

Research Capacity Building Workshop

11. Plagiarism



Online Forum



Go to the address: <http://dutmoodle.dut.ac.za/moodle/>

Click on the category *RPS Research Capacity Building*, and click on course *Research Matters*.

Materials are posted there online after workshops.

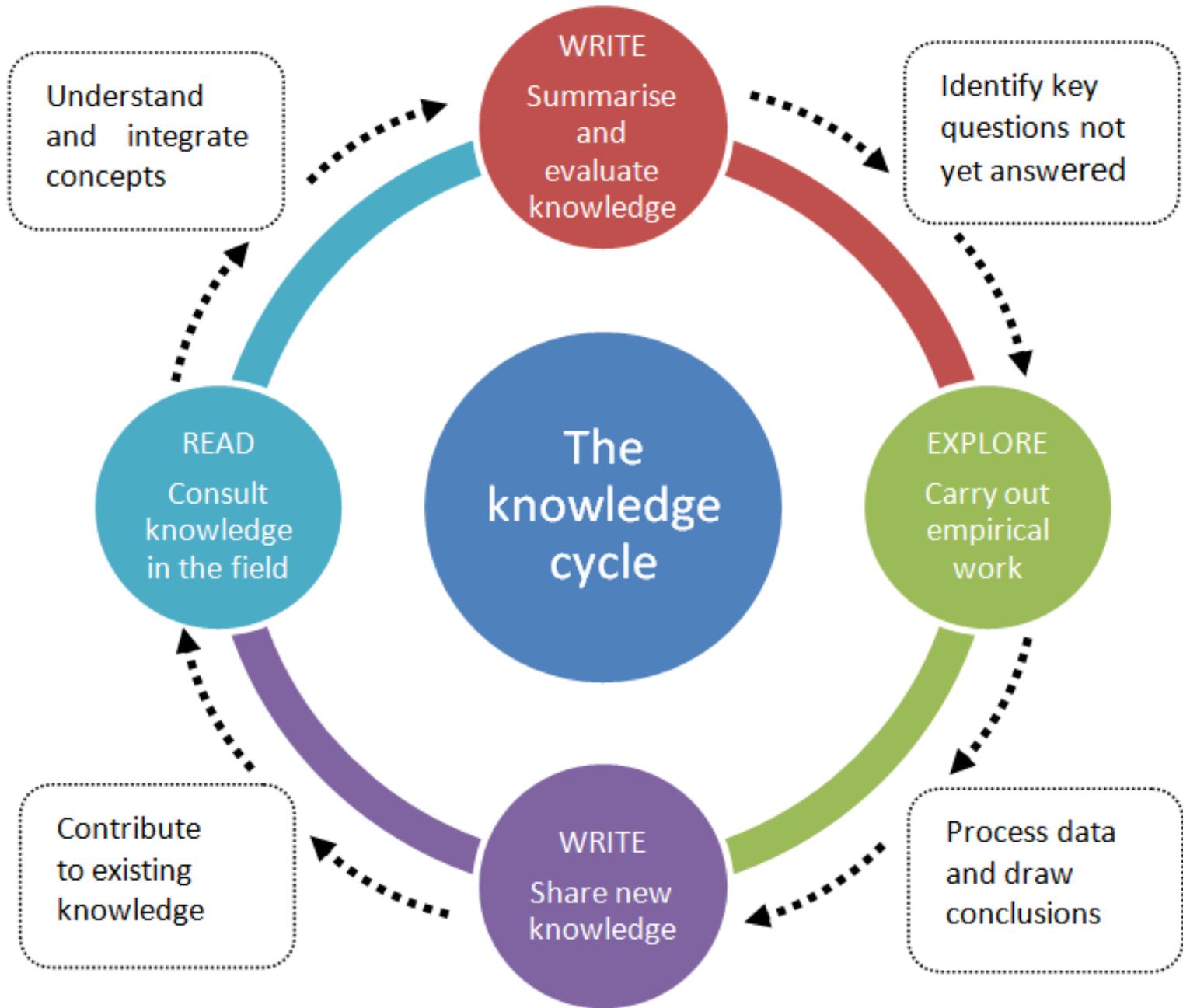
To log in:

