

Teaching students about plagiarism

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Student perceptions of plagiarism

- Study funded by LTSN Bioscience
- Aims:
 - To determine what students believe constitutes plagiarism
 - To produce guidelines for students

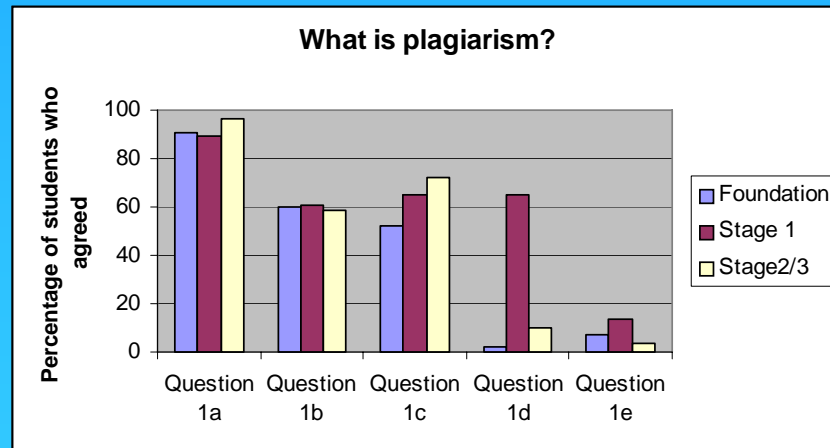
What we did

- Devised multiple choice questions (3)
- Case scenarios (6)
- Level 1 students during induction (105)
- Foundation (44)
- Levels 2 and 3 (volunteers; 28)
- Staff (not many!)
- Analysed results; produced guidelines based on questionnaire.

Question 1: What is plagiarism?

1. Plagiarism is:

- a) Using someone else's words as if they were your own
- b) Using someone else's ideas as if they were your own
- c) Using someone else's results as if they were your own
- d) Sharing work with someone else and pooling ideas
- e) Getting your ideas from a text book



From guidelines

Plagiarism has been defined in many ways, however the definition that we find most useful is that of Carroll (2002), which states that

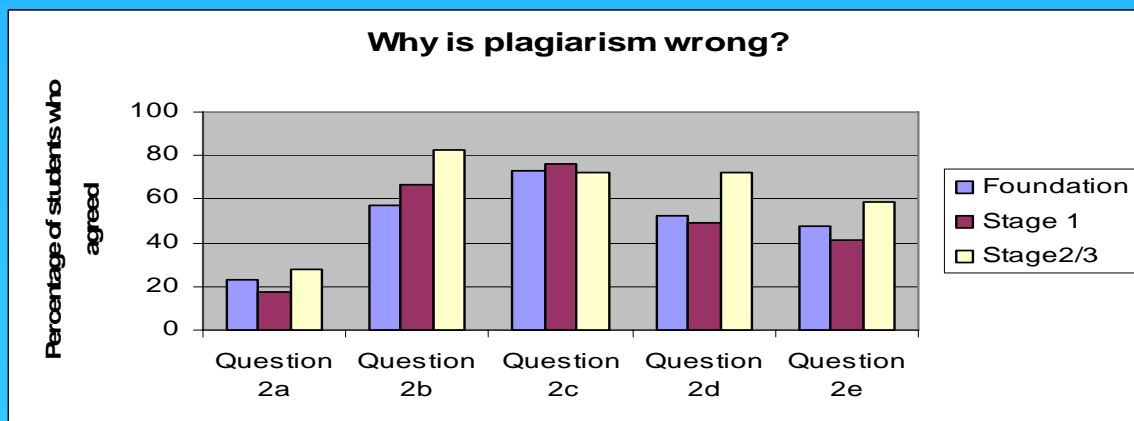
‘Plagiarism is defined as passing off someone else’s work, whether intentionally or unintentionally, as your own for your own benefits’ (Carroll, 2002).

This means that plagiarism includes:

- **using someone else’s words and/or ideas as if they were your own,**
- **using someone else’s results as if they were your own,**
- **copying chunks from textbooks without stating where the material came from and without any contribution of your own.**

Question 2: Why is plagiarism morally wrong?

