

# Quality assurance in detecting and preventing plagiarism: A mainstream educative strategy

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## Abstract

University plagiarism policies aimed at the assurance of academic integrity provide for increased vigilance and disciplinary procedures to deal with transgressions. Many also issue directives to teaching staff to ensure that students are adequately informed about the meaning of plagiarism and its consequences, and methods of citing within the particular referencing system in use. However, the experience of academic advising has indicated that receiving such information is insufficient for numbers of students who, for a variety of reasons, inadvertently lapse into plagiarism. A simple and not excessively time-consuming strategy is proposed for academics to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn not only *what* they are required to do, but also *how* to do it. The strategy involves the induction of students, within the core curriculum, into the language of their discipline. It is suggested that the investment of a small amount of time on this task at the outset has the potential of becoming a powerful quality assurance mechanism, by reducing the incidence of inadvertent plagiarism as well as raising the overall standard of written work for an increasing range of students.

## Plagiarism as cheating

- Copying a whole paper from a fellow student
- Presenting a paper - taken from an obscure source - as one's own
- Buying a paper on-line
- Cutting and pasting large sections from internet or hard-copy sources

## Detection and prevention

- Increased vigilance & discipline
  - ✓ Assessor's knowledge of sources
  - ✓ Electronic services (e.g. turnitin.com)

### WHAT TO DO

- Give students information
- Provide clear referencing guidelines
- Assessment & formative feedback

## Inadvertent plagiarism

- paraphrasing or summarising without referencing
- citing exact words without the use of quotation marks

as a result of:

- not understanding conventions of referencing (or the need for it!)
- lack of experience of appropriate language

## EDUCATIVE STRATEGY

takes into account that students with no experience of university

- ✓ need *MORE THAN* clarification of rules and practice in referencing
- ✓ need to be *INDUCTED* into the culture of research and the *LANGUAGE* for doing it

## Genre Analysis

Using their reading to improve their writing

### Learning the language of the genre:

For native speakers this is an **unconscious** process that is time consuming

Educative strategy: fostering a **conscious** approach to accelerate the process

## A student's 'own words'?

- A student's 'own' language is limited to prior experience
- Limited stock of words
- Limited experience of what is appropriate within the genre

*All language learning is to some extent borrowing others' words*  
(Pennycook 1996: 227)

## HOW TO DO IT

### I. Analysing the structure

- Access to authentic examples of the genre: to use as 'models'
- Examine and label stages in the text
- Examine and note the language features typically occurring at each stage

### 2. Identifying 're-usable' language

During the past 40 years the United States has experienced the integration of the computer into society

Using **completely different content**, the 'empty' or non-content part of this general statement could be re-used:

During the past \_\_\_ years the \_\_\_ has experienced the integration of \_\_\_ into \_\_\_

During the past 10 years the University has experienced the integration of **International students** into its **student cohort**

Weissberg & Buker (1990) *Writing Up Research* (p21)

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## EDUCATIVE STRATEGY

The integration of an academic language focus into the mainstream lectures and tutorials is

a powerful quality assurance mechanism to

- ✓ reduce incidence of inadvertent plagiarism
- ✓ raise overall standard of academic writing