

Student Attitudes to Plagiarism and Collusion within Computer Science

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1 Introduction

There is a widespread perception among staff in Computer Science that plagiarism is a major problem particularly in the form of collusion in programming exercises. The department makes extensive use of electronic detection measures but, especially in view of the difficulty faced in prosecuting plagiarism offenses, would prefer to prevent the problem arising in the first place. While there is a large literature on devising assessments to minimise plagiarism the recommendations are not always easy to implement especially when faced with class sizes of over 100. The object of this project was to come up with some practical measures for minimizing the problem.

I report the results of two questionnaires distributed to students which attempted to ascertain the extent to which plagiarism really is a problem within Computer Science, whether students understand what is meant by plagiarism and what causes students to plagiarize. The first questionnaire focused specifically on collusion in programming exercises and was distributed to first year undergraduates while the second looked at the issue of plagiarism in general and was distributed to second and third year undergraduates and MSc students. In both cases there were approximately 80 responses.

These responses suggest that plagiarism is indeed a problem with over a quarter of respondents to the second questionnaire admitting they had cheated in this fashion at some point. While respondents were not always clear what constituted plagiarism in borderline cases it was clear that over 90% were aware that the most straightforward instances did constitute plagiarism and in borderline cases it was clear that more students considered the activity to be cheating of some sort even if they did not classify it as plagiarism. This suggests that it may be clearer to students if staff place an emphasis on not cheating in general rather than on plagiarism in particular and that we need to be clearer about our attitude to making small modifications to texts, using short quotes from texts and sharing methods in programming exercises.

The most common cause of plagiarism was seen to be lack of time rather than laziness or contempt for the assessment process. Interestingly over 10% of the responses to an open ended question on the the collusion questionnaire highlighted lack of support and the pace of the programming modules as a major factor causing plagiarism.

This would suggest that more careful management of coursework deadlines and in particular their relationship to the appearance of relevant material in lectures may help alleviate the problem. It also suggests that the ongoing process of revising the department's first programming module in the light of a larger and more diverse student body needs to continue.

2 Background

The School of Computer Science and Information Technology has a large undergraduate body (approximately 300 students in each year of study) being taught in an environment which encourages computer use in all its forms. Plagiarism and collusion are perceived by staff members as being in increasing problem.

Collusion occurs most frequently during programming exercises. These are an important part of the computer science degree and are used to assess the students' grasp of a core skill required in many aspects of the science. It is important that students programming ability is assessed and students themselves have requested more programming assessments throughout the degree. Electronic detection of collusion is in widespread use throughout the school and indicates that the practice is widespread with as many as 25% of submissions being flagged as similar in some exercises. This is of deep concern to staff both in and of itself and because a number of students claim they are unable to program when faced with producing their project in 3rd year (which requires programming). The level of plagiarism detected presents its own problems since it becomes inefficient to prosecute all but the most severe cases through the university disciplinary procedures. It is also difficult to coordinate communication between module conveners meaning that repeat offenders can be hard to detect.

The 3rd year project is the other source of concern within the department. It is harder to apply electronic detection measures here since the projects are handed in as physical objects, however in recent years large sections of some projects have been identified as plagiarized from (in general) web sources. The large student body means that the majority of projects are not based on the research interests of staff members and so their knowledge of the relevant literature can not be relied upon to detect cheating.

Clearly alongside a the detection measures in place the School needs urgently to find ways to reduce the amount of plagiarism occurring.

There are numerous recommendations on designing courseworks to avoid plagiarism (see [1] for a list). However many of these are impractical to implement in the School's context.

Project work involving programming effort is required for accreditation by the BCS and is, nevertheless, a standard component of many degree programs – while each project is individual which reduces the opportunities for collusion the large student body makes it hard to ensure that projects are entirely novel or that large sections of background material can not simply be copied. Increasing the number of deliverables for projects to minimise the amount of writing up done in a rush at the end will increase the marking load on members of staff who already feel overwhelmed by the amount of project supervision required from them.

Similarly it is hard to assess a student's ability to program other than by setting an individual programming exercise. Group work is particularly ineffective here since it is generally easier for one person to write a program than to collaborate even with a couple of well-motivated and able colleagues until the program required reaches a level of complexity far beyond that which can be reasonably asked of a first year undergraduate. Setting each student a slightly different exercise is also tricky when faced with 200 students – it would be hard enough to think up 200 exercises without then trying to make sure they were all of equal difficulty!!