User ID: staff or student number

Password: research

Once on *Research Matters*, go to the “Social forum”, and respond to the message: **EDITING AND PROOF-READING: 11 May 2012**. When finished, read and reply to the message: *What is/is not plagiarism?*

WE ARE HERE



Today's programme



This workshop deals with the following:

- What is/isn't plagiarism
- Why students plagiarise
- How students plagiarise
- How to prevent/spot plagiarism
- Using Google
- Using Turnitin
- Plagiarism as a teaching opportunity

What is/isn't plagiarism



Plagiarism is a difficult concept to define because it encompasses a wide range of actions from merely writing incorrect citations to the wholesale theft of someone else's work or ideas (Alberta Library 2011).

It arouses indignation:

It is the theft of someone else's intellectual property . . . The notion that all or most material on the Internet is “free” is what seems to encourage and perpetuate the use of other people's works without proper acknowledgement (Nicholson 2010: 16).

Definition of plagiarism



From Park (2003: 472):

According to the *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (Hanks, 1979), plagiarism is ‘the act of plagiarising’, which means ‘to appropriate (ideas, passages, etc) from (another work or author)’. Plagiarism involves literary theft, stealing (by copying) the words or ideas of someone else and passing them off as one’s own without crediting the source.

Origin of the term “plagiarism”



From Park (2003: 472):

Barnhart (1988, p. 801) traces the etymology of the word plagiarism (‘literary theft’), from the earlier English word plagiary (‘one who wrongfully takes another’s words or ideas’), derived from the Latin *plagarius* (‘kidnapper, seducer, plunderer, literary thief’), from *plagium* (kidnapping) from *plaga* (snare, net).

Misuse of another author's writings?



In Park (2003: 472):

The term plagiarism is usually used to refer to the theft of words or ideas, beyond what would normally be regarded as general knowledge. This is the spirit of the definition of plagiarism adopted by the Association of American Historians, who describe it as 'the misuse of the writings of another author...including the limited borrowing, without attribution, of another's distinctive and significant research findings, hypotheses, theories... or interpretations' (Fialkoff, 1993).

“Mapping the extent of plagiarism”



From *Assessing Learning in Australian Universities* (n.d.: 6):

Here are six ways to use sources. Number one is plagiarism; Number six is not. Where do you cross the line?

- 1) Copying a paragraph verbatim from a source without any acknowledgment.
- 2) Copying a paragraph and making small changes - e.g. replacing a few verbs, replacing an adjective with a synonym; acknowledgment in the bibliography.
- 3) Cutting and pasting a paragraph by using sentences of the original but omitting one or two and putting one or two in a different order, no quotation marks; with an in-text acknowledgment and a bibliographical acknowledgment.

Where do you cross the line?



- 4) Composing a paragraph by taking short phrases from a number of sources and putting them together using words of your own to make a coherent whole with in-text acknowledgments and a bibliographical acknowledgment.
- 5) Paraphrasing a paragraph by rewriting with substantial changes in language and organisation; the new version will also have changes in the amount of detail used and the examples cited; citing source in bibliography.
- 6) Quoting a paragraph by placing it in block format with the source cited in text and in bibliography.

(Carroll, 2000, based on an exercise in Swales and Feak, 1994).

... and how should students know, then?



It is likely that academic staff 'cross the line' at different points, even within the same discipline or department. The point is, if the definition of plagiarism is difficult for academic staff to agree on and articulate in detail, it is little wonder that some students accidentally participate in what appear to be extreme cases of plagiarism (Assessing Learning in Australian Universities n.d.: 6).

Why students plagiarise



There is a potentially complex combination of factors that might contribute to plagiarism by a student (Assessing Learning in Australian Universities n.d.: 3).

The following points are from the "Why Students Plagiarize" page of the "Guide to Plagiarism and Cyber-Plagiarism"

(<http://guides.library.ualberta.ca/content.php?pid=62200&sid=457755>):

Why students plagiarise contd.



