OXFORD
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Plagiarism

A Good Practice Guide

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May 2001

JISC

Joint Information
Systems Committee

Executive Summary

Information about the extent and growth of plagiarism and collusion in higher education, though in some ways incomplete, does document that electronic communication has had an impact on the way students create and submit work for assessment. Plagiarism and collusion are certainly easier and probably more prevalent as C and IT becomes ever more central to academic work. Because the problem has been exacerbated by the impact of communication and information technology, it could be tempting to believe that a solution is provided through the same means, i.e. through electronic detection tools. Others have sought to apply and evaluate the place of these very useful tools as well as to document the extent and development of plagiarism and inappropriate collusion. These reports can be found at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/pub/index.html#projects

In this report, a case is made for combining academic and policy decisions in a systematic, fair and coherent way in the belief that this is the most effective way of dealing with plagiarism. A balanced approach combines rethinking the design of the course whilst at the same time considering how best to inform students about regulations and teach them skills of academic discourse and citation. Of course, not all students will find these measures sufficient deterrent so it considers the benefits of tightening security arrangements and introducing electronic detection tools. Above all, rethinking assessment can lessen plagiarism and collusion. By reconsidering exactly what they are seeking to assess, institutions can make the tasks more relevant to future employment needs and reduce the opportunities they offer for plagiarism. Integrating different elements of assessment can enhance student learning while providing an opportunity to crosscheck the authenticity of work.

While often academics are sure that they know what plagiarism is when they see it, any discussion that goes beyond a dictionary definition will soon reveal considerable variation in understanding. What is accepted as part of the "general knowledge" within the canon (and hence not need referencing) will vary depending on the subject and the academic experience of the student involved. Before staff can explain their university's definition (and, more importantly, make it live through worked examples for students who may be from a completely different culture) there must be a consensus understanding of the term. It is necessary for institutions to positively teach academic writing skills and correct attribution. Whether this is best done within each subject or centrally is arguable but the former is probably preferable. In any event special attention must be paid to the needs of international students.
As well as ensuring that students are taught how to avoid plagiarism, staff behaviour and attitudes can significantly affect the prevalence of academic misconduct. If students perceive staff as not respecting the learning process, they will not do so either. Staff disrespect can be indicated in a number of ways, an obvious example being the ignoring of relatively obvious plagiarism. There are various types of electronic aids to detecting academic misconduct, none of which can substitute for the academic judgement of the lecturer. Instead they can, and do, provide evidence that the lecturer may not have

otherwise been aware of, that can aid the process of making an academic judgement.

Once plagiarism has been detected, it is important that it is dealt with fairly, consistently and in accordance with the principles of natural justice. Normal examination board procedures cannot do this, and extreme care must be paid to the relative responsibilities and the interaction between the disciplinary process and that of the examination board. The principle elements of a fair disciplinary procedure are fairly well understood, but there are different options for who is best placed to operate that procedure. Informing students of the effect that plagiarism could have on their academic career by means of recent real (but anonymous) cases can also help deter potential misconduct. By combining attention to fairness and to deterrence, policies and procedures can contribute to educating students about appropriate ways to attribute work, as well as punishing them for inappropriate attribution.

Each of the many suggestions and proposals discussed in this paper can be introduced in isolation. However the impact of each will be multiplied many-fold if there is a co-ordinated and coherent institutional strategy that obtains the commitment and unites the efforts of all staff, from the top to the bottom. Notwithstanding the many pressures on higher education at the moment and the apparent recent growth of academic misconduct across the sector, there are clear reasons why it is possible to be optimistic that this problem can be successfully tackled in the near future by adopting such a balanced strategy.

A full list of the good practice recommendations given in this paper is available in Appendix A.

1. Introduction

1.1 The problem

Plagiarism, collusion and other forms of academic misconduct have always been a regrettable but unavoidable aspect of academic existence. However, recent evidence, albeit often anecdotal and much US based, seems to indicate that it is growing by leaps and bounds. Thus Fly *et al* (1997) found that 15% of a group of US psychology students claimed that they had cheated in one way or another. 29% of a group of US medical students surveyed by Coverdale and Henning (2000) admitted falsifying references and 17% had submitted material copied from previous year's papers. Walker (1998) cites a survey of 200 US business students which revealed that 80% frequently cheated and 19% had specifically committed plagiarism. He went on to say that British research studies had produced similar findings. In private conversations most academics will agree that acknowledged levels of academic misconduct in UK universities are only the tip of the iceberg.

1.2 External requirements

It is no longer possible to ignore the issue of plagiarism (if it ever was). In particular the Quality Assurance Agency has charged institutions to have "effective mechanisms to deal with breaches of assessment regulations" (QAA Code of Practice on Assessment, 2000, Precept 3). It further requires institutions to conduct assessment "with rigour and fairness and with due regard for security" (*op cit,* Precept 5). The presumptive conclusion is that all policies relating to academic misconduct should be clearly located within the framework of the disciplinary procedure. Nor is this inappropriate. University values do not judge plagiarism as poor academic practice. They assert that it is wrong, whether done deliberately or accidentally, to claim someone else's work, thoughts or ideas as one's own. Universities owe a duty to current and future members of the community to ensure that this principle is clearly understood, is followed and is defended. Students need to view correct attribution of work at least as seriously as any other part of the academic training they are undergoing.

Open, coherent and fair policies and procedures, applied effectively and fairly, provide information to all students and further deterrence to the minority who set out to cheat. Moreover, there are strong and increasing external requirements on universities to ensure that their policies do meet the above criteria. It is certainly arguable that Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights now applies (via the Human Rights Act) to university disciplinary procedures (and which institution wants to be the first to test this assertion in the Courts?). In any event, many of the criteria indicated above are also prescribed within various elements of the QAA Code of Practice on Assessment.

1.3 Ways forward

Many reasons have been offered for the growth in plagiarism, a not insignificant one being the enormously greater ease with which academically relevant material can be found (via the Internet) and "indetectably" inserted into a student's submission (using the cut-and-paste function of a word processor). This has recently been matched by a growing number of increasingly sophisticated technical aids to the detection of such activity. These fall into a number of categories including:

- linguistic analysis (comparing the grammatical style of various sections of a piece of work to check for internal consistency);
- textual comparison (comparing the content of different pieces of work to detect collusion);
- internet search machines (attempting to locate similar or identical material to that submitted on the Internet;
- other more specialised or discipline-specific aids.

It is tempting (and apparently fitting) to believe that a problem greatly aided by the development of C&IT can best be dealt with by means of that self-same C&IT. However, there is clear evidence that such an approach is ultimately self-defeating. ". Cole and Kiss (2000) describe cheaters in American universities using surveillance cameras, silent pagers, and tiny video cameras to gain marks which in turn leads to lecturers using forensic linguistics to catch them. They call this behaviour a "dispiriting arms race ...reminiscent of James Bond" (p. 6). In fact, like any purely "catch-and-punish" approach (only more so), it will simply lead to a never-ending "arms-race" between the students and the university. One UK lecturer commented succinctly, "If you try too hard, all you catch is the clumsy ones and the students will spend more time outwitting you than learning."

Instead, what is needed is a balanced institutional response, which combines appropriate use of such aids with a range of enhanced teaching and learning strategies, against a backdrop of a clear, fair and effective disciplinary procedure. Such a response should include:

- ways to design out opportunities for plagiarism
- teaching students what plagiarism is
- teaching the skills to avoid plagiarism
- ways to create a climate that discourages plagiarism
- the judicious use of electronic aids
- a clear separation between the assessment and disciplinary processes
- a clear fair and consistent disciplinary procedure
- informing students about the institution's policies and practices to tackle plagiarism
- an overall policy setting out the responsibilities of all staff in relation to each point above.

Each of these issues is explored in more detail below.

