be considered unethical. Overall, students gave the highest mean level of seriousness to part ii (Illegal drug use at work) with an overall mean of 4.7 out of 5. Within this mean response, the most significant feature was that females and students that worked part time agreed more strongly with the statement than males and students that did not work part time respectively. This trend was also evident in question 1. A. In fact, the

overall means for each part of the question shows that females took this type of behaviour more seriously than males. There were no significant trends through the sub-categories of course year and age. The lowest overall mean was given for part viii (Cutting school/truancy) with a mean of 3.44 out of 5.

Table 4: Response results for question.1 C from questionnaire (0-1%=Virtually no chance, 99-100%=Virtually certain)

Category	Mean %		Category	Mean %
Overall	86%			
1 st year	83%		18-21	86%
2 nd year	84%		22-25	88%
3 rd year	84%		26-30	82%
4 th year	89%		31-40	96%
5 th year	92%		40+	98%
Working	87%		Male	77%
Not working	84%		Female	91%

This question asked students how likely it would be that they would return €100 to the rightful owner if they found it in an envelope with the owner's details on it. The question put emphasis on the student's ethical decision making in a non-business context. Overall, students stated that they would return the money 86% of the time. The oldest students, those who worked part time, and females all were more likely to return the money than their counterparts.

4.5 Misconduct in higher education

Table 5: Response results for question.2 A&B from questionnaire (1=Academically honest, 5=Academically dishonest)			
A. Anita had a test at 9am on Monday and Lou had a test at 1pm on the same day. That evening, both friends discovered that both tests were very similar. On Tuesday, Anita had a test again at 9am while Lou had a test at 1pm. After Anita's test at 9am, she discussed the types of problems on the test and the ways in which she had answered them with Lou. Lou is now better prepared for her test at the 1pm slot as a result. How would you assess this behaviour?		B. Ed had a test at 9am on Monday and Burt had a test at 1pm on the same day. That evening, both friends discovered that both tests were very similar. On Tuesday, Ed had a test again at 9am while Burt had a test at 1 pm. After completing the test at 9am on Tuesday morning, Ed uses a spare piece of scratch paper to write out the problems and his answers. He meets Burt for coffee at 10am and gives him the problems and answers. Burt is better prepared for the second exam as a result. How would you assess this behaviour?	
Category	Mean	B Category	Mean
Overall	3.25	Overall	3.85
1 st year	3.32	1 st year	3.94
2 nd year	3.07	2 nd year	3.8
3 rd year	3.34	3 rd year	3.72
4 th year	3.18	4 th year	3.84
5 th year	3.32	5 th year	4.23
Working	3.18	Working	3.82
Not working	3.33	Not Working	3.89
18-21	3.47	18-21	3.83
22-25	3.14	22-25	3.81
26-30	3.24	26-30	4
31-40	3.94	31-40	3.82
40+	3.47	40+	3.95
Male	3.4	Male	3.93
Female	3.33	Female	4.03

This question asked students to assess two similar situations and assess how academic honest or academically dishonest the actions taken were on a Likert scale of 1-5. The main difference between both scenarios was the fact that in the second scenario, answers were written down for the other person rather than just communicated orally. Although this difference was relatively small, the overall mean response suggests that students found the actions in the second scenario where the information was written down to be more academically dishonest than the first scenario. This highlights the difference in the egregious nature of many forms of cheating. The mean response of 3.85 for part B was higher than the mean response of 3.25 for part A.

Table 6: Response results for question.2 C from questionnaire: Why do students plagiarise?												
	Laziness		Lack of skill in citing and referencing		Lack of moral responsibility		Do not think they can be caught		Other		Total	
Overall	116	50%	86	37%	11	5%	18	8%	0	0%	231	100%
1 st year	21	43%	16	33%	4	8%	8	16%			49	100%
2 nd year	18	45%	20	50%	0		2	5%			40	100%
3 rd year	38	51%	28	39%	4	5%	4	5%			74	100%
4 th year	22	49%	19	43%	2	4%	2	4%			45	100%
5 th year	16	73%	3	13%	1	5%	2	9%			22	100%
Working	58	50%	43	37%	5	4%	11	9%			117	100%
Not working	57	50%	43	39%	6	5%	7	6%			113	100%
18-21	56	61%	36	39%	5	5%	9	10%			92	100%
22-25	28	47%	23	38%	3	5%	6	10%			60	100%
26-30	17	59%	11	38%	0	0%	1	3%			29	100%
31-40	8	47%	9	53%	0	0%	0	0%			17	100%
40+	6	33%	7	39%	3	17%	2	11%			18	100%
Male	25	56%	9	20%	6	13%	5	11%			45	100%
Female	57	51%	44	39%	2	18%	9	8%			112	100%

This question was adapted from Batane (2010) and asked students what they believed to be the main reason for plagiarism. A definition of plagiarism was included to give students a better understanding of the question. The current study found that laziness was reported to be the main reason given by students for plagiarism with a majority of 50% of students citing this reason. Lack of skill in citing and referencing was given as the main reason by 37% of students. The other options were in the minority. This differs significantly with the Batane (2010) study which found that a larger percentage of students (75%) gave laziness as a reason for plagiarism while 7% of the students in that study believed lack of skill in citing and referencing to be the main reason. Students in the study by Batane (2010) who chose laziness blamed the lack of negative consequences for plagiarism and the lack of incentive to write properly

(Batane 2010). One of the academic staff in that study stated that “the only kind of cheating that is taken seriously in this school is exam cheating, but as for the misconduct that happens during the course of the semester with assignments and projects, no serious measures are taken to penalise students for that” (Batane 2010: 7). The fact that so many students point to laziness suggests that the students have the skills to write academically. This highlights the need for third level institutions to communicate integrity values to students.

Within the years surveyed (1-5), there was a significant jump in the percentage of students who stated that plagiarism was a result of laziness, from first year (43%) to fifth year (73%). This may be explained by the fact that masters students (year 5) in LYIT are required to write a dissertation which necessitates development of skills in academic writing. Therefore, if they have the skills to avoid plagiarism, it is not surprising that these students believed laziness to be the main factor involved. 37% of first years believed the main reason for plagiarism to be lack of skill in citing and referencing which highlights the need for development of academic writing skills at an earlier stage of a course. The surveys were administered towards the end of the academic calendar. This trend may highlight the need for examination of course content to establish how students’ education can be enhanced further in all areas. Students who enter 5th year and are expected to develop their limited academic writing skills while simultaneously completing a project that requires a high level of such skills, may struggle to manage the workload of such a task in the short time frame that is involved.

Table 7: Response results for question.1 b from questionnaire (1=Not serious, 5=Extremely serious)												
Appendix i=	i)	ii)	iii)	iv)	v)	vi)	vii)	viii)	ix)	x)	xi)	Average 2 D
Overall	4.18	3.88	4.47	4.2	4.72	2.66	4.4	3.38	3.42	4.37	2.7	3.85
1 st year	4.28	3.98	4.39	4.22	4.66	2.8	4.28	3.59	3.31	4.49	2.86	3.9
2 nd year	4.25	3.78	4.51	4.3	4.5	2.78	4.31	3.22	3.63	4.2	2.77	3.84
3 rd year	4.07	3.91	4.41	4.12	4.68	2.72	4.39	3.51	3.38	4.38	2.66	3.84
4 th year	4.07	3.78	4.57	4.09	4.89	2.33	4.48	3.02	3.41	4.39	2.52	3.78
5 th year	4.41	3.95	4.64	4.45	5	2.55	4.68	3.5	3.41	4.36	2.77	3.97
Working	4.15	3.82	4.57	4.19	4.86	2.53	4.57	3.39	3.42	4.44	2.68	3.87
Not working	4.2	3.94	4.37	4.2	4.57	2.78	4.22	3.37	3.43	4.3	2.73	3.83
18-21	4.05	3.75	4.39	4.12	4.66	2.54	4.23	3.47	3.44	4.31	2.68	3.79
22-25	4	3.73	4.33	3.98	4.68	2.45	4.52	3.05	3.27	4.28	2.55	3.71
26-30	4.55	4.14	4.83	4.62	4.83	2.72	4.59	3.36	3.28	4.38	2.66	4
31-40	4.47	4.18	4.76	4.41	5	3.24	4.76	3.47	3.76	4.65	2.94	4.15
40+	4.63	4.42	4.63	4.47	4.74	3.37	4.42	3.84	3.74	4.74	3.16	4.2
Male	3.85	3.54	4.35	4.15	4.57	2.11	4.17	3.11	3.18	4.24	2.49	3.61
Female	4.27	4.07	4.58	4.27	4.75	2.87	4.51	3.6	3.5	4.49	2.89	3.98

The above questions related to students' attitudes towards acts of academic misconduct in a learning environment. The different mean level of seriousness given for different parts of the questions highlights the difficulty in dealing with academic misconduct as some acts are seen as less serious and presumably warrant less serious action. Overall, part v (getting another student to impersonate themselves for a test) was taken more seriously than the other behaviours listed with a mean level of seriousness of 4.72 given out of a Likert scale of 5. Within this result, females took this behaviour significantly more seriously than males. Out of the 11 acts of misconduct listed (appendix i), females took the 11 behaviours more seriously than males with an average mean response of 3.98 compared to 3.61 for males. Older students also took the behaviours more seriously. The 40+ had an overall average mean of 4.2 while the 18-21 age group had an average mean of 3.79.