MISUNDERSTANDING KEY CONCEPTS

- Misconception of plagiarism
- Misconception of intellectual property, copyright, and public domain
- Misconception of common knowledge
- Perception of online information as public knowledge

Why students plagiarise contd.



EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Pressure from family, competition for scholarships and jobs
- Student ethics and relationship with the University
- The commodification of knowledge and education

INTERNAL FACTORS

- Poor time management and organizational skills

CULTURAL FACTORS

- Culturally based attitudes towards plagiarism

Why do students plagiarise?: Understanding student intentions and motives

There are many reasons why students plagiarise but one central question is, 'Did they intend to do so?' They may have. Table 1 outlines some of the possible reasons for intentional plagiarism in higher education.

Table 1: The context of plagiarism in higher education

Noah and Eckstein (2001) identified five factors that influence dishonesty among academic staff :	Are these pertinent to students ? (Y/N)
1. pressures on the individual to succeed and the penalties for failure	
2. the expected reward to be gained	
3. the opportunities to be dishonest	
4. the probability of getting away with it	Source: Assessing Learning in Australian Universities n.d.
5. the social norms governing such behaviour	

Why students plagiarise contd.



Also from Assessing Learning in Australian Universities (n.d.):

In addition, or conversely, there may be other unintentional reasons that students plagiarise including:

- Their limited or incorrect understanding of what, exactly, plagiarism encompasses
- Their incorrect understanding of citation and referencing conventions
- Their limited skill base in: summarising, paraphrasing, critical analysis, argumentation, managing contributions to group work, time management, workload and stress management.

Why students plagiarise contd.



From *Why students plagiarize* (Penn State n.d.):

- I. Cynicism About Grades
- II. Fear of Failure
- III. Demanding Schedules (and Lack of Planning)
- IV. Perception that Cheating is Easy
- V. Lack of Interest
- VI. “Economy of Effort”
- VII. Ignorance about Plagiarism
- VIII. Seeking Thrills

Factors inhibiting plagiarism



Students are inhibited from cheating when the victim can be conceived of in personal terms, not if they are unknown or 'abstract'.

I stole and copied another student's assignment: it was just a piece of work with a name on it, faceless, it was just a name, I didn't know the person, so I didn't know who I was doing the wrong to, apart from to myself, I suppose. I wouldn't want to cheat, using a friend's work without their consent, I think I might feel bad about doing that. (15)

If you had some staff, like one module we did where the staff made a real effort to print everything and make themselves understood, and gave you their address to contact them on, so for that module I wouldn't give any work in that was crap, or that I'd copied, because I know that they put so much work into it: that makes you put more work in as well. I wouldn't cheat in exams with them. (11) (Ashworth *et al.* :196)

How students plagiarise



From Park (2003: 475):

Forms of Plagiarism by Students

Students plagiarise in four main ways (Wilhoit, 1994; Brandt, 2002; Howard, 2002).

1. Stealing material from another source and passing it off as their own, e.g.
 - (a) buying a paper from a research service, essay bank or term paper mill (either pre-written or specially written),
 - (b) copying a whole paper from a source text without proper acknowledgement,
 - (c) submitting another student's work, with or without that student's knowledge (e.g. by copying a computer disk).

