

## **Plagiarism Awareness Programme for Teachers:** *a report for the Eduserv Foundation Information Literacy Initiative* Helen Blanchett, Netskills Consultant Trainer, November 2008.

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

This report outlines the conclusions of a project run by Netskills relating to plagiarism awareness in schools, involving the delivery of a series of workshops and the release of a package of teaching materials. The project was delivered between November 2007 and October 2008 and builds on a previous pilot project delivered in 2006<sup>1</sup>. Both projects were funded under the Eduserv Foundation Information Literacy initiative.

The pilot project in 2006 aimed to raise awareness of plagiarism issues in schools and was driven by several factors, which continue to be relevant two years on. Firstly, plagiarism continues to be a high-profile issue for schools, particularly issues relating to the internet and coursework. For example, a recent survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) reported that more than half of teachers believing internet plagiarism to be a serious problem amongst sixth-formers<sup>2</sup>. In 2007, concern over coursework led the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to introduce more rigorous controls over coursework and even remove it in some subject areas<sup>3</sup>. There continues to be a need for more guidance to be given to pupils in schools on how to avoid plagiarism, but also for schools to address the issue in a more strategic way, as demonstrated by the ATL survey which found that 55% of teachers said either that their school did not have a plagiarism policy or were unaware of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Exploring and Deterring Plagiarism in Schools: *a report for the Eduserv Foundation Information Literacy Programme, 2006* <http://www.netskills.ac.uk/content/projects/eduserv-info-lit/schplagreport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> BBC News, 18 Jan 2008, 'Teachers voice plagiarism fears', a survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7194772.stm>

<sup>3</sup> "QCA announces changes to coursework", news release summarising changes made following a review of coursework in 2005, [http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_9678.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_9678.aspx)

The pilot project identified a need for further awareness-raising among teaching staff, but that it was difficult to attract teachers to courses due to releasing staff time and a lack of recognition of the importance of this topic. Library staff were found to be enthusiastic to enhance their role in this area.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

This project aimed to provide plagiarism awareness raising activities within the schools sector and to facilitate awareness raising activities within schools themselves. The activities were targeted at secondary school teachers and support staff, including librarians, and aimed to equip them with the skills and knowledge to help students avoid plagiarism and also to encourage the issue to be addressed at school level.

A series of workshops provided the main vehicle for awareness-raising. The materials from the workshops will be made available to be used for cascade training or for use with pupils during teaching sessions.

## **1.3 Outputs**

The main outputs from this project are:

- A series of plagiarism awareness raising workshops
- A package of teaching materials to be made freely available to schools
- This report outlining conclusions and recommendations

## **2 The Workshops**

### **2.1 Workshop Content and Materials Development**

*Exploring and Deterring Plagiarism in Schools* was based on Netskills' highly successful *Detecting and Deterring Plagiarism* workshop, developed in conjunction with the JISC Plagiarism Advisory Service<sup>4</sup>, and delivered to over 600 higher and further education staff around the country over the past few years.

The workshops in this project were run from 10am to 4pm (as opposed to 4pm to 8pm for the pilot project). The materials from the pilot workshop were updated and additional material incorporated, in order to allow time for activities and discussion. In particular, a session on using detection services was added with logins to the Turnitin detection service being provided by Northumbria Learning<sup>5</sup>, who also offered trial logins to attendees on the workshop for use in their schools. The materials were also updated to reflect recent news stories and changes in approaches by qualifications authorities. The materials were also amended to include more references to the Scottish educational system (in addition to the English), addressing a criticism contained in feedback from the pilot workshops.

Workshop topics included: defining plagiarism, exploring the positive and negative impacts of the web on plagiarism, using detection services, designing out opportunities for plagiarism, and policies to deal with the problem.

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<sup>4</sup> The JISC Plagiarism Advisory Service ceased to exist in July 2008. The web site and hosting of Turnitin is now run by Northumbria Learning <http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/>

<sup>5</sup> See above.