4.6 Misconduct in the business environment

Table 8: Response results for question.3 A from questionnaire (0-1%=Virtually no chance, 99-100%=Virtually certain)

Category	Mean %		Category	Mean %
Overall	60%			
1 st year	58%		18-21	59%
2 nd year	65%		22-25	51%
3 rd year	62%		26-30	57%
4 th year	57%		31-40	75%
5 th year	55%		40+	85%
Working	61%		Male	58%
Not working	59%		Female	58%

This question placed students in a hypothetical business-related ethical dilemma: would they return extra merchandise accidentally shipped to their company, or would they keep it without mentioning anything to the supplier. This question puts emphasis on the student's ethical decision making in a business-specific context and can be compared to question 1.C which asked a similar question in a non business context. Students stated that they would only make the ethical choice of returning the merchandise 60% of the time. This compared to the non business context question where students stated they would return the money 87% of the time. This suggests that students take unethical conduct in a non business context more seriously than in a business context. There was also a significant difference in the age category. Older students (40+) stated that they were more likely (85%) to return the merchandise than younger students in the 18-21 age group (59%).

Table 9: Response results for question.3 B from questionnaire (1=Highly unlikely, 5=Highly likely)							
	i)	ii)	iii)	iv)	v)	vi)	Average 3 B
Overall	2.54	2.55	2.11	2.63	3.68	3.94	2.91
1 st year	2.47	2.49	2.33	2.38	3.61	3.96	2.87
2 nd year	2.79	2.85	2.79	2.92	3.85	3.83	3.17
3 rd year	2.42	2.55	2.68	2.57	4.03	4.22	3.08
4 th year	2.61	2.39	2.37	2.67	3.91	3.88	2.97
5 th year	2.54	2.5	2.59	2.81	3	3.89	2.89
Working	2.54	2.56	2.63	2.77	3.63	3.92	3.01
Not working	2.53	2.54	2.48	2.5	3.74	3.96	2.96
18-21	2.68	2.73	2.72	2.87	3.7	3.95	3.11
22-25	2.43	2.48	2.57	2.52	3.65	3.83	2.91
26-30	2.15	2.22	2.19	2.3	3.64	4.22	2.79
31-40	2.59	2.06	2.18	2.19	3.47	3.88	2.73
40+	2.58	2.68	2.53	2.53	3.95	3.89	3.03
Male	2.75	2.84	2.72	2.7	3.56	4	3.1
Female	2.62	2.63	2.67	2.71	3.65	3.85	3.02

This question was adapted from Saunders and Wenzel (2008) and relates to potential positive and negative outcomes to an act of unethical conduct and how likely they may be. The questions aim to ascertain how appealing acts of unethical conduct may be to students. Parts i-iii asked students how likely they feel that various positive outcomes would occur from carrying out acts of unethical behaviour for gain, such as getting more money and better opportunities. The mean responses in the current study for parts i-iii (positive outcomes) were lower than those in the study by Saunders and Wenzel (2008) and students in the current study felt that positive outcomes were unlikely. Parts iv and v asks students how likely they feel that negative outcomes would occur from unethical behaviour such as losing their job. Students thought that these outcomes were more likely than the positive outcomes. Overall, students felt that it was more likely that unethical conduct would result in negative consequences rather than positive consequences. This is not surprising as students who consider themselves to be ethical are more likely to identify unethical conduct with negative consequences (Saunders and Wenzel 2008).

Table 10: Response results for question.3 C from questionnaire (1=Not serious, 5=Extremely serious)			
	i)	ii)	Average 3 C
Mean	3.95	4.31	4.13
1 st year	4.08	4.45	4.27
2 nd year	4.07	4.29	4.18
3 rd year	3.92	4.29	4.11
4 th year	3.76	4.24	4
5 th year	3.95	4.23	4.09
Working	4.01	4.38	4.2
Not working	3.9	4.23	4.07
18-21	3.92	4.3	4.11
22-25	3.77	4.23	4
26-30	4.21	4.34	4.28
31-40	4.18	4.53	4.36
40+	4.16	4.37	4.27
Male	3.51	4.09	3.8
Female	4.15	4.4	4.28

This question aimed to identify students' attitudes towards unethical behaviour in the work environment. Part i) asked students to attribute a level of seriousness to one team member taking undue credit for a report or marketing campaign. The mean response was 3.95 out of 5. Females found this concept to be significantly more serious than males and the level of seriousness rose slightly in line with an increase in age. Part ii) asked students to attribute a level of seriousness to an employee claiming expenses that were not incurred by him/her. This behaviour was attributed a significantly higher mean level of seriousness with a mean of 4.31. Students who worked part time and females took this behaviour more seriously than students who did not work part time and males respectively.

One of the HR experts believed that individuals who have little work experience are not equipped with the skills necessary to adapt to or understand the working environment and the ethical attributes that are required. This individual stated that he had "come across some very intelligent graduates coming out of third level institutions and they just don't know how to think, act or behave in a way that will contribute to organisations". The survey results reflects a difference in attitudes between working statuses as students who work part time seem to have developed greater ethical attitudes than those who do not work part time. This highlights the

importance and benefit of placing students in business context situations to develop their ethical character.

4.7 Ethical considerations in the recruitment process

The experts that were interviewed all highlighted the difficulty for employers to assess the ethical attitudes or attributes of a graduate during the recruitment process. The interviewees thought that third level institutions should take some responsibility for an individual's character development but ultimately it would be up to the organisation during the training process. This difficulty in assessing ethical attitudes means it is not a major surprise that the interviewees felt that ethical attributes were not a major consideration in the recruitment process. This figured in the feedback on what recruiters would consider when hiring a graduate in order of importance. Two of the experts believed that professional experience was the most important factor that was considered when hiring graduates. One of the experts believed that energy, motivation and enthusiasm was the most important factor while all three interviewees believed an individual's qualifications to be the second most important factor.

One HR expert pointed out that the only way for an ethical assessment of a graduate to be realistic would be to access some sort of behavioural record from the graduate's time in third level education. However, the interviewee pointed out the lack of credibility this concept has. "But to say no, I am not going to hire you because you cheated on an exam in first year, but then you repeated and you got your degree, I wouldn't be saying that I wouldn't want to hire you, I would say that you probably learned a good lesson, that maybe you've learned a better lesson in ethics than someone who never done it because, for example, you had to repeat your whole year". Another interviewee stated "I don't think it would be right that it be a major factor in recruitment in that you're judging somebody on the rest of their life on something that happened when they were at the most volatile period of their entire life". These factors seem to influence recruiters to believe that third level education develops a graduate's key competency skills but the responsibility of training a graduate to be ethical in the workplace lies with the organisations. This suggests that there is little incentive for third level institutions to develop the ethical character of their students as it has little bearing on producing graduates who are attractive to employers. This is also reflected in the fact that business curriculum focuses on tests rather than focusing

on building a student's character to make them ready for the work environment. Considering the preferences of recruiters, it is unlikely that the problems with accounting and business curricula addressed in Section 2.12 will be resolved.

4.8 The link between academic misconduct in third level education and the business environment

Although it is unlikely that ethics plays a major role in recruiting decisions, it doesn't necessarily mean that unethical behaviour in third level education is not linked to unethical behaviour in the workplace. From the survey results, it is apparent that students are able to identify their own attitudes towards honest behaviour in a business context. This indicates that development of these attitudes prior to entering the workplace is possible. Placing students in hypothetical situations that resemble business contexts is not a feature of current business curricula. Therefore, students are not asked to put their ethical attributes into action and develop them which would enable students to adapt to the workplace more comfortably. One HR professional interviewed stated that "I think what we need to do, as a society, is to develop individuals who are principled. I think third level institutions have a role to play in that equally and organisations ultimately". A greater level of communication between organisations and third level institutions would help this concept become reality.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions & Recommendation

5.1 Introduction

The objectives of this thesis are to identify;

- What are the attitudes of business students towards academic misconduct in higher education and misconduct in a business environment and how much of a link may lie between both?
- What are the attitudes of Human Resource Professionals towards business ethics and the role business graduates play in organisations?
- To determine how unethical behaviour may develop when individuals are in third level education and to identify the methods used by third level institutions in dealing with this issue.

