

'A can of worms'

In English, difficult and tricky issues are referred to as 'a can of worms'. If you think about 'Managing Plagiarism', you will probably find these sorts of 'worms'. They are listed here in no particular order of importance.

- Procedures for managing plagiarism assume
 - it is rare; it is always cheating
 - it is a serious threat to students' credentials
 - must be handled as if each case will end up in a court of law.

These assumptions do not match assessment in 2009. In 2009, the context is:

- more home examinations
- the Web,
- very diverse students,
- less and less time to teach skills
- enormous resources in English,
- pressure to pass (on students and on teachers)

- An estimated **minimum** of 10% of students' work needs attention for plagiarism.
- Institutions shy away from saying what has happened or predicting what will happen around plagiarism in their university. Saying it might hurt their reputation.
- The rules governing examinations only refers to action for deception but the rules are regularly assumed to refer to plagiarism.
- Available penalties do not reflect the range and complexity of cases. The result is that the penalties are rarely seen as fair or proportionate – not by teachers or by students.
- Many desirable changes would be possible under current policies and procedures if teachers would only plan ahead – but teachers won't plan ahead so they are not possible
- Most teachers just do not see copying in their students' work. Maybe they cannot. Maybe they do not want to – whatever the reason, most copying goes undetected.
- Teachers hide behind '*We can't do that. It's not allowed*' as a way of avoiding making changes. Many make the claim without checking whether it is or is not allowed. Often, it is perfectly possible.
- Pragmatic solutions for managing plagiarism are often rejected because of the worry that any case could end up in a court of law. If lawyers argue, '*Do it this way so any appeal or challenge can be defended*', this will mean that procedures and systems are very complex. The procedures fit for legal challenge make it very difficult to convince any teacher to use the procedures at all.

I am sure you can add your own tricky issues and difficult problems. The challenge is finding ways to work with these realities or to change them. For each 'worm', what do you think should be done: work with it or change it.

ELEMENTS IN A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO STUDENT PLAGIARISM

An audit starts the planning process.

- For each section below, consider if this aspect is present in your University / Department.
- Then review the answers and identify where action is needed.
- Finally, agree where to start.

Aspect of the Holistic approach	yes	no	In part
<p>1. Are actions taken to make sure students understand what is expected of them for University-level work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students are alerted at the start of their programme that they need to pay attention to avoiding plagiarism ○ Students are told what is and is not plagiarism. ○ Students are given information <u>in writing</u> on avoiding plagiarism [for them to use in the future or when they need it]. ○ Students are given written guidance on citation; use of others' work. ○ Students are informed about the specific referencing systems used in their own department. ○ Students are told how their grades are decided [what is valuable in the student's work] so they know what aspects of their work must be '<i>my own work</i>'. ○ Students are told how much or how little co-operation and help is acceptable from other students. 			

Aspect of the Holistic approach	yes	no	In part
<p>2. Do programmes in your university ensure students have a chance to learn how to avoid plagiarism?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The programme identifies all the skills students will need to avoid plagiarism. For example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to search for sources, - how to write from sources - how to use citations - how to create a reference list etc ○ The programme plans where/ in what courses each skill will be taught [making sure skills are not taught too often or ignored]. ○ It is agreed who will teach each of the skills. When it will be taught is agreed ○ Students have a chance to practice academic writing without being punished in the early stages for poor application. [for example, by submitting drafts in later years and by controlling through marks nly in early years]] ○ Students are given feedback on how well or poorly they apply 'the rules' of citation and attribution. 			

Aspects of the Holistic approach	yes	no	In part
<p>3. Are assignments designed so that the students cannot easily copy or find answers to home examination tasks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are opportunities for reviewing the assignments either during or after the teacher sets them – the review is to consider if answers or products are easy (or difficult) to copy or find. ○ There is guidance and support for reconsidering assignments to reduce copying. Elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assignments which encourage students to use, apply and evaluate information -Assignments which do not have only a single answer, encouraging copying between students. ○ New tasks and assignments are set each time the course runs [to discourage students from reusing previous students' work / answers]. ○ If tasks are unchanged when a course is repeated, steps are taken to check that the submitted work is the students' own. 			

Aspects of the Holistic approach	yes	no	In part
<p>4. Are a range of detection strategies in use to identify work that is plagiarised?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessors are given guidance and/or training in using a range of ways to identify work that is not in accordance with regulations / requirements. ○ Methods which are used to identify work are inclusive - that is, detection methods do not single out any specific group. [For example, relying on change of language too heavily can have a disproportionate impact on students writing in English as a second language.] ○ Electronic screening * is used to identify work that needs additional attention from assessors who are grading the work. ○ When electronic text-matching is used, assessors are trained to interpret reports. ○ Assessors are provided guidance on how to identify instances of deception and cheating through plagiarism. ○ Assessors are provided with guidance on how to deal with cases where deception and cheating are identified. <p>* Examples: Urkund, Genuine Text, Turnitin etc</p>			

Aspects of the Holistic approach	Yes	No	In part
<p>5. Are cases which must be managed or reported - are these cases dealt with effectively?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is clear guidance to decide the level of the case: can it be managed by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the person grading the work? or - the programme? or - the University Discipline framework? ○ If a case should be managed at the level of the course, the process is clearly stated. ○ If a case can be managed within the programme and penalties applied at this level, the process is clearly stated. ○ If a case reveals deliberate deception and must be reported for possible disciplinary procedures, the reporting procedure is clearly stated. ○ Where evidence must be collected for reported cases, there is guidance on how and how much is needed. ○ Reported cases are prepared for resolution/ decision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> quickly consistently fairly 			