

The Importance of Independent Research

How Students can Conduct Original Research

Samuels and Bast (2006) outline ways students can conduct their own research to avoid plagiarising. Students panic at last minute when assignments are due and begin to copy large amounts of texts and fail to reference correctly. This can be avoided by breaking the project into smaller sections, ie statements outlines and drafts before the final essay is due for submission.

The study has shown that giving students a unique topic which they are genuinely interested in encourages them to conduct their own research.

By presenting the students with a problem, it forces them to approach the project in an analytical and evaluative way.

Controlled topic choice and structured projects will give students a clear focus and allow them to find papers which accurately support their research topic.

Clearly communicating with students about what is expected of them and ensuring their sources are reliable guarantees that plagiarism in said research projects is less likely.

Students have a very simplified concept of plagiarism solely as verbatim copying due to plagiarism detection software such as turnitin as it encourages a "mechanistic approach towards academic honesty"

Benefits of Independent Research

It is important for undergraduates to engage in independent research as it improves academic performance and confidence. In an International study, of Students Conceptions of Ethics of Academia conducted by Abasi and Graves (2005), it was found that students were keen on displaying non-plagiarising behaviour and wanted to present work, adhering to the established referencing guidelines.

According to Breen and Massen (2005) First year undergraduates were more likely to re-produce ideas while third year students were better able to extract ideas.

Student

Understanding of Plagiarism

Plagiarism often stems from student lack of understanding to what it means to plagiarise (Gullifer et al, 2014). This ignorance is caused by an absence of interest and education.

Half of second level students believe that paraphrasing without giving credit does not constitute plagiarism (Roig, 1997) In university students are responsible for educating themselves about plagiarism, the issue Gullifer (2007) points out is that there is no clear definition of plagiarism and each university defines it differently.

Childers and Bruton (2015) include a definition of patchwriting as "reproducing source language with some words deleted or added, some grammatical structures altered or some synonyms used".

This was highlighted as the most common citation issue with 89% of papers showing some form of patchwriting or "mosaic plagiarism" (which involves combining language from multiple sources)

1. "Strategies to Help Legal Studies Students Avoid Plagiarism Samuels, Linda B; Bast, Carol M. Journal of Legal Studies Education; Bloomington Vol. 23, Iss. 2, (Summer 2006): 151-167.
2. Absi, A. R., & Graves, B. (2008). Academic Literacy and plagiarism: conversations with international graduate students and disciplinary professors. Journal of English for Academic purposes, 7, 221-233.
3. Breen, L., & Maassen, M. (2005) Reducing the incidence of plagiarism in an undergraduate course: the role of education. Issues in educational Research, 15(1), 1-16
4. " Student Perceptions of Complex Citation Issues. Dan Childers and Sam Bruton, 16 December 2015. Springer Science+Business Media Dordecht 2015
5. Gullifer, J.M. & Tyson, G.A. 2014, "Who has read the policy on plagiarism? Unpacking students' understanding of plagiarism", Studies in Higher Education, vol. 39, no. 7, pp. 1202-1218
6. Roig, M. 1997, "Can undergraduate students determine whether text has been plagiarized?", The Psychological Record, vol. 47, no. 1, pp. 113-122.