- a) You may get caught and lose marks
- b) It is dishonest
- c) Assignments that are plagiarised fail to demonstrate your knowledge of the work
- d) You don't learn anything by copying someone else's work
- e) It steals other people's ideas

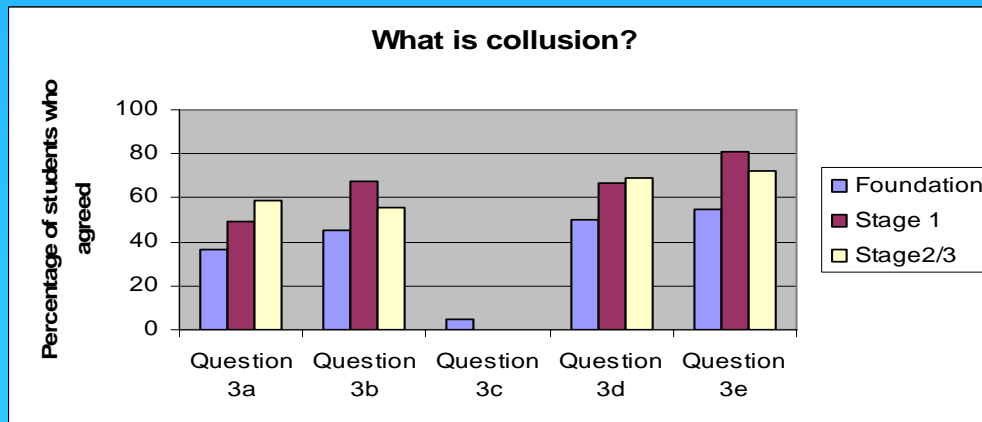


From guidelines

Plagiarism is morally wrong because it is dishonest and steals other people's ideas. Apart from that if you plagiarise your assignments you will not be demonstrating to your tutors your own knowledge and you will not learn anything at all by copying someone else's work.

Question 3: You may be accused of collusion if you:

- a) Submit an assignment produced as a joint effort, under your name only
- b) Copy a completed assignment that your friend has emailed to you
- c) Work in a group as instructed to produce a poster as a joint effort
- d) Lend a completed assignment to a friend, who then copies any part of it
- e) Pass off someone else's work as your own, for your own benefit



From guidelines

Collusion occurs when students work together on an assignment but each student submits the assignment as if it were all their own work. For example if two of you work together on a laboratory exercise and have one set of results, you must then write and submit the report individually. If students submit very similar reports and it is clear that they have worked together they will be found guilty of collusion and penalised accordingly

Working collaboratively, when instructed to do so, is **not** collusion. An example might be when you are instructed to work in a group to produce a poster.

You should **never** lend or email an assignment to a fellow student because you will be accused of collusion and /or plagiarism if they copy any part of it, even though you have done all the work.

Scenario One

1. Scenario one shows a paragraph from a textbook and specimen of work produced by students 'A', 'B' and 'C'
2. Student 'A' had copied wholesale without acknowledgement; 'B' had copied but acknowledged source (no quotes to indicate how much), 'C' had acknowledged and reworded; used quotes when needed.
3. When asked if the students were guilty of plagiarism:

Percentage of students responding 'yes'

Case	response	Foundation (n=44)	Level 1 (n=105)
1	Student A was guilty of plagiarism	77.3	86.7
	Student B was guilty of plagiarism	29.5	36.2
	Student C was guilty of plagiarism	15.9	12.4

From guidelines

Student A is **guilty of plagiarism** because they have directly copied a number of statements from the book without stating the source of the information. Even if they did state the source of the information they would still be guilty of plagiarism because the text is copied word for word and is not within quotation marks.

Student B is also **guilty of plagiarism** even though they have cited the source. There is no indication of the extent of copying from the book and no attempt to discuss the information in their own words.

The example from Student C is **not plagiarism** because they have used quotation marks to show how much has been taken from the book. Some students submit assignments which consist of a series of quotations where the source *has* been cited. Technically this is not plagiarism but is **poor practice** and will not get good marks.

Scenario 2

Copying sentences/phrases from textbooks:

- Students D and E both copied segments- E word-for-word, D less so
- Student F had re-worded
- No acknowledgement seen

Percentage of students responding 'yes'

Case	response	Foundation (n=44)	Level 1 (n=105)
2	Student D was guilty of plagiarism	25	38.1
	Student E was guilty of plagiarism	59.1	93.3
	Student F was guilty of plagiarism	13.6	4.8

From guidelines:

- Student D has attempted to paraphrase the information from the textbook, however they should still cite the source of the information as it is sufficiently similar to the book.
- Student E is **guilty of plagiarism** because they have copied word for word. To avoid charges of plagiarism both students should cite the source of the information.
- Student F has attempted to explain the information in their own words and is **not guilty** of plagiarism. They would be expected to quote any sources they have used in a bibliography.

Scenario 3

Referencing of sources and electronic detection of plagiarism:

- Student G: This essay was found to be downloaded entirely from a single website which was not referenced. The student had listed 12 other references including books, journals and Internet sources.
- Student H: This essay was found to have been downloaded entirely from 3 Internet sources all of which were referenced.
- Student I: This essay listed 12 references from books, journals and Internet sources. Electronic detection of plagiarism revealed that the Internet sources listed had been used correctly.

