

<http://www.iml.uts.edu.au/assessment/plagiarism/why.html>

## **University of Technology Sydney**

### **UTS: Institute for Interactive Media and Learning**

#### **Why students plagiarise**

Even those students not intending to cheat can inadvertently plagiarise. Wilhoit (1994) argues that few students come to university understanding the rules of academic writing. Poor note taking, for example, is the most common reason given for inadvertent plagiarism. Howard (1995) argues that some forms of inadvertent plagiarism are learning strategies adopted by students who have not been taught how to make proper intellectual use of resources.

Studies of student plagiarism have found clear differences between students' and teachers' views of cheating. Generally students do not think that minor forms of cheating are wrong (Franklyn-Stokes & Newstead, 1995). Students plagiarise to cope with the demands of studying and the pressure to get a good grade (Ashworth, Bannister & Thorne, 1997: 188). Zobel & Hamilton (2002) found that financial problems were among the most common reasons given for committing plagiarism. Students who plagiarise have a tendency to over-commit themselves to other activities and then plagiarise out of desperation. Zobel & Hamilton found that there are also cultural issues such as respect for authority that can lead to unintentional plagiarism.

The most common factors influencing intentional plagiarism are the stress to obtain good grades, ineffective institutional deterrents and condoning teachers (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992). When the assignment is considered to be of little consequence and others in the class are cheating or the institution does not make plagiarism a high priority then students are more likely to plagiarise (Ashworth et al., 1997). Zobel & Hamilton (2002) found that when students find themselves with difficulties they preferred to turn to their friends for help rather than to university structures like time extensions or study skill support.

Academic dishonesty is lower where there is a high perception of being caught (McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2001). There is clearly an institutional responsibility to detect and deal with plagiarism. Yet, Zobel and Hamilton (2002) find that departments are often inadequately prepared to deal with plagiarism. They argue that the first step in preventing plagiarism is arriving at staff agreement on what constitutes plagiarism and the appropriate penalties for plagiarists.

## Reference

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