A SUGGESTION FOR USING ORAL PRESENTATIONS TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF PLAGIARISM IN BUSINESS COURSES*

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ABSTRACT
Research has found that large numbers of students admit to engaging in academic misconduct such as plagiarism whilst studying at university. The literature suggests, however, that many students commit plagiarism without realising it. The definition of plagiarism is culturally sensitive and students who undertake study in new cultures and simply follow what for them are standard academic practices may find themselves doing things that are regarded as unacceptable in the new culture. Students are also under increasing time pressures as they manage both work and study, and this may lead them to take short cuts that result in practices academics regard as unacceptable. This paper describes a teaching strategy that attempted to reduce the incidence of plagiarism by changing cultural perceptions about plagiarism and requiring students to make an oral presentation of their work before submission of its written version to increase student buy-in to these cultural changes. Preliminary results suggest that this strategy had some success. Lecturers felt that the standard of writing improved and the incidence of plagiarism fell with respect to previous semesters suggesting that further work on how oral presentations might be used to reduce plagiarism would be valuable. Suggestions are made for improvements to the strategy and a more systematic approach to its evaluation for future work.

Keywords: plagiarism, essay writing, oral presentations.

JEL classifications: A20, A23.

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1. INTRODUCTION
Submission of a written assignment is one of the assessment tasks required by most subjects completed as part of a university degree in Business or Commerce. In a written assignment, students are able to demonstrate in some depth that they understand and are able to analyse and discuss material covered in the subject (Walstad, 2006). Unfortunately, a common complaint amongst academics is that the quality of some of the assignments they mark is very low, often reflected in poor spelling and grammar, and that students frequently engage in plagiarism. The occurrence of plagiarism is particularly concerning since rewarding students who incorrectly claim material to be their own original work encourages habits that will be detrimental to them in the professional business world (Burton and Hegarty, 1999; Nitterhouse, 2003).

The degree of plagiarism can range from simply failing to correctly reference sources of material used in assignments to direct copying of material without acknowledgment. The reasons for plagiarism also vary. Students may face time constraints in their studies, they may find the demands of writing in challenging subjects daunting, or they may generally lack the incentive to engage seriously with the task. Problems may also arise with the definition of plagiarism. Since this definition is to some degree culturally determined, students who undertake study in new cultures and simply follow familiar academic practices may find themselves engaging in plagiarism without realising it.

For these reasons, universities increasingly provide a wide range of resources to assist students in assignment writing. These resources may provide examples of high quality written assignments as well as information on and examples of plagiarism. They are often made accessible to students via websites, workshops and one-on-one consultations. Universities may also inform students about the availability of these resources when they first enrol and lecturers place information in subject guides and course outlines on how to access these resources.

Students commencing their first semester of study at university have been found to be more weakly skilled in writing assignments than students who have been studying at university for more than one semester (Hansen, 1998). But, academics marking assignments written by students in their last semester of undergraduate studies or
completing postgraduate degrees also find that students continue to have problems writing assignments. This suggests that while universities may be providing resources to assist students with their assignment writing, students may not necessarily be using these resources. One reason for this might be that some students fail to identify very closely with the assignments they write, hiding behind a degree of anonymity that exists between marker and student.

This paper suggests that oral presentations, which already play an important role in the pedagogy of business education, might be used to decrease the incidence of plagiarism, and it outlines a teaching strategy to show how this might be done. It argues that oral presentations may contribute to plagiarism reduction in two ways. First, these presentations give students an incentive to identify more closely with their work because the anonymity of submitting only a written version is lost when they must stand in front of a class and outline their ideas in person. Students may thus make greater use of support resources for essay writing, feel more in control of the writing process, and resort less to measures like plagiarism as a means of coping with the pressures of tertiary study. Their awareness of what constitutes plagiarism may also be improved by engaging more closely with these resources. Secondly presentations provide students with the opportunity to receive feedback from teachers and other students. Thus if a presentation is made before a written version of the same work is submitted, this provides students with the opportunity to incorporate feedback they receive and to submit more original work if warnings about plagiarism are included in this feedback.

The paper starts by reviewing the literature on plagiarism. It then provides a description of the teaching strategy built around oral presentations and the context in which this strategy was implemented. A preliminary evaluation of the strategy is then offered before some conclusions are drawn and suggestions made for further work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Plagiarism is clearly a form of academic misconduct. Universities generally incorporate a component on plagiarism in the policy and procedures they use to assess students. The assessment policy at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS, 2007, p. 23) defines plagiarism as ‘a broad term referring to the practice of presenting someone else’s ideas or work as one’s own, without acknowledging the source’. This definition not only refers to the practices of copying
material directly from a source or paraphrasing someone else’s work without acknowledgement, it also refers to students who take work completed by other students and submit this as their own or to students who contract another student to write an assignment on their behalf.

Ashworth, Bannister and Thorne (1997) argue that even when information on plagiarism, such as that outlined in the UTS policy, is made available to students, they do not necessarily have a good working understanding of what plagiarism involves. Ashworth et al. (1997) interviewed nineteen undergraduate students enrolled at English universities about academic misconduct. All of the interviewees indicated that they regarded plagiarism as an ethical issue since it allowed students to obtain marks for work that was not their own and this was unfair to other students. However, they felt that it was difficult to know exactly what constituted plagiarism as they often wrote essays after discussing their ideas with other students or taking detailed notes from reading materials. As a result, it was not easy to identify who actually owns the ideas that were expressed in their writing. Several of the interviewees stated that university regulations on plagiarism where difficult to interpret and no attempt had been made to explain what was acceptable when using the ideas of other authors. Ashworth et al. (1997, p. 201) also found that interviewees were ignorant of the correct procedures to use when referencing the work and ideas of other authors. While all of the interviewees knew they were required to reference the sources of cited material, none of them realised the reasons for acknowledging the contributions of these sources. The general feeling was that correct referencing was a matter of “academic etiquette and polite behaviour” rather than protection against “intellectual theft” (Ashworth et al., 1997, p. 200).

Several studies have surveyed students regarding academic misconduct and found that plagiarism is frequently used by students when writing assignments. Some studies have found that the amount of plagiarism taking place over time has increased. Diekhoff et al. (1996), for example, surveyed undergraduate first year students at a U.S university in 1984 and again in 1994, and found a significant increase in the proportion of respondents claiming to have plagiarised over this ten year period. A similar survey of postgraduate students at a U.S graduate business school in 1993 and 1998 undertaken by
Brown (2000, p. 107) also found an increase in the number of respondents claiming to have engaged in plagiarism. Finally, a survey undertaken by McCabe and Bowers (1994) across several U.S universities in 1962