The completion of these objectives was achieved through an extensive review of the key literature related to the topic and also through the primary research collected via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with HR professionals. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions drawn and the recommendations suggested by the author.

5.2 Business graduates' attitudes towards misconduct

The survey results suggest that students see themselves as relatively ethical in most cases. It is difficult to quantify how much of a link may lie between the attitudes that students have towards non business ethics and business ethics. The survey results also suggest that students are more willing to act unethically in a business context compared to a non-business context. This was shown in the fact that students were more likely to return €100 to a stranger found at a football match as opposed to returning merchandise to a supplier. It may be the case that society values are appreciated by students more than business values which should be a concern to educators and the business community.

“The ethical attitudes of individuals have deep roots in an individual’s whole personality and are not merely something that can be taught. Paying the proverbial lip service to ethics does not create ethical students” (Brown *et al.* 2010). This is an important point which highlights the problems with third level institutions solely punishing students for doing wrong rather than promoting integrity as a tool for personal development. Brown *et al.* (2010) state that “the pedagogical experience must be infused with examples, exercises, and opportunities to develop personality traits that are conducive to ethical behaviour”. Mc Cabe *et al.* (2001) suggest that institutions should consider ways of creating an “ethical community” that encourages communication and respect. Current business curricula are not designed to promote these values to students. The heavy reliance on tests and written assignments encourages academic misconduct such as plagiarism. Students should be placed in an atmosphere where they actively discuss ethical issues and have to act on them. One interviewee suggested that third level institutions place their students into business situations during their course. “For example, setting up a room like a mini company and people go in there and they might have, depending on what course you’re doing, you might be in such and such a department so it’s a more real to life”. Such a change is unlikely to happen as long as recruiters place their focus on key competency skills and neglect other aspects of a graduate’s character when recruiting.

5.3 Perspectives of HR Professionals

The recruiters interviewed did not consider ethical character to be a major factor when recruiting graduates. This was mainly due to the difficulty in assessing the ethical attitudes of students during the recruitment process. The interviewees did believe that third level institutions should take some responsibility for ethical character of their graduates but did ultimately it was up to the organisation. Recruiters believed that students should be exposed to situations that resemble those of the workplace to help them to make the transition from college to work. Overall, there seems to be a disconnect and a lack of communication between third level institutions and organisations in terms of how students’ education can be geared more towards their careers. Due to this lack of communication, recruiters can only go on qualifications and what is said during the interview process to assess students. In smaller organisations where assessments are more basic this may not be good enough. One HR

expert pointed highlighted this point; “Who can make an as assessment of an individual and his/her merit or worth in 20 minutes.”

5.4 Academic misconduct

From the literature review, it is apparent that the various types of academic misconduct and the numerous causes of it make it a difficult issue for third level institutions to deal with. Lack of communication on behavioural policies and ethical values between administration, academic staff and students can cause instances of academic misconduct to persist or increase. It is evident that if administration does not take academic misconduct seriously and support academic staff it is less likely that academic staff will feel obliged to deal with these issues due to the stress involved. If students see that academic staffs are not taking academic misconduct seriously, they won't take seriously either and the problem will escalate. Plagiarism is a growing problem in third level institutions and educators are struggling to find ways to deal with this problem. A high percentage of the students surveyed believed that laziness was the main reason for plagiarism while many students also believed lack of skill in citing and referencing was a cause of plagiarism. This suggests that third level institutions are not placing enough focus on developing business students' academic writing skills. Another trend that arose through the surveys was that females take unethical conduct more seriously than males. This trend was also found by Mc Cabe *et al.* (2001) and Harris (1989).

5.5 Recommendations

- One interviewee stated that “developing ethical attitudes is really implementing ethics in your organisation”. This approach should be applied in third level institutions. Administration and academic staff should work together to promote honesty among students.
- Institutions should aim to promote honesty among students by enabling them to trust administration to a greater extent. One interviewee stated their company had incorporated a whistle-blowing scheme which allowed employees to come forward anonymously to highlight cases of wrongdoing. A similar approach would be useful in third level institutions. Students may not feel they can approach academic staff and may feel resentful to students who cut corners. Such a system would enable students to highlight cases of academic misconduct anonymously which would reduce the burden on academic staff and act as a strong deterrent to students who cheat.
- Third level institutions must support academic staffs that raise allegations of suspected cheating. The institution must be willing to employ sanctions that have a strong deterrence value but also have a strong educational value.
- The incorporation of plagiarism detection software systems by third level institutions should be handled carefully. There is a danger that academic staff will only use the software as a way of catching out students and may not see its educational value. Institutions should educate academic staff on the weaknesses, strengths and educational value of this software before incorporating it into classroom assignments.
- Business organisations need to put pressure on academic institutions to develop the workplace skills of students before enter the workplace. The HR experts interviewed agreed that students entering the workplace were often prepared academically, but were not equipped with the other skills required in a business environment. Some larger companies may not see it as necessary that students have these competencies coming in as the company will put them through a robust training process. However, it may be important for smaller firms with less advanced training programmes that students entering the workplace have a firm grasp on ethical behaviour in a business context.

- Academic institutions should be able to differentiate between different types of academic misconduct. As some forms of academic misconduct are less serious than others, punitive measures are not always the best option. The punitive approach also may deter academic staff from bringing forward cases of academic misconduct if they feel they do not warrant formal procedures. This creates problems for the institutions as a whole which is discussed in further detail in Section 2.9. If institutions take a more proactive approach to tackling the different forms of academic misconduct, it is more likely that academic staff will come forward with suspected cases of academic misconduct.

5.6 Areas of further research

Further research could be undertaken to expand on the findings of the current study. As the surveys were only administered to one college, it would be interesting to see the results over a larger population. It would also be worthwhile in exploring further the perspectives of academic staff, administration in colleges and HR departments in organisations to identify their thoughts on this topic considering they play a major role in it.

It would also be worthwhile to complete more detailed qualitative research on the thoughts of students in terms of academic misconduct and their courses. The current study used surveys that were mainly quantitative in nature which reduced the capacity for students' perspectives on the topics to be identified and explored.

Further studies that explore the concept of developing student's ethical competencies would be worthwhile. It seems that recruiters and third level institutions are not placing focus on this area. Further research could highlight the benefits and importance of promoting honesty and workplace ethics before a student enters the workplace. It would also be worthwhile to consider how courses could be enhanced to enable these changes to happen.

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Appendix i

Questionnaire

*ETHICAL ATTITUDES SURVEY OF BUSINESS
STUDENTS IN LYIT*

Conducted by Christopher Moran

*Masters of Accounting Student at Letterkenny Institute
of Technology*

April 2011

All information collected is confidential, will be held in the strictest of confidence and used only for the purposes of gathering generic statistics. No individual names or views will be disclosed.

Questionnaire

Hi, my name is Christopher Moran. I am a 5th year student in LYIT. As part of my masters course I am conducting research into the attitudes of students towards the concept of unethical behaviour/misconduct in two separate but related settings: higher education; and the business workplace.

The survey is split into two sections. First, attitudes towards misconduct in higher education will be assessed, followed by attitudes towards misconduct in the workplace. The survey will take around 10 minutes and I would be very grateful if you could take the time to fill it in. This survey is completely anonymous.

Thanks for your time,
Christopher.

Personal Details

Please circle/underline;

Are you male/female?

What age are you?

18-21

22-25

26-30

31-40

40+

What area are you studying?

(Accounting/ Marketing/ Management/ Business Studies/ Admin/ Other)

What year are you in?

Work part-time

Yes/No

Q.1: General Views of Misconduct

A) Please circle/underline; (Note: 1 =Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)

I Believe that...

- i) Honesty is always the best policy 1 2 3 4 5
- ii) Other people’s welfare is more important than mine 1 2 3 4 5
- iii) Misconduct is only serious if it affects others 1 2 3 4 5

B) Please indicate the level of seriousness you would attribute to each of the following (Circle/underline);
(Note: 1=Not Serious, 5=Extremely Serious)

- i) Being drunk on duty 1 2 3 4 5
- ii) Illegal drug use at work 1 2 3 4 5
- iii) Fighting 1 2 3 4 5
- iv) Harassing people 1 2 3 4 5
- v) Stealing 1 2 3 4 5
- vi) Subjecting people to racial abuse 1 2 3 4 5
- vii) Cursing/Swearing at officials in sports 1 2 3 4 5
- viii) Cutting school (Truancy) 1 2 3 4 5

C) After attending a football game, you return home to discover that you have lost an envelope from your jacket pocket. The envelope contains €100 and has your name and address written on the outside. A stranger has found the envelope. If YOU found €100 in an envelope like the one described above what are the chances that you would return the stranger’s money? (Check one)

0-1%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	99-100%
Virtually No chance										Virtually Certain

Q.2: Misconduct in Higher Education

A) Anita had a test at 9am on Monday and Lou had a test at 1pm on the same day. That evening, both friends discovered that both tests were very similar. On Tuesday, Anita had a test again at 9am while Lou had a test at 1pm. After Anita’s test at 9am, she discussed the types of problems on the test and the ways in which she had answered them with Lou. Lou is now better prepared for her test at the 1pm slot as a result.

