Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Instructional Development Unit UWI, Mona

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Special points of interest:

- The **Teaching Tips Newsletter** is a publication of the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/) as well as in the office of the IDU.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the IDU.

Combating Plagiarism

turnitin

All universities today have some policy against plagiarism. At The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION REGULATION 78 iii and iv state:

(iii) Plagiarism is a form of cheating.

(iv) Plagiarism is the unauthorized and/or unacknowledged use of another person's intellectual efforts and creations howsoever recorded, including whether formally published or in manuscript or in typescript or other printed or electronically presented form and includes taking passages, ideas or structures from another work or author without proper and unequivocal attribution of such source(s), using the conventions for attributions or citing used in this University.

There are many sites that offer good ideas about reducing the level of plagiarism in the college and university classroom. Here at The UWI, the use of Turnitin might be helpful in combating plagiarism. Turnitin is a plagiarism detecting software used on the computers and linked to the internet. It is used by many institutions of higher education. Essentially, it helps in determining if a submitted essay or document has been plagiarized. In this regard, it shows the level of unoriginal content (Turnitin is available here on campus. Please contact MITS for help with using Turnitin).

In order to combat plagiarism, we must try to distinguish between poor source management and intentional cheating. Students sometimes do not cite sources properly or make mistakes in paraphrasing and quoting. A meaningful resource that teachers might consult to help us teach our students about plagiarism is: *The Plagiarism Handbook: Strategies for Preventing, Detecting, and Dealing with Plagiarism* (Harris, 2001, Pyrczak Publishing).

Harris's book provides information about combating plagiarism for teachers and others. Here are some of his major points:

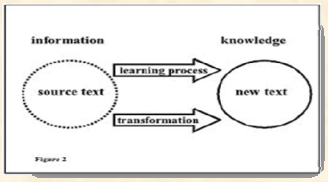
- Don't assume students know what plagiarism is.
- Teach plagiarism not from a punitive approach, but rather by emphasizing good writing and source management skills.
- Distinguish between writing mistakes and deliberate cheating.
- Talk about plagiarism in class, and not only in terms of an admonishment warning students to avoid it.
- Make the writing process visible to students (and you) by collecting drafts, annotated bibliographies, and copies of sources used.
- Teach students how to manage sources.
- Design assignments to both mitigate against plagiarism and at the same time help students learn good scholarly habits.
- Know the institution's plagiarism policies and procedures before you begin courses, so you Know your options and rights as a teacher in advance.
- Remember due process and student confidentiality if you need to make a plagiarism charge.
- Put students at ease in teacher- student conferences to discuss plagiarism. Give students a chance to explain their paper.

Harris (2001) is also of the view that we need not have a copy of the plagiarized source in hand to confront the student about possible plagiarism. A simple student-teacher conference will often yield important information that will enable the teacher to determine if plagiarism really took place. Teachers need to talk to students and inquire about how they wrote the particular (cont'd ⟶)

Combating Plagiarism cont...

essay or other constructed response item, where they got the ideas from, whether they thought quotations or paraphrasing was necessary and so on. In these student-teacher conferences enough information is usually provided that will enable the teacher to determine whether blatant plagiarism was done or whether the student did not manage the sources properly.

Help Students Develop Paraphrasing Skills to Help Deter Plagiarism



Many students have real weaknesses in writing, in fact even in comprehending and paraphrasing from an original source. Oftentimes students contribute very little to a paper because they have read the literature and do not fully understand the concepts. They might go on to quote heavily and paraphrase inaccurately from the source. Some students might even omit the usage of quotation marks as a way of hiding their overreliance on the source. Unfortunately, this will be named as plagiarism. University teachers in multiple disciplines must create opportunities for students to develop writing skills. This can be accomplished in several ways:

- Lecturers might assign a passage for reading and a one paragraph summary and then invite students to describe or paraphrase an idea or ideas advanced by the author or authors.
- Students might be asked to share the one page summary (mentioned above) in small groups of twos and threes.
- Students could also be asked to use the popular active teaching strategy think, pair and share and provide feedback on each other's work.
- Another approach might be to have students work in small groups to determine how accurate they were in summarizing and evaluating the original ideas offered in the passage as well as how the language was actually used.
- In the final stage of the process, students should be asked to work in the larger group to draft an accurate paraphrase of the original passage and use the appropriate citation required by the discipline and of course in keeping with the traditions of academia.

References

Based in part on an audio workshop, Avoiding the Plagues & Pains of Plagiarism, presented by Caroline L. Eisner, Academic Coaching & Writing (www.AcademicCoachingandWriting.org), February 1, 2011.
Roig, M. (2007). Some reflections on plagiarism: The problem of paraphrasing in the sciences. *European Science Editing,* 33, 38-41.

The strategic use of student comments to promote success for fellow students

As the semester moves to a close, you might want to discuss with your students (especially new or first year students) some of the challenges they experienced with the course you are completing. In fact, you should ask them to provide written advice to other students who will do the course next year/semester. Collect these letters of advice and use them in your course on the first day of class next semester or whenever the course is next offered. Let the students pass the letters of advice around enabling each student to read several. You will then have a class discussion to identify common themes and appropriate responses to the students' advice.

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