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Detecting and Dealing
with Plagiarism

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Summary

- Defining plagiarism
- Manual detection
- Reactive checking – Google
- Proactive checking – Turnitin
- Collusion and fraud
- Regulations and procedures
- Culture and good practice

Plagiarism

- Literary theft, cheating, copying
- Passing off someone else's words or ideas as one's own without crediting the source
- Including:
 - Plagiarising published/web sources
 - Colluding (not collaborating)
 - Fraudulent authorship

Human detection - some indicators

(from Hinchcliffe, 1999
on the Plagiarism Advisory Service web)

1. URLs or names left on a document
2. Sudden changes in font, layout, style, quality of writing and scholarship
3. American spelling, changes in spelling
4. Bibliographies citing material that is unavailable locally or out of date
5. Unusual jargon for the level of work
6. Work is oblique to the title or problem
7. Scanned images pasted in

Types of computer assistance

Detection aids are for text (not images or ideas etc.)

- Analysis of single documents for changes in style
- Textual comparison of two or more documents (within or between cohorts)
- Finding matching online sources including the web
- Discipline-specific e.g. computer code

Two uses of software

For matching text:

- **Reactive**

Confirming sources after suspicions of plagiarism or collusion are raised in marking (Google or Turnitin)

- **Proactive**

Routinely scanning of large cohort of student assignments, before marking (Turnitin)

Reactive checking

1. Google

“up to ten words in quotes” is searched.
Quite efficient with well-chosen phrases.

2. *Properties* of Word documents etc.

TurnitinUK

- Detects use of the web, collusion within and between cohorts, published materials
- Good Practice Guide and other reports on the Plagiarism Advisory Service web
- Briefing documents for institutions, teachers and students
- Keele use: 5700 reports in 2006-7
- Integration into VLE from 2006-7

TurnitinUK (www.submit.ac.uk) and Turnitin Assignments in VLE

- Has levels of access
 - Institution
 - 'Instructor', teaching assistant
 - Student
- Instructor creates courses and assignments.
- Instructor (or student) submits a final document or a draft.
- Instructor (and possibly student) sees report.

Limitations of software

- Only detects text, not ideas or images
- Some of the web is 'hidden'
- Cannot use paper sources
- The results need interpreting academically - the source may be properly cited
- Cannot detect a fraudulent author for unique work

Collusion, essay mills & contract cheating

- New collusion regulation
- Essay mills (pre-prepared essays): several students may buy, so Turnitin may find
 - Note: Turnitin is trying to increase access to these sites
- Contract cheating is where students pay for work to be done
- Advice: use personal assignments, seek staged submissions, always submit question to Turnitin

Academic Culture

- Guidance on writing: working with the students, not against them
- Do we teach them good practice or to avoid being caught?
- Do students submit their own work?
- Do we let them see their own reports? (They could hand in paper copies)
- What searching or investigation techniques are allowed?
- How to deal with information received?

Good practice with Turnitin

1. If Turnitin is used for an assignment, it should be used for all students, not on a sample, random or otherwise. (This does not mean that it could not be used for a specific student's work where this gives rise to suspicion in marking.)
2. Before Turnitin is used on summative work for any student, the student should have a formative experience of Turnitin such as having the system demonstrated to them and originality reports interpreted for them (on the screen in a class) or by submitting a draft to Turnitin with the opportunity to correct problems.

Sources

1. Plagiarism Advisory Service
<http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk/>
including *A guide to good practice* by Jude Carroll & Jon Appleton
2. More at
www.keele.ac.uk/depts/aa/landt/links/plagiarism.htm
3. Turnitin www.submit.ac.uk