How would you assess this behaviour?

Circle/Underline;

- Academically Honest < > Academically Dishonest
- 1 2 3 4 5

B) Ed had a test at 9am on Monday and Burt had a test at 1pm on the same day. That evening, both friends discovered that both tests were very similar. On Tuesday, Ed had a test again at 9am while Burt had a test at 1 pm. After completing the test at 9am on Tuesday morning, Ed uses a spare piece of scratch paper to write out the problems and his answers. He meets Burt for coffee at 10am and gives him the problems and answers. Burt is better prepared for the second exam as a result.

How would you assess this behaviour?

Circle/Underline;

Academically Honest	<	>	Academically Dishonest	
1	2	3	4	5

C) Plagiarism: “a piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as being your own work”

Example: Copying and pasting a paragraph from Wikipedia for a paragraph in your own essay and passing it off as your own work.

Please circle/underline one only;

In your opinion, why do students plagiarise?

Laziness

Lack of skill in citing and referencing

Lack of moral responsibility

Do not think they can be caught

Other (Please specify) _____

D) Please indicate the level of seriousness you would attribute to each of the following (Circle/underline);

(Note: 1-Not serious, 5-Extremely serious)

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| i) Copying from another student during a test | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ii) One student allowing another to copy from them in a test | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| iii) Taking unauthorised material into a test – notes, pre-programmed calculator, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| iv) Giving answers to another student by signals in a test | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| v) Getting someone else to pretend they are the student – impersonating the student in a test. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| vi) Continuing to write after a test has finished. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| vii) Gaining unauthorised access to test material before sitting – test paper, marking schedule, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| viii) Padding out a bibliography with references that were not actually used. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- ix) Paraphrasing information from a web site, book or periodical without referencing the source. 1 2 3 4 5
- x) Copying information directly from another student's assignment (current or past) without their consent. 1 2 3 4 5
- xi) Working together on an assignment when it should be individual. 1 2 3 4 5

Q.3: Misconduct in the Business Environment

A) In an effort to increase productivity, the owner of a small Irish business has ordered ten personal computers for use by his staff. When the shipment of computers arrives, he notices that the invoice only charges for nine PCs, even though all ten were included with the delivery.

The owner has two options. (1) He can inform the supplier of its error and ask to be billed for the correct amount; Or (2) he can pay the amount shown on the invoice for only 9 PCs and take no further action.

If the owner pays the amount shown, the worst thing that can happen is that the supplier may later discover its error and bill him for the tenth computer. There is a high probability (99% say) that the error will never be discovered.

If YOU were the owner in the situation described above, what are the chances you would inform the mail-order house of its mistake and ask to be billed for the correct amount? **(Check one)**

0-1%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	99-100%
Virtually No chance										Virtually Certain

B) Please indicate how likely or unlikely you think the following outcomes are if you carry out unethical act(s) in the workplace (Circle/underline);

(Note: 1-Highly Unlikely, 5-Highly likely)

- i) I will get a lot of money 1 2 3 4 5
- ii) I will enjoy a better lifestyle 1 2 3 4 5
- iii) I will have better opportunities 1 2 3 4 5
- iv) I will become more competitive 1 2 3 4 5
- v) I will be legally punished 1 2 3 4 5
- vi) I will lose my job 1 2 3 4 5

C) Please indicate the level of seriousness you would attribute to each of the following (Circle/underline); (Note: 1-Not serious, 5-Extremely serious)

- i) One team member taking undue credit for a report or marketing campaign 1 2 3 4 5
- ii) An employee claiming expenses that were not incurred by him/her 1 2 3 4 5

Adapted from:

Batane, T. (2010), “Turning to Turnitin to Fight Plagiarism among University Students”, *Educational Technology and Society*, Vol.13 No.2, pp.1-12.

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Appendix ii

Questionnaire response results

Are you Male or Female?

	Percentage	Responses
Male	30%	48
Female	70%	114
	Total Responses	162

What age are you?

	Percentage	Responses
18-21	47%	111
22-25	26%	62
26-30	12%	29
30-40	7%	17
40+	8%	19
	Total Responses	238

What area are you studying?

	Percentage	Responses
Business Studies Degree (Years 1-4)	66%	157
Administration Degree (Years 1-4)	25%	59
Marketing Masters (Year 5)	2%	5
Accounting Masters (Year 5)	7%	17
	Total Responses	238

What Year are you in?

	Percentage	Responses
1 st Year	21%	50
2 nd Years	18%	43
3 rd Years	32%	77
4 th Years	20%	46
5 th Years	9%	22
	Total Responses	238

Do you work part-time?

	Percentage	Responses
Yes	51%	120
No	49%	118
	Total Responses	238

	Total	Working	Not Working
1 st years	50	17 (34%)	33 (66%)
2 nd years	43	13 (30%)	30 (70%)
3 rd years	77	41 (53%)	36 (47%)
4 th years	46	32 (70%)	14 (30%)
5 th years	22	17 (77%)	5 (23%)
Total	238	120	118

Appendix iii

Interview Transcript 1

Interview: Ethics in Third level education and the workplace

Interviewer: First of all, would you be able to talk a little about your work and how it relates to job recruitment?

Interviewee: Sure, I have a HR consultancy company. We don't position ourselves as recruitment consultants. However, from time to time we will help our clients if they need to recruit positions.

Interviewer: In terms of a company realising their objectives, how important do you think human capital is (i.e. employees of the company)?

Interviewee: Critically important. An organisation is only as capable and as competent as its people.

Interviewer: Do you believe companies are increasing their focus on human capital to a higher extent compared to other aspects of their business?

Interviewee: Yeah, we just came away from a client company and they're in fact significantly investing in the employees and their development and development of team cultures, in developing the organisation to become more competitive so it's the way of the future.

Interviewer: Do you believe companies should be placing more emphasis on human resource policies?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Do you think the financial crisis has affected companies' attitudes towards human resources and human resource policies?

Interviewee: I think that organisations realise now, or are beginning to realise, they need to be an offal lot more cost competitive, they need to be more value adding, they need to offer greater services in a much more cost effective quality way than they

have been in the past. So it's becoming more and more of a focus, yeah. They need all employees to be committed in the delivery of the objectives of the business. The only way employees can guarantee their safety of employment is to make sure the organisations they are working in are secure as well.

Interviewer: Ethical lapses played a major part in the global economic financial crisis. What steps, if any, do you think companies should take in responding to this? For example, in the recruitment process and the training process?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think in the recruitment process, the process needs to be far more robust. I mean, if you talk about small organisations, the typical recruitment process is a 20 minute face to face interview. You know, who can make an assessment of an individual and his/her merit or worth in 20 minutes. I think it needs to be developed a lot further, it needs to be competency based, you can't just rely on the interview process itself, you need to have reference checking, maybe some psychometric testing, personality profile testing, you need to engage people on a probationary period, over a 3-6 month period to assess whether or not they are efficient to the organisation. Until you do that, you're not sure you're taking on someone that will be absolutely ethical and doing everything with integrity.

Interviewer: Do you think the public's interest in companies' ethical practices relating to human resources has changed? If so, how?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think we're all just sick and tired of what has gone on in the past. What is the expression, "there isn't enough for everyone's greed for everyone's need".

Interviewer: How do you think companies have reacted or should react to a possible change in public sentiment towards the ethical behaviour of the company? For example, shareholder concerns to ethical practices in the company?

Interviewee: I think it's hugely important that you only do business with people that you like, know and trust. I think the smart companies are the companies that will ensure that everything they do is on a highly ethical basis.

Interviewer: In psychology, the attitude-behaviour gap is a term that refers to a person who says one thing, but does another? Do you think this can be related to companies in terms of their ethical attributes and their dealings with the public?

Interviewee: Maybe in times past but I think in times forward, people will see through the propaganda. They may have got away with it in the past, but not in the future. We, as the public, have become an offal lot more discerning now. We're going to require much more exacting standards from our public service and from our politicians and in turn, that will probably permeate down through business as well.

Interviewer: Do you think that there may be an expectations gap in terms of ethical practices between what the public expects from companies and what companies can realistically achieve? Or, do you think the public are fair in their expectations?

Interviewee: No, I think the public are absolutely fair. We want to get value. That's very deliverable by companies

Interviewer: To what extent do you believe third level education prepares a student for the workplace?

Interviewee: Academically, it prepares people for sure. It develops their competence and their capability. I think there's a big gap nevertheless. In that, I have come across some very intelligent graduates coming out of third level institutions and they just don't know how to think, act or behave in a way that will contribute to organisations, so there is a disconnect there in an awful lot of cases. I was just dealing earlier with a graduate of three or four years who actually graduated in journalism, and her level of punctuation, her level of grammar, her structure... you just couldn't give that individual a report to finish. So there is a disconnection there.

