Plagiarism

“Plagiarism is submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one’s own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source.”

According to the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), a report from one Canadian university shows that instances of cheating and plagiarism in their institution increased by 81% between 2003 and 2006 while reported cases of internet-based plagiarism nearly tripled from 54% to 153% in the same period.

The CCL recommends a number of strategies to help deal with the rise of academic dishonesty, including on-line plagiarism programs and academic honour codes. Such codes, which define a code of conduct for students, are most effective when they:

• develop clear, specific definitions of dishonesty and apply them uniformly;
• appeal to students’ personal integrity;
• reduce the temptation to cheat;
• encourage active student participation and critical thinking; and
• impose reasonable but strict penalties.

Taken from: “The 21st Century Cheater: Academic dishonesty in Canada’s Schools.”
http:/ /www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl/Newsroom/Releases/20100706AcademicDishonesty.html

Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Classroom Learning Regarding Plagiarism


Plagiarism-proofing Your Class:

• Dedicate an entire class on teaching about academic integrity. Discuss in class and via hand-outs, the rules for proper reference, citation, paraphrasing, etc.
• When discussing required readings, highlight certain sections where the author has synthesized the main ideas and referenced them as an example for your students.
• Develop tasks that ask students to evaluate and analyze ideas that they have read.
• Use examples of previous assignments to demonstrate how ideas can be presented and how sources should be referenced.
• Show “SafeAssign” to students.
• Develop in-class activities that require students to demonstrate their referencing skills and knowledge.
• Discuss “paper mills” and how easily professors recognize their products.
• Get a handwritten in-class writing sample from each student early in the course; keep it to check for characteristic errors, style, and vocabulary level in major projects.
• Ask all students to read and sign an “academic honesty” contract outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices.
• Stress the seriousness and consequences of plagiarism.
• See: http://www.humber.ca/academic-regulations (Academic Dishonesty and Penalties)

Plagiarism-proofing Assignments:
• Avoid topics that are too general or common in your discipline.
• Require students to apply theory/model/approach to their own experience or a local “case” (e.g. Toronto).
• Ask for an interview or other primary research component.
• Have students clear topics and reference sources with you before starting or handing in the paper.
• Make students include citations/references from your textbook or course hand-outs.
• Break major assignments into several steps/checkpoints spaced apart over a time period.
• Value and grade process as well as product: evaluate outline, proposal, research notes and/or rough draft.
• Set an “expiration date” for references: e.g. no references more than 2 – 3 years old.
• Require an electronic as well as paper copy to enable easy “Googling” of paper.

Catching Plagiarists:
• Trust your instincts but verify them.
• Keep a photocopy of the assignment or keep the original and return the photocopy to the student.
• Look for formatting clues: inconsistent font/size changes, website URLs at the bottom of the page, etc.
• Look for sudden/random changes in writing style, vocabulary, number of mistakes within the paper (can indicate cut-and-paste from multiple sources).
• Search for phrases, title or sentences on Web using Google, DogPile, and other search engines.
• As well as websites, search common encyclopaedia CDs (Encarta, Compton's etc.) using phrases as key words.
• Look for topics/themes/source types that don't make your assignment.
• If you suspect plagiarism, but can’t prove it, arrange a meeting. Ask the students for an oral summary of the paper, or definitions of rare or technical terms used in it.
• If all of the student’s references are obscure, ask for copies of sources (books, articles, print-outs or a writing sample).
• Compare style, grammar, vocabulary, spelling with student’s previous assignments or writing sample.
• Student writing abilities rarely improve radically within a term. Writers make and repeat characteristic mistakes such as run-on sentences, subject-verb agreement, use of plurals, confusing “affect” and “effect”, etc. If the student’s in-class writing sample has far more writing mistakes than a later major project, suspect plagiarism, or at least, outside editing help.