Two exercises used in the workshop were from the Jude Carroll's book 'A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education'<sup>6</sup> and adapted for use in the workshop (with permission). Permission has subsequently been granted to include these materials in the package of online materials to be made available on completion of this project.

Additional items were included in the materials given to attendees. These included Briefing Papers from Plagiarismadvice.org ("Reducing plagiarism through assessment design" and "Why do students plagiarise?"<sup>7</sup>), the Frequently Asked Questions from the Plagiarism Advisory Service and the JCQ Guidance for Teachers and Assessors "Plagiarism in Examinations"<sup>8</sup>.

## **2.2 Workshop Scheduling**

*Exploring and Deterring Plagiarism in Schools* ran at three venues: London, Manchester and Edinburgh. In 2006, teaching and support staff were consulted about the most appropriate timing and duration of workshops in order to maximise attendance, but feedback was inconclusive. For this project, workshops were run from 10am to 4pm, in order to provide ample time to explore and discuss the complex subject matter.

## **2.3 Workshop Publicity**

Experience from previous workshops found that no one single publicity method was guaranteed to successfully reach schools and in particular, sending letters to schools was very hit and miss due to the difficulty in targeting the appropriate member of staff. A variety of publicity methods were used for this project, including:

- Dedicated section of Netskills' web site created to publicise the workshops.
- Letter and poster sent to every secondary school in each region
- Use of relevant email lists.

Library discussion groups and lists were used as the main publicity vehicles, aiming both to target library staff themselves and to encourage dissemination details within their schools.

## **3 Workshop Attendance and Audience**

A total of 29 people booked on the three workshops (36 places were available), with 26 people attending, a very low drop out rate for a free workshop. Only one workshop failed to book fully – the London workshop was scheduled in September, a busy time of year in schools.

The workshops were predominantly attended by library staff, reflecting their interest in the subject and the choice of library lists as publicity vehicles. As with the 2006 workshops, most of the participants were from the state sector. A small proportion was from sixth form or further education colleges involved in teaching under 18's.

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<sup>6</sup> Carroll, J (2008) "A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education", 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Oxford: Oxford Brookes University. <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsltd/books/>

<sup>7</sup> Plagiarismadvice.org Briefing Papers, <http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/briefingpapers.php>

<sup>8</sup> JCQ Guidance for Teachers/Assessors 'Plagiarism in Examinations'

The breakdown of attendees by job role is given below:

Learning support	1
Library staff	22
Management	2
Teachers	3
Other	1

One of the workshops was attended by a film crew from a production company making a programme for Teachers TV. The programme covers using the internet for research and aims to highlight its advantages and disadvantages, with opportunities for plagiarism being one of the disadvantages. Permission was gained from all workshop attendees for filming to take place and some lively discussions were captured.

As part of the programme, the production company wished to include a case study of a school where plagiarism issues were being addressed. Although a school was eventually found, the company found it difficult to locate such a school, reflecting the current lack of coherent strategies within schools to address plagiarism issues.

The programme is due to be transmitted in Spring 2009, providing an ideal opportunity to raise awareness of plagiarism issues.

#### **4 Workshop Feedback**

Online feedback was collected after each workshop. Responses were very positive, demonstrating the continued interest in this topic.

A summary of the 20 feedback forms returned is below:

Overall average score:	<b>4.75</b> (on a scale of 1 – poor to 5 – excellent)
Rating for presentations:	<b>4.70</b>
Rating for hands-on sessions:	<b>4.50</b>

Participants were very happy with the course content, with suggestions for improvement mainly focusing on the desire for more real life examples of plagiarism in schools or cases that have been dealt with by exam boards. Many commented that they now realised how complex plagiarism issues are and some found it difficult to deal with the fact that there are no 'off the shelf' solutions.