Interviewer: In relation to moulding a graduate's ethical competencies, how would you compare the responsibility of third level education with that of HR managers in a company in achieving this?

-Do you think they are linked?

-Does one have more responsibility than the other?

-Is one more effective than the other?

Interviewee: I think there should be a combination of both. I think ultimately it is up to the organisation that is selecting the individual that they fully understand and appreciate what constitutes good conduct within that organisation, within that business setting. That's why I think the whole induction process is critically important. Ultimately, that responsibility lies with the company. If a person is that way inclined that they are trying to get away with doing as little as possible, that they are trying to cut corners or take shortcuts, it's going to be very hard to change that.

Interviewer: Do you think that if they have that attitude going in to the workplace, that that has been consequence of college or is it more to do with themselves?

Interviewee: Yeah, well I think it goes way back to when they're youngsters, that they understand what's right and what's wrong. I think what we need to do, as a society, is to develop individuals who are principled. I think third level institutions have a role to play in that equally and organisations ultimately.

Interviewer: Do you believe companies focus more on technical skills of candidates when recruiting, or personality and ethical attributes?

Interviewee: I always encourage employers to recruit on the basis of attitude. Give me the person that has the right attitude. They may not necessarily have the requisite knowledge, skills and experience but you can teach them that, or develop those areas.

I would say what is critically important is that people are truthful, that they're trustworthy, that they're conscientious, that they have integrity and that they have the potential to grow.

Interviewer: How would you respond to each of the following quotes in terms of ethics in organisations and ethics education in third level education and the workplace? Do you think they're fair, are they related, etc?

“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”

Interviewee: True. If someone has developed patterns of behaviour, it’s going to be very difficult to turn that around.

Interviewer: “A person educated in mind and not in morals is a menace to society”

Interviewee: I’d have to agree with that. We have to do what is right in any circumstances and just because a person has got a very good education, if they behave in an immoral way, they’re not adding to society.

Interviewer: “Even the most rational approach to ethics is defenceless if there isn’t the will to do what is right”

Interviewee: Yeah, if a person isn’t willing to do what is right in given circumstances, then you’re not going to be able to change that individual.

Interviewer: “Integrity has no need of rules”.

Interviewee: Yeah, if you have got integrity, you know the right thing to do in certain circumstances, you know right from wrong. You’re able to make the choice. An example would be; I would want that my staff would do what is right, whether I am here or not. I would like to think that they’re committed to the organisation and to our clients whether I am here or not. They don’t need to be told.

Interviewer: In what order of importance do you think SHOULD be placed on the following at the recruitment stage when choosing between candidates:

- Communication skills
- Qualifications
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm
- Professional experience
- Extracurricular activities
- Ethics coverage in curriculum
- Age

Interviewee:

-Communication skills	4
-Qualifications	2
-Energy, motivation, enthusiasm	1
-Professional experience	3
-Extracurricular activities	6
-Ethics coverage in curriculum	5
-Age	7

Interviewer: In what order of importance do you think IS placed on the following at the recruitment stage when choosing between candidates:

- Communication skills
- Qualifications
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm
- Professional experience
- Extracurricular activities
- Ethics coverage in curriculum
- Age

Interviewee:

-Communication skills	4
-Qualifications	1
-Energy, motivation, enthusiasm	3
-Professional experience	2
-Extracurricular activities	6
-Ethics coverage in curriculum	5
-Age	7

Appendix iv

Interview Transcript 2

Interview: Ethics in Third level education and the workplace

Interviewer: First of all, would you be able to talk a little about your work and how it relates to job recruitment?

Interviewee: I'm the head of HR, so I have recruiters coming into me who would do all the recruitment for me.

Interviewer: In terms of a company realising their objectives, how important do you think human capital is (i.e. employees of the company)?

Interviewee: Absolutely vital, we're a service industry so everything we do is based on our people, so getting the quality employees in and training them and developing them throughout their careers is absolutely vital to our success. Colleges play a big part in that by training people in the skills we need and colleges have been excellent as they've tailored programmes specifically for us so that really helps us to deliver and that helps us to get jobs in here because without the talent, the work isn't going to come to Ireland, it's going to go to India or somewhere else.

Interviewer: Do you believe companies are increasing their focus on human capital to a higher extent compared to other aspects of their business?

Interviewee: Well, our company definitely is. During the turbulent financial crisis that's been happening over the last few years, during the worst of it when our share prices have been at their lowest, the chair of the company decided that that's where he was going to focus his time, was on talent, because the senior management team, who heads the entire company would see that as where the company is going to differentiate itself, so yes, we have definitely put a much bigger focus on talent within the company and I would see that reflected in other organisations that I would be talking to as well so that is definitely a direction.

Interviewer: Do you think the financial crisis has affected companies' attitudes towards human resources and human resource policies?

Interviewee: Yeah, there has been different sorts of impacts. I suppose, one of them, would have been that back in the turbulent times, a lot of companies would have pulled back on their benefits, their salaries. So that was one outcome. Also, there was more unemployment so it was easier to get employees, depending on what kind of roles you have. Then the other side of it is that companies are aware that they probably need more oversight. For example, there's a big demand now for auditors and that type of role in organisations because they would have learned from the past as they would have learned from larger organisations that you really need to have all your checkpoints in place.

Interviewer: Ethical lapses played a major part in the financial crisis. What steps, if any, do you think companies should take in responding to this? For example, in the recruitment process and the training process?

Interviewee: Well one thing is getting your risk departments in place and getting your officers in place and then training them to be your watchdogs. But in terms of recruiting, we would have added in steps, we would be working with an external vendor now who would do background checks on people which we wouldn't have been doing before so that would be in terms of credit checking or police checking particularly if they're coming in from other countries so there's probably a lot more of that happening now than there was before, more thorough reference checks, that you're not just checking references but you're going back and checking the person's work history so I think companies probably have tightened up in areas like that as well. So it's a more robust recruitment process.

Interviewer: Do you think the public's interest in companies' ethical practices relating to human resources has changed? If so, how?

Interviewee: I would expect so. I would expect that the focus on ethics and at every department and at every level of the organisation has probably increased. For example, our company would have ethics officers at all levels from the board, all the way down, every level of management. I'm an ethics officer at the company here and I would report then to an ethics officer and all our employees would do web based training on ethics. Our leadership teams would all attend ethics sessions with myself

and the ethics officer from the US so we would have a big focus on it. We have policies in place and employees would be aware that it can't be breached in various areas just to ensure we are being very ethical.

Interviewer: How do you think companies have reacted or should react to a possible change in public sentiment towards the ethical behaviour of the company? For example, shareholder concerns to ethical practices in the company?

Interviewee: I do think companies have to be seen to, not only seen to, but it makes good business sense as well that you are acting in an ethical manner. For example, one of the things that we would have in place is, we would encourage all employees to report ethical issues but it's very hard for an employee to report an ethical issue, maybe if the person they're reporting is their team leader or manager so we've put in an external company to act as a helpline so an employee could ring them totally confidentially and it would come back into the ethics in the US and the ethics office here so it is a totally confidentiality system for somebody. So encouraging whistleblowing and protecting people who do raise a flag, I think it's really crucial and I think if people see that in place, then they're going to have a greater level of comfort around what's happening in an organisation because there's no doubt about it; before a crisis, there are people who know about it, people on the ground who can see it happening but they didn't feel empowered to speak up obviously whereas now, that's really what companies have to do. They have to empower people on the ground to speak up because sometimes with all the best intentions in the world, management may not see what's happening at certain levels but there are definitely people there who do. And I think companies need to be publishing that and making aware of what they are doing.

Interviewee: In psychology, the attitude-behaviour gap is a term that refers to a person who says one thing, but does another? Do you think this can be related to companies in terms of their ethical attributes and their dealings with the public?

Interviewer: It can definitely be the case, unless, as I say, you have a good whistleblowing process in place because if you are at any level in an organisation and you know the person sitting beside you in the meeting could report you for unethical

behaviour, you're unlikely then to indulge in it, whereas if you don't have that in place and a really good safety net for the people reporting, then absolutely, that is what we're seeing.

Interviewer: Do you think that there may be an expectations gap in terms of ethical practices between what the public expects from companies and what companies can realistically achieve? Or, do you think the public are fair in their expectations?