1.4 Experience in plagiarism, detection and policy application

The suggestions and recommendations offered below for implementing a balanced and coherent approach to tackling plagiarism arise from a range of sources. Some are modifications of more general approaches to teaching and learning; others are gleaned from the experience of colleagues or more experienced practitioners, from conversations with a wide range of people at conferences, and from consultations with student representatives, nationally and locally. Where appropriate, sources and research findings are cited but it has not always been possible to unearth the exact origin of ideas or to use publicly available sources. Whilst acknowledging the irony and possible conflict of this situation in a report on the citation of others' ideas, we have nevertheless sought to include useful ideas even if inclusion requires sometimes tentative attribution.

Where relevant, we conclude each section with what seems to us to be the most appropriate action to take. We hope the summary will be useful to hard pressed colleagues seeking, as many are, to address and deal with their growing worries about plagiarism. Doing any of the recommended actions will probably be helpful. However, unless most or all of them are in place across most if not all of an institution, it is unlikely that the problem of students using others' work and submitting it as their own will diminish. It could even be that introducing electronic detection tools on their own creates more problems than it solves. It is our belief that inaction in tackling the growing worries about and possible instance(s) of plagiarism and collusion will threaten the integrity and reliability of higher education awards in the UK.

TEACHING AND LEARNING-BASED SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH PLAGIAIRISM

2. Designing out opportunities for plagiarism

2.1 Changing assessments

This is perhaps the most straightforward place to start when considering how to lessen opportunities for plagiarism. Students talk to fellow students about how a particular lecturer organises assessments and therefore quickly learn if a lecturer sets the same essays, re-issues the same case studies or asks for reports on tried-and-tested practicals, year after year. Students can also spot cosmetic changes such as tweaking the numbers in the practical or renaming the characters in the case study. Many students regard copying on such courses as simply common sense (Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead, 1995). Why should they make an effort when the lecturer does not?

Good practice recommendation: *rewrite/modify the assessment task each time the course is taught*

2.2 Reconsider learning outcomes

One way to make copying harder is to eschew learning outcomes that ask the student to explain, list or collect information then test their achievement by setting essays. This kind of information is much more likely to be for sale on essay bank sites, though of very questionable quality (Olsen, 1998) or in free sources on-line, for example, in other universities where students post essays. In either case, it can be downloaded in a few clicks and "personalised" by the student in a matter of minutes. A less technically *au fait* student, with some looking, will find what is required perhaps verbatim in books or journals so the task of copying takes longer but requires the same low level of thinking. However, asking a different question (e.g. setting an essay that integrates two ideas such as *Analyse how a particular economic theory contrasts with the actual response of country X to World Bank requirements*) and the web-based possibilities move from wholesale borrowing to cut-and-paste construction.

The more analytical and creative the task, the less likely it already exists. Building on the last example, the likelihood of thinking and learning goes up if you ask the student to locate three web resources or printed texts that deal with a specific economic theory then contrast the views expressed on those sites with the situation in country X and drawing on all three, ask the student to make recommendations for the future. Even at this level of synthesis, students may collude, i.e. pool their knowledge/work, but that is a different issue and can be dealt with using measures described in sections 3.4 and 7.

Another way to design out plagiarism opportunities is to include information-gathering skills as an outcome in its own right. A course where information gathering was valued explicitly would, in many instances, include the Web as

a key source of information. Macdonald (2000) argues that collecting and using information is much closer to the employment experience of graduates than many others stressed in HE so it may also offer vocational value as well as encourage individual learning.

Accessing web-based information could be extended to include essay banks and "cheat" sites. This suggestion is viewed by some academics as provocative and could be helping students cheat. Others regard it as naïve to believe students are unaware of such things, drawing an analogy with arguments against sex education. Essay banks provide a useful teaching tool by asking students to mark such work using agreed assessment criteria. Price et al (2000) demonstrate the importance of this active approach in ensuring criteria are both understood and applied in a student's own work. It also shows the low quality of many of these very expensive products and provides another "live" opportunity for demonstrating the boundaries between poor practice and plagiarism.

Good practice recommendation: *reconsider the learning outcomes for the course and decrease those that ask for knowledge and understanding, substituting instead those that require analysis, evaluation and synthesis; consider adding information gathering to learning outcomes*

2.3 Create individualised tasks

Some courses set a task that is the same for all students. Sometimes, this seems unavoidable because the skill is relatively straightforward, e.g. using an IT package or solving a practical problem. However, assessing *application* or *comparison* rather than *use* will encourage more individualised products. For example, students could be asked to select a text themselves from an electronic source and reformat it then explain why they opted for the new format and why it is better than the original. Or students could be asked to compare in class their own solution with an alternative and explain which one is more effective using stated criteria. In a similar vein, relatively general and standardised topics such as a general essay on George Elliot could be individualised by asking how an Elliot character dealt with a situation and how a recent public figure did so, leaving the student to select the figure. Essays that compare two things are less likely to exist already and quickly unearth possible collusion.

A final way to encourage a unique product, even with a standard task, is to assess the process (how the student achieved the end result) as well as the product. In group work (which is a valuable learning tool and not one to be abandoned lightly), it is probably more useful to use the group activity to provide the learning but not as a sole source of assessment because communal effort can easily be exploited by freeloaders. Instead of assessing the outcome of the whole group's efforts, you could ask each member to evaluate the group's product, whatever it might be. You could then assess the evaluation. Other ways to assess individual effort include requiring an individual record of what the group did, captured in contemporaneous logs which were dated and initialled to ensure they are not made up the night

before submission. Log entries of group activity would not be assessed per se but would lead to assessment via a post-hoc reflective piece on each person's contribution to the project (perhaps written under supervision, which allows you to compare answers for consistency and includes examples). A retrospective analysis of the problem solving strategies used by the group (with examples from the group experience) often covers very similar outcomes to the project itself but can be done individually or can be checked for collusion (see section 7).

Good practice recommendation: *Design in assessment tasks with multiple solutions or set one that creates artefacts to capture individual effort.*

2.4 Integrate assessment tasks

When able students were asked why they did not copy others' essays or download material, some referred to fear of detection. Others were confident they could do a better job than the "stolen" essay. However, most said they didn't take shortcuts because coursework was necessary to understanding and that they would need to demonstrate understanding in another context. Whilst they looked at others' essays and often reproduced the structure, they wove in their own facts and arguments, something they saw as essential for "getting your head around it". (Carroll, personal communication, 2001).

When course work and exams crosscheck and reinforce each other, this needs to be made explicit to all students, otherwise only the more strategic and successful will spot the connection. Linking exams and coursework explicitly also raises the overall status of coursework. Research shows that students regard exams as "powerfully symbolic, with those occurring at the end of a period of study necessarily carrying a sense of dramatic climax. The perceived formality of the examination as an Occasion (sic) lends it gravity, as does its atypical and staged nature". (Bannister and Ashworth, 1998 p. 238**).**

The same argument that supports integrating assessment tasks also supports building in overt structure. The structure encourages all students be as organised and strategic as the good ones. Evans (2000) opines that "readers tend not to cheat and cheaters tend not to read" so designing in requirements to read and record the reading would help. Several studies show that cheating and plagiarism are more common amongst weaker students with poor time management strategies (Roig and deTommaso, 1995 and Bannister and Ashworth, 1998). Designing in staging posts and requiring students to submit work for formative assessment will encourage forward planning. For example, asking in stages to see and initial a plan, a draft and a final product can be helpful because last minute panic may make plagiarism seem the only solution. One UK essay bank capitalises on this connection, offering free essays (with a disclaimer that users should "never cheat or plagiarise in any way") under the heading *Essay Crisis? What essay crisis!* (www.revise.it , 2000). (Worried academics, faced with this idea, need to remember that checking that something exists is not the same as assessing it.)