General comments included:

- "One of the best staff development courses I have attended for ages. Thank you."
- "The workshop was most interesting and thought provoking."
- "Very enjoyable and rewarding day, I look forward to attending others again. Excellent presentation."
- "Excellent tutor. All aspects clear and relevant. Good mix of activities."
- "A brilliant course with an excellent leader. Very thought provoking and lots of practical things to try and implement."

Discussion took place at the end of each workshop to identify the best methods for further awareness-raising and strategy development in schools. Although some attendees felt they had no mechanism for disseminating information, others were keen to take ideas and issues back to schools through:

- writing briefs for Heads of Department or Head Teachers
- running training sessions within schools
- dissemination to school library networks.

Some attendees said that they would target individuals on their school board or try to get on the school board themselves in order to influence policy. Others aimed to develop momentum for strategy development by starting with receptive departments and building on success. Further issues from these discussions are detailed in Section 6.

## 5 Consultation

Consultation took place with exam regulators and local education authorities in order to ensure alignment with current developments and identify where improvements could be made.

### 5.1 OfQual

In April 2008, responsibility for regulating exams and qualifications in England shifted from the QCA to OfQual. In June 2008, Isabel Nisbet, acting CEO of OfQual, presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Plagiarism Conference<sup>9</sup> and outlined OfQual's approach to plagiarism in future. Based on the findings of the 2006 QCA report 'Digital Technologies and Dishonesty in examinations and tests'<sup>10</sup>, a threefold approach to plagiarism is suggested (referred to as the three 'Es'):

- The Virtues Approach (ethics/**E**ducation)
  - Develop students who reject cheating
- Prevention Approach (**E**ngineering)
  - Eliminate or reduce the opportunities to cheat
  - Reduce the pressure to cheat
- Policeman Approach (**E**nforcement)
  - Catch and educate those who cheat
  - Catch and punish those who cheat
  - Monitor the custodians.

(based on Hinman<sup>11</sup>)

Isabel outlined different activities for each approach. The 'Virtues' approach included institutional policies and honour/honesty codes, the latter catching the eye of the press<sup>12</sup> when reporting the conference. The 'Prevention' approach involves modifying assessment to make it harder to cheat (through asking for analysis or unusual

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.plagiarismconference.com/>

<sup>10</sup> Underwood, J. (2006), Digital technologies and dishonesty in examinations and tests. QCA <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/177.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Underwood above.

<sup>12</sup> 'Pupils, aged 7, could be asked to sign exam 'honesty codes'', The Independent, 25 June 2008, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/pupils-aged-7-could-be-asked-to-sign-exam-honesty-codes-853523.html>

viewpoints) and increasing controls on the exam environment. Increasing control over coursework assessment is already in place following a review in 2006, which recommended the removal of coursework from some subjects and in other, controlled classroom based coursework. The 'Policeman' approach involves using technologies (such as plagiarism detection tools) to identify plagiarism and when identified, using clear rules and consistently applied penalties. Plagiarism detection tools are increasingly used, for example by all JCQ exam boards, but there is less evidence of clear rules and consistent penalties being used.

The plan for OfQual's future approach to plagiarism appears to be comprehensive and coherent, following current recommended good practice. However, embedding these practices is likely to be a long-term process. One of the first stages in this process is the commissioning of a series of guides to be produced by Northumbria Learning, hosts of the Plagiarismadvice.org web site (and formerly at JISC's Plagiarism Advice Service) for publication in 2009. The publications will include guides to understanding plagiarism, referencing, using electronic sources and detecting plagiarism.

## **5.2 Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)**

The SQA regulates exams in Scotland and Carole Forrest, SQA's Manager for External Assessment Delivery, agreed to discuss their approach to plagiarism. Current guidance and procedures include a publication for students called 'Your Coursework'<sup>13</sup> and a declaration signed by students and teachers. A malpractice group produces procedures relating to identifying and dealing with occurrences of malpractice, including plagiarism. No formal guidance is currently given to examination centres specifically relating to dealing with plagiarism.