Interviewee: Well, to be honest, I couldn't say what all the expectations are in the public, but I think the public are reasonable to expect that business is being conducted in a manner that is in their best interests. If they're paying an organisation for a service, I think they have a right to expect that the service is delivered in a way that they're not going to end up suffering as a lot of shareholders suffered in the past where sound decisions were not taken and they ended up carrying the can rather than the company, rather than the actual companies or the people running the companies so shareholders have a right to their expectations, the public have a right to their expectations, employees have a right to their expectations and I do think companies need to be taking steps to address the concerns of all those parties. And publishing. I think they're going to have to (publish), I don't think it's going to be optional, I think people are going to deal with the companies where they feel their interests are being protected, employees are going to want to work in the companies where they feel it's safe to say and where the company respects them to say what's happening, that they know themselves is fair and right. So I think it (publishing) will be a survival issue.

Interviewee: Do you think more legislation will be brought in regarding disclosures?

Interviewer: I do and it's not the ideal way for it to be happening from my viewpoint in that legislation will put in a lot of red tape and depending on what type of business you're in, it could be very cumbersome and may not be the right solution as people begin to take actions just to tick boxes of what's going to meet the legislation rather than doing it from the viewpoint of; I actually want to act in an ethical manner so this is what I am going to do to make sure I do. So, maybe it's not the ideal solution so I think it may be required. In my thinking, it's like capitalism. I would be more inclined to say to companies; you put in what's going to work, show us how it's going

to work and then we respond to that either by; the shareholders will not invest in you if they're not happy, as customers, we will not deal with you, as employees, we're not going to work here if we're not happy and I think that would have the result anyway but legislation, I feel, brings red tape and people just comply with it and may not be doing anything more than just complying with the legislation. You'd have people just ticking boxes.

Interviewer: To what extent do you believe third level education prepares a student for the workplace?

Interviewee: To some extent. Obviously it's a very different world. I feel college, it prepares people academically, but unless they have placements, translating that into the workplace can be a challenge for people coming in initially. For a lot of companies like ourselves, we have to be very lean in that we're competing with organisations cutting their costs? If we get a student in, we expect them to be immediately billable and deliver value to the customer. Unless there's a lot of practical work in a college course, that's very difficult for a person to do. They're going to need time to translate the theory they've learned into what that actually means on the ground

Interviewer: So do you think in the curriculum, there should be more practical based work.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. Now, I know it's hard for colleges to get companies to get them to take people in and that's a whole other challenge but maybe if they could do more practical stuff during the course themselves and simulating the work environment. For example, setting up a room like a mini company and people go in there and they might have, depending on what course you're doing, you might be in such and such a department so it's a more real to life.

Interviewer: In relation to moulding a graduate's ethical competencies, how would you compare the responsibility of third level education with that of HR managers in a company in achieving this?

-Do you think they are linked?

-Does one have more responsibility than the other?

-Is one more effective than the other?

Interviewee: Well, to be honest, it's the first time I thought that colleges might be doing that at all. When somebody comes in here, no matter if it's from college or from another company we would always take the approach that we're starting from scratch and we would always put them through all our training so I'm not aware that colleges are doing that or how they're doing that so I can't really answer the question.

Interviewer: I mean, for instance, small factors within the college environment that may encourage ethical behaviour such as in assignments, academic misconduct, whether they should try and get across to the student what's acceptable and what's not acceptable

Interviewee: I think that's absolutely what you want to be happening but we'd have no proof that it is happening. As long as they have their qualifications, if we know they have their qualifications, that they have these subjects and are competent in them, but we'd have no way of telling how ethical they are.

Interviewer: Do you think unethical behaviour by a student in third level education may be linked to unethical behaviour when that student enters the workplace?

Interviewee: Like, we would look back at a person's history, but to be honest with you, it's very hard to say what a nineteen year old does is indicative of what that adult person will do because we're all a bit mad at that stage so it's probably a small indicator but I wouldn't see it as an indicator of how that person's going to turn out really. I don't think it would be right that it be a major factor in recruitment in that you're judging somebody on the rest of their life on something that happened when they were at the most volatile period of their entire life. I do think that it's important that they're learning ethics are important and they're understanding that and by the time they're leaving college that they will have moved to there, but I think in the early years, they're still developing. So if you're saying colleges should report unethical acts by a student to a company, then I'd say not. If you're saying that the unethical

conduct by a student involves copying an exam, then they're obviously going to fail the exam so they're not going to get through unless that behaviour changes anyway.

Interviewer: So, would you be saying that unethical behaviour at this stage is just part of their development and when they enter the company, their ethical attributes are moulded here?

Interviewee: When they come, they will be trained in what we expect and then we have disciplinary procedures in place to handle it, so they won't be here long basically if they are unethical in the workplace. But to say no, I am not going to hire you because you cheated on an exam in first year, but then you repeated and you got your degree, I wouldn't be saying that I wouldn't want to hire, I would say that you probably learned a good lesson, that maybe you've learned a better lesson in ethics than someone who never done it because, for example, you had to repeat your whole year.

Interviewer: So if there was a way of identifying the unethical conduct in college, you wouldn't take that as a major factor because you're going to develop their character?

Interviewee: That would be my thinking. However, if they did it in their final exams, then you could say that's who they are right now. But if they did it way back in first year and had to repeat, you'd think they learned a lesson and that's fine. Like even in the workplace, you'd always give somebody a warning before you'd let them go so even in the workplace, unless it was a really serious breach they'd be gone immediately, but if it was a more minor breach, then you'd warn them first and then they would be gone.

Interviewer: Do you believe companies focus more on technical skills of candidates when recruiting, or personality and ethical attributes?

Interviewee: Well, no.1 technical and no.2 personality. At our company, we need them to have the technical skills for the role they're being brought in to and then they need the communication skills and a good creative sort of approach and a positive

attitude so that's what we'd be looking for. We wouldn't even think about ethics to be honest with you.

Interviewer: Do you believe it is easier to develop a person's key competency skills in third level education and the workplace or a person's ethical attributes?

Interviewee: Well, developing ethical attitudes is really implementing ethics in your organisation. I definitely think people will do whatever they think they can get away with and at some point they're going to have to learn you can't get away with it so the sooner that happens the better so yes, I would think colleges should create an ethical environment and that students should be aware of that and that breaches should be handled seriously and I would think that's what would be an important aspect of if it is easier to that than behavioural competencies. I think they have to go hand in hand really. Like, I think the ethics is something underlying, I don't think it's something to spend a lot of training time on but it's something that initially students are trained this is what you do, ethics is why we're an ethical environment and then taking actions based on breaches so you're demonstrating more by action than by talking about it.

Interviewer: So I suppose if you're saying people will get away with as much as possible, it sort of goes back to the red tape issue?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it is human nature, we will do as much as we can get away with, it's just a fact of life.

Interviewer: Do you think companies should be aiming to assess a graduate's ethical competencies when recruiting or do you think it is adequate to leave this area to the training process?

Interviewee: Yeah, in what way would you suggest doing that?

Interviewer: It's obviously difficult as it's a bit of an intangible but maybe through an assessment period or a trial period.

Interviewee: Well, people always do a six month probation so it would be part of what you're trialling them for but if you're interviewing someone, they're not going to tell you they're unethical so it would be very hard to pinpoint until they are actually in and then there is a six month probation. I'd say even after that, if they do something very unethical they're going to be gone anyway.

Interviewer:

How would you respond to each of the following quotes in terms of ethics in organisations and ethics education in third level education and the workplace? Do you think they're fair, are they related, etc.

“You can't teach an old dog new tricks”

Interviewee: You can definitely teach an old dog new tricks if there's enough pain in the process because I would really see it in companies, like I would see people in companies who may have acted in certain ways but once whistle-blowing was brought in and they would know that their PA would be able to report them, their behaviour changes very fast because that person is probably at a level where they're earning at a very high level and they wouldn't want to lose it, not only lose it but lose it in shame so I think yeah, absolutely, because people are always looking for...if somebody acts unethically, it's because they're better off doing that and they think there's a gain in it for them. If instead of gain, there's pain, then we're not going to do it. With ethics, I really think the most effective thing is whistle-blowing but I don't think there's anything else that is as effective as that, knowing that the person you're with in any situation can report you.

Interviewer: “A person educated in mind and not in morals is a menace to society”

Interviewee: Yes, this is true, I would agree with that but I think it's up to every organisation to have policies in place to make sure that breaches only happen once.

Interviewer: “Even the most rational approach to ethics is defenceless if there isn't the will to do what is right”

Interviewee: No, not in my opinion. Again, if you have a way of catching people and taking action, then I would think that's effective but if the will of a whole group wasn't there, so if you had a whole group where everyone has bought in to doing the unethical thing, that's where you would run into trouble alright so it would have to be the will of a group of people and then you need to have people in other processes doing audits from outside. So you would have the group brought in and the auditors.

Interviewer: So maybe it's happened in the past where people were determined to collude, which possibly led to major scandals?

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely and I am talking about big organisations where you would have a lot of people but in smaller setups then it might be easier because you might only have two people in an office then so if those two collude, then absolutely, or if you have person in control

Interviewer: "Integrity has no need of rules".

