



Institutional case study

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1. Context for case study

1.1. The Plagiarism Advisory Service

The Plagiarism Advisory Service acknowledges that plagiarism is a complex problem, which demands an equally complex response from educational institutions. The service was inaugurated in 2002, to provide advice and guidance on plagiarism prevention and detection to UK JISC¹-funded institutions. Additionally, the service hosts a national electronic detection facility, provided by US software developers, iParadigms, and based on the Turnitin² product, and branded TurnitinUK. This detection facility was offered free of charge to JISC-funded institutions until summer 2005, and following this trial period a subscription to the software has been required. Currently around 80% of HE institutions in the UK have active subscriptions to the software. Although initially the software was viewed as an immediate solution to the issue, institutions more recently have adopted a holistic approach to plagiarism, which considers how use of these tools integrate with institutional policies and procedures and robust pedagogical practices.

1.2. Quality assurance and plagiarism strategies at the institution

The University's institutional and strategic management of quality assurance and enhancement are published in two documents that are publicly available online. One document brings together all the University's policies relating to academic quality and standards. The University's enhancement strategy enables it to identify characteristics of learning and teaching that are to be valued and sustained, and those which are in need of review or development; it also enables the University to take account of external developments in its forward planning. Institutional initiatives, such as this development of a case study with the Plagiarism Advisory Service, are used to inform and evaluate elements of the University's quality assurance and enhancement agenda.

A university-wide plagiarism policy was developed at undergraduate level in 2003/04 and subsequently one was introduced for postgraduate coursework and dissertations in 2004/05. These policies aim to ensure consistent and transparent procedures and identify a single range of penalties across the University. They are based on the understanding that departments explain to students the nature of plagiarism, that they periodically reinforce this explanation, and that no action is taken without the plagiarised source having been identified. Both policies were reviewed and revised during 2004/05 in light of the implementation of the undergraduate policy.

All student handbooks now contain a standardised statement about plagiarism, and training and awareness-raising sessions on plagiarism are

¹ Joint Information Systems Committee

² Further details may be found at <http://www.turnitin.com>

provided for both staff and students by one of the institution's key academic support departments. In addition, this department has provided and managed university-wide access to the TurnitinUK plagiarism detection software through the Plagiarism Advisory Service since 2003/4, firstly on a trial basis, and more recently via subscription.

During 2005/6 the institution entered into an extensive dialogue with the Plagiarism Advisory Service regarding its contract for TurnitinUK with the US software developers. This resulted in a number of changes, ensuring that the contract reflected European rather than US law (particularly in relation to the Standard Contractual Clauses and the Export Control Regulations). During 2006/7 the University will be taking the decision on whether it will provide recurrent funding for an institutional licence subscription to TurnitinUK.

2. Methodology

An introductory meeting between representatives from the Plagiarism Advisory Service and the University was held in October 2005 in order to establish key contacts and agree the remit for the case study. At the same time a staff development workshop was conducted by the Plagiarism Advisory Service for staff at the institution. The session focused on the use and capabilities of the detection software, and how it can assist with a holistic approach to plagiarism. During the session staff were encouraged to try out the software, and were set typical essay questions, which they answered from a range of sources including search engines and essay bank sites. Responses to the essay questions were then submitted to the plagiarism detection software for analysis, and results were discussed during the session. Feedback from the workshop indicated that the session was well-received and relevant.

A series of generic questionnaires have been created by the Plagiarism Advisory Service, based around the institutional audit tool or "roadmap"³, developed by the service, which focuses on key areas in a holistic approach to plagiarism prevention. The questionnaires will ultimately be made available for use by staff and students in institutions across the further and higher education sectors, in order to establish both a local and national picture.

A questionnaire developed specifically for academic staff was used in a survey approach at the institution, in order to establish a baseline of activities related to plagiarism within the University. The questionnaire sought tutors' experiences of academic misconduct, plagiarism, and poor academic practice, and looked at their individual practice in preventing and detecting plagiarism, highlighting examples of good practice. It used a combination of mainly closed response and some free text questions. Staff were also asked to consider the mechanisms used to inform students of policies and procedures at the University,

³ Duggan, F. (2005) Plagiarism Advisory Service roadmap. Available at http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/images/bin/roadmap_version_4_r3.pdf (Accessed: 22 September, 2006)

their practices in setting assignments, and methods used for detecting possible instances of plagiarism. Additionally, the questionnaire investigated staff understanding of institutional policies and procedures in place at the University, and attempted to identify any training needs in this area.

The questionnaire was made available online via a commercial hosting company, and a link was circulated to all academic staff at the University for their completion during a four-week period in February/March 2006. The timing of the questionnaire distribution was agreed with contacts at the institution in order to reach staff early in the second semester.

Following analysis, the survey results were fed back to key contacts at the institution for comment, along with recommendations for future investigation, and additional staff development activities that may be required. These are detailed in the following sections.

3. Results

3.1. Results of staff survey

The survey received 96 responses from a total of 1400 academic staff at the University, indicating a response rate of 6.8%. Feedback from the University on the questionnaire itself indicated that some members of staff were deterred by the closed nature of the majority of the questions and the limited responses available to them. Some respondents, for example, did not feel comfortable responding with a definitive 'yes' or 'no', since their accurate response would have been 'sometimes'. The questionnaire was purposely designed in this way, to elicit either a definitive positive or negative response, however, given the complexity of the nature of the problem, clearly staff would have appreciated more opportunities to present their experiences and perceptions via free text responses. For example one tutor commented:

"The on-line survey doesn't enable us to offer an evaluation of our plagiarism policy."

The questionnaire will be revised in order to address this feedback.

A demographic breakdown of respondents in relation to cognate areas and length of teaching career can be found in Appendix C.