2.5 Set a range of assessment tasks

In some courses, instead of an essay, students could be asked for an annotated list of sources. The list could be accompanied with comments on, for example, the reliability of the source, how the information was used in the group project, or how it is relevant to the topic. Asking for an outline rather than a finished product or asking for the three best web sites or resources that *would* have been useful (had the document been written) can go a long way towards showing understanding and knowledge. By tracking the programme as a whole you can ensure students *do* practice and perfect valued academic writing skills but most students demonstrate dozens of times that they can write essays before graduation. Asking for different artefacts can significantly lessen the chances of submitted work being bought, faked or copied.

Good practice recommendation: *Integrate tasks so each builds on the other; design in checks that do not require teacher time but do require student effort. Be careful to only check, not assess the intermediate tasks. Set a variety of assessment tasks, choosing those less likely to already exist.*

3.0 Inform students about institutional policies and programme expectations

3.1 Induction

Students receive about 3000 documents/pieces of information at the start of a three-year degree programme and somewhat less paper for many postgraduate courses. Little (if any) of it is read yet many institutions tell students "It's in the Handbook" when sanctions are applied for plagiarism. Not surprisingly, disciplinary committees are almost universally met with protests that the alleged plagiariser didn't understand the rules. It is probable that recent Human Rights legislation makes this situation contrary to natural justice and fairness, i.e. legally unacceptable. Even if this is not the case, it is no longer tenable under Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) codes of practice. In 2000, the QAA required institutions (amongst other things) to provide guidance on academic misconduct that is explicit and readily available. The National Union of Students' (NUS), when asked their opinion on plagiarism, headed their recommendations with a request for "student friendly approaches that show understanding for the pressures students are under and the benefits of not doing it [i.e. plagiarising]". The NUS calls for "widely promulgated policies [that demonstrate] institutional openness and transparency [providing] clear, unambiguous, detailed and complete guidelines that distinguish between individual academic offences". They go on to say that definitions should explain what students must avoid (e.g. collusion, plagiarism) and what is allowed or even encouraged (e.g. collaboration and group work). Explanations should, according to the NUS, be written in student-friendly language and include illustrations and examples. Students also need to be told where to go for further clarification and guidance (Carroll, personal communication, March 2001).

3.2 Definitions of plagiarism, collusion and misconduct

Although definitions of academic misconduct in general and plagiarism in particular are universally regarded as important, the latter are difficult to devise. Evans (2000) comments, "Everyone seems to know [plagiarism] is wrong, including those who commit the offence, but few know how to completely define it and … its kissing cousin, copyright law". He lists various types of plagiarism such as auto-plagiarism (failure to cite oneself), self-plagiarism (submitting the same document several times) and cryptomnesia where hidden memory plays a key role. A common source of confusion arises from many people's tendency to confuse plagiarism with other forms of academic misconduct and cheating (Franklyn Stokes and Newstead, 1995, helpfully list 22). Often, "plagiarism" covers everything a student should not do at university.

Sometimes, definitions leave out the broader context. Many definitions only address writing whilst others refer to "work" as in phrases such as "passing off someone else's work as your own", to include constructions, music, photographs, unpublished documents, and others' ideas gained through

working in a group. A minority of definitions include the concept of gaining a personal reward from others' work in settings other than assessment such as when one seeks to enhance or improve one's personal and/or professional reputation by using others' work without acknowledgement. Finally, some definitions of plagiarism include a disclaimer about motives, pointing out that the action is unacceptable whether it was intentional or accidental, i.e. arising from fraud or misunderstanding.

Another difficulty is that some definitions include an exemption from citation rules for "common knowledge" but few define this concept despite the fact that common knowledge to a professional sociologist, for example, and a first year undergraduate differ greatly. Indeed, one of the characteristics of becoming a part of the discipline is taking on the knowledge base in that field. Citation rules also vary between different types of writing or dissemination. For example, a reflective piece will need referencing differently from a published journal article. An exam seeks to test knowledge and affirms that the student "knows" and is therefore in possession of that piece of information. In coursework, the information can only be "borrowed" from whomever really owns it and this needs signalling in a citation. Dissemination methods also have an impact. A researcher with a well recognised research profile can stand up in a conference and say, "Research shows...." but when her talk is included in conference proceedings, she may be asked to cite the source of this very general statement (or she may not depending on the editor's style notes). Finally, different disciplines have very different rules for citing others' ideas. Biologists and Historians, asked about plagiarism, can and do engage in heated arguments about their diverse approaches.

Few definitions in handbooks admit any of these subtleties yet any or all could come into play once an accusation has been made. Articles by Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995); Bannister and Ashworth, (1998) and Macdonald (2000) all include typical quotes from students expressing their confusion.

3.3 Reinforcing understanding of definitions for particular groups

Although all students find defining plagiarism and collusion difficult, International Students (IS) often need particular help. It will not be enough just to define plagiarism or tell them not to do it.

Although many academics see international students as lacking skills, in fact they bring skills such as citing appropriate proverbs to illustrate ideas or describing the context and background to ideas in great detail. For some (and, of course, for many stay-at-home students), reproducing large chunks of others' texts is a way of signalling they know of the existence of this information. (Ryan, 2000). Successful use of these strategies account in part for ISs past achievements as signalled by their entry into UK higher education. Once admitted, many need help to add new skills and to set aside others in order to succeed in their new environment. For example, mining texts to gather ideas and quotes is valued in the UK but some ISs find it both strange and disrespectful, especially if they come from academic cultures

where offering personal and possibly critical views was not acceptable. Angelil-Carter (2000), discussing the needs of South African students, reminds her fellow academics that these students often

> …are immersed in highly religious cultures … oral history and [a] literature tradition that requires and values accuracy of memorisation. The student who is plagiarising may simply be making use of the modes of textual construction that he or she knew at school (p. 165).

Many ISs "borrow" the words of native authors through lack of confidence in their own abilities to write correct, clear English. Watkins and Biggs (1996), commenting on Chinese students, notes,

> Students who want to make a point particularly clearly see paraphrasing the source as a strange thing to do when the source itself makes the point better than they ever could reword it in an imperfectly mastered language (p.279).

What began as a pragmatic solution can quickly become a problem unless clear teaching of referencing is offered early in an ISs British academic life.

By acknowledging the utility and validity of past approaches to writing, British lecturers are not being asked to accept the same behaviours as valid in UK institutions. British Higher Education holds other beliefs, values and practices. ISs themselves wish to be certified as successful in the UK context and UK institutions wish to preserve their standards and expectations. For ISs, setting aside previously successful strategies and learning new ones can take considerable time and effort but where task requirements are made very explicit, many students adapt quickly (Volet and Kee, 1993). Where requirements remain implicit and no help is provided, some struggle for years. Even with explicit information, many need specialist help (Fox, 1994). Many authors of books on teaching in HE address the teaching of ISs explicitly, including reference to plagiarism. (See, for example, Ryan, 2000)

3.4 Defining collusion and informing students

Whereas many staff and students find defining plagiarism difficult, almost *everyone* has difficulty identifying where collaboration stops and collusion begins. More often than not, students are given instructions such as, "Work in a group but each of you must submit your own work". It is relatively common to see peer instruction valued in class only to have students meet with dire consequences when they use it in assignments.

The only way to counter this confusion is by providing clear definitions that state how individual work is to be signalled, what criteria for assessment will be used and how students should identify shared work. Since the UK system requires an individual grade based on individual effort leading to an individual degree classification, teaching staff must find some way to ensure they are assessing this individual product of work, even where learning and effort has been collaborative. Suggestions for doing this can be found in the growing

literature on group working and assessment such as Gibbs (1995) or see section 2.3.

***Good practice recommendations**: Institutions should invest time and energy into reaching consensus on defining breaches of academic regulations then disseminate them widely to academics and students.*

3.5 Continuing to offer information

Information about what constitutes plagiarism and how to conform to good academic practice needs to be offered throughout a student's academic career using such vehicles as course handbooks, dissertation cover sheets, assignment briefing sheets, and user-friendly leaflets. Some students use this information to guide their practice. For example, postgraduate students from their National Committee (Carroll, personal communication, 2001) claimed that instruction on referencing and definitions of plagiarism in their institutions are effective although they would have welcomed more specific instruction on citing web sites, noting these sites frequently change or die. Where no guidance existed, these experienced postgraduate students used whatever rules applied in their discipline-based journals. They recognised the importance of using correct citations outside the university. There are few spotters of published plagiarism more vigilant than the original author.

