University of Reading

Student projects: plagiarism and assessment

Conference or Workshop Item

Other

author's conference summary/reflection

Haworth, G. M. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9896-1448 (2006) Student projects: plagiarism and assessment. In: JISC 2nd International Plagiarism Conference 2006, 19th - 21st May, 2006, The sage, Gateshead, Newcastle. Available at https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/4558/

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Published version at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/events/2006/06/event_plagiarism_0606.aspx

Publisher: JISC

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2nd JISC International Plagiarism Conference: Gateshead, 2006-06-(19-21)

One-page summary/reflection by Guy Haworth, University of Reading: g.haworth@reading.ac.uk

~170 delegates (Aus., France, Ireland, Malta, NZ, S Africa, S Korea, UK, USA) : ~35 speakers
Presentation slides, maybe some videos, to appear on the JISC Plagiarism Advisory website shortly.
Conference proceedings expected to appear before October 2006: I have the (1st Conf.) 2004 proceedings.

Conference summariser (organizer Fiona Duggan, JISC PAS) reasonably highlighted three themes:

- greater consistency of treatment of plagiarism cases needed within and across HE institutions
- focus should move from the 'negative' of *Plagiarism* to the 'positive' of *Academic Integrity*
- clear signs of changing student and institutional plagiarism-behaviour

Greater consistency of treatment of plagiarism:

Baroness Deech (OIA) made the earnest request: v concerned about disparity of treatment
request seems in line with her/OIA's principle of *natural justice*
Jude Carroll discussed a survey of plagiarism treatment at Oxford Brookes
Institutions should keep better records, esp. if anticipating defending appeals before the OIA
Suggests a university initiative, and collaboration between universities.
Issue: there is no shared system for correlating plagiarism experience across HE.
Even so, only ~15 plagiarism-associated cases reached OIA in 2005, < 3% of the OIA caseload.

Move to positive focus:

Going further, *Assessment Effectiveness* more resistant to plagiarism is considered necessary.
Pre-empt rather than just detect/deal with plagiarism:
more effective (in that it improves students) and probably more efficient too
establish integrity culture [patchy effectiveness of Honor Codes in the USA?]
educate early on writing/citing as part of Part 1 'study skills' studies

Changing behaviour re plagiarism:

Increasing pressures on students: time-use, 'stakeholder' expectations, job-market
New techniques being used by students:
attempts to frustrate systems analyzing work (such as TURNITIN, COPYCATCH and FERRET)
'Contract cheating' – contracting out coursework – thought to be an increasing issue
SSE.ISG is addressing this in resetting the 2006-7 regime for the I.T.Project
Evolution on the institution side:
Conference was an open, co-operative community: inclusive, helpful, informative ✓✓
65% of institutions now use TURNITIN, though one survey says 50% staff cannot use it
Greater attention to definitions and examples of plagiarism
Increased effort on pre-emption of plagiarism (c.f. theme 2 above)

The *systems* perspective (mine, at least when going into this subject) seemed a minority one, but perhaps the governance and pedagogical issues are more significant. It is clear that institutions can make greater use of TURNITINUK, and the inevitable wishlist about the software need not delay this. There was a TURNITIN usergroup meeting and I'll welcome some notes on that as I was speaking in a parallel session. TURNITIN is being used to educate students about plagiarism but there are concerns about 'type forming' students and moving the focus unhelpfully away from 'learning' and towards 'beating the analyser'.

The Open University has interesting experience of larger-scale analysis of student work using COPYCATCH software. Linguists are studying the writing difficulties of international students: it seems that, with their relatively limited vocabulary, they show up more readily on the non-originality radar even if they are not plagiarizing more than UK students.

The trailed launch of DOCUMENTIT, an aid to citing and referencing, was delayed to a time when I was checking out the intra-cohort studentwork-correlator FERRET. DOCUMENTIT should be compared for value and value/money with ENDNOTE.