Interviewee: No, I would disagree with that. It does have need of rules, very clear rules because if they're not clearly spelled out then you can't implement them and you can't act on breaches.

Interviewer: So how would you balance that between the red tape and the spirit of the concept, if there's there spirit, then maybe there are fewer rules?

Interviewee: So the risk to me is where the external body is imposing it because there is a lot of form filling involved but if the company themselves draw up rules, rules will never come into play unless somebody is in breach, so the person acting with integrity doesn't ever think of those rules, they don't apply to them, they've worked sixty years and they've never heard a rule quoted at them, so the rules only apply with people who are not acting with integrity but then it's really important that the rules are there so you can take action against them.

Interviewer: In what order of importance do you think SHOULD be placed on the following at the recruitment stage when choosing between candidates:

- Communication skills
- Qualifications
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm
- Professional experience
- Extracurricular activities
- Ethics coverage in curriculum
- Age

Interviewee:

- Communication skills 4
- Qualifications 2
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm 1
- Professional experience 3
- Extracurricular activities 6
- Ethics coverage in curriculum 5
- Age 7

Interviewer:

In what order of importance do you think IS placed on the following at the recruitment stage when choosing between candidates:

- Communication skills
- Qualifications
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm
- Professional experience
- Extracurricular activities
- Ethics coverage in curriculum
- Age

Interviewee:

- Communication skills 4
- Qualifications 1
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm 3
- Professional experience 2
- Extracurricular activities 6

-Ethics coverage in curriculum	5
-Age	7

Interviewer: Can I finally ask you if you think there is any aspect of your experience of dealing recruitment and ethics that has not been covered in this interview?

Interviewee: Well the main thing I would say really is it's difficult to determine somebody's ethics in recruitment because they are obviously not going to admit to wrongdoing or intention of wrongdoing so while it would be ideal, other than doing background checking, if there's something serious enough to be recorded, and by doing reference checking, unless that shows something, you're always going to have to have your policies in place that you can act on those breaches

Interviewer: So overall, would it be fair that you would say that there isn't a major link between ethics and education and ethics in the workplace, and that its generally up to the company?

Interviewee: I do think that it's important that colleges are addressing it but I don't think it would be that companies will be using it as a factor to hire perhaps, other than if there was consistently unethical people coming out of a college; obviously you're not going to hire them again. So I don't think you're going to look at it on the date of hire but if you take two people in from one college and they both acted dishonestly, then I think you're going to look at another college for recruitment next time so I think that's where it may come into play. So yes, I think they should be doing it, but do I think they're going to see employers ranking people on ethics in hiring, I don't think that's going to happen, not with me anyway

Appendix v

Interview Transcript 3

Interview: Ethics in Third level education and the workplace

Interviewer: First of all, would you be able to talk a little about your work and how it relates to job recruitment?

Interviewee: Ok, so I am Senior HR consultant here so I look after all the recruitment on site. We're purely a software development house so we hire the likes of developers, senior developers right down to graduate level and that's on the development side and we also recruit on the QA side from lead QA straight down to a graduate person as well. We also hire eight interns as well who take their third year out of college and do an industrial development and we also hire eight masters students because we develop a course in conjunction with a college called Masters in Enterprise applications development and we are in our second year and we took on eight students last year and we hired three of those back for permanent roles and then we've taken on the eight masters students as well this year so we hire right across the board. I also look after a company in Dublin which is a customer of this company and I look after all their recruitment there. They hire registry officials to deal with people calling up to register and their financial interests and we hire those people and we've hired, we're in the process of hiring a software development officer as well.

Interviewer: In terms of a company realising their objectives, how important do you think human capital is (i.e. employees of the company)?

Interviewee: Last year, we put in a performance management system which I was responsible for rolling out because we have a three year business plan in place and to become more competitive in the market against our competitors so, in line with our three year business plan, we have to look at our performance management and how we reward and attract people to come and work for the company so prior to this year, we didn't have any objectives set for our annual salary review but now this year, we have five to seven objectives and they have to be smart objectives so yes, without human capital, we wouldn't be able to be as competitive as we are. A lot of replacement roles and new roles are coming into this branch so the calibre we get is really important.

Interviewer: Do you believe companies are increasing their focus on human capital to a higher extent compared to other aspects of their business?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think that given the current economic climate that we're in, human capital is really important. Yes, we're focusing on getting top talent. We have rolled out a number of manager excellence sessions for managers, a lot to do with annual salary review in terms of writing objectives because this was the first year so we supported them in that, giving and receiving feedback when we did final year reviews. Also, we did a session on talent management on attracting talent to the company and now as we're coming up to our media review, we'll be doing sessions on media review.

So yes, they do focus a lot on that in terms of... we ran a big project here last year for example for the Qatar government. Normally we would just interview people we would want, we wouldn't test people on their technical skills but we hired a company externally, we got all of our internal staff to complete the test, to use as a benchmark for the people we will be recruiting to see what level or percentage they would need to achieve to get an interview with our company. So we work with a supplier in the UK and we rolled out those casts and basically, we set a percentage level that people would need for an interview and definitely there's a lot on human capital. What we do here is rotate people around the company so they get experience in different areas as well and also this year just now we are rolling out a new online system called Talent Management so where you can go into your own personal details and then it's near to a mini CV so the purpose of that is that we actually see who's available in the business, what skills they have so if something became available in the US or down in the Middle East, that if we were looking for someone with particular skills, we could call on that person and try call that person and get them to do a placement over in those different countries, so definitely there's a big emphasis on that this year.

Interviewer: Do you think the financial crisis has affected companies' attitudes towards human resources and human resource policies? Explain.

Interviewee: A lot of the focus is on performance management so definitely that while managers at the company do engage with HR an offal lot anyway, but if we are

going through a particular bad performance, they engage with HR straight away and work with that person's poor performance and bring it up to a satisfactory level but definitely their attitudes are more in line with our three year business plan and moving forward, is that we see people that are performing, we just can't have people who are poor performers and we've had to deal with them pretty much straight away anyway so their attitude is, because we're so busy as well, we need to get people to engage with the work, so yeah, they engage with HR straight away and the HR policies that are always in place.

Interviewer: Ethical lapses played a major part in the financial crisis. What steps, if any, do you think companies should take in responding to this? For example, in the recruitment process and the training process?

Interviewee: Here, we have an ethics policy so last year, we had to complete training online with our ethics policy and you had to pass at least 80% of it so the company put a big focus on it. If there's lapses in the recruitment process, well we go through quite a rigorous recruitment process where we telephone first and then we bring the person in for second round interviews, they do testing, HR meet with them as well so we try and ensure that everything from an ethical perspective is covered in the recruitment process. We don't do training here because all our training function is in the UK and a lot of our training is done online as well.

Interviewer: Do you think the public's interest in companies' ethical practices relating to human resources has changed? If so, how?

Interviewee: I think a company's good name always displays a public interest in the company because you do get a lot of people coming in here with applications so, yeah, if someone heard something bad about this company, I'm sure it wouldn't do our public profile any good.

Interviewer: For example, from ethical lapses that have occurred globally, do you think there's more scrutiny from the public?

Interviewee: Well, one company I can think of is PWC, they got a bit of bad publicity last year in Dublin but definitely I think, because it's graduates, because it's a much more competitive environment out there and graduates are really particular about what company they want to join, if they've heard something bad about them in the press or through word of mouth then definitely, I know they would think twice about applying for a role, I know I would anyway, in my own personal circumstances but I think definitely people are very clued in given the current climate, about companies and if they hear anything bad, I don't they will be applying.

Interviewer: In psychology, the attitude-behaviour gap is a term that refers to a person who says one thing, but does another? Do you think this can be related to companies in terms of their ethical attributes and their dealings with the public?

Interviewee: Well, we deal a little bit with the public when people come in here for roles, but a work experience person is treated the same way as you would treat a permanent employee and it all stems from myself because I would be responsible for dealing with all the recruitment so definitely, we would not breach our ethics because it is really embedded into us and we only did it last year as well.

Interviewer: Maybe in relation to companies, in general saying one thing but doing another?

Interviewee: Well, I'm sure it still goes on in some companies. I mean in their recruitment policies, it says they don't discriminate although I know they actually do so it's a difficult question to answer because I don't know what other companies' ethical attributes are. I know a company and what they say on their website is completely different when you actually go in there so I mean, they say work life balance, they advertise big benefits but when it comes down to it, there's no work life balance, you're in there working all the time and their HR policies, they don't follow them at all, they just decide one day, they walk in and they don't like you and you're gone so that's one company in Dublin that I could possibly comment on that don't have any ethical attributes at all. However, I wouldn't see their company reports because nobody would ever see them anyway. I know they should be in the public

domain but I haven't even looked for them but from knowing that company, they wouldn't even have an ethics policy at all.

Interviewer: Do you think that there may be an expectations gap in terms of ethical practices between what the public expects from companies and what companies can realistically achieve? Or, do you think the public are fair in their expectations?