How students plagiarise

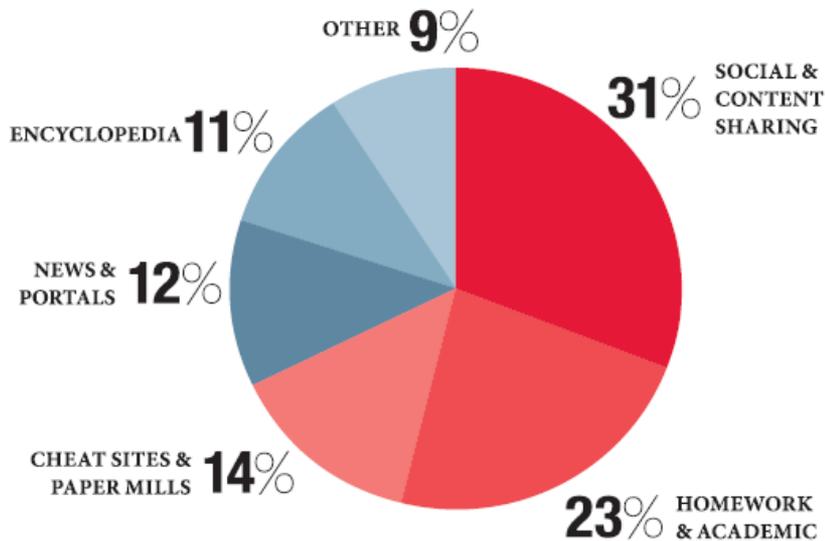


2. Submitting a paper written by someone else (e.g. a peer or relative) and passing it off as their own.
3. Copying sections of material from one or more source texts, supplying proper documentation (including the full reference) but leaving out quotation marks, thus giving the impression that the material has been paraphrased rather than directly quoted.
4. Paraphrasing material from one or more source texts without supplying appropriate documentation.

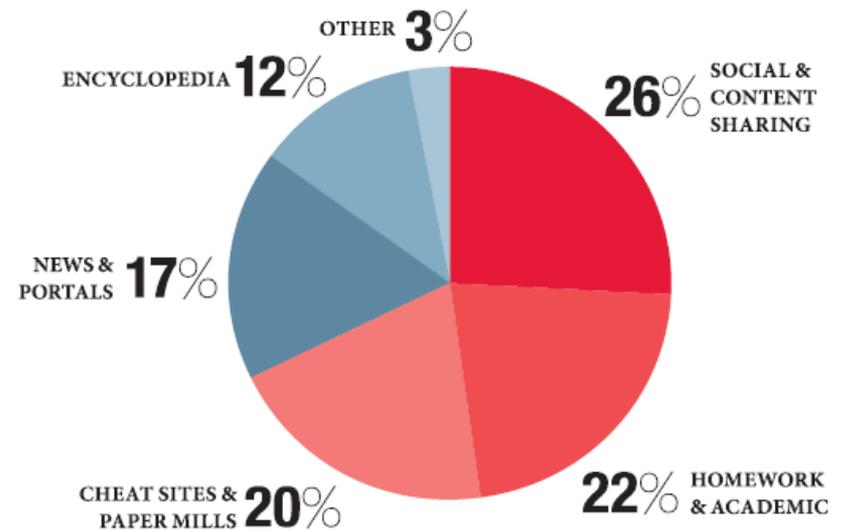
Popular sources (Turnitin White Paper n.d.: 6)

The graphics below show a high-level view of the most popular categories of matched content in secondary and higher education papers.

SECONDARY EDUCATION



HIGHER EDUCATION



The largest discrepancy between secondary and higher education students is in the categories of social and content sharing web sites, which are more popular among secondary students; cheat sites and paper mills which are more popular among college students; and the “other” category which includes sites such as Amazon.com. Secondary and higher education students’ reliance on encyclopedias and news sites is virtually identical.

How to spot plagiarism



- Syntax: ungrammatical sentences, mismatched phrases and clauses, unfinished sentences, over-elaborate sentence structure
- Uneven style
- Sudden and complete change of topic, content and style
- Marked variations in the complexity and formality of the student's language
- Archaic language (e.g. “Nay, rather...”)
- Electronic plagiarism checkers e.g. Turnitin, The Plagiarism Checker, Grammerly.com)

How to spot plagiarism contd.



