

# Course design and assessment strategies for dealing with student plagiarism

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# Why does plagiarism happen?

## **Misunderstanding:**

Not clear about definitions & not clear on regulations /rules  
Lack of clarity in assignments & requirements

## **Misuse:** Weak academic skills, weak language skills

Over-reliance on others' work

Poor planning / time management

Partial accuracy in using citation rules

## **Misconduct:** Too easy to do; too hard to resist

Poor decision making eg about deadlines

Already an established behaviour; Fear of failure;

Only wanting 'a good grade / qualification'

# ‘Academic apprenticeship’: [designing **in** at programme level]

- activities to **build a shared understanding**
- early **diagnostic activities & targeted feedback** on correct / incorrect use of academic rules
- requirements** that students show they know about the conventions
- excellent **written support** and guidance
- modelling and rewarding** academic values

# Designing out plagiarism

## 1. Start early.

Habits & behaviour are established early

Established behaviours are hard to change

## Designing out (continued)

### 2. Acknowledge **students' poor planning.**

Design in compulsory stages  
chunk tasks,  
create compilation assessments,  
check things are happening,  
require evidence of activity

### 3. Review assessment criteria.

[to match assessment rewards with espoused values]

*Do students' grades improve if they show authority and credibility?*

*Do their grades improve if they use referencing skilfully?*

## **4. Consider peer review and peer assessment.**

Make work public and owned

Require students to use the results of peer review

Value students use of others' feedback by building their use into the assessment

## 5. Focus on assignment tasks

**Novelty:** task or format

**Requirements:** specific, local , recent, personal, individual, unique

**Higher-order cognitive skills** (eg. rank, justify, choose, revise, interpret, analyse, invent, plan;

**not** knowledge (eg. 'describe, state') or understanding ('explain') or generic application

**Assess the process** as well as (or instead of) the product

**Authenticate** (*'Who did this work?'*)

## Examples of 'make it'

**NO:** An essay on 'smoking and public health'

**YES:** Find 3 '*stop smoking*' websites. Create criteria to judge which will best improve public health. Rank them. Justify your ranking

**YES:** Select xxx recent decisions w. impact on smoking. Which are most / least likely to have a positive impact? Why? Draft advice to a government cttee to strengthen the decision - include quantitative data.

**YES:** Here's a case study, evaluate it.

**YES:** Be ready to debate, '*The best way to improve public health is to stop people smoking*'. [variation: write the script in class]

**YES:** Imagine you are xxx trying to convince yyy to fund a stop-smoking campaign. Prioritise your arguments + support each one with cited evidence from recent reliable studies.

**NO:** A description of 'Anatomy and physiology of the nose'

**YES:** Identify an every-day task. Design one of the sensory systems a robot would need to complete the task. Imagine that you can do anything. What would you NOT need to include in a mechanical device that is vital in a human for that sense?

**NO:** A care plan for 'Balance after below-the-knee amputation'

**YES:** Randomly allocate 3 characteristics & 2 symptoms to create a 'person'. Design a care plan to improve the symptoms

**No:** What factors influence the success or failure of speculators on the commodities market?

**Yes:** Download a current set of commodity futures prices [ *then five questions about how to analyse and interrogate the download*]. If your answer to (v) shows an imperfect hedge result, explain the probable main reasons for this. If your result is a perfect hedge, explain why this is unexpected given this is a contango market. **Explain the factors relevant to the success or otherwise of speculating in this example.**

*Rosser, U of*

*Coventry, 2008*

# Putting theory into action

‘make it’ or ‘fake it?’

‘find the answer’ or ‘make the answer?’

## **It's hard to spot your own – why?**

Too close.... or too fixed on one kind of  
assessment

Wrong time of the year for thinking

Not sure what is possible or permissible

Worry about workload

## 6. Authenticate

Observe the work in progress

Request meta-task actions

Orally review material with some or all students

Check coursework understanding in exams

## Enhancing design-based solutions

Needs a **holistic approach**

The student needs to see actions in place to **detect and defend the rules**

Teachers need to feel students are being **treated fairly** when they are punished

Everyone need to feel **colleagues** are doing the same