The department has begun implementing “programming exams” in which students work at a computer under exam conditions to complete a program and this may well prove to be the most profitable way forward though at the expense of favouring those students who perform better under exam conditions. Although there are options for tying an exam into coursework by revealing the question early or asking the students to modify a program they had previously developed in more relaxed circumstances.

However, this study aimed to address several specific questions. Firstly did the students understand what constitute plagiarism or collusion? a frequent defence being that they did not understand their behaviour was wrong. Secondly is the incidence of plagiarism as high as staff fear. Thirdly why do students plagiarize? and lastly was plagiarism more prevalent among non-native English speakers and foreign students? It was hoped that the answers to these questions would further illuminate the way forward.

3 Methodology

Two questionnaires were devised one focused purely on the problem of collusion in programming exercises while the other focused on the issue of plagiarism in general.

Questionnaires were distributed during lectures for students to fill in. They were given time during the lecture to do this and the questionnaires were collected in at the end of the lecture. This ensured a good response rate although one that can be assumed to bias the results towards the more conscientious members of the student body.

The collusion questionnaire was distributed to students on a level 1 module which contained a significant amount of programming work. The attendees on the module were mostly first years.

The plagiarism questionnaire was distributed to a level B module and the respondents were a mixture of second and third year undergraduates and MSc students.

Each questionnaire consisted of three sections, the first dealt with the definition of plagiarism or collusion and listed a number of scenarios. The students were asked to indicate whether they believed each scenario counted as plagiarism, whether they thought it fair if marks were deducted because of the behaviour and whether they had ever done this themselves. The main purpose of this section was to find out whether the students understood what was meant by plagiarism. It was also an attempt to get some idea of the level of plagiarism that was being undertaken in the school. The second section asked the students to estimate how many of their fellows had plagiarized. I believed it would be difficult to get students to admit to plagiarism themselves but that they might have a more accurate perception of how much of such activity was going on that staff did although work by Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead [4] suggests this may be less of a problem than anticipated. The last section asked students to give reasons why plagiarism was undertaken.

4 Results

A full breakdown of the results of the two questionnaires is shown in the appendices.

4.1 Collusion Results

This questionnaire was distributed in an first year lecture (although a couple of second years were taking the module as an option). 80 students responded out of a possible 210 taking the module. However the number attending the lecture was about 80.

The scenarios the students were asked to comment upon were as follows:

1. Two students discuss the coursework together and produce a joint design for the program (e.g. how information will be passed and when loops will be needed). They then each work separately to produce a final program.
2. Two students work together on large sections of a coursework e.g. certain methods. These are the same in both of their submissions though there are differences elsewhere.
3. A student copies another student's program with their knowledge and submits it as their own. A student is told by another student how some feature of the language works (e.g. how to read files in Java). They use this within their own program which is otherwise entirely their own work.
4. Two students work together on a coursework and both submit the same program.
5. A student copies several methods from another student but makes a note as a comment in their program that they have done so.
6. A student copies another student's program with their knowledge making small changes, such as the naming of variables and submits it as their own.

Students were confused by the options presented when assessing the scenarios many thinking that they had to check one box (It is fair if the student lost marks, I think this counts as plagiarism, I have done this myself) and only one box. As a result in the analysis ticks in the first two boxes have been counted together simply as a measure that students are aware the activity is in some sense considered wrong¹. This problem was rectified in the plagiarism questionnaire by putting "yes/no" at the top of each box indicated that the students should fill them all in.

Most staff members would consider scenarios 2, 3, 5 and 7 as examples of collusion which should be discouraged if not penalised – this largely corresponds with the student responses. In cases 3, 5 and 7 over 90% of students indicated they considered it wrong in some fashion. However only 75% of students considered it wrong to share methods.

