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Let them Plagiarise!

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## Paper 14: Let them plagiarise!

### John English and Chris Ireland: The Business School

The issue of plagiarism in Higher Education has been widely debated (Dawson and Overfield, 2006) and has been reported as both growing (Breen and Maassen, 2005) and of "epidemic proportions" (Emerson et al, 2005). Much of the debate centres on how institutions should address plagiarism, both relating to procedures concerning suspected plagiarism (e.g. Yeo and Chien, 2007) and how its avoidance can be successfully learned (e.g. Breen and Maassen, 2005; McGowan and Lightbody, 2007). Given that Beasley (2004) identifies a range of explanations for plagiarism then the call from Macdonald and Carroll (2006) for institutions to take a holistic approach with a particular focus on formative assessment seems appropriate.

Taking account of this, a first year undergraduate module in the Business School which has embedded academic skills includes an early focus on plagiarism in its formative assessment. Over the past two years this has included e-learning based materials and classroom activities during the first two weeks of the programme. Following this, during the third teaching week, a 1000 word essay has been submitted via Turnitin UK with written feedback provided regarding a range of writing issues including, if necessary, plagiarism. It is evident from the writing produced in this exercise that whilst many students appear to have an acceptable understanding of what is required in academic writing, a small number continue to produce writing containing large amounts of unoriginal and un-attributed work.

As a result of this evidence, but also recognising that some students may need to gain an experience of having committed plagiarism in order to appreciate what it constitutes, the module leaders concerned have introduced a short formative writing exercise during induction which continues to use Turnitin UK but which also makes use of Blackboard to provide swift feedback.

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