3.1.1. Staff experiences of plagiarism

When asked to identify the most commonly occurring behaviours constituting plagiarism or poor academic practice that they had encountered, during the last academic year, tutors mainly cited “copying paragraphs from various sources, without acknowledgement, and handing it in as [the student’s own] work”. Much less common were other forms of academic misconduct such as making up references and falsifying data. Downloading or purchasing material from an essay bank, or commissioning work from a ghostwriting service, were also rarely identified. Tutors identified first year undergraduates and overseas students as the two key cohorts in which the range of behaviours constituting plagiarism or poor academic practice appeared to be most prevalent.

When asked to suggest, from their own experience, why these groups appeared particularly susceptible to academic misconduct, tutors most commonly selected:

- Lack of understanding as to what constitutes academic work.
- Poor or undeveloped study and research skills.
- Poor time management.
- Differences in cultural outlook regarding academic conventions.
- Difficulties with studying in a second language.
- Poor study skills taught at school.

Full details of free text responses to this question can be found in Appendix B.

3.1.2. Staff knowledge and application of institutional policies

This section of the questionnaire indicated that, on the whole, staff at the University were well-informed about institutional policies and procedures relating to plagiarism and academic misconduct. In terms of institutional guidance, 98.77% of those responding to the question were aware that the university had a specific policy on plagiarism. Likewise, 87.34% felt that they had a clear idea of how to adhere to the university’s policy if they suspected a student of plagiarism. 69.62% did not feel that the university’s policies on plagiarism were too bureaucratic, and 75.95% felt that policies were well-publicised within the institution.

For 89.87% of respondents the university’s policies on plagiarism were felt to be appropriate for the subject area in which they taught, while 73.08% felt that the policies did not allow them to take an informal approach to dealing with suspected cases. However, it was not possible from the questionnaire to elicit whether staff viewed this latter situation positively or negatively. Additionally 78.48% considered the university’s plagiarism policies not to be too complex. Whilst 44.78% of respondents felt that the university’s policies allowed them to take extenuating circumstances into account, 55.13% felt that this was not the case.

Respondents were asked whether they felt it would be beneficial to have cases investigated by an independent assessor within the university, an increasingly common approach within institutions. Around one third were in favour of this.

In terms of putting the university's policies and procedures into practice, 83.33% of respondents agreed that students were made aware of institutional guidance as part of their induction programme. In relation to case handling, 91.25% of respondents agreed that all cases of plagiarism were dealt with at a departmental level in the first instance. Whilst 45.12% of respondents felt apprehensive about making an accusation of plagiarism, 54.88% did not. 84.15% of respondents agreed that making an accusation of plagiarism meant a lot of extra work, and 89.02% felt confident that their department would support them if they were to accuse a student of plagiarism.

Just over a third (35.8%) of respondents agreed that they tended to ignore minor incidences of plagiarism, however 64.2% disagreed with this statement. Only 27.16% of respondents considered that no action was taken against students who plagiarise.

3.1.3. Informing students about plagiarism

In the majority of cases (89.74%) staff encouraged their students to read about the university's plagiarism policies in their course handbook. Around half (55.13%) of those responding to the question conduct study sessions with their students to teach them correct referencing skills. Less than half of the respondents (39.74%) liaise with library and learning resources staff when developing induction programmes for students. A small proportion of respondents (14.1%) allow students to use plagiarism detection software to check their work for plagiarism prior to handing it in. Only 24.36% provide students with practical examples of plagiarism to illustrate university policies, however 64.1% were keen to engage their students in discussion on plagiarism and academic misconduct. Staff were almost all (97.44%) against making their students aware of the essay bank sites. 73.08% of staff would be in favour of using interactive resources if they were available to assist with informing students about plagiarism.

3.1.4. Setting assignments

In terms of setting assignments, three quarters of respondents stated that they changed their assignments each academic year and 97.44% considered their assignments to have well-defined criteria. 98.72% felt that their assignments encouraged students to think critically and 85.90% tried to use innovative learning methods whenever possible. In particular, 82.05% stated that they use a learning management system to assist with their teaching. When asked about providing guidance to students on referencing and citation, 89.74% offered formative feedback.

3.1.5. Detecting plagiarism in student work

A free text question asking staff to give details of the methods and resources they currently employed to detect potentially unoriginal work showed search engines to be the most popular means of detection for 55.3% of staff. Plagiarism detection software was used by a considerably smaller 8.5%.

3.1.6. Training on institutional plagiarism policies

When asked whether they were happy with the training available to ensure they kept up-to-date with university policies and procedures on plagiarism, 64.1% of respondents, stated that they were. In spite of this almost half (47.44%) of the respondents indicated that they would welcome more staff development activities to assist them in preventing and detecting plagiarism. Around two thirds (66.67%) would be interested in other training resources offering guidance on preventing plagiarism.

3.2. Use of the plagiarism detection software at the institution

Although access to the plagiarism detection software has been available at the institution since early 2003, the 2005/6 academic year demonstrates the University's most determined use of the software, with over 1,000 submissions to the system. This level of usage of the software positions the University approximately mid-range of all subscribing institutions in the UK. Although this figure should not be viewed in isolation, it may nevertheless be seen as an indicator of change within the institution, and a growing awareness of the capabilities of the software.

4. Discussion

Anecdotal evidence from contacts at the institution indicates that the initial staff development session conducted by the Plagiarism Advisory Service acted to some extent as a catalyst for further investigation of issues relating to plagiarism and academic misconduct at the University. Certainly use of the plagiarism detection software has considerably increased during this period, although there is no apparent evidence to suggest that the two are related. In fact the survey responses would seem to indicate the opposite, with less than 10% of the respondents making use of the software as a detection tool.