Only 10% of students confessed to knowingly participating in cheating behaviour. Which is considerably lower than the staff perceptions of collusion. There are a number of possible explanations for this disparity – since the majority of the respondents were only half way through their first year of study it may be that the problem increases during the course of their studies (backed up by an increase to 25% of students confessing to cheating in 2nd and 3rd year). The confusion over whether sharing large sections (but not all) of a coursework also contributes to this low number since 16% of respondents said they had done this even though most of them did not perceive this as wrong in anyway. Lastly I, as the person who would be analysing the results, was present in the

¹ Obviously students might think it fair for marks to be reduced without considering an activity cheating. I chose to ignore this for simplicity but it should be born in mind when interpreting the results.

room as the questionnaires were completed unlike the plagiarism questionnaire which was handled by another member of staff. Consequently it may be that their faith in the confidentiality of the results was lessened. The confusion over whether all boxes should be ticked or only one may also have lowered the reporting rate here.

Students estimates of the extent of the problem show that the general perception is that incidence of plagiarism is fairly but not very low this would tie in with an estimate of between 10% and 25% cheating.

The most popular reason given for collusion was inability to do the coursework (80%) followed by lack of time (70%) and inability to keep up (63%). Reasons which indicate contempt for the assessment process such as getting higher marks (30%) and not needing to know the material (19%) ranked rather lower.

The actual ranking is:

1. They simply couldn't do the coursework on their own.
2. They started too late and ran out of time.
3. They couldn't keep up with the work.
4. They have to succeed. They got higher marks this way.
5. They didn't need to learn that material, just pass the module.
6. They felt the tutor didn't care, so why should they.
7. They didn't think it was wrong.
8. We are encouraged to work together.
9. They wanted to see if they could get away with it.

The reasons chosen were based taken from [3] who reported they were from [2] (although I couldn't actually find them listed in the body of the report). These suggestions missed out straightforward laziness which 6% of respondents identified in the "Other" option – this would rank it 9th in the above list.

An open-ended question asking for input revealed a lot of dissatisfaction with the method of teaching programming in first year from "*not enough support – some tutors aren't as good as others and make you feel thick.*" through "*In a case where not all the material in a coursework are covered by the lecturer in lectures, what do you do.*" to "*the lecturers assume that students already know things like a bit of programming.*" In all out of 80 responses 9 people chose spontaneously to complain about either lack of support for or the pace of programming modules. This is 10% of responses which can be presumed to have self-selected to more conscientious and hard-working students and indicates that the School clearly has a problem in the presentation of the early programming modules.

4.2 Plagiarism Results

This questionnaire was distributed in a B level module open to second and third year undergraduates and MSc students. Once again 80 responded out of a possible 280. The member of staff involved estimated there were approximately 140 students present in the lecture theatre when the questionnaire was distributed.

The scenarios presented to the students were based on an exercise in [8]:

1. A student composes a paragraph by taking short phrases of 10 to 15 words from a number of sources and putting them together, adding words of their own to make a coherent whole; all sources appear in a list of references at the end of the coursework.
2. A student copies a paragraph from a textbook or web page making small changes – e.g. replacing a few verbs, replacing an adjective with a synonym. The source appears in a list of references at the end of the coursework
3. A student paraphrases a paragraph with substantial changes in language and organisation; the new version also has changes in the amount of detail used. The source material is acknowledged in the text e.g. (Jones, 1999) and included in a list of references at the end of the coursework
4. A student composes a paragraph by using sentences of an original source but omitting one or two and putting one or two in a different order. The source appears in a list of references at the end of the coursework
5. A student quotes a paragraph by placing it in italic font and/or using quotation marks with the source cited in the text and included in a list of references at the end of the coursework.
6. A student copies a paragraph from a textbook or web page that they did not write this paragraph.

Staff would probably consider 1, 2, 4 and 6 as plagiarism of some form (despite the referencing at the end in several cases). 93% of students recognised that case 6 represented plagiarism and 95% thought students should lose marks for it. However, in all other cases students were less clear – in Case 2 and Case 4 only 49% and 56% respectively thought it was plagiarism with 59% and 64% thinking marks should be deducted. In case 1 only 22% thought it constituted plagiarism and only 28% thought marks should be deducted. These results suggest two things: the fact that in all cases more students considered it fair to deduct marks for the behaviour than considered it plagiarism suggests that we should stress that we penalize cheating over plagiarism. It is also clear that we need to stress that even slight modifications of texts still count as plagiarism. Altogether 25% of respondents admitted to indulging in behaviour they thought would be considered wrong with 8% admitting to direct plagiarism (case 6). Worryingly 54% had collaged together paragraphs (case 1) from phrases copied from elsewhere.

