

Curriculum redesign as a faculty-centred approach to plagiarism reduction

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Traditional approaches to tackling plagiarism have reflected two distinct philosophies: either educate the students, providing and reinforcing information about correct citation and referencing, acceptable collaboration and so on; or catch and punish unacceptable behaviour (Taylor 2003; Hart & Freisner 2004). As Taylor (2003) and Macdonald and Carroll (2006) note, both of these approaches carry the implicit assumption that responsibility for avoiding plagiarism is that of the student, and when a problem is encountered, the blame rests with student rather than with faculty or the institution. Commentators are starting to make calls for educators to look at pedagogy and assessment design as a means of reducing the likelihood of plagiarism, a strategy which reflects a philosophy of sharing the responsibility for countering plagiarism across students, individual faculty and the institution.

This paper is concerned particularly with aspects of innovative assessment design as a strategy to minimise plagiarism, within the context of the broader range of strategies that underpin a holistic approach to counteracting plagiarism. Data are collected using a questionnaire administered to faculty at the University of Tasmania. Results reveal variety as to what particular plagiarism reduction strategies are used and with the extent to which various strategies are thought to be effective. There is evidence to suggest that in some cases assessment-related strategies are implemented in response to perception about the underlying causes of plagiarism, but more generally efforts do not appear to be driven by a clear cause-and-effect logic. Further, factors were identified that appear to act as constraints on the implementation of some assessment-related strategies. Overall, the results provide insights on which both individuals and institutions might reflect, and develop more proactive and holistic counter-plagiarism strategies.