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Supporting academic integrity: approaches and resources for higher education

Case studies and perspectives

StudyWell: Encouraging positive study skills by students and staff

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Introduction

StudyWell is a website developed by a group of staff at City University London to integrate existing resources on plagiarism prevention and good study into a single place, and supplement these with additional information and activities for students and staff. This case study describes the development of the resource and explains its purpose as an integrated plagiarism prevention tool.

What StudyWell tries to achieve

The original impetus for creating the website was that across the University there were various sources of information related to plagiarism issues. These included assessment and academic conduct regulations, guidance about good academic conduct, and information and support provided by, for example, the Library and the Students' Union. The website includes links to the range of sources, incorporates new, participative activities, and seeks to provide a more positive approach to encourage academic honesty.

How StudyWell was created

The development of the website was informed by relevant literature and other sources (e.g. Carroll, 2007; Sunderland-Smith, 2008). In addition, we were guided by the work of Blum (2009), who argues that academic misconduct may occur as a result of the existence of different cultures within higher education – a *staff* culture that regards plagiarism as a serious academic offence, set against *student* cultures based on the need to achieve qualifications. Blum points to the need for greater alignment between staff and student expectations, and this was taken into account in creating the resource. We also looked at existing websites that include such issues, such as the academic integrity website at Curtin University of Technology (http://academicintegrity.curtin.edu.au/home/). There was also a need to be guided by local needs, so that the website was relevant to our institution in London.

To make the resource appealing and dynamic, StudyWell includes activities, quizzes, videos and a number of fictional characters to help convey key messages (e.g. as student case studies). The website was also designed to incorporate a variety of perspectives and 'voices' on plagiarism prevention – including the Students' Union.

StudyWell was structured into three main sections: *understanding academic misconduct*; *preventing academic misconduct*; and *dealing with academic misconduct*. It was envisaged that these areas would have clear relevance for anticipated users.

Future development

We plan to continue to develop StudyWell in response to user feedback. The Frequently Asked Questions section will be extended based on user enquiries. In addition, staff resources are to be enhanced by providing example learning activities and assessment redesigns, which were created as part of the University's *Educational Development Associate Initiative*. The resource is being used by students, and particularly by the Students' Union, but as with many initiatives, there is more profile-raising work to be done.

References and further information

Blum, S. (2009) *My Word! Plagiarism and College Culture*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

Carroll, J. (2007) *A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education*. 2nd ed. Oxford: The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

Sunderland-Smith, W. (2008) *Plagiarism, the Internet and Student Learning: improving academic integrity*. London: Routledge.

StudyWell website: http://www.city.ac.uk/studywell/index.html