Moving on to the reasons students gave for plagiarism these were ranked as follows:

1. They started too late and ran out of time.
2. They simply couldn't do the coursework otherwise.
3. They didn't think it was wrong.
4. They have to succeed. They got higher marks this way.
5. They didn't need to learn that material, just pass the module.
6. They couldn't keep up with the work.
7. They wanted to see if they could get away with it.
8. They felt the tutor didn't care, so why should they.
9. They thought paraphrasing would be disrespectful.

These appear largely similar to the results for collusion although the top two reasons have switched and the confusion over definitions is represented by “They didn’t think it was wrong” appearing third. Being unable to keep up has dropped down the list.

Of the open-ended comments 4 people mentioned uncertainty in one form or another over the definition of plagiarism. One dispiriting response read

“I feel the university doesn’t make it clear what counts as plagiarism. It is listed in an extensive document somewhere that is so confusing in its wording that nobody reads it. Also many lecturers openly encourage working in groups for coursework, but then call people up for plagiarism when the submitted work is similar.

“Also the referencing system that the school insists on using is in most cases unnecessarily comprehensive and confusing. This is why people leave it out. Having to write things about where the information came from, in most cases down to the page number and line is senseless. A simple method would encourage people to do it.

“If the university insists on being so strict on plagiarism then a proper lecture needs to be given to the students detailing with examples what exactly does and doesn’t count as plagiarism because the current information isn’t enough.”

Another response went

“More difficult within CS in terms of reusing other people’s code snippets while researching online – is this plagiarism if the code is available to the public?”

representing a clear confusion between the open source, freedom of information culture of the Internet and our academic concerns about originality.

5 Are International Students more prone to Plagiarism than Home Students?

Literature on plagiarism commonly reports that non-native english speakers are more prone to plagiarism than native english speakers (e.g. [5, 6]) – although Lesko [6] suggests that perceptions may be skewed by the fact that it is easier to detect plagiarism from non-native english speakers. Only a small number (approximately 10 in each case) of respondents were prepared to identify themselves as international students (and some of these were from places such as America or Germany which are perceived to have a similar cultural attitude to plagiarism). With this in mind it’s hard to draw any strong conclusions and the evidence is very mixed. Fewer international students thought there was something wrong in sharing methods or making small changes to another student’s code and similarly 80% of international respondents had collaged paragraphs together from other sources. On the other hand considerably more international students identified replacing words with synonyms as plagiarism compared to only 54% of home students. International students perceived there to be higher levels of collusion within the School but lower levels of Plagiarism. The reasons they gave for plagiarism and collusion were broadly the same as those of home students.

6 Other Surveys

A number of surveys have been conducted into levels of plagiarism in UK institutions (even more into plagiarism in American Institutions), frequently revealing very high levels of cheating.

Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead [4] looked at cheating in UK institutions and received depressing results: 72% students allowed coursework to be copied, 66% paraphrased without acknowledgement, 66% altered or fabricated data, 54% fabricated references, 54% plagiarised from a text and over 13% had taken unauthorised material into an exam, 6% had gained advance knowledge of the paper and 6% admitted to premeditated collusion to communicate answers to each other during an examination.

This suggests several things, firstly if these results are representative and the answers on our questionnaires are broadly correct then we have considerably less of a problem with collusion and plagiarism than other institutions. On the other hand we have not seriously considered fabrication of references or cheating in examinations as problems for the School and the above results suggest they should be looked at.

7 Recommendations

The results suggest that the main causes of collusion and plagiarism are lack of time management and inability to do the work. There is little we can directly do about lack of ability since that is part of what we are trying to assess - though it is depressing that so many of our students feel ill-equipped to handle our assessments. We may be able to improve their time management however. It might be possible to coordinate coursework deadlines better - there may also be something to be gained from indicating how much effort we expect a coursework to require or suggesting time management strategies for individual pieces of coursework. Several early courseworks can be completed in an afternoon and it may be that students are thereby lulled into a false sense of security - Steve Mills' experience with DBS coursework would certainly suggest this.

It is clear that a lot of our students feel quite strongly that we teach programming inadequately, whether in terms of poor support, incorrect assumptions about prior knowledge, pacing of information or difficulty of exercises. Since a great deal of effort is put into supporting PRG the only conclusion I can draw is that this support is failing to reach the people who need it. I know that PRG is under continuous review and the best that can be said following this questionnaire is that such review need to be continued.

