

CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY

Designing Out Plagiarism in Assessment

It is important that assessment strategies allow for the designing out of plagiarism, that is, to create and to implement specific programme and course assessment initiatives which are known to reduce the incidence of inadvertent and/or deliberate plagiaristic activity (Carroll, 2001). Some of these strategies involve placing emphasis on certain kinds of well-known summative assessment techniques, for example terminal examinations, but there is a range of possibilities in designing assessment tools which are both formative and plagiarism-resistant. In addition to specific assessment tools, courses and programmes can also factor in specific anti-plagiarism procedures. A combination of tools and procedures might include the following (see Carroll, 2001 and Borg, 2002):

- Re-working assessments on a continuing and randomised basis, so that questions are not recycled. The editing out of "essay banks" is also useful in this area. Cosmetic changes to assignment drafts should be avoided, as they are easily spotted by students. This technique should apply not only to essays and analogous coursework examples, but also to practical assignments, reports, reviews and case-studies.
- Avoid straightforward links between learning outcomes and essay setting – make analytic tasks more three-dimensional, and use information-gathering more widely in assessments (see below).
- Individualise tasks whenever consistent with good pedagogy. The use of poster work is particularly helpful in this area, as is tutorial-based essay-title planning. Some tutors may find that abandoning "set" essay titles on the one hand, and disallowing wholly student-created titles on the other, helps in resisting the temptation to plagiarise, as well as providing other assessment benefits, e.g. tailoring tasks to specific skills and interests of students.
- Build in specific plagiarism-moderation procedures into assessment schedules, for example random detection-software checks on assignments handed in throughout the course or programme. The principle of such checks should be embedded within programme or course documentation and made clear in handbooks and other information material.
- Use specific assessment tools which are known to reduce the incidence of plagiarism, for example academic reviews and information searches, posters and annotated bibliographies. Variety in assessments tends to reduce plagiarism (Carroll, 2001).
- Create a collaborative research environment which resists plagiarism through peer pressure, for example, group written projects moderated by peers and/or tutors. The challenge of peer evaluation tends to reduce plagiaristic activity, as does group work.

Borg, E. (2002) *Northumbria University lecturers' experience of plagiarism and collusion*. JISC [Online]. Available at http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/site/eve_conferences.asp?section=papers (Accessed February 2007).

Carroll, J. and Appleton, J. (2001) *Designing out opportunities for plagiarism*. JISC [Online]. Available at <http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/site/guide2.asp> (Accessed February 2007).