Although the relatively low number of responses received to the survey mean that it is not possible to view the opinions expressed by tutors as entirely representative of all academic staff at the institution, the results provide an insight into some of the factors influencing staff attitudes to plagiarism and academic misconduct, and current working practices and experience in the area.

Tutors' perceptions of commonly occurring behaviours which constitute plagiarism and poor academic practice are much as expected, and reflect other data collected by the Plagiarism Advisory Service, with low experiences of students using essaybanks and ghostwriting services being reported. Free text responses on why certain groups appear to be particularly likely to be involved in academic misconduct also reflect those most commonly cited across the sector. This may indicate, however, that clearer guidance to students on what constitutes plagiarism, in addition to training in study and research skills, is required during their academic career. To this end, the institution has recently developed standardised guidance on plagiarism for inclusion within student handbooks, and is continuing to develop additional support for students at both departmental and university level.

In terms of their knowledge of policies and procedures at the University in relation to plagiarism, tutors, on the whole, appear to be well-acquainted with the guidance offered by the institution. However there appears to be some degree of ambiguity regarding application of the policies.

The survey revealed a lack of clarity as to the extent to which extenuating circumstances should be considered when investigating a suspected case. Whilst the University's plagiarism policy states that students may appeal any decision taken via its standard procedures for academic appeals, there is no mention of extenuating circumstances and when/if or by whom any consideration would be given. The lack of explicit direction regarding this matter in the University's plagiarism policies may have contributed, at least partially, to the divergence of views on the handling of extenuating circumstances.

Respondents were equally divided as to whether they would discuss their suspicions of plagiarism with a student before taking any further action. This may be linked to staff views on whether extenuating circumstances should be taken into account, since the response rates were fairly similar. The different views expressed by staff may relate to the lack of explicit direction within the University's plagiarism policies. On the other hand, however, it is not possible to ascertain from the survey whether staff responded to questions relating to extenuating circumstances and/or discussing suspicions with a student in relation to minor and/or serious offences. Responses may have differed if the questions had been asked separately for different categories of offences. This would suggest that a lack of clarity exists in this area, both in terms of institutional policy and also the survey tool.

The institution's plagiarism policies provide definitions of minor and serious offences, and identify appropriate penalties and actions to be taken in each case. No formal procedures are required to be instituted against a student unless the relevant unacknowledged source can be established. In cases where plagiarism is strongly suspected but no source has been identified, the student may be spoken to informally by the relevant module coordinator or tutor, to

ensure that they understand the nature of plagiarism, and the penalties it incurs. In all cases where a plagiarised source has been identified, the University's policies require the matter to be dealt with formally at departmental level, either through correspondence between the Chief Examiner and the student (for minor offences) or through a formal meeting (for serious offences). It is unclear why some staff may be reluctant to follow up minor incidences. Possible reasons may include the additional workload required and concern about the severity of the potential penalty. This would be an area worthy of further exploration.

On the question of whether an independent assessor should investigate all suspected cases of plagiarism across departments within the University, around one third were in favour of such a role. This approach is becoming increasingly popular, and is endorsed in JISC's 2005 briefing paper, which outlines the role of the Academic Conduct Officer accordingly:

*"markers must continue to detect unacceptable behaviour but then pass the case to the specialist who decides whether plagiarism is demonstrated and allocates a punishment from a limited range of options"*⁴

Some of the issues identified within the survey which might benefit from such an approach include:

- Around half of respondents feel some degree of apprehension about making an accusation of plagiarism.
- Almost 85% of respondents feel that making an accusation of plagiarism can mean a lot of extra work.
- Worryingly, a third of respondents agreed that they tend to ignore minor instances of plagiarism. (This may be linked to the first two points, above).

In spite of increased use of the plagiarism detection software during the 2005/06 academic year, formative use of the software as a tool to assist students with effectively acknowledging source material, has been minimal. A small proportion (14.1%) of tutors commented that they had made the software available to allow their students to check their work for correct attribution before handing it in. Contacts at the institution indicate that in the next academic year (2006/7) staff development opportunities may be made available to enable tutors to more fully investigate both formative and summative use of the software, subject to continued institutional financing of the software licence.

Search engines were identified as the key tool for plagiarism detection, and whilst these are valuable tools, using detection software has many additional benefits. For instance, material can be checked considerably more quickly, with the software analysing an entire document, without the need for extracting suspect words and phrases, and presents results in a colour-coded user-friendly format. Additionally, it is unlikely that using search engines has the same capacity for formative development with students. Criteria for selecting detection

⁴ Deterring, detecting and dealing with student plagiarism: briefing paper (2005)

tools were not explored within the survey, however this information could usefully inform the promotion of plagiarism detection software to staff, and consideration will be given to the value of eliciting this information in future surveys.

Unsolicited feedback, to the University's TurnitinUK administrator, from tutors who have made use of the software indicates that they have generally found it useful. However use of the software has tended to focus on its role as a 'policing' tool (which is reflected in the staff survey responses), with less emphasis placed on its potential as a developmental pedagogic tool, where arguably its main strengths may lie. The University's student learning advisory service has indicated an interest in exploring some of the software's pedagogic potential with the University's TurnitinUK administrator, however the resource implications of any such undertaking would need to be fully considered.

Furthermore, the institution are currently exploring integrating the plagiarism detection software with their learning management system (LMS), which will enable tutors to create assignments, and students to make submissions from within a familiar user-environment. Many UK institutions integrate the two systems in this way, and this has been found in some instances to act as a driver for use of the LMS:

*"It's so simple to use. It's driving some people [sic] use of Blackboard."*⁵

Technology can of course be used in conjunction with the "intuitive" approach to detection, highlighted by 21.3% of respondents, which can prove invaluable when plagiarism is suspected from non-electronic sources.