Interviewee: Yeah, speaking about this company in general, worldwide, in some countries, yeah, that given there is a world recession, there are parts of the company where there is a gap between what the company can offer and realistically pay. So take remuneration, we would have some heavily unionised countries and we would have to negotiate with those unions on annual salary review and what the unions and staff would be looking for is something that the company would not be able to offer so I think in one country, they wanted to be paid in dollars because of the exchange fluctuation but when it actually transpired and the HR manager went and spoke to the employees, they didn't actually want that, they wanted to be compensated for that exchange rate going back over five years, so they were looking for a 120% increase in their salary and of course, the company can't afford to do that. We did an annual salary review here and we got a very small budget, I mean it was about 3% to remunerate staff so definitely there's that perception, that if a company is profitable, is not in the red, then staff will think they can pay. But that's normal, people will always look for something extra.

I think the public's number one interest is job creation, over ethics. Ethics comes into it but I think its jobs first. The public may turn their backs on ethics themselves if jobs are being created and not think about it.

Interviewer: To what extent do you believe third level education prepares a student for the workplace?

Interviewee: To a certain extent, but I think third level education will just prepare people in education terms. In terms of experience, they can never prepare students for that because in terms of ethics, the way you work with colleagues, the way you treat colleagues. The only way you'll actually learn that is if you actually come into the

workplace and you work. Student's that actually do industrial placement, that gives them very good experience because they take that year out of college and it gives them that experience so that when they go back to college and are in their final year, they know what to expect when they go out to the workplace. But I would say it's down the workplace, college does prepare you a certain amount but not the whole amount.

Interviewer: Do you think it could be changed a bit?

Interviewee: Well, we take on the eight interns here and I have to say, there's a large difference between when they come in and when they go. So maybe we take the interns on for the year and then in August, we get our new batch in, the difference between the two groups is unbelievable and they learn so much, it's hard to quantify, they get a good rounded experience. I think colleges in Ireland should, I know it's probably hard given how many students there are and how many industries there are in Ireland and how practical it is for every student to go out and get work experience but I do think they should stagger it. So say they do their first year, maybe some go in their second year, maybe some go out in the fourth year so every student gets a year's work experience in the workplace because that actually prepares them for when they go out, doing interviews, what they actually want to look for in a role, how they work with people, I think that would be invaluable experience and I am surprised that has been something that hasn't been taken up a lot sooner.

Interviewer: In relation to moulding a graduate's ethical competencies, how would you compare the responsibility of third level education with that of HR managers in a company in achieving this?

-Do you think they are linked?

-Does one have more responsibility than the other?

-Is one more effective than the other?

Interviewee: I can only comment on my own experience when I was in college. I can comment a bit for a local college. I would say, in the college we take on the masters students from, I would say they are grilled in terms of the way they come to the company and the tutors would work very closely with students. Whether it's done, if

there's a particular programme they study during their degree, I would say possibly no. Here, we would do our induction when our students join the first day and we would do a section on ethics and they all get their ethics policy with their contract of employment and they all have to read it and they have to sign it to make sure they've read it. And also, there's an online course as well and they have to do the ethics briefing within their first 90 days here.

Interviewer: So, would you expect graduates coming in to have some ethical standards?

Interviewee: Well, under our ethics, teamwork, you'd expect them to have that, ethical behaviour; you'd expect them to have that. You'd expect them to have a minimum but you wouldn't expect them to be experts in the area.

Interviewer: Do you think unethical behaviour by a student in third level education may be linked to unethical behaviour when that student enters the workplace?

Interviewee: I'd have to see what they did in college that was unethical. It depends on the student, on their whole motivation, what they actually want out of life, so if someone has been unethical in college, well then, I am sure it would come over into the workplace. But I have never come across unethical students here. One company, PWC, in Dublin, they had an issue last year, where the student sent out emails about females in the company. So predominantly, that probably came from college and led into the workplace as well so yes, I could see that happening where students probably don't understand, they're at college, there are no real ramifications about sending an email about somebody else to their friends. But I don't think people realise that when they come to work, email is company property. So the IT department can look at your email or what you are viewing on the internet as well. But I don't think in that case, the students thought of the employment equality act where they were discriminating against those women sending those comments around. I didn't hear what happened in the end but I don't think it did any favours in the end for their reputation as one of the big four accountancy firms or for people, particularly women, to join them given what went on there. If there was a suitably qualified female applying, would she think,

well am I going to be in the same boat as those female students that were commented on and would that hamper their recruitment process as well?

Interviewer: So would it be fair to say that they took those attitudes from college?

Interviewee: I would say, yeah.

Interviewer: Would you say colleges should take responsibility for that type of behaviour or do you think it's not their problem?

Interviewee: I do think they should do ethics and I would guess a lot of colleges don't. They should work more closely with companies in the locality and talk about ethics and I would say have a semester on ethics each year so students are kept refreshed on ethics because it is important that when people enter the workplace they understand ethics.

Interviewer: Before it's too late?

Interviewee: Exactly and I think if that had been done in terms of PWC, if the students had done ethics training in college or when they came into their induction, then that could have prevented that which I don't think PWC were too happy about.

Interviewer: Do you believe companies focus more on technical skills of candidates when recruiting, or personality and ethical attributes?

Interviewee: Well, if you're talking about this company, it's both. We look at skills but also the personality and ethical attributes and see if there's a fit between this company and the employee, so it's both.

Interviewer: Do you believe it is easier to develop a person's key competency skills in third level education and the workplace or a person's ethical attributes?

Interviewee: They develop as a person and they develop their technical skills because that's what we really want. You can say that some goes up through the software

development route, they come up to a manager level. So you want a mix of both, good software skills but also good personality and ethical attributes. I think it's up to the company to develop the ethical attributes as well, not just the technical skills. What I find with technical people, they're good technically, but in terms of people management, they're not and that's something that's not just here. I think its technical people all over, they just are good technically but when it comes to people management or anything like that, they're not good.

Interviewer: So do you think it's harder to develop that?

Interviewer: It is because they need to engage more with HR because they see it very much from a technical perspective rather than a business perspective so that's because if nobody gets the training and they are here a number of years, then it is very hard to change that person, it takes quite a lot of effort to do that.

Interviewee: Do you think companies should be aiming to assess a graduate's ethical competencies when recruiting or do you think it is adequate to leave this area to the training process?

Interviewee: I think it's easier to develop it from day one as opposed to assessing graduate's ethical competencies because in my time, I have never assessed a person's ethical competencies so I think it's easier to develop it when they come into a company.

Interviewer: How would you respond to each of the following quotes in terms of ethics in organisations and ethics education in third level education and the workplace? Do you think they're fair, are they related, etc?

“You can't teach an old dog new tricks”

Interviewee: Depends on the person. Some people can't be trained and some people don't want to take on change or new responsibilities whereas other people are just open to it all the time. It depends on the person and on the company. If a person's here a long time then it's very hard because they get stuck in their ways.

Interviewer: In terms of ethics?

Interviewee: I suppose you can. It depends on what they're unethical in. If they're unethical in recruitment, you just need to pull that person aside. If they're unethical towards employees, or towards a certain gender or race, then that's more serious and that's something that takes a longer commitment. I'd say people can be taught. It depends on the person and the area.

Interviewer: "A person educated in mind and not in morals is a menace to society"

Interviewee: I would tend to disagree because you could be the best educated person in the world and have no morals at all. In terms of ethics, I've seen a lot of people who are well educated and have not a lot of morals. But I wouldn't say a menace to society. It depends on who they are.

Interviewer: "Even the most rational approach to ethics is defenceless if there isn't the will to do what is right"

Interviewee: I'd have to agree with that one, yeah.

Interviewer: "Integrity has no need of rules"

Interviewee: Integrity does, everyone has integrity. But you have rules for having integrity. I would say in terms of ethics in organisations, ethics in education, I would say they're related and that's fair because both stem from education and also from organisations.

Interviewer: In what order of importance do you think SHOULD be placed on the following at the recruitment stage when choosing between candidates:

- Communication skills
- Qualifications
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm
- Professional experience

- Extracurricular activities
- Ethics coverage in curriculum
- Age

Interviewee:

- Communication skills 3
- Qualifications 2
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm 4
- Professional experience 1
- Extracurricular activities 6
- Ethics coverage in curriculum 5
- Age 7

Interviewer: In what order of importance do you think IS placed on the following at the recruitment stage when choosing between candidates:

- Communication skills
- Qualifications
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm
- Professional experience
- Extracurricular activities
- Ethics coverage in curriculum
- Age

Interviewee:

- Communication skills 3
- Qualifications 2
- Energy, motivation, enthusiasm 4
- Professional experience 1
- Extracurricular activities 6
- Ethics coverage in curriculum 5
- Age 7

(Same order as above)