Carole said that there had not been a significant increase in plagiarism recently and that collusion between students was more an issue of concern. However, she acknowledged that reported statistics may not be representative of actual occurrences. She stated it was beyond the remit of the SQA to encourage schools to address plagiarism through changing teaching practices. However, one area that was being considered was to require policies on plagiarism and collusion to be introduced as part of centre approval processes. This would go some way to addressing the current wide differences in how centres approach plagiarism. Carole did acknowledge that even if centre policies were introduced, this would not necessarily result in changes in teaching practice.

An area where the SQA had made positive attempts to reduce opportunities for plagiarism was in assessment design. Assessments are now designed to require some kind of personal input or interpretation. Assessments that are plagiarism prone, such as fact based essays, are being identified and eliminated. Occurrences of plagiarism are analysed to identify areas where improvements could be made. Interestingly, unlike in England, the SQA has decided not to make changes to or remove coursework despite it being most prone to plagiarism, instead valuing its place in the educational process and instead attempting to reduce plagiarism through assessment design.

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<sup>13</sup> SQA, Your Coursework 2009 - a guide for candidates, <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/1452.html>

### **5.3 Local Education Authorities**

Thirteen Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were contacted, with a view to consulting a target of three authorities. Finding appropriate contacts within authorities with responsibility for plagiarism issues proved difficult. Emails were sent to the thirteen authorities addressed to the named person responsible for schools and children's services. An additional contact was provided by Northumbria Learning.

Responses were received from four authorities, three in England and one in Scotland. Two authorities (Hertfordshire and Edinburgh) replied forwarding guidance from the JCQ or the SQA and citing requirements from exam boards, stating that no extra guidance on policy development or implementation was given by their authority to schools. In Hertfordshire, the English Advisors would reinforce messages from the JCQ guidance regarding plagiarism through training sessions and support for schools.

Further telephone discussion took place with the Jeff Hooper, Head of School Improvement in Bedfordshire. Jeff stated that in recent years, the move towards increased independence of schools means that LEAs are less likely to provide specific guidance on plagiarism policies, but that this should be decided at school level. He also cited capacity as an issue within LEAs, with many other issues receiving higher priority and that it was unlikely that his authority would issue specific guidance on plagiarism, this being more the place of the exam boards. However, he did outline the LEA's role in maintaining standards relating to teaching and learning and thought that initiatives to encourage critical thinking and evaluation of sources could be linked to plagiarism, thereby being addressed as an integral part of teaching and learning strategies and not a separate issue in itself.

## **6 Issues**

The day long workshop provided plenty of time for discussion, both during the interactive presentations and group activities. A discussion session was used to round up each workshop, with specific questions being asked about what further guidance participants would like to receive, the best methods of raising awareness within schools and issues relating to the development of a school plagiarism policy. Issues arising from the workshops and consultation are outlined below.

### **Awareness-raising**

- This project demonstrated the continuing difficulty of attracting teachers to events related to plagiarism.
- Attendees were very pleased that materials from the workshops will be made freely available, both for use with pupils and for staff awareness. Some felt more confident than others about running their own training sessions in this topic.
- INSET and in-service days were suggested to educate staff about plagiarism issues, but this depends on the topic being acknowledged as an important area for development by senior staff.
- An attendee from a Further Education in England highlighted the importance of Continuing Professional Development<sup>14</sup> hours and that if courses could count towards this, development in this area would be encouraged.

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<sup>14</sup> Teachers in further education must now be registered with the Institute for Learning and are subsequently required to complete 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development, [http://www.ifl.ac.uk/services/p\\_wvv\\_page?id=171&menu\\_id=1340](http://www.ifl.ac.uk/services/p_wvv_page?id=171&menu_id=1340)

- A wiki was suggested to share good practice across the schools sector.
- Teacher training courses were seen as a ideal mechanism of addressing the issue long-term by raising awareness at the start of a teacher's career.