Lastly, while students have a good grip on what constitutes plagiarism and collusion in the most extreme cases there clearly is a good deal of confusion over borrowing sections of code, quoting small portions of text and making minor changes to other people's work. This would suggest we should particularly emphasize these practices when we warn against plagiarism. Pyper [7] has written a useful guide on avoiding plagiarism for students which highlights many common pitfalls - we should possibly investigate including something like this in our student handbook in place of the rather terse and dry description we already have which fails to cover cases of sharing sections of work and of making minor alterations to pieces of work.

References

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A COLLUSION SURVEY: Results

SECTION A

	lose marks	plagiarism	done	1 or 2	4 & 3	
Two students discuss the coursework together and produce a joint design for the program (e.g. how information will be passed and when loops will be needed). They then each work separately to produce a final program.	15%	6%	63%	20%	1%	Overall
	25%	0%	67%	25%	0%	Int
	17%	14%	53%	28%	3%	Home
Two students work together on large sections of a coursework e.g. certain methods. These are the same in both of their submissions though there are differences elsewhere.	45%	47%	16%	75%	0%	Overall
	25%	33%	33%	58%	0%	Int
	50%	61%	8%	83%	0%	Home
A student copies another student's program with their knowledge and submits it as their own.	43%	89%	6%	99%	5%	Overall
	42%	58%	8%	92%	0%	Int
	50%	94%	11%	100%	11%	Home
A student is told by another student how some feature of the language works (e.g. how to read files in Java). They use this within their own program which is otherwise entirely their own work.	6%	4%	81%	10%	1%	Overall
	17%	8%	75%	25%	0%	Int
	0%	0%	86%	0%	0%	Home
Two students work together on a coursework and both submit the same program.	43%	72%	5%	95%	1%	Overall
	33%	58%	8%	91%	8%	Int
	44%	81%	8%	92%	3%	Home
A student copies several methods from another student but makes a note as a comment in their program that they have done so.	69%	28%	2%	85%	1%	Overall
	66%	25%	17%	91%	8%	Int
	72%	22%	0%	75%	0%	Home
A student copies another student's program with their knowledge making small changes, such as the naming of variables and submits it as their own.	41%	77%	8%	93%	4%	Overall
	25%	42%	25%	66%	0%	Int
	53%	86%	6%	97%	6%	Home

Students who self-report actions they perceive as plagiarism or for which they should lose marks: Overall: 10%, Int: 8%, Home: 14%

SECTION B

1. What proportion of your year do you think have at some point during the course submitted a program containing sections which were written by someone else (excluding group exercises).

	Overall	International	Home
Less than 10%	29%	17%	28%
Between 10 and 25%	34%	17%	42%
Between 25 and 50%	24%	33%	14%
Between 50 and 75%	9%	25%	8%
More than 75%	5%	8%	8%

2. Please tick the three *main reasons* why you think people do this².

	Overall	Int	Home
They simply couldn't do the coursework on their own.	80%	83%	78%
They started too late and ran out of time.	70%	67%	72%
They couldn't keep up with the work.	63%	58%	58%
They have to succeed. They got higher marks this way.	30%	17%	28%
They didn't need to learn that material, just pass the module.	19%	17%	22%
They felt the tutor didn't care, so why should they.	11%	8%	11%
They didn't think it was wrong.	9%	0%	8%
We are encouraged to work together.	8%	0%	11%
Lazy (Specified in Other)	6%	8%	11%
They wanted to see if they could get away with it.	5%	8%	8%

A.1 Comments on Sheets

"I've helped some people get some of their methods correct, and others have helped me - especially finding bugs that turn out to be silly mistakes, I'm pretty sure widespread plagiarism (i.e. direct copying) is not rampant

"It is difficult to help each other with the work if we can not show some code." - Single Honours Student

"not enough support – some tutors aren't as good as others and make you feel thick. I know because my tutor makes me feel thick, and they loose their temper when you still don't understand after they have explained.