A relatively small proportion of tutors (24.36%) provide students with practical examples to assist with their understanding of plagiarism. However, a further question, which asked tutors about whether they engage their students in discussion on plagiarism and academic misconduct received a much higher response, indicating a concerted effort to assist students in their understanding of a complex area. Experience from other institutions indicates that using practical examples of what does and does not constitute plagiarism, in addition to actively engaging students in debate on the subject can assist with understanding. Indeed the plagiarism detection software can be used formatively in this way. Undoubtedly it can be argued that this approach is much more effective than simply defining plagiarism via a course or module handbook with little further explanation or contextualisation:

*"Simply telling students that the institutional regulations exist and where to find them is limited in its effectiveness"*⁶

⁵ Ramsden, A. J. (2005) "JISC Plagiarism Detection Service", Blackboard Usergroup, 7 March [Online] Available email: blackboard-usergroup@jiscmail.ac.uk

⁶ Duggan (2005)

Using library and learning resources staff to assist with sessions on plagiarism can also be seen as an effective method of aiding students with their understanding of plagiarism. In some institutions the majority of training in this area is carried out in this way, an approach endorsed by Debi Boden and Ruth Stubbings⁷ in a paper presented at the recent international plagiarism conference. At the institution, similar guidance is provided by the University's student learning advisory service. Connected to this, a question was added to the questionnaire at the request of staff at the institution, asking whether tutors would be in favour of a package of interactive learning resources which would assist in informing students about plagiarism. Almost three quarters of respondents were in favour of this.

Perhaps not surprisingly, respondents were almost unanimously against making their students aware of essay bank sites. In spite of tutors' obvious reluctance to introduce students to this resource, the Plagiarism Advisory Service recommend that tutors do introduce these sites to students, as this underlines the fact that they are familiar with them and the material they offer, and may therefore deter students from use. Recent high profile articles in the press⁸ mean that students are unlikely to be unaware of their existence.

5. Recommendations for further investigation

The following pointers for possible future research and investigation at the institution are based on key elements of the roadmap approach discussed previously:

- An aspect of the roadmap involves consulting and obtaining the views of the student population⁹, a university-wide survey at the institution (supplementing a small-scale survey previously undertaken with students) may be beneficial in order to gauge views on plagiarism, and to assess whether it is felt that guidance offered by academic staff is adequate for their needs. Such a survey would also enable synergies to be drawn between staff and student viewpoints, and to establish a rounded picture of plagiarism prevention and detection at the institution.
- Assessing the feasibility of establishing Academic Conduct Officers throughout the University to ensure that suspected cases of plagiarism are dealt with fairly and consistently. Since considerable financial and procedural outlay would be necessary in creating such roles within the University, a detailed feasibility study would be necessary in the first

⁷ Boden, D. & Stubbings, R. (2006) Re-writing the script: supporting academic integrity the library way

⁸ Taylor, M. & Butt, R. (2006) 'Q: How do you make £1.6m a year and drive a Ferrari? A: Sell essays for £400', The Guardian, Saturday July 29, p. 3.

⁹ Duggan (2005)

instance. A commitment from Senior Managers and academic staff alike would be key to the success of such a strategy.

- Investigating more fully the use of the plagiarism detection software as a formative tool, which can be used to develop and enhance students' study skills, in particular for referencing and citation practice.
- Clarifying any ambiguities emerging from implementation and review of the institution's plagiarism policies. In particular consideration may wish to be given to providing explicit guidance on consulting informally with students about possible instances of plagiarism and the handling of extenuating circumstances.

Bibliography

Please note that some references have been removed as they may uniquely identify the institution.

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Appendix A: Staff survey



Plagiarism Advisory Service staff survey

This short questionnaire is designed to determine how student plagiarism is currently dealt with at your institution. It will focus on your individual experiences of plagiarism in the last academic year, and your own academic practice in preventing plagiarism.

The questionnaire also seeks to consider the guidance provided by your institution in preventing and detecting plagiarism, and how this informs your practice.

Its findings will enable recommendations to be made in relation to how your institution deals with student plagiarism in future.

Please answer all questions based on your personal experiences. All responses will be treated in confidence.

Many thanks for your co operation.
The Plagiarism Advisory Service.

Section 1: My experience

Please indicate which of the following instances of plagiarism and poor academic practice you have encountered amongst your students in the last academic year.

1. Students copying paragraphs from various sources without acknowledgment, and handing them in as their own work. YES NO
2. Students downloading or purchasing a piece of work from an essay bank¹⁰, and handing it in as their own work. YES NO
3. Students commissioning a piece of work from a ghostwriting service¹¹, and handing it in as their own work. YES NO
4. Quoting large passages of text from another source, with acknowledgment, but with the addition of little or no original additional material. YES NO
5. Students working together on an assignment, and handing in work which is very similar when they are supposed to be working alone. YES NO
6. Students copying passages of text from another source, changing some words and handing it in as their own. YES NO
7. Making up references. YES NO
8. Falsifying data in an assignment. YES NO

¹⁰ An essaybank is a web site offering completed assignments on various topics to students. These are often freely available, or a charge or subscription is required.

¹¹ A ghostwriting service offers custom written assignments. A charge is made for this service.

Are you able to identify a particular cohort of students (first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate, postgraduate, for instance) in which these actions are particularly prevalent?

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From your own experience, would you like to suggest why this may be the case?