Other students, less attuned to external readers and less aware of academic conventions, either do not notice information on plagiarism or once noted, take little heed of rules until they face punishment for breaching them. An information-only approach will probably leave students as uninformed as those who responded when a lecturer (Carroll, personal communication, 2001) sought the most frequently asked questions by undergraduates on plagiarism. The eleven most FAQs included ten about applying citation rules such as:

- *Why can't I use his words if they are better than any I could think of?*
- *What difference does it make if I just put it in the bibliography?*
- *It is my work. I've changed the words in the article to my own. Isn't that enough*?

The eleventh question was *"How not to get caught*". If this informal survey is any guide (and it probably isn't), ten times as much confusion as fraud was expressed, supporting the view that information without instruction, discussion and practice leaves students no option but trial and error. If an institution wishes this to not be the case, they must explicitly teach writing and citation skills.

4.1 Induction or apprenticeship?

Many programmes include a short session on avoiding plagiarism as part of induction week. The session is usually confined to definitions of academic misconduct and exhortations on compliance, offered as a lecture to a large number of listening newcomers who may or may not attend. Despite this induction, almost all researchers confirm that students do not understand what plagiarism is or how to avoid it. Wilhoit (1994), writing before the explosion of electronic sources, claimed that the majority of students unintentionally fail to comply with regulations and a minority makes a conscious decision to do so. Parlour (1995) explains the prevalence of misuse of paraphrasing and referencing by claiming that "students do not know what it means to reference, they will often have been taught that it is perfectly acceptable to copy and thinly paraphrase work from secondary sources". A short talk may be effective at conveying information, but cannot change attitudes and beliefs or develop skills (Bligh, 1998) as these require that students are actively involved (see section 4.3).

Many HEIs link the early explanation/exhortation session with a period of exemption , which allows students in Year One to learn and practice their referencing skills without incurring sanctions. Shortfalls in this "apprenticeship" are deemed "poor academic practice", reserving the label of "plagiarism" and resulting punishment for Year Two or even Three. An extended practice is claimed as necessary given students' weak writing skills, their rudimentary awareness of referencing and frequent inexperience in reading for research purposes. Staff claim that asking too much too soon discourages students and lecturers alike, often stating, "If we're too strict, everyone will fail".

Other academics (and some institutions) take the view that using others' ideas as one's own for personal benefit constitutes plagiarism no matter when it happens or who is doing it. By ignoring plagiarism, even for what looks like benevolent reasons, lecturers are saying that students can put off learning about referencing and paraphrasing. Losing a few marks can seem a price worth paying for an easier life in Year One. Delay also reinforces the view that academic rules are more about avoiding punishment or being polite then they are about upholding the values of academic discourse. If universities constitute a community of thinkers who build on and acknowledge each other's ideas and if students are junior members of that community, then letting students "break the rules" whilst offering guidance for the future is inconsistent with academic values and therefore wrong.

It is also probably ineffective. Studies show that many students often don't collect coursework once they know the mark and do not read corrections and feedback on their work. Those who do seem rarely to adapt their practice to comply with well-meaning advice or to correct previously held incorrect ideas (Fritz et al, 2000). One university that operates a "no grace period" approach pointed out (Carroll, personal communication, 2001) that almost all students claim their plagiarism was unintended and resulted from misunderstanding of the rules with PhD candidates being among the most vociferous in this

regard. By treating all plagiarism as unacceptable, they claim that students actually use the early years to learn the skills rather than delaying until it "matters". It is important to remember that plagiarism can be identified without implying maximum penalties for offenders. There are two decisions: *1. is it plagiarism?* and *2. what happens as a result?* See section 9.3 for suggestions about determining punishment.

Good practice recommendation: *treat all instances of plagiarism formally with penalties and tariffs adjusted to fit student circumstances; inform students clearly of the policy, how they must comply and how they will be helped to do so (see section 10).*

4.2 Teaching academic conventions

Finding time to teach students how to avoid plagiarism can be problematic, especially in modularised programmes. Compulsory modules are likely to be "full" of discipline-specific content but including the teaching in optional modules would mean students either miss it or encounter it several times. By far the most common approach is to expect students to learn the skills implicitly (which the more strategic do) or face punishment when they transgress (either through ignorance or fraudulent intent). It may be that the growing emphasis on explicit learning outcomes and on informing students more clearly about all their responsibilities will help all students teach themselves these skills. However, those who read very little, who come from a background where different writing skills were rewarded (see section 3.3) or those whose skills are poorly developed for whatever reason will need practice to master these skills. "Stressing the dire consequences of failing to observe official guidelines, in the absence of constructive and positive guidance, may have a 'crippling' effect on the academic confidence of students" (Bannister and Ashworth, 1998 p. 239).

To avoid the trial-and-error approach, some programmes include the skills in a compulsory element of the programme; others offer a generic course on study skills, often broadening the syllabus to include writing for academic purposes, library use etc. Incorporating skills into discipline-based teaching risks arguments about diluting content, about where these skills are best taught, and about who is best able to teach them. Generic "study skills" courses, whilst often championed in programmes that take students from diverse backgrounds, are often seen by students as a distraction from their primary goal of a discipline-based qualification with those most likely to benefit also most likely to see such courses as an additional burden. Even those who welcome the help do not find it easy to transfer their learning to other contexts. Generic "study skills" teachers struggle with adapting what they offer to a wide range of disciplines and widely variable requirements depending on the contexts where students will use the skills.

Good practice recommendation: *design in compulsory teaching sessions on academic writing and citation skills where students can apply the skills to discipline-specific content as part of their core assessment tasks.*

4.3 Active learning methods to teach students

Induction sessions may have covered definitions but stories or case studies help definitions come to life and show how subtle some of the distinctions can be. Students can be offered paraphrased versions of the same text, only one of which would be acceptable in Higher Education. This inevitably leads to discussion and explanation as to why one version did comply with convention and others did not. Whilst this may seem a trivial exercise to academics used to this style of writing, a study by Roig (1997) showed that most students are confused by the subtleties of paraphrasing. Many believed that an author's words can be used virtually unchanged as long as the original author is cited somewhere in the text.

Many inexperienced students welcome the idea of attending additional instruction in writing for academic purposes in the form of classes, surgeries or drop-in clinics. Help is especially useful if it does not stigmatise the student and is offered at a range of times as flexible scheduling reduces the chances of compromising students' other work. It is also helpful if the person offering support is a specialist attuned to the needs of particular groups such as mature students, dyslexic students or international students. Supplemental help will need forceful marketing as the students most in need are also those least adept at seeking it out. Resources allocated to this work should reflect the sensitive and often extended nature of this kind of support, especially for international students.

Good practice recommendation: *ensure that students are taught how to avoid plagiarism with active learning techniques, providing opportunities for discussion, practice and feedback; this instruction works best integrated into discipline-specific contexts.*

5.0 Creating a climate of student involvement and interest

5.1 Explanations and justifications for cheating

Research at Sheffield Hallam University showed that students saw cheating as "relatively legitimate where a course is seen as of marginal importance or badly taught" (Macdonald, 2000). Bannister and Ashworth (1998) call their article, '*Four good reasons for cheating and plagiarism*' and cite a range of explanations and, in some cases, justifications for academic dishonesty. For example, students cheat because they feel alienated and ignored by lecturers, disengaged by assessment tasks and disrespected by assessment that does not "require original thought ...but rather the reiteration of well-established ideas and concepts" (p. 239). Where students felt the subject had been exhausted, where the assignment had been set year after year, and where the lecturer did not seem to value what was being taught, students' commitment drops and they become "open to cheating" (p. 239).