### **Curriculum issues**

- The importance of embedding information literacy into the curriculum was seen as a key mechanism for addressing plagiarism, through teaching referencing and evaluation skills.
- Making more resources available online for use in lessons was suggested, for example, tutorials on Harvard referencing, and more tutorials on using sources, similar to the Internet Detective<sup>15</sup>. The resources produced by Learning and Teaching Scotland were praised<sup>16</sup>.
- Access to quality resources to use in schools would be welcomed, such as the recent discounts for JISC Collections for schools<sup>17</sup>.
- Good teaching involves giving advice and suggestions and it was felt that more clarity was needed about where this crosses the line into unacceptable help. It was felt that more realistic guidance was needed which acknowledged the teacher's role.
- Differences between subject areas caused much discussion, for example in psychology where there are conventions for the structure of essays and how conclusions should be introduced, would this be classed as plagiarism?
- Most agreed that designing original and personalised assessment was a good idea, but felt that this would be time-consuming and also make it harder to match assessments to the marking criteria.
- Some concerns arose regarding submission of original work, voicing a potential danger that if exam markers are used to 'off the shelf' answers, would they penalise original thought?
- Clear guidance needs to be given over the difference between acceptable collaboration and collusion.
- It was felt by many attendees that children lacked a concept of 'ownership' of information, particularly in relation to web resources, and did not have an understanding of the need to cite sources. It was felt this should be addressed more coherently across the curriculum from an early age.

### **Strategy Development**

- Few schools were found to have addressed plagiarism through specific policy and there remains an inconsistent approach to dealing with plagiarism both within individual schools and across the sector as a whole
- Plagiarism is not seen to be of prime importance as compared to other pressures on teachers' time and the demands of the curriculum
- Detection services, such as Turnitin, were seen to be too expensive, but the fact that exam boards use it provides a good deterrent to students

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<sup>15</sup> Internet Detective - a tutorial on quality evaluation of web resources, <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective/>

<sup>16</sup> Learning and Teaching Scotland - Information Literacy web site, <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/informationliteracy/index.asp>

<sup>17</sup> JISC Collections for Schools - online subscription resources, <http://www.jcs.nen.gov.uk/>

- In many schools, enthusiastic and interested individuals are attempting to raise awareness of plagiarism issues, but this is on a very ad hoc basis and usually without higher level support.
- Head teachers are the key influence when it comes to addressing any issue and plagiarism will only be sufficiently addressed once it is required "from above"

### **External guidance to schools**

- In terms of strategy development, it is unclear who's responsibility it should be to provide guidance to schools.
- A suggestion was made for some kind of quality mark for plagiarism to indicate schools had addressed this issue (a suggested name for the standard was 'Investor in Ideas').
- There seems to be a gap between guidance issued by exam regulators, local authorities and implementation in schools - documents are circulated, but there is little evidence of these becoming part of school policy or changing practices.
- Although there is documentation produced about plagiarism by various bodies, this is not always disseminated widely within schools.
- Any guidance provided needs to be concise and clear, not using what some felt was 'fudgy language', leaving much to be decided subjectively. However, it may be that the complexity of the subject has not been fully appreciated.
- Solutions to the issues would be welcomed, rather than just guidance which raises more questions and leaves much to interpretation.
- In Scotland, attendees said they would like to see the guide for teachers which was produced by the SQA and disseminated to schools in 2005 being reissued. They also would like a guide produced for parents, in addition to that for students.
- How important is plagiarism really? Does it really matter? What's in it for schools to reduce plagiarism if they are getting good results? The emphasis needs to be on benefit to learning, but rewards are still based on outcomes not process
- Changes could be required in schools via exam board centre requirements, however this is very much a 'stick' rather than 'carrot' approach.

## **7 Conclusion and Recommendations**

This small-scale project continues to demonstrate that awareness and education in plagiarism issues is still very much in need and that there is little evidence that schools are approaching plagiarism in a strategic way. It is also unclear where guidance on the creation and implementation of plagiarism policies should come from.