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Section 2: Institutional guidance

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. I am aware that my university has a specific policy on plagiarism.
AGREE DISAGREE
(If you have disagreed with this statement, please go to question 11 in this section)
2. I have a clear idea of what to do to adhere to the university's policy if I suspect that a student has plagiarised.
AGREE DISAGREE
3. I feel that our policies on plagiarism are too bureaucratic.
AGREE DISAGREE
4. The university's policy on plagiarism is well-publicised within the institution.
AGREE DISAGREE
5. The university's policy on plagiarism is not appropriate for the subject area I teach in.
AGREE DISAGREE
6. The university's policy on plagiarism allows me to take an informal approach to dealing with suspected cases of plagiarism.
AGREE DISAGREE
7. I feel that our policies on plagiarism are too complex.
AGREE DISAGREE
8. The university's policy on plagiarism allows me to take extenuating circumstances into account when dealing with a case.
AGREE DISAGREE
9. I feel that it is beneficial to have all cases of plagiarism investigated by an independent assessor within the university.
AGREE DISAGREE
10. Students are made aware of the university's policies and procedures on plagiarism as part of their induction programme.
AGREE DISAGREE
11. Making an accusation of plagiarism against a student means a lot of extra work.
AGREE DISAGREE

12. In the first instance, all cases of plagiarism are dealt with at a departmental level.
- AGREE DISAGREE
13. I feel apprehensive about making an accusation of plagiarism against a student.
- AGREE DISAGREE
14. I feel confident that my department will support me if I accuse a student of plagiarism.
- AGREE DISAGREE
15. I tend to ignore minor incidences of plagiarism, as dealing with them is too much trouble.
- AGREE DISAGREE
16. I always discuss my suspicions of plagiarism with the student in question, before I take any further action.
- AGREE DISAGREE
17. In my experience no action is taken against most students who plagiarise.
- AGREE DISAGREE

Section 3: My own practice

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Informing students

1. I encourage my students to read about the university's plagiarism policies in their course handbook.
AGREE DISAGREE
2. I conduct study skills sessions with my students to teach them how to reference their sources correctly.
AGREE DISAGREE
3. I liaise with library/learning resources staff when developing induction programmes for my students.
AGREE DISAGREE
4. I allow my students to use plagiarism detection software to check their work for plagiarism prior to handing it in.
AGREE DISAGREE
5. I provide my students with practical examples of plagiarism to illustrate university policies.
AGREE DISAGREE
6. I engage my students in discussion on plagiarism and academic misconduct.
AGREE DISAGREE
7. I ensure my students are aware of the essaybank sites.
AGREE DISAGREE
8. I would make use of interactive resources for students to assist me in informing my students about plagiarism.
AGREE DISAGREE

Setting assignments

1. I ensure that I change my assignments each academic year.
AGREE DISAGREE
2. The criteria I set for each assignment are well-defined, so that my students know what is expected of them.
AGREE DISAGREE

3. My assignments encourage students to think critically about the problem which has been set.
AGREE DISAGREE
4. I try to use innovative learning methods whenever possible to encourage original work.
AGREE DISAGREE
5. I use a learning management system, such as Blackboard or WebCT to assist in my teaching.
AGREE DISAGREE
6. I provide my students with formative feedback on referencing and citation.
AGREE DISAGREE

Detecting plagiarism

What methods and resources (search engine such as Google, plagiarism detection software, other) do you use to detect plagiarism in your students' work?

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.....
.....
.....

Section 4: Keeping up to date

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. I am happy with the training available to ensure I keep up to date with university policy and procedures on plagiarism.

AGREE

DISAGREE

2. I would welcome more staff development opportunities to assist me in preventing and detecting plagiarism.

AGREE

DISAGREE

3. I would be interested in other training resources offering guidance on preventing plagiarism.

AGREE

DISAGREE

Section 5: Myself

Please complete the following information about yourself. These details will be used to identify whether particular patterns exist within departments or subject areas.

Department:

Subject area:

I have been teaching for

- Less than 1 year 1-5 years -10 years 10+ years

Appendix B: Responses to free text questions

Responses to free text questions

Section 1: My experience

Are you able to identify a particular cohort of students (first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate, postgraduate, for instance) in which these actions are particularly prevalent?

- 2nd year undergraduates
- 3rd year international students
- all
- All cohorts, although poor academic practices (rather than explicit plagiarism) slightly more prevalent in first year undergraduates and those returning to academic study after some time away. Some specific practices of those above more prevalent in particular year groups, e.g. similar work from 2 or more students more prevalent with those who have been part of a study group prior to entering the university at year 1 or year 2 (Access Course and HNC students).
- all groups of undergraduate nursing students
- All students guidance and reminding of what the rules are but first year students and international students at postgraduate level generally need most assistance.
- All years u/g. No p/g, in my experience.
- At 3rd year level
- Chinese students
- Copying text from other sources without acknowledgement is more frequent in first year than in later years.
- Detected plagiarism is rare. In each year we find 3-4 cases among undergraduates. It usually occurs in years 1-3.
- Direct lifting from websites and books has been found, with acknowledgement. However this is the easiest form of plagiarism to identify if students are more devious than the time required by markers to double check and identify source precludes identification. Only identified in undergraduate scripts but this is the bulk of my marking.
- First and second year students (*****).
- First and second year undergraduates.
- first year final year
- First year International students
- First year and Far Eastern students
- first year undergrad/diploma
- First year undergraduate
- First year undergraduate and international students
- first year undergraduate students and international students
- First year undergraduate, taught postgraduate
- First year undergraduates, visiting students (particularly Spanish students)
- Foreign masters students and random cases
- Fourth years
- Generally less academically able 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students.
- Honours students at institution I taught at before - not sure for this institution.
- i only teach post graduates