Cole and Kiss, (2000), writing about American students, describe "cheating in record numbers" (p. 5) and go on to argue that approaches based on distrust and sophisticated detection strategies are bound to fail. Instead, the authors advocate demonstrating why academic integrity is an important value. Their research shows that students cheat less (even when attempts to prevent them doing so are scaled down) when they see tasks as worth doing, when they admire their teachers and when they are excited about what they are learning (p. 7). Whilst American traditions such as establishing honour codes with public "signing ceremonies" at the start of students' university careers (McCabe and Parvela, 2000) may translate uneasily to the UK context, the underlying principles are analogous.

5.2 Academic conduct as a model of good practice

As well as espousing academic values, faculty need to follow them scrupulously by citing those whose ideas they use in lectures and crediting others' ideas rather than treating them as their own. This does not always happen. When consulted for their views on plagiarism, members of the National Postgraduate Committee complained at length about papers published under their supervisor's name or with the student as fifth author when the student did most of the work. (Carroll, personal communication, 2001). These kinds of academic behaviours must be common or the humour in the following guidelines for marking would not work:

- in the event that more than half the entire answer has been plagiarised and the marker recognises the source: *fail*
- less than half the answer has been plagiarised/marker recognises the source: *deduct 20 marks*
- marker feels that they have read this particular script several thousand times before, but cannot quite remember where or when: *no action to be taken*

- in the event that the answer reveals extensive plagiarism of the marker's work: *add ten marks."* (Taylor, 2000*)*.

One of the authors of this report has read that extract to many hundreds of lecturers; it always gets a laugh of recognition.

A relatively recent threat to trust and shared values between teacher and student could be over-use of detection (see section 7). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that rather than too much detection, some academics avoid it if at all possible. Although there may be disputes about whether the more subtle aspects of paraphrasing and summarising constitute plagiarism, many examples are blatantly obvious. A lecturer who sees any of the following and does not take action to identify possible plagiarism is in fact, contributing to the alleged diminution of academic values:

- urls left at the top of students' pages
- strange changes in font and/or layout
- American spelling either throughout a document or in scattered sections
- bibliographies that only cite material not available locally
- bibliographic references from 1996 and before (for example) in a paper on a topical issue
- bibliographies that do not reflect the content of the coursework
- introductions and conclusions written in grammatically incorrect English and not addressing the body of the paper that is written in flawless, complex English
- unusual or highly specific professional jargon in a student starting out in the discipline

Less blatant examples in written work should also make the reader uneasy. For example, coursework that:

- addresses the topic only obliquely or addresses only a small aspect of it
- is out of character for this particular student, especially if it significantly exceeds the usual level of performance or language
- closely resembles work submitted by other students.

(Based on Hinchliffe,1999.) See also section 10 for other examples of academic reluctance.

Good practice recommendation: *Academic staff need to be seen to be adhering to the behaviours they ask of their students and taking steps to defend them from abuse.*

5.3 Secure systems for recording and returning coursework

Students show their work to each other and place a high value on helping fellow students, often rating these values as more important than rules about plagiarism (Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead, 1995). However, students see stealing others' work and resubmitting it as wrong and think lecturers who

allow this to happen are incompetent. Coursework should not be left in a box outside one's office or in a pile at the front of the lecture hall. It is the work of a moment to take an A-grade example, scan it and resubmit it with a new front cover. Students know that multiple markers and very large classes make this kind of cheating hard to spot although electronic tools that spot collusion can be helpful (see section 7). Low-tech solutions also help. One university used worries about theft to instigate a system of handing back work during personal tutoring time, thus insuring safe return and enhancing the feedback. One tutor commented, "At least now I get to meet them all."

***Good practice recommendations**: create administrative and institutional systems to collect, record and return coursework securely.*

6.0 Using assessment to check authenticity

To check the student's work is authentic, you might organise:

- a random viva of a percentage of the cohort
- an open-book test
- an in-class or supervised task.

The section on course design reviewed the importance of integrating assessment tasks so that each task builds on a previous one as a way of encouraging learning; integrated assessment is also a way of checking authenticity. For example, a written exam question or a ten-minute viva could check a student's understanding of the coursework. Evans (2000) suggests a meta-essay, written under supervised conditions on an undisclosed topic (e.g. *Why I structured the essay in this way, Which sources were particularly useful, How I would do it differently next time, What I learned from writing it*). As well as checking authorship, a meta-essay encourages reflection and analysis. Another approach is to create a scatter diagram of coursework marks against those obtained under exam conditions, looking for large discrepancies worthy of future investigation.

To check the work is original, electronic detection tools are useful.

7.0 Using electronic detection tools

7.1 Choosing the right tool for the task

If the lecturer is worried about students copying from each other, they need a tool that checks for collusion. CopyCatch, devised by a forensic linguist and available for purchase (see resources in Appendix 1), requires a relatively short time to match each script with all the others in the cohort. Matches over 60% or 70% (depending on the task) are clear indications of the need for specific checking of those papers more closely. CopyCatch can only be used if students submit work electronically.

Some detection tools search the Web for text similar to that submitted by the student, either using a programme under the lecturer's control or by submission to a web-based service. Appendix 2 lists the tools that were recently evaluated by JISC (the full reports are available at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/pub/index.html#projects). As search engines become more powerful, they, too, can find sites quickly. However, Hinchliffe (2000) points to worries as to whether tools cover a wide enough section of the web, what they miss, and their impact on "the classroom climate".

- *worries about the "referent database"* (Hinchliffe, 2000 p. 5). Detection tools can only access the relatively small percentage of the Internet that is indexed on search engines. One study found that combining 11 search engines checked 42% of the web and using one (Northern Light) searched 16% (Lawrence and Giles, 1999). Copyright rules and protection devices mean that much of the web is out of bounds, including many essay banks. One American instructor comments, "I can easily find the sites where students go ...I don't have the $9 to $20 per page to verify that a paper I have from a student is one they got on line." (personal communication, 2001).

- *fraud.* Detection tools cannot identify the author of a piece of work. If a student pays someone, uses one of the free essay banks or paraphrases cleverly, this will be undetected. An essay bank in the UK offers 13 suggestions to "make a Revise.it EssayLab essay seem like one of your very own...." including suggestion 7. "You might want to add some spelling mistakes/ grammatical error's (sic) [and] 8. Use a thesaurus to change some of the bigger words into different big words..." (www.revise.it, March 2000).

- *overlooking print sources.* Hinchliffe (2000) notes, "...the savvy, intentional plagiariser will use older periodical articles or, even more difficult to track though not impossible, book chapters. Tracking these original source documents requires expertise in identifying clues in the original texts and then retrieving those print documents" (p. 6).

- *the effect on the learning environment* Evidence of the effect remains anecdotal but this worry is frequently cited by many if not most authors looking at pedagogy and plagiarism.

7.2 Staff development and training

Some lecturers need help in learning to use the more complex detection tools and most appreciate a chance to share expertise and pool good practice. Usually, the more technologically-minded people lead the way with the less keen adopting things more slowly. Because (in general) academics seem most willing to learn from colleagues within their own institution, training programmes based on networking with enthusiasts and discussion linked to one-to-one coaching where necessary will probably be the most effective. It is important that this pragmatic, incremental approach is happening alongside measures for institution-wide monitoring of practice, decisions and punishments (see section 11 below) since students will expect a common approach despite the inevitable different rates of progress.

