Signs of Academic Dishonesty

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Some material presented in this resource has been adapted from:


Additional resources:


Lars Jones (2011) defines academic dishonesty as "the theft of ideas and other forms of intellectual property - whether they are published or not". As Jonathan Bailey (2011) notes in his blog, the key to dealing with plagiarism – accidental or otherwise – is to “learn to use your intuition and learn how to look for the warning signs of plagiarism”. Here are some of the signs:

- papers that are barely “on topic”
- papers that far exceed the page requirement of the assignment
- papers that exceed the scope of the assignment (for instance, a paper that connects the assigned reading to a reading not covered in the course)
- unusual quality of prose—either poorer or better than the writer’s previous work generally
- uneven quality of prose—oscillating from poor to good in terms of how well points are organized, reasoned, or supported
- uneven style or correctness—fluctuation in syntactic sophistication or in the narrative voice of the essay, or severe fluctuation of grammar/spelling usage
• unusual style—may be paragraphed like a newspaper account; may use popular magazine-style introductions
• use of vocabulary that is beyond that usually included in the student’s work
• bibliographies that do not match sources cited in the paper
• discussion of sources in the text that do not appear in the bibliography
• use of quotations that are not attributed in the text

You may be able to avoid having to deal with cases of academic dishonesty in your Continuing Studies course by setting one or two activities at the beginning of the term to help your students understand the importance of academic integrity:

• ask students to review the University’s policy on academic integrity and hold a Moodle forum discussion about what it means to produce authentic intellectual work
• point students to resources that will help them understand the distinctions between intentional plagiarism and accidental plagiarism and advise them on how to avoid plagiarizing, for example:

  Information for Students, University of Victoria Learning and Teaching Centre
  http://www.ltc.uvic.ca/initiatives/integrity/student.php

  Avoiding Plagiarism, University of Victoria Libraries Student Guide
  http://library.uvic.ca/instruction/cite/plagiarism.html

  Citation Help, University of Victoria Libraries Research Help
  http://library.uvic.ca/instruction/cite/index.html

  Why Cite Your Sources, Cooperative Library Instruction Project and the Ohio University Libraries
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZtqmIDmNYY

• give your students guidelines on your citation requirements, if the program area has not adopted a citation and format style
• include a note about academic integrity in your assignment instructions