From *Plagiarism: how to spot it* (Washington State University 2004):

- Sudden changes in audience, tone, vocabulary, sentence structure, level of sophistication, degree of depth or understanding of topic
- Writing that seems far more sophisticated than that you normally see or expect in students of the same level
- Anything else that strikes you as different from student's other writing or interests
- Font of paper suddenly changes (suggests copy/pasting)
- Inconsistencies in citation format or usage
- Complete lack of citations, especially for complex material/ideas
- Last minute change of paper topic or research focus

[Check out this site: <http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/plagiarism/recognizing1.htm>]

Using Google to confirm plagiarism



From *Plagiarism: how to spot it* (Washington State University 2004):

- Search particularly suspect passages or the title of their essay
- Remember to search multiple passages to find plagiarized material from multiple sources
- Print out the source material you find - be sure to include the web address
- Visit the online sources they list in their Works Cited page

How to prevent plagiarism



Assessing Learning in Australian Universities:
Minimising plagiarism
(www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning)

The authors suggest “36 strategies to minimise plagiarism” (pp8-11)!

How to prevent plagiarism contd.



Universities and academic staff are advised to focus around four main strategies, all underpinned by the central principle of ensuring fairness:

- 1)** A collaborative effort to recognise and counter plagiarism at every level from policy, through faculty/division and school/ department procedures, to individual staff practices;
- 2)** Thoroughly educating students about the expected conventions for authorship and the appropriate use and acknowledgment of all forms of intellectual material;

How to prevent plagiarism contd.



- 3) Designing approaches to assessment that minimise the possibility for students to submit plagiarised material, while not reducing the quality and rigour of assessment requirements;
- 4) Installing highly visible procedures for monitoring and detecting cheating, including appropriate punishment and re-education measures.

(Assessing Learning in Australian Universities: *Minimising plagiarism*)

How to prevent plagiarism contd.



The first three strategies are proactive and intended to help reduce the incidence of plagiarism. The fourth strategy is reactive and while it might include efforts to reduce the incidence in the longer term, it also includes immediate responses when plagiarism does occur.

(Assessing Learning in Australian Universities: *Minimising plagiarism*)

Teach students about plagiarism



Carroll (2000) suggests teaching students the skills of paraphrasing and summarising, giving students opportunities for practice, to get feedback, to see others' efforts and to refine their own. Kalusman (1999) agrees, claiming it is necessary to teach students about the different types of plagiarism, including what he calls 'paraphrase plagiarism' and 'patchwork plagiarism' and how to avoid them by working through examples. (Assessing Learning in Australian Universities n.d.: 6)

Teach “good writing skills” to prevent plagiarism



Howard and Davies (2009: 164):

However, good writing from sources involves more than competent citation of sources. It is a complicated activity, made even more complex by easy access to a seemingly limitless number of online sources. Any worthwhile guide to preventing plagiarism should

- Discuss intellectual property and what it means to "own" a text.
- Discuss how to evaluate both online and print-based sources (for example, comparing the quality and reliability of a Web site created by an amateur with the reliability of a peer-reviewed scholarly article).
- Guide students through the hard work of engaging with and understanding their sources, so students don't conclude that creating a technically perfect bibliography is enough.
- Acknowledge that teaching students how to write from sources involves more than telling students that copying is a crime and handing them a pile of source citation cards.

Consequences of using software



Howard and Davies (2009: 164) also warn of the possible negative consequences of using “plagiarism-detection software”, as it does not address the following problems:

- the probable motives for plagiarism,
- the reasons for student confusion over originality and appropriating other people’s texts

It could lead to “mutual distrust”, and also to avoidance of engaging with “the pedagogical and ethical issues involved”.

They conclude: “The handy technological fix may divert us from the real problem, which, at its heart, is not technological at all” (Howard & Davies 2009: 164).

The South African Context



Denise Nicholson, Cape Librarian, Copyright Services Librarian, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, looks at the South African context in “Why do students plagiarise”? (March/April 2010).

Plagiarism as a teaching opportunity



Read the paper by “kuwcnews” on “Distinguishing between plagiarism and a teaching opportunity”

<http://kuwcnews.wordpress.com/2011/12/22/distinguishing-between-plagiarism-and-a-teaching-opportunity/>

Posted on December 22, 2011 by kuwcnews | 2 Comments

Turnitin demo



Preggy Reddy of CELT EdTech will give a Turnitin demo after tea.