- I work mainly with on taught post graduate courses and am not aware of any of the above problems other than the one highlighted. This happened with only one student though who had accessed the information from the internet and hadly partially acknowledged this.
- In general, undergraduate students who either lack confidence in their ability to respond to an essay task/qestion, or who are under pressure to complete more than one assignment at roughly the same time. Lack of confidence is more prevalent in first-year undergraduates, but final-year students often find themselves under more pressure (e.g. if balancing an academic subject with a teaching placement).
- In the last year cases have been fairly evenly spread over years 1, 2 and 3 at undergraduate level. No postgraduate cases but the cohort is much smaller.
- It seems to be endemic
- mainly Chinese UG and PG students though 1 case of UK-born UG and 1 case of a Spanish UG
- More common in first and second year students (four year courses are typical)
- More likely to occur amongst the weaker students.
- Most of our students (in TESOL/EFL) are non-native speakers of English, and so most of those committing plagiarism are from this group. That's not to say that native speakers aren't also sometimes guilty of plagiarism, but I think most staff who have experience of working with non-native speaker students find that attitudes towards plagiarism may be very different in non-western cultures.
- new undegraduate students
- newer students coming to grips with essay writing
- no
- No
- NO
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No - I have experienced this in semester 3 students, level 10 students and in postgraduate students.
- No - over the years I've dealt with cases of plagiarism at all undergraduate levels (and never at postgraduate). First-year students, however, do find it hard sometimes submit work which is strongly *derivative* (rather than blatantly plagiarised), making little effort to digest their reading and render their own argument in their own words.
- No - these seem to occur throughout the undergraduate years. NB. Have encountered 3rd and 4th yrs who've only just been pulled up for these kind of things - although don't know why they weren't picked up earlier.
- No (but I've only taught first-years)
- No I have experienced this at the first year, 2nd year level 10 and postgraduate levels.
- No I have experienced this throughout

- No, although 3rd and 4th year students seem to be more aware that what they're doing is wrong. 1st and 2nd year students sometimes seem to find it difficult to distinguish between poor referencing and plagiarism.
- No, examples in our department have spanned all age/year groups.
- no, my cases were in 2nd and final year - I find cases in final year most worrying.
- No.
- no. This particular instance was an a taught Masters
- Not really - all were student nurses
- postgraduate Chinese students and undergraduate business students doing IT related coursework e.g. databases
- Seems more prevalent among first and second years
- Seems to apply to all undergraduate levels and also one MSc dissertation.
- sometimes it is more obvious in first year and with students in any year who are struggling
- the examples concerned relate to a group of far eastern students and I believe that those concerned did that this was unacceptable in our university culture. .
- The two incidents with which I was involved were in the evening degree course.
- THOSE ACTIONS ARE NOW PREVALENT ACROSS THE BOARD
- Unable to comment. I started in September
- Undergraduate
- Undergraduate Foundation Year students Undergraduate students - all years MSc students
- Usually first or second year students.
- Visiting students, particularly from Spain and Greece
- When this has happened and it is not often I teach professional courses so usually 50: 50 pgs and Ugs unable to draw any conclusion between Undergrad and Postgrad other than this usually occurs at the early stages of their academic career and early intervention by way of tutorial guidance and supervision has sorted the problem . My other experience was supervising Final Year Hons Graduate Dissertation, which was caused me some angst and was particularly difficult to unravel, but we got there.
- Year one pg dip - any genuine misunderstandings regarding referencing and plagiarism are generally picked up and dealt with very early on in the two year programme.
- Yes, postgraduate overseas students

From your own experience, would you like to suggest why this may be the case?

- A number of hunches and explanations from Students. Competing demands, juggling family, work, study and surviving economically; medical reasons students are unwell and pressurised to meet deadlines. Clarifying at the very beginning expectations of scholarliness : Basic ground rules. E.g some students genuinely didn't realise that using tutors' and other students' work without referencing was plagiarism. Access to Undergrad and postgrad dissertations need more monitoring. Not sure what happens in other departments. Weaker students more likely to entertain this idea
- An easy way for weaker students to improve their marks with little effort.
- Couldn't possibly comment!
- Cultural differences in attitude to plagiarism. Lack of appropriate referencing input/knowledge Lack of time to complete assignment (MSc students mainly) Lack of understanding the subject area

- Despite being informed in classes and course handouts some students do not understand what plagiarism is.
- failure to read the university policy on plagiarism, failure to read essay instructions, poor written and spoken English skills, laziness, cultural attitudes (e.g. Chinese students seem to take the view that they cannot have a worthy personal opinion on a subject so it is only normal that they would turn to published opinion for their essays - lack of a sense of individuality?)
- First year students might not realise so clearly either that and why plagiarism is wrong, or just what counts as plagiarism.
- first years don't know any better final years think they can get away with it
- Firstly a difference in understanding of what constitutes academic work, and also a fear of providing the 'wrong' answer. Secondly, a poor grasp of English leading to emergency measures in assignments, ie they feel the book expresses the concept much better than they can in English
- For which aspect? Re. students working together, I think it may be partly due to following a recommended study practice in good faith (e.g. study groups) but not appreciating where the limits of such support should be.
- I don't have much contact with first year work
- I feel that in all fairness to such students we should have an introductory couple of days before they start their courses where we explain what plagiarism is, show them examples, then show them how to use ref. materials without plagiarising. I also think that it would be very valuable to give them exercises in writing assignments, explaining what is expected here. For example, that their own ideas should be included (they tend to be encouraged to reflect the ideas of their lecturers). ***** do this with groups of our post grads and it appears to have a very positive impact. I have concerns that there might be a prevailing attitude that 'they are post grads they ought to know'. We must not forget that the students, whom we prize highly and who make a significant contribution to our university, come from a totally different educational culture. All they need is a clear explanation of 'the way we do things round here'. and... if we engage with them at this early stage in their studies, the 'good news' about how supportive the institution is will get back to their country. We'll also have the opportunity of learning from the good practice aspects of their approach.
- I suspect simply because they have been allowed to get away with minor instances before Hons level, so it becomes difficult for tutors/lecturers to clamp down on it at Hons level without having to explain why they turned a blind eye previously.
- I think that some is due to poor technique and the students may be confused about what exactly constitutes plagiarism I think that they feel that as long as they reference it, it is not plagiarism but do not realise that when that is all they are using it cannot constitute their own work.
- I think that students are often under a lot of pressure to combine their studies with paid work. I think that this increases the likelihood of students taking drastic measures e.g. copying and pasting from internet sources. I also think that for certain essays, i.e. particularly the last deadline of a semester, it can be difficult for students to get hold of the books they need. This basically comes down to the lack of funding for library provision - a point that has been made by several students in every student evaluation that I've seen at the institution. If we are going to be hard on students when they plagiarise, then we also have a responsibility to make sure that they know how to reference properly and that the literature is available in library when they need it.