The workshops were very well-received and most attendees indicated that they would take the lessons learned back to their schools for dissemination, with several aiming to try to change their school policies. The materials will be released following completion of the project and hosted on the Information Literacy web site<sup>18</sup>. A range of channels will be used to publicise the materials, including school library networks, mailing lists and online directories of teaching resources. The enthusiasm for the materials indicates that they will provide a useful resource to facilitate further dissemination.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.informationliteracy.co.uk/>

This project confirmed the findings of the 2006 pilot project and found that many of the key issues remained the same. As a result, the recommendations from the pilot are still valid:

- Ensuring that pupils are given clear guidance about plagiarism and referencing.
- Involving school library staff in teaching the appropriate skills.
- Developing online tutorials specifically aimed at school pupils. Although some tutorials on note taking and referencing have now been produced by Learning and Teaching Scotland<sup>19</sup>, there is scope for more.
- Developing regional and national networks to enable schools to share best practice and guidance. At present, what work there is seems to be going on in individual school departments in piecemeal fashion.
- Ensuring that teaching staff receive appropriate training and awareness.
- Improving the dissemination and take-up of guidance to schools from examining authorities.

This last recommendation regarding dissemination and in particular the take-up of guidance from examining authorities is one of the key issues that this project has identified. Although examining authorities are now recognising the importance of addressing plagiarism issues and emphasising a holistic approach to dealing with this area, there remains a gap between the guidance produced and the implementation within schools. It also seems unclear as to who should produce guidance to schools on policy implementation.

In addition to the above, this project recommends the following:

- Identifying the appropriate body to provide guidance on policy implementation, being aware that if information comes from many disparate sources it may well be ignored.
- Ensuring that guidance to schools is clear, realistic and practical, enhanced with real-life examples covering different subject areas.
- Encouraging information literacy to be embedded within the curriculum from a young age, in particular focussing on referencing and the concept of ownership of information.
- Finding a specific mechanism to target head teachers, as they are the critical decision makers and influencers over individual school policies.
- Producing guidance for Head Teachers emphasising *why* it is important to address these issues.

This project has demonstrated a continuing need for training and awareness-raising on plagiarism issues, but highlighted a need for a strategic and holistic approach within schools. Head Teachers are critical to policy development within schools and a way must be found to develop their commitment to address plagiarism at a whole-school level.

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<sup>19</sup> Learning and Teaching Scotland - Information Literacy web site, <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/informationliteracy/index.asp>

## **8 Appendix: Workshop Description**

### ***Exploring and Deterring Plagiarism in Schools***

Opportunities for plagiarism in schools have escalated with the growth of the world wide web, with its vast range of content, easy opportunities for cut-and-paste, and growing market of commercial sites helping the potential plagiarist. While sophisticated online services can help with the detection of web-based plagiarism, long-term deterrence lies with appropriate course design and administration, and clear guidance to pupils and parents alike about avoiding malpractice.

#### **Topics:**

- Definition and examples of plagiarism
- Plagiarism and the web - sources and detection
- Exploring anti-plagiarism tutorials and essay banks
- Designing out opportunities for plagiarism and collusion
- How to raise awareness of plagiarism issues within schools

#### **Who is it for?**

This free workshop, funded by the Eduserv Foundation, is aimed at secondary school teaching and support staff who wish to find out about this complex and controversial subject and how to deal with it. Materials from the workshop will be made available for use within schools.

Participants need no special technical skills, but for the hands-on sessions they will find it helpful to have had some experience of using a browser.

#### **By the end of the workshop participants will have:**

- Understood what is meant by plagiarism and how and why it may occur
- Viewed and discussed examples of plagiarism
- Seen how the web facilitates plagiarism
- Tried out online anti-plagiarism tutorials
- Used scenarios to explore pedagogic and administrative approaches to deterring plagiarism
- Shared experiences and views with other participants
- Discussed how to address plagiarism issues within schools