Percentage of students responding 'yes'

Case	response	Foundation (n=44)	Level 1 (n=105)
3	Student G was guilty of plagiarism	79.5	95.2
	Student H was guilty of plagiarism	31.8	54.3
	Student I was guilty of plagiarism	6.8	3.8

From guidelines:

- Student G is definitely **guilty of plagiarism** as the entire essay has been written by someone else. In addition, the listing of 12 other references which were not used is a clear attempt to deceive.
- Student H is also **guilty of plagiarism** since none of the essay was their own work even though three internet sources were given. It is **not acceptable** to submit an essay which has been entirely or even partly copied in this way.
- Student I is **not guilty of plagiarism** because they have referenced their sources correctly. To avoid a charge of plagiarism (and because it is good academic practice) you should reference web sources in the same way as you would a textbook.

Scenario 4

The deadline for handing in a practical is Monday 30th September. You have completed your report by the 28th. Your friend, who partnered you in the practical class, calls round on Sunday evening- he has just remembered the deadline and is panicking because he has lost the results. You agree to lend him your practical report. Without your knowing, your friend copies the whole report and hands it in the following day. The tutor notices that the two pieces of work are identical, he speaks to both of you about it. Your friend denies copying your work.

Questions: please circle any statements which you think are correct:

- a) Your friend is guilty of plagiarism
- b) You are guilty of aiding plagiarism
- c) Copying the work was reasonable, since you had both worked together in class
- d) Your friend will be subjected to a disciplinary procedure
- e) You will be subjected to a disciplinary procedure

Percentage of students responding 'yes'

Case	response	Foundation (n=44)	Level 1 (n=105)
4	Your friend is guilty of plagiarism	77.3	96.2
	You are guilty of aiding plagiarism	25	40
	Copying the work was reasonable (you had both worked together in class)	9.1	1.9
	Your friend will be subject to a disciplinary procedure	61.4	91.4
	You will be subject to a disciplinary procedure	34.1	65.7

From guidelines:

Both of you will be accused of plagiarism and/or collusion. Your tutor will not know whether one of you has copied from the other (plagiarism) or whether you have worked together and produced identical reports. For this reason you will both be penalised and may both be subjected to a disciplinary procedure. In actual fact, your friend is **guilty of plagiarism** whilst you are guilty of **aiding plagiarism**. You should never allow a fellow student to copy your work even if you have carried out a laboratory exercise together.

Scenario 5

Student J has produced an essay on nuclear pores. He has read the appropriate literature and written the essay, giving references to the literature where necessary. He has obtained a picture, with written title and legend, of nuclear pores from an internet website and has downloaded it entirely into his essay. In which of the following cases would this student be guilty of plagiarism?

- a) He has cited the web reference in the reference list at the end of the essay
- b) He has cited the web reference on the figure itself and in the reference list
- c) He has cited the web reference in both places and has re-written the legend.
- d) He has made no reference to where he obtained the figure

Percentage of students responding 'yes'

Case	Response; 'Guilty of plagiarism if.....'	Foundation (n=44)	Level 1 (n=105)
5	He cited the web reference at the end of the essay	15.9	22.9
	Cited the web reference on the figure itself and at the end of the essay	15.9	7.6
	Cited the web reference in both places and has re-written the legend	9.1	7.6
	He made no reference to where he obtained the figure	72.7	93.3

From guidelines:

If you download a figure from an internet website, or even photocopy a figure from a book, you must reference the source of the figure to avoid being accused of plagiarism. The **best practice** is to cite the reference on the figure itself and in the reference list, including the date it was accessed. You should always write a legend which is appropriate to the figure as used in your essay.

Scenario 6

A group of students have been given an essay title 'The use of spectrophotometry in the biosciences'. They have been told to research their essay, and that they will write the essay under examination conditions during a lecture period. Two students, K and L, have decided to work together to research different aspects of the subject. They get together to share what they have found. They then sit down and write an essay together which they memorise. The essays which they write in class are almost identical (with around 80% of the sentences and phrases being word-for-word). At what stage do you think the students are guilty of collusion?

- a) When they decide to work together?
- b) When they share the results of their research?
- c) When they write the essay together?
- d) When they memorise the essay?
- e) When they write the essay in class?

When are they guilty of collusion?

Case	Response; 'Guilty of plagiarism when they...	Level 3 (n=44)	Level 4 (n=105)
6	Decide to work together	11.4	8.6
	Share the results of their research	15.9	24.8
	Write the essay together	45.5	75.2
	Memorise the essay	40.9	41.9
	Write the essay in class	22.7	31.4

Advantages of using scenarios

- Based on real cases
- Can be adapted to different groups eg
 - Postgraduates
 - Overseas students
- Can add/change scenarios as student perceptions change

What we do now

- Continue to use the questionnaire in induction
 - to raise awareness of good/bad practice
 - to monitor any changes in student perceptions
- Use on-line version on VLE for instant feedback to students

<http://www.webct.mmu.ac.uk/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct>

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