"Some people are just lazy. But most people use the same examples to come up with the same code individually so hard to prove its plagiarised"

"Because programming is such an important part of the course people feel they have to succeed so will resort to copying because labs and stuff are of little help if you are really lost when it comes to programming" - Single Honours Student

"The main reason people copy is because they are unable to do the coursework on their own. There have been certain courseworks where we have simply not had the knowledge to do them without discussing how to do certain methods. People often help each other out but actual copying is less common." - Single Honours Student

"Plagiarism is totally wrong but if it the purpose his/her study then it's fine"

"It would be better if the lecturer gives more notes and examples, so that we will be able to understand more!"

² Based on material in 'Plagiarism detection and prevention: final report on the JISC electronic plagiarism detection project' by Gill Chester, <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/mle/plagiarism>, 2001.

“I know this because I have done it myself. I want to succeed and if it means getting help where i can, I will do it. Morals are not relevant in the context of my degree.

“ I think courseworks often move too quickly and are too advanced.

“The department should consider those who have not studied computer science before.” – Digital Business student

“It’s all about passing exams, learning has become secondary, so people sometimes dont’ bother learning but still want to pass”

“Not enough attention is paid in labs as I’ve seen on several occasions people copying off each other and people emailing their coursework to another, possibly if email attachments with java extensions could be monitored could be a way to catch people” - Single Honours student

“Sometimes there is no option. In a case where not all the material in a coursework are covered by the lecturer in lectures, what do you do?” - Single Honours student

“lack of assistance on programming”

“If people were helped more by tutors and lecturers, then there surely would be far less copying”

“plagiarism shouldn’t be the same strict as other department, like business” – Joint Honours Management student

“Not enough help from slides and tutors in general.

“ I think more help should be given to students generally in slides and handouts so they can be encouraged NOT to copy, or for example some example programs in programming!!

“Lecturers assume that students already know things like a bit of programming while people like me have never done programming before!!” – Single Honours student

“Most people who do it have a reason to do so. I feel that when we are learning this course the lecturers assume that students already know things like a bit of programming while people like me have never done programming before” - Single Honours student - NB. appears to have colluded with neighbour whose comments appear above.

“A friend teaching another person to how to do the program is not plagiarism. However given the person completely the program without the person actually making the effort to understand is plagiarism.” - Single Honours Student

“One individual has been spotted by me multiple times trying to cheat and the department has done nothing!!” – Single Honours student

“There is a particular ‘Cheating Guy’ sat in this lecture.

“I think that the department is not doing enough to detect blatant acts of plagiarism”

- Single Honours student

“If you do not want people to copy then do more online tests. Make weekly exercises easier so that you definitely understand. If you do not understand one week, how are you meant to do the following weeks’ work? Also, weekly test the new things we have learned. Give more examples. Do not make us learn too much AND expect us to be able to make a program using all the information we have learned THAT week.” - Single Honours student

B PLAGIARISM SURVEY:Results

SECTION A

	lose marks	plagiarism	done	(1 or 2) & 3	
A student composes a paragraph by taking short phrases of 10 to 15 words from a number of sources and putting them together, adding words of their own to make a coherent whole; all sources appear in a list of references at the end of the coursework.	27%	22%	55%	6%	Overall
	20%	20%	80%	0%	Int
	37%	26%	44%	8%	Home
A student copies a paragraph from a textbook or web page making small changes – e.g. replacing a few verbs, replacing an adjective with a synonym. The source appears in a list of references at the end of the coursework	59%	48%	29%	9%	Overall
	60%	70%	20%	0%	Int
	69%	54%	19%	4%	Home
A student paraphrases a paragraph with substantial changes in language and organisation; the new version also has changes in the amount of detail used. The source material is acknowledged in the text e.g. (Jones, 1999) and included in a list of references at the end of the coursework	5%	4%	77%	3%	Overall
	10%	0%	90%	10%	Int
	4%	4%	89%	4%	Home
A student composes a paragraph by using sentences of an original source but omitting one or two and putting one or two in a different order. The source appears in a list of references at the end of the coursework	64%	56%	20%	8%	Overall
	70%	80%	30%	20%	Int
	73%	69%	15%	4%	Home
A student quotes a paragraph by placing it in italic font and/or using quotation marks with the source cited in the text and included in a list of references at the end of the coursework.	9%	4%	75%	1%	Overall
	10%	0%	80%	0%	Int
	0%	0%	81%	0%	Home
A student copies a paragraph from a textbook or web page into a piece of coursework. There is no acknowledgment that they did not write this paragraph.	92%	94%	9%	6%	Overall
	90%	90%	10%	0%	Int
	96%	100%	0%	0%	Home

Students who self-report actions they perceive as plagiarism or for which they should lose marks: Overall: 25%, Int: 30%, Home: 15%

SECTION B

1. What proportion of your year do you think have at some point during the course included another person's words in a coursework without making it clear that they were not their own words?