7.3 The effect of electronic detection on academic decisions

Electronic detection can only be an adjunct to the normal exercise of academic judgement. It is important to remember that a negative finding – not locating the original source – does not preclude action (see section 9.3). A positive result will draw attention to possible action or provide information that would not otherwise be available. (For example, it could spot significant overlap in two pieces of work in a large cohort or one with multiple markers.) In either case, an academic judgement is needed as to whether academic misconduct has occurred and what further action needs to be taken, if any

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

8. Using a separate procedure for disciplinary issues

No matter how well a course teaches ways to avoid plagiarism, or how much effort the lecturer has put into building a climate that values learning itself, there will always be students who commit academic misconduct whether through ignorance or deliberate choice. For the reasons set out in section 1.2 and 4.1, such occurrences must be dealt with through a disciplinary process. Furthermore, it is essential that this is clearly differentiated from the normal process of assessment via examination boards.

This separation is necessary in principle because the two processes fulfil different functions, require different procedures to be followed and apply different criteria within those procedures. Put crudely, an examination board will consider the extent to which a piece of work demonstrates that the student has achieved the necessary learning outcomes and determine what academic credit should be awarded for it. It will apply procedures developed through internal quality assurance and external peer review. A disciplinary committee, on the other hand, will consider whether or not the evidence presented to it is sufficient to warrant a finding of academic misconduct and, if so, what penalty should be imposed. Some penalties, such as expulsion from the University, go beyond the normal powers of examination boards and many should be imposed without reference to the merits or otherwise of the (non-plagiarised) remainder of the work submitted. Unlike assessment procedures, those for disciplinary committees are governed by the rules of natural justice (and quite possibly now the Human Rights Act) (see section 9.2ans 9.3 below).

These distinctions have been tested out in the courts and it has been shown that the application to the disciplinary process of procedures appropriate to the examination board can easily lead to a successful challenge to the outcome. Thus, in R v Manchester Metropolitan University *ex parte* Nolan (1993), Mr Justice Sedley was clear that the exclusion of a student from the meeting of the examination board that considered an allegation of plagiarism against him was

> …not beyond challenge if its effect were to rob a student altogether of a hearing by or on behalf of those who were to judge him, not - I stress – on examination performance but on the academic equivalent of a criminal charge. (p21)

The same case made clear that, if the examination board is to play any role in the disciplinary process (for example, by determining an appropriate penalty after a disciplinary committee has determined guilt or innocence), then it must at the very least have all of the relevant information before it since

> …a material failure on the part of the Board of Examiners … to take into account matters which it was incumbent on them to take into account, namely the full evidence in mitigation which had been placed before and

> accepted by the Disciplinary Committee, … will ordinarily vitiate the material proceedings and nullify the decision. (*op cit* p25).

Moreover, once a disciplinary committee has made its decision a subsequent examination board must be extremely careful not to revisit or seek to alter the decisions made by that disciplinary committee. It was exactly such behaviour that led Mr Justice Sedley to state that "it was the obligation of the Board of Examiners to accept and not to revise or go back on the findings of the Disciplinary Committee" when quashing the decision of an examination board to permanently fail a student for plagiarism (*op cit* p.22). All in all, institutions would be well advised to err on the side of separating the two procedures rather than conflating them.

Though necessary, and from many points of view desirable, the separation between disciplinary and assessment processes does lead to certain difficulties. Provided a judgement of plagiarism does not lead to expulsion (and most do not), the disciplinary penalty and the determination of the student's future programme must be brought back into the normal institutional systems for recording academic credit and determining progression. If the plagiarism is sufficiently serious to warrant failure of the piece of work, or of the relevant course unit, this can be decided by the disciplinary committee and incorporated into the student's academic record administratively. Any consequential issues of progression and/or resubmission should be dealt with by the examination committee in exactly the same way as for any other student with a similar record of failure, however caused.

More difficult is the situation when plagiarism is judged to have occurred but is not sufficiently serious to warrant a complete failure of the piece of work. In this case, it is necessary for institutions to develop and apply a methodology for determining a mark that accurately reflects the "underlying academic merit" of the piece of work while also imposing an appropriate punitive reduction. Developing such a methodology is fraught with difficulty, not least because some academics believe that the very concept of the "underlying academic merit" of a piece of semi-plagiarised work is inherently meaningless (Appleton, personal communication, 2000). In any event the outcome, whatever it is and however it is determined, must be fed back into the normal administrative processes of the institution as in the previous case.

Following from the separation between assessment and discipline, there also needs to be clarity about appeals. Policies must specify which elements of any outcome can be appealed against through the appropriate provisions of the Disciplinary Procedure and which, if any, can be reviewed by means of an appeal against a decision of an Examination Board. None of these distinctions are impossible to establish, and many are not even particularly difficult, but it is not clear whether all institutions have yet adopted such an approach.

Good Practice Recommendation:- *clearly define the respective roles of the Examination Board and the Disciplinary Procedure in cases of plagiarism, and*

any interrelation between them; ensure that all parties are aware of and adhere to their respective limits.

9. Key Elements of a Disciplinary Procedure

9.1 External requirements

Earlier comments about the necessity for fairness (see sections1.2 and 8) referred to Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights. In this context, a fair procedure is one that one that adheres to the principles of natural justice, produces outcomes proportionate to the magnitude of the offence and one that is consistently applied across the whole University.

9.2 The requirements of natural justice

The principles of natural justice require that a student be presented with all the evidence should an accusation of plagiarism be pursued and be given an opportunity to challenge it in front of the body that will determine the allegations. All participants in the process should be given appropriate notice; and the student in particular should be told about their rights of representation at such a hearing. On the matter of representation, Hart (2001) stresses that a student should not be denied access to an appropriately skilled and qualified representative, particularly in serious or complex cases, though this representative need not be a lawyer. She quotes Lord Denning in *Enderby Town Football Club Ltd v Football Association Ltd* [1971] who concluded:

> *A domestic tribunal is not entitled to lay down an absolute rule: 'We will never allow anyone to have a lawyer to appear for him' [but] justice can often be done better in them by a good layman than by a bad lawyer.*

The right to challenge the evidence is particularly important in cases where it has not been possible to identify the original of the allegedly plagiarised material. While plagiarism can properly be identified through academic judgement, such judgements must be open to testing both by the student and by the institution. Certainly, at least one of the two should do so. Thus a case brought without the ability to cite an original text should be sufficiently strong to satisfy the requirements of civil law. Hart (2001) reminds Higher Education institutions that

> …it is generally accepted that the criminal standard *[of proof]* is too strict for internal disciplinary proceedings. However, it is also considered that the more serious the charge, the more satisfied the committee need to be that the offence has been committed.

For those who do not usually deal in such matters, the criminal standard of proof is "beyond reasonable doubt" as opposed to civil procedures where decisions are made "on the balance of probabilities". In addition to being a requirement of natural justice, the process of debating and testing the evidence of plagiarism is also a key opportunity to reinforce the definitions and examples of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable academic citation, paraphrasing, etc.

The case of *Flanagan v University College, Dublin* [1988] (quoted in Hart, 2001) made clear that a university must ensure a complete separation between the role of prosecutor and that of the body that determines guilt and imposes a penalty. Lack of separation risks having the decision set aside by the courts. This means that whoever argues the case for plagiarism must not be the body determining punishment (See section 9.5 on how fast tracking deals with an apparent breach of this requirement; section 9.3 on considerations for allocating punishment are also relevant.)

The requirement for separation extends to appropriate appeal mechanisms. Appeals must be reviewed by individuals not directly linked to those who made the initial decision(s).

Good Practice Recommendation:- *make the disciplinary process a place where learning can occur as well as punishment and where procedures meet external legal requirements.*

9.3 Determining appropriate outcomes

A fair procedure must clearly define how an institution will address the question of consequences once a decision of plagiarism has been made. This means agreeing the factors to consider and the relative importance of each in making the decision as to outcomes. The key issue has to be the extent of the academic misconduct (e.g. the amount of text plagiarised, the closeness to the original text, the nature of the material copied, whether purely descriptive or including results, etc).