- I think, it is the way that they were educated in their own country. They tend to find difficult to write essays which requires analysis and debates.
- In some non-western academic cultures (and in some *western* cultures), the authority of the text is such that students are trained in a "cut-and-paste" approach to academic writing. At the risk of over-simplification and stereotyping, they are not trained to express their own opinions or to think independently.
- In the first instance because many schools seem to accept copying as legitimate practice. In the case of postgraduates plagiarism occurs principally among overseas students - whether because of difficulties with the second language or because learning by rote is regarded as proper practice.
- In the most part, not wishing to put effort into assignments - take the quickest and easiest way out without reading around and spending time on the work; In a few cases, not realising that this is the wrong approach - especially in the case of overseas students.
- Inexperience Lack of practice Lack of modelling
- lack of awareness of what constitutes 'their own work' cultural differences regarding plagiarism
- Lack of experience and understanding. A lot of the issues are not malicious.
- lack of experience and unsophisticated essay style
- Lack of quality delivery at secondary school level on writing arguments and importance of original ideas. Lack of solid, systematic course across the university on the above skills.
- Large first and second year courses contain many students who do not go on to study at honours level. They tend to have less commitment to the subject and the teaching staff. The level of marking also makes it more difficult for tutors to detect and deal with cases of suspected plagiarism. These students do seem to take a couple of years to recognise that this is a serious offence.
- Large introductory courses contain many students who do not go on to honours programmes in this subject area and therefore have a lower sense of commitment to the subject (and staff teaching them). Pressure on tutors to mark large numbers of scripts makes detection more difficult so the temptation to plagiarise is possibly greater. Often seems to be down to ignorance of the rules. It takes a couple of years for it to sink in that this is really serious stuff!
- Laziness, largely, I fear.
- Many reasons - however, the main one I think is that they have huge workloads and tend to be over-assessed and some assessments lend themselves to similar answer structures.
- Mass expansion of the university sector, following a spuriously 'egalitarian' political agenda, has resulted in many academically unsuited students. Plagiarism results from their intellectual inadequacies.
- Maybe immaturity in the first case. We think different cultural norms in the second case.
- misunderstanding what does and does not constitute plagiarism - continuation of previous practices employed in schools eg. cut and paste from the web. cultural conflict on plagiarism
- More elaborated essay questions, more exams

- MY IMPRESSION IS THAT IT IS THE LESS GIFTED STUDENTS THAT ARE DOING THIS. AS THE NUMBERS OF SCHOOLLEAVERS ENTERING UNIVERSITY RISES, IT APPEARS TO BE GETTING WORSE. AND COMBINED WITH THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT THE INTERNET OFFERS, THIS IS A POWERFUL FORCE THAT IS INCREASING PLAGIARISM CASES
- n/a
- N/A
- n/a
- N/A
- N/a
- N/A
- Often it is naivety, one student who simply paraphrased all his work from published material had said he had been doing it all through his time at university and had been getting good grades (he was in the sixth semester at the time). He, therefore felt that it was the correct way to undertake coursework - I am sure he is not unique. Some of the items mentioned above may have been suspected as being the case but unless proven cannot be addressed.
- Panicking close to the deadline; choosing not to listen to instructions given regarding assignment; give the impression that being foreign excuses them reasearching and presenting in own words/attribution sources.
- poor time management
- Possibly the nature of the exercise - a short essay or presentation, is more inviting to borrow material from elsewhere (frequently Wikipedia).
- Predominantly because of lack of awareness and understanding. Very very few cases seem to be intentional.
- See above.
- See above.
- Some claim to be unaware that this is not usual way of writing essays- just cut and paste or copy from sources, changing a few words about.
- Student had personal problems which interfered with her academic work
- Student report that they feel under time pressure to complete. In some cases, English was not their first language.
- Students appear to think they will receive a warning even though the University policy of minor and serious offences are quite clear
- Students in the first two years tend to take courses in my subject in order to 'fill up their card'. If their only concern is to pass the module then their commitment to both subject and staff is likely to be less strong. They may also feel less able to appeal to staff if they are experiencing difficulties. For some, in spite of frequent reinforcement, they may simply not be able to grasp the issue of "intellectual property" or its implications!
- Students plagiarise for different reasons - for example, ignorance of what plagiarism is (usually the case amongst first-year students); trying a short cut because of pressures of time (all levels) and, sometimes (but, I think most rarely), out-and-out dishonesty (the two cases of plagiarism I've dealt with - in the space of ten years' of teaching – in the students' final year).
- The web provides electronic articles and it's very tempting to cut and paste from them. In one incident, I found an entire essay made up from web sources (about 6). It is quite easy to check for this using an advanced search engine
- There is a feeling, deriving from school teaching practice, that such kinds of 'theft' are acceptable and many students genuinely fail to see it as such.

