Despite lengthy explanations and multitudes of examples describing what plagiarism is, isn't, how to avoid it, how to cite and reference correctly, students still do it! Why? No doubt we all have our theories. I'm probably stating the obvious here, but nonetheless, here goes.

Firstly, easy access to the Internet encourages the notion that anything on it is free - the everyman's version of the hacker ethic which was originally described by Levy (2001). We can discuss at length intellectual property, copyright, the need to attribute authorship or ownership, and associated issues. But somehow many people, not just students, cannot (or do not) apply this knowledge to online environments. It's so easy to copy text, images, music etc. After all, why are we providing electronic copy if not to make access to information easy?

Further, the modern student is time poor having to juggle study commitments, work commitments, family responsibilities and a social life (they want to socialise as well?). The notion of a "full time scholar" seems to be a thing of the past. Students will do what they need to successfully pass their programme of study. Only a minority will see past what I have heard called the P-mentality (P for pass) and aim to extend their knowledge beyond the minimum requirements of their course. Certainly my experience suggests that the goal of many students is to learn just enough to pass the exam!

Finally, there is the issue of emphasising legal risk and the latter ethical issues.

What these papers highlight is that the tensions between good (online) teaching practice and minimising student dishonesty are not easily resolved. The tensions are further compounded by the need to teach large classes. The fully online unit I teach this semester has 588 students enrolled in it. Class sizes of 1200, though not common, are not unknown at Deakin University. Such classes have large teams of academics involved in teaching and assessment. This does not assist in the detection of plagiarism. So we are investigating other methods of minimising and detecting plagiarism and cheating.

My preferred method is to try and design assessment tasks that do not lend themselves to copying, either from one year to the next, or within a class. For example students are asked to investigate a "current issue" being one that is being, or has been, reported in the media in the last 6-months. This eliminates previous year's assignments turning up in the submission box this year. Further, where students have picked the same issue (and with a large class this is inevitable) they may not use identical sources or references. Sometimes this is difficult to police but the students are spread across various campuses in Australia and overseas minimising the opportunity for unauthorised collaboration. Also, just being told that they have to work within such constraints is often sufficient to dissuade the majority of potential
misbehaviour. However, this makes marking more difficult as it is necessary to employ more comprehensive moderation techniques to ensure the quality and fairness of marking across tutors and presentations.

The University and Faculties have policies in place designed to inform, educate and dissuade students from cheating and/or plagiarising work. There are ranges of associated penalties that may be enforced ranging from official warnings, loss of marks, and automatic failure in the unit, through to exclusion from the University in severe cases. The Faculty of Science and Technology are diligent in following up on suspected cases to the extent that recently approximately 40 students (out of a class of 150) were hauled in front of the Faculty Disciplinary Committee accused of plagiarising a programming assignment. I'm currently grappling with a case where online tutorial work has been plagiarised. The circumstances are such that the student concerned would have been better off simply admitting defeat as far as completing the tutorial exercise but instead they are likely to face a somewhat harsher penalty!

Deakin University is not the only institution in Australia to face these problems. It is a national – no, international – problem. The Australian Universities Teaching Committee has prepared a range of resources to support teaching in higher education. Amongst them is a paper on Minimising Plagiarism (McInnis and Devlin, 2002), which provides a lot of useful information, to assist in educating students, designing plagiarism-proof assessments as well as implementing processes to monitor and detect instances. McInnis and Devlin emphasis the need for proactive strategies to reduce the incidence of plagiarism as well as reactive ones that includes an immediate response when an incident is identified.

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