The second issue that is central to determining punishment relates to student motivation. If the student intended to gain an unfair advantage (or was grossly negligent in not taking sufficient steps to prevent themselves from committing plagiarism), they have committed a further offence. In determining the degree of intentionality (and hence the degree to which the penalty should be increased) consideration should be given to the following factors, while recognising that they are not necessarily all entirely distinct

- whether the student admits or denies the allegation,
- the stage of the student in their programme,
- the number of previous offences,
- the learning background of the student
- the extent of the student's knowledge of the concept of academic misconduct.

Finally, consideration must then be given to the effect of the intended penalty on the student's progression or (potential) award. The overall outcome should not be disproportionate to the offence. In certain disciplines, because of the nature of the programme, similar decisions may have very different effect. All of these factors are relevant to determining a fair outcome and all need to be considered consistently across the institution. This implies that institutions will need to develop more or less formal systems of "tariffs" covering the range of academic misconduct.

9.4 Consistent and effective application of the procedures

There is a need to explain and respond to the wide disparity between the incidents of plagiarism acted upon by staff and those reported anecdotally and more than anecdotally by the students themselves. Clearly, one reason is simply lack of time. Evidence of the significant increase in workload for all staff in Higher Education over the last 10 years or more is so widespread as not to need citation. But although pressure on time is a key deterrent, other academic worries also contribute to their reluctance to act.

Some staff cite an absence of clear teaching for students on how to avoid plagiarism and see detection as unfair on students generally and potentially discriminatory against overseas students. For others, it is viewed as unfair if other students, taught by other staff, are not equally at risk. Some staff may believe that they would be seen as having failed compared with other staff who had not discovered extensive plagiarism amongst their students (even if lack of detection arises from not having looked). Yet others may believe that their management would not thank them for being the cause of the School or University appearing on the front page of the Times Higher in a less than flattering light. In every case, action could only result in yet more time taken out of an already over-extended timetable.

One solution to academic reluctance at the individual level and, at the institutional level, the difficulty of maintaining a consistent approach across the whole institution is to invest responsibility in a relatively small group of staff. This selected “professional” group would have all suspicions of plagiarism reported to them, would decide when to take action, then take it, share experiences and develop a common approach to plagiarism and disciplinary procedures. Basing such staff in a centralised function of the university would maximise coherence and encourage speedy adoption of policies. However, this tight centrality is likely to produce difficulties in properly getting to grips with the specific nature of plagiarism in the wide range of subjects that are taught in most modern Universities (see section 3.2 on the variations in definitions of plagiarism in differing fields). Also, given the uneven timing of, e.g., coursework submission dates this group is unlikely to be kept fully occupied by conducting disciplinary cases, and it is not clear what else they might be doing.

An alternative approach is for each lecturer to undertake their own disciplinary processes. This has the advantage that they will have a better understanding of the subject in question, are more likely to know the specific circumstances of the student and may consequently be better able to educate the student on a one-to-one level as opposed to merely punish them. However, it would be difficult to ensure that all such staff were adequately trained and informed about this responsibility. Even if they were, most would deal with so few cases that they would have little opportunity to develop the necessary skills and competencies. The risk is that poorly trained, under-experienced or over-worked staff might decide not to challenge academic misconduct because they do not feel confident in their ability to apply the procedure properly.

Alternatively, they might apply the policy incorrectly to the detriment of themselves, the student and the University.

The best elements of these options can be combined by requiring all academic misconduct cases to be referred to one or two staff from each subject area who would take specific responsibility for that subject area. This would ensure that cases were dealt with by someone who understands the academic area in question (and quite possibly knows the student as well). Limiting the numbers makes consistent decision-making a realistic possibility, maximises the cost benefits of any formal training provided and ensures expertise is maintained through regular practice. It is worth noting that, while the holder of such a role certainly needs a thorough understanding of the relevant academic issues, there is no automatic requirement that he or she be a member of the academic staff.

Whatever the model adopted, it must include:

- ways of sharing diverse situations, either through face-to-face meetings in a devolved system or through information gathering in a centralised one;
- data on who is doing what that is shared and evaluated;
- changes in policy in response to monitoring and evaluation of current practice;
- continued efforts to inform and update all staff on how to deal with these issues.

Good Practice Recommendation:- *give the responsibility for dealing with all cases of plagiarism to a small number of staff in each subject area, who are properly trained and who will work as a team across the institution.*

9.5 Other procedural issues

Having set out the requirements of a robust disciplinary procedure, it is important that it does not become so unwieldy that staff are deterred from using it. Wherever possible there needs to be opportunities for cases or elements of cases that are minor and/or uncontested to be dealt with under a "fast-track" process. "Fast tracking" allows the student to acknowledge error and move on while ensuring that the appropriate penalty is imposed. Such a process must allow for a return to the rigorous process described in sections 8 and 9 immediately a dispute arises. Using fast-track procedures in the case of serious allegations should be done with the utmost care, if at all, regardless of the student's views and wishes.

It is unlikely that a fast-track procedure can be developed fairly without adopting an approach like that recommended in section 9.4 where experienced academic misconduct officers are appointed. A fast-track allows the disciplinary officer to apply penalties on behalf of a full disciplinary body. For the student, it is rather like accepting and paying a fixed penalty speeding fine rather than disputing and using the full court procedures. For the member of staff, fast tracking would also reduce the temptation to bypass the formal procedures through methods which do not comply with the requirements

listed elsewhere and which would leave both the individual and the institution open to serious challenge. Tariffs become even more important if fast-tracking is used.

Good Practice Recommendation:- *establish "fast-track" disciplinary procedures for dealing with minor and uncontested cases of plagiarism and clearly define the limits of their use.*

There is growing legal advice (e.g. Hart, 2001) that disciplinary panels should give reasons for their decisions. Over and above that, it creates yet a further opportunity for teaching the students involved the relevant academic principles and can contribute to institutional development by enabling more detailed monitoring of outcomes. To achieve the latter aim, cases need to be recorded appropriately and in sufficient detail. Properly analysed these records can indicate inconsistencies in the application of the disciplinary procedure between academic areas, where teaching of correct attribution within the University could be strengthened, which groups of students are particularly vulnerable to misunderstanding attribution conventions, and could even (given sufficient detail) highlight common errors in attribution.

Good Practice Recommendation:- *design a simple disciplinary record keeping system that will enable you to monitor which plagiarism problems are occurring where, and how effective different strategies and initiatives are in addressing these problems.*

10 Informing students of university activities against plagiarism

Sections 3 and 4 dealt in some detail with how students might be better informed about plagiarism and better taught to avoid it. Informing students about integrated and sequential assessment is an essential component of an integrated strategy. When different elements of the assessment build on each other in such a way that cheating at an early stage makes later stages significantly more difficult, lecturers should say so. In this section the issue is reinforcing information with additional reminders of the significant detrimental effect that a proven charge of plagiarism can have on their programme (and possibly on their lives). Admittedly, this is difficult to do as many are not interested until it happens to them. One way forward might be to publicise anonymised real examples of plagiarism, including the penalty imposed and the consequences. A regular slot in the student newspaper might attract attention but it also risks creating one of two impressions; either that numbers are high therefore everyone is doing it ("…*so why shouldn't I*") or, if cases are relatively rare, that most people are getting away with it ("…*so I might as well too"*). Certainly this approach should only be adopted as part of an integrated and widely publicised approach including many of the suggestions in this report.

Whereas the need for general information to students is clear and forms the largest component of recommendations from the National Union of Students (Carroll, personal communication, 2001), there is contradictory experience about the benefits of informing students in advance of submission of electronic detection for collusion in specific instances. Information as to whether this changes student behaviour remains anecdotal.

- One lecturer describes a cohort of 120 students who were thus warned, resulting in no evidence of collusion in a course where it was assumed it usually happened. There was, however, considerable student anger, something the lecturer attributed to frustration that a usual solution to coursework effort had been denied to them.
- A similar exercise in another university still resulted in 26% of papers submitted containing evidence of collusion; when this detection rate was reported to the students, a subsequent piece of work produced no cases of collusion. (Seenan, 1999)
- A third colleague, asked to participate in a trial of electronic detection tools, refused to tell students as she had no wish to alert them. She detected no collusion and had no explanation for this finding.
- A fourth refused to participate in trialing electronic detection for fear of creating an "us and them" atmosphere where detection aids were solely seen as clever ways to catch students out.