	Overall	Int	Home
Less than 10%	41%	67%	40%
Between 10 and 25%	30%	44%	16%
Between 25 and 50%	20%	0%	24%
Between 50 and 75%	8%	0%	16%
More than 75%	6%	0%	8%

2. Please tick the three *main reasons* why you think people do this³.

	Overall	Int	Home
They started too late and ran out of time.	61%	86%	65%
They simply couldn't do the coursework otherwise.	50%	86%	42%
They didn't think it was wrong.	46%	57%	35%
They have to succeed. They got higher marks this way.	37%	57%	42%
They didn't need to learn that material, just pass the module.	34%	57%	35%
They couldn't keep up with the work.	30%	14%	35%
They wanted to see if they could get away with it.	9%	0%	12%
They felt the tutor didn't care, so why should they.	7%	14%	12%
They thought paraphrasing would be disrespectful.	7%	0%	4%

B.1 Comments on Sheets

"Because the way the degree is taught as in the setup that people do! ... Student are not known and their work thus can't be identified i.e. if the work can not be identified how can inconsistency in peoples work be spotted" - 3rd, British, Single Honours student

"In my opinion I think tha tone would use another person's words in their coursework as they are still learning the subject and thus can better understand and try to pass on their understanding of the subject by doing this."

"Often plagiarism is inadvertantly done by the student as the answers to certain courseworks must be the same or very similar. This makes it harder ot detect true plagiarism rather than the students own work. This case is especially ture within a technical dept such as comp sci." - 3rd year, British, Single Honours student.

"I feel the university doesn't make it clear what counts as plagiarism. It is listed in an extensive document somewhere that is so confusing in its wording that nobody reads it. Also many lecturers openly encourage working in groups for coursework, but then call people up for plagiarism when teh submitted work is similar.

³ Based on material in 'Plagiarism detection and prevention: final report on the JISC electronic plagiarism detection project' by Gill Chester, <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/mle/plagiarism>, 2001.

“Also the referencing system that the school insists on using is in most cases unnecessarily comprehensive and confusing. This is why people leave it out. Having to write things about where the information came from, in most cases down to the page number and line is senseless. A simple method would encourage people to do it.

“If the university insists on being so strict on plagiarism then a proper lecture needs to be given to the students detailing with examples what exactly does and doesn't count as plagiarism because the current information isn't enough.”

“As international students, it's really difficult to express the idea although they've understood perfectly, academic writing is difficult” - Chinese, MSc Student

“Why do lecturers plagiarise as well?

“Why does the government plagiarise?” - MSc Student

“Many people just wish to pass the module.

“ In my opinion: As often as we are warned about it, and told we will get caught, there are still too many students getting away with plagiarism... this is unfair on those who make a genuine effort” - 2nd year, German, Digital Business student

“It is made very clear from day one what the department's stance on plagiarism is. I feel that students, particularly International students, due to culture differences, do not realise how serious it is.”

“I am always trying to give full credits to the original source by specify where I get it from. But sometimes, within the same document I find it boring to repeat the source. I do not know if that is consider plagiarism base on the university criteria.” - Cypriot, MSc Student

“You should also check for copying from older students (some of whom sell their work from last year)” - 2nd year, British, Single Honours student

“If you, like me, can not program but get screwed into doing loads of programming modules that you do not want to do, which are 100% useless to you, then it is no wonder people do plagiarism. If you made modules like G51FUN, G52CMP etc. optional there would be less plagiarism” - 2nd year, British, Single Honours Student.

“I think there needs to be more guidance on exactly what plagiarism is and who is and isn't acceptable” - 2nd year, British, Digital Business student.

“I have given much advices at times (explicit code sometimes) to people with the above two issues [started too late, could't keep up]. Simply because I do not want friends to get bad marks.” - 3rd year, British, Single Honours student.

“More difficult within CS in terms of reusing other people’s code snippets while researching online – is this plagiarism if the code is available to public?” 3rd year, Malaysian, Joint Honours Management student.