- There is issues with the Chinese students in respect to how we teach - I am not sure if this is cultural? But there does seem to be difficulty in getting them to realise that plagerism is unacceptable. Undergraduates as mentioned above seem to be under the illusion that lecturers cannot spot plagerised IT assignments. As most of my assignments also ask for a report to explain the rationale for the application created this tends to expose any problems.
- they don't understand how to write an academic essay because it may be the first one they have come across, ever or for many years, and they don't understand or misinterpret what is expected
- Time pressure, because students start working on the essays too late, essay writing skills cannot always be expected from university entrants, students forget quickly research skills after introductory seminars/lectures on these issues, confusion as to research methods with students with combined degrees where one discipline does not share the same research methods with the other (the latter is a typical cause especially for inaccurate referencing).
- To save effort. Often students under excessive time pressures do this, possibly in the hope they'll get away with it, and the reasonable presumption that we will not punish them excessively (since we tend to give it a 3rd class grade at worst).
- Unaware of what plagiarism is and think if they reference it then it is okay.
- Unsure - possibly students don't realise that this is inappropriate. Also I think they feel they can get away with it.
- Usually ignorance or lack of confidence in own writing
- We have an access policy which encourages non-traditional learners to undertake a vocational course. Some have less experience of academic referencing than traditional learners and have to learn good practice at PG Dip level. We provide a great deal of guidance to support non-traditional learners but deal firmly with straightforward 'cheating'.
- When it happens it is probably because students are under pressure and take what they think is the easy way out.
- With foreign students the poor spoken/written English can be a significant problem. With the 'other' cases, it is worth noting that plagiarism is easy to do, can be difficult to detect and almost impossible to prove. This makes us an easy target.
- Years 1 and 2: anxiety about performance? overworked? Honours: anxiety about being in Honours and needing to justify being there, especially not wanting to let down parents?

- Google - but more usually students who plagiarise are not that imaginative about where they steal the material from. Consequently, I usually detect plagiarism when the wording of an essay looks strangely familiar. Nearly always, the student involved plagiarises from one of the basic textbooks. I should emphasise, however, that in my experience plagiarism is *very* rare at all levels.
- Google advanced search looking for exact phrases. It's more difficult if it isn't an electronic source - you might have a feeling that work has been copied but be unable to track it down. In that case, I would take no action
- Google and my own knowledge of the sources
- google and my research experience
- Google and oldfashioned textbook reading
- Google and plagiarism detection software
- Google if I suspect a case but I do not use it routinely. I am against routine electronic detection by staff as it disadvantages those students who submit electronically. It also does nothing to encourage students to submit electronic work if they worry about it being screened for plagiarism.
- Google only
- Google, and PsychInfo
- google, colleagues
- google, if students cite certain websites in their references, I sometimes follow these up
- google, JISC plagiarism detection software, personal knowledge of relevant texts and recognition of 'typical' indicators of plagiarism eg. changes in writing style and/or forms of referencing, inclusion of hypertext links, different coloured text, changing fonts etc.
- google, main text books and articles, the software if suspicious about serious plagiarism
- Google, manual search (though extensive searching is time-consuming and often impractical).
- google, plagiarism detection software, personal knowledge and that of colleagues, library texts/journals
- Google, trial plagiarism detection software
- Google.
- Google.
- Google; cross-marking with colleagues
- Google; prospects.ac.uk
- Have used Google Also use knowledge of the nature of student writing
- Have used the JISC Plagiarism Detection Service in the past - but only to help make students more aware
- I don't - for a start I don't have the time to engage in this without it impacting on research and admin time. I have sometimes conducted a quick google search to look for obvious cases but it is very hard to find most things that you suspect are cribbed.
- I don't use any - I don't know of any (Yet). Generally I find that in reading a students work is enough at present and comparing to other pieces they've submitted to detect discrepancies where there is no natural progression of critical thinking.
- In depth knowlwdge of source material
- INternet search engines
- JISC has been used.
- Just google and looking up relevant texts.

- look at the books, google.
- Memory; have searched via internet when became suspicious of a particular coursework
- n/a
- None
- None
- None
- None
- None
- None
- None
- none - I'd have to scan their assignments to do this
- None at present
- None other than own suspicions
- Occasionally I Google
- Own knowledge and intuition.
- plagiarism detection software
- Primarily search engines, occasionally simply flicking through books to check that passages have been appropriately referenced.
- Search engines, data bases, libraries
- search engines
- search engines
- Search engines plus cross-referencing scripts
- search engines, primarily
- This may be the wrong answer, but in a very specialised area, with relatively small student numbers, it is generally self-evident.
- use Google if I am concerned about suspected plagiarism but as have to type in material, this is time consuming. Electronic submission would assist here. Many of the questions above should have been answered 'don't know' as disagreeing with one particular question rather negates the answer to others.
- usually quite obvious from inconsistent qualities, or changes in tone - then I pop a few phrases into google or other search site to check
- various
- websearches own knowledge of texts

Appendix C: Demographic breakdown of staff responding to survey

77 of the 96 respondents provided details of their department and subject area, in addition to indicating the length of time they had been teaching.

Although respondents appeared to be widely spread across many departments within the university, the highest numbers of responses came from the following:

- Nursing and Midwifery: 9.09%
- English: 9.09%
- Psychology: 7.79%
- Biological and Environmental Sciences: 6.49%
- Education: 5.19%
- Applied Social Science: 5.19%
- History: 5.19%
- Law: 5.19%

A diverse range of subjects were represented, and the following were most obvious:

- Nursing: 7.79%
- Education: 3.9%
- Environmental Science: 3.9%
- Law: 3.9%
- Psychology: 3.9%
- Sociology: 3.9%

Length of teaching career of respondents:

- 10+ years: 51.95%
- 1-5 years: 27.27%
- 5-10 years: 18.18%
- Less than 1 year: 2.6%