Whatever approach is adopted, students should never be given reason to believe that, because the lecturer has not told them that work will be checked, they can cheat with impunity. Similarly, when the lecturer is taking active steps to check the authenticity of student work by comparing different assessment stages, students should know this. . Random or partial checks

are a legitimate adjunct to normal academic judgement. Such actions must be explained with care lest years of effort to create an atmosphere of collegial working between staff and students is put at risk.

It seems likely that the relative novelty of electronic detection means good practice about informing students is still developing. Adopting the recommendations in this report, including the ones just referred to, is primarily about producing the most effective learning processes for all students and only secondarily about catching and punishing cheats.

11. Implementing a co-ordinated strategy against plagiarism

Any recommendations and solutions such as those put forward in this paper will need to be put into practice by individual staff and groups of staff. However, an institution needs an over all policy to make sure that, through working in alignment, it gains the benefits of synergy and ensures that all students encounter frequent and consistent messages about plagiarism. The student thereby learns and reinforces that learning throughout his or her programmes. A list of interconnected tasks with clear guidance about how to apply them fairly and consistently can make the process appear straightforward and prompt the question, "If it's all so obvious and so simple, why aren't all academic staff already doing all these things?"

In fact, many are doing at least some of these things and some are doing many of them already. More and more staff are using electronic detection tools as they become better known. However, in our experience, the majority of staff are and will continue to be reluctant to become more proactive in this area, especially as individuals. Time taken to learn how to use any given tool, to actually apply it, and (most importantly) to pursue any cases detected acts as a significant deterrent. The latter could become an even stronger one if the suspicions about the number of cases of academic misconduct prove to be well founded (Walker (1998) asserts that in some universities up to 80% of students plagiarise).

Every institution will have to address this issue in a way that is sensitive to its existing culture, but all should be based on an explicit policy that includes:

- *a clear commitment from the highest levels of the University*.

This makes the statement that the issue is important and that it is necessary to devote appropriate resources to tackling it. It reassures those worried by the negative impact of any possible short-term bad publicity. It also strengthens the concept that all parts of the University will adopt a consistent approach to the problem.

- *a clear and appropriate regulatory framework for defining and dealing with academic misconduct;*

- *clearly defined roles and responsibilities*

Each member of staff, every School and Faculty needs to know what is expected of them and what they can expect from others.

- *access to support and specialist advice*

Carrying out a balanced policy will necessitate support from specialists and experts in areas such as assessing electronic detection aids, course/assessment design, academic misconduct disciplinary procedures, and teaching academic writing skills. In order to develop expertise, these

individuals will need time to research the relevant field, analyse information from a range of sources and produce (and regularly update) guidance appropriate to the institution.

Once developed, this expertise will need to be actively disseminated as well as made available on request to individuals and groups. Many staff would also benefit from more general training and support in the same areas. Institutions will need to make time available for these activities, both to those delivering them and those receiving.

- m*easures for embedding practice*.

Tackling academic misconduct will always remain a reactive process unless institutions integrate their development of methods for tackling academic misconduct relating to course design, teaching and assessment into the existing and normal course review and Quality Assurance procedures. Of course, additional early implementation efforts may also be necessary.

- *targets and timetables*

Public statements about realistic targets and action plans for achieving them will significantly aid progress. However, in order to set realistic targets it is likely that there will have to some initial research to establish the current extent and nature of academic misconduct.

- *a procedure for reviewing progress*

This needs to be done on a regular basis, and the various aspects of the policy amended as appropriate.

Whilst the above section sets out the necessary components for institutional progress, the speed of change may well depend upon the appearance of enthusiasts and champions. Such individuals cannot be compelled into existence. The skill of a committed senior management will lie in identifying, encouraging and supporting such individuals if and when they appear.

CONCLUSION

Plagiarism is not going to go away of its own accord. Ideas and approaches to tackle plagiarism change fast and are likely to continue to do so. The good news is that plagiarism seems to be a problem that academics recognise and wish to do something about and one that lends itself to a range of solutions. The desire to act inside institutions is reinforced and underpinned by external pressures to safeguard the validity and integrity of UK awards. In some ways, this is a unique and positive combination of factors compared to many of the demands for change in Higher Education. Of course, finding time, resources and expertise to implement the necessary changes is and will continue to be problematic but this is true of all change, however necessary. The synergistic combination of pressures and motivations bodes well for the future. Combining this with the suggestions we can already offer and the new ideas arising from current research, we can significantly lessen the impact of plagiarism on Higher Education.

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Appendix 1 - Summary of good practice recommendations.

Lecturers and Teachers	**Institutions**
Rewrite/modify all assessment task each time the course is taught	Invest time and energy into reaching consensus on defining breaches of academic regulations then disseminate them widely to academics and students.
Consider the learning outcomes for the course and decrease those that ask for knowledge and understanding, substituting instead those that require analysis, evaluation and synthesis; consider adding information gathering to learning outcomes	Treat all instances of plagiarism formally with penalties and tariffs adjusted to fit student circumstances; inform students clearly of the policy, how they must comply and how they will be helped to do so (see section 10).
Design in assessment tasks with multiple solutions or artefacts	Design in compulsory teaching sessions on academic writing and citation skills where students can apply the skills to discipline-specific content as part of their core assessment tasks.
Integrate tasks so each builds on the other; design in checks that do not require teacher time but do require student effort. Be careful to only check, not assess the intermediate tasks. Set a variety of assessment tasks, choosing those less likely to already exist.	Create administrative and institutional systems to collect, record and return coursework securely
Ensure that students are taught how to avoid plagiarism with active learning techniques, providing opportunities for discussion, practice and feedback; this instruction works best integrated into discipline-specific contexts	. Define clearly the respective roles of the Examination Board and the Disciplinary Procedure in cases of plagiarism, and any interrelation between them; ensure that all parties are aware of and adhere to their respective limits
Academic staff need to be seen to be adhering to the behaviours they ask of their students and taking steps to defend them from abuse.	Make the disciplinary process a place where learning can occur as well as punishment
	Give the responsibility for dealing with all cases of plagiarism to a small number of staff in each subject area, who are properly trained and who will work as a team across the institution
	Establish “fast-track” disciplinary procedures for dealing with minor and uncontested cases of plagiarism and clearly define the limits of their use.
	Design a simple disciplinary record keeping system that will enable you to monitor which plagiarism problems are occurring where, and how effective different strategies and initiatives are in addressing these problems.

Appendix 2 – Report on Free Text Electronic Plagiarism Detection

As part of the JISC plagiarism detection project, University of Luton carried out a technical review of the following electronic plagiarism detection packages.

Company	**URL**
iParadigms	http://www.turnitin.com
Digital Integrity	http://www.findsame.com
CaNexus	http://www.CaNexus.com
Wordchecksystems.com	http://www.wordchecksystems.com
CopyCatch.com	http://www.copycatch.freeserve.co.uk

Appendix 3 – QAA References

The Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice – Quality and Standards in HE: Assessment of Students, 2000.

The two precepts relevant to this report are:

2 Institutions should have effective mechanisms to deal with breaches of assessment regulations, and the resolution of appeals against assessment decisions.

5 Institutions should ensure that assessment is conducted with rigour and fairness and with due regard for security.

Appendix 4 – Report Authors

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Appendix 5 – Disclaimer

The information contained herein is believed to be correct at the time of issue, but no liability can be accepted for any inaccuracies. The reader is reminded that changes may have taken place since issue, particularly in rapidly changing areas such as Internet addressing and consequently URLs should be used with caution. The JISC cannot accept any responsibility for any loss or damage resulting from the use of the material contained herein.