Plagiarism, contract cheating and final year projects

Conference or Workshop Item

Accepted Version

UK HEA Contract Cheating Workshop 2008-3 GH Pres

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Plagiarism, Contract Cheating
and **Final Year Projects**

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Structure

- **Systems Engineering Study Programmes**
- **Three phases of Plagiarism Management**
  - ➢ **Pre-emption**
  - ➢ **Detection**
  - ➢ **Redirection**
- **A recent Case Study**
- **Discussion on the Plagiarism Issue with students**

- **Definition of Plagiarism:**
  - ➢ **"the fraudulent representation of another's work as one's own"**

- **Definition of Contract Cheating:**
  - ➢ **Outsourcing an Assignment and then 'passing off' as above**

Systems Engineering Study Programmes

- **Customer – Problem – System Solution**

- **1-year timescale**

- **'Own Projects' encouraged**

	Projects R Us **Project Module**

	e-Business		Proj. Mngmnt.
Year:	1	2	3
Weighting:	0	1	2

Three Phases of Plagiarism Management

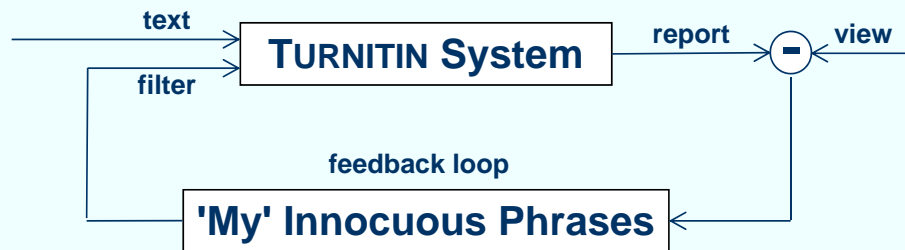| Pre-emption	Detection	Redirection
Student Condition Assignment Regime	TURNITIN Search Engines Vivas	Just Penalty Learning Logging

Pre-emption

- **Student Condition**
  - provide an opportunity to learn early – e-Business Essay Challenge in Wk.1
  - ethical sense of right and wrong: 'Just Say "No" to Cheating'
  - capability: it's the weaker students that cheat
  - student feedback
- **Assignment**
  - 'open book', yes, but could it be short timescale?
  - task (inputs i1, i2, ... , personal-factor: outputs created o1, o2, ...)
- **Regime**
  - virtual company: focus on students not 'in the team'
  - transparency of work-in-progress
    - technical: shared filestores,
    - social: open and continual dialogue between the 'actors' – mentor, customer ...
  - make this an explicit parameter of the assessment
  - no last-ditch 'rabbits out of hats' allowed
  - tougher penalties for Contract Cheating

Detection

- **TURNITIN does indicate:**
  - 'already seen' texts
  - over-dependant, 'patch' or plagiarised writing
- **Search-Engines complement TURNITIN**
- **Vivas**
  - probe depth of personal understanding
  - complete the sentences (which may or may not be the student's)
  - what decisions did you take in creating X?
  - how did you build Quality Q into your system?
  - how would you change your system to do Y?
- **Contract-cheating: UoR has, I believe, no regime in place**
  - shortage of tools ... shared, national system needed

['My' TURNITIN – please]

text → TURNITIN System → report → ⊖ ← view
filter
feedback loop
'My' Innocuous Phrases

Redirection

- **Just Penalty**
  - ➢ **Student Union is rightly asking for Consistency**
  - ➢ **later year, repeat offence, greater scale ⇒ greater penalty**

- **Learning**
  - ➢ **ethics, finding/using good sources ... just other things to learn**
  - ➢ **students annotate the sections they have copied in**
  - ➢ **"Every exit is an entrance somewhere else" (Stoppard, 1996)**
  - ➢ **keep the light on over the Honourable Exit door**

- **Logging**
  - ➢ **University needs to be holistic and learn by sharing information**
  - ➢ **Is there a risk that plagiarism is contained 'within boundaries'?**

A Recent Case Study

- **Preparation for this workshop**
  - "Any UoR students on the BCU Contract-Cheating radar?"
  - 2008-02-13, "0 out of 900" ... 2008-02-20, "Yes, 1"
  - **http://www.kasamba.com/post-request/answers-list.aspx?QID=356800**

- **Our reaction:**
  - check out online use, web-caches, email-accounts, 'Net-traffic logs
    - some success ... which raises ethical problems of its own
  - 'do nothing' or 'pre-empt' ... obviously, aim to pre-empt
  - conduct a discussion with the student in the cited module on ...
    - "The Issues raised by Contract Cheating"
    - [with a subtext hinting that we had picked up 'Kasamba']

Contract Cheating Issues, A

- **q01: As a student, do you understand what Plagiarism is?**

- **q02: As a student, do you understand why Plagiarism is treated as Academic Misconduct?**

- **q03: Does an Act of Plagiarism have any Victims?**
  - If so, who are the Victims?
  - If not, why is Plagiarism called 'Misconduct'?

- **q04: As a student, how would you feel if a fellow student is Contract Cheating on an Assignment which you were doing honestly?**

Contract Cheating Issues, B

- **q05: As a student, how would you feel if**
  the student had Contract Cheated previously?

- **q06: Is premeditated cheating worse than ...**
  doing it in a hurry at the end?

- **q07: Imagining that you are a Teacher rather than a Learner:**
  - **How would you defend the integrity of the Assessment Process?**
  - **How would you pre-empt Plagiarism and Contract Cheating?**
  - **How would you deal with it after it was detected?**

- **q08: Has the Student Body any concerns about ...**
  the way UoR is managing the issue of Plagiarism?

Contact Cheating Questions, C

- **q09: Is it ethical for Teachers**
  - **to track 'Placed Contracts' on websites, e.g., by RSS- or email-feed**
  - **to work as 'Experts for Hire' on websites**
  - **to pose as an 'Expert for Hire' just to identify cheaters**
  - **to actually answer 'own Assignment' to detect Contract Cheaters**

- **q10: Is it ethical for University 'A' to inform University 'B' that:**
  - **a student is apparently trying to Contract Cheat on an Assignment**

- **q11: Given that University 'B' is aware of possible C Cheating**
  - **should 'B' sit back and wait to see if the cheating actually happens**
  - **should 'B' attempt to pre-empt and discourage Contract Cheating**

Contract Cheating Issues, D

- **q12: Is it ethical for Information Technology Services to:**
  - ➢ **to consult its logs to see what activity there is on certain websites?**
  - ➢ **put a 'watch' on certain websites?**
  - ➢ **to inspect the web- and email-activity of suspected students?**

- **q13: Should Universities use Coursework Assessment differently:**
  - ➢ **more immediate deadlines!**
  - ➢ **vivas (Oral Examinations) and written examinations only?**
  - ➢ **written examinations only?**

- **q14: Do you have any questions to add to this list?**

In Summary ...

- **Following a painful case of plagiarism three years ago**

- **UoR.SSE.CSI *Information Technology* Study Programme has**
  - ➢ **taken steps to improve pre-emption, detection, redirection**

- **'CSI' is now recommending its practice to SSE and UoR**

- **Detection kit for Contract Cheating is next to null so ...**

- **We are currently putting our effort into pre-emption but ...**

- **Would be willing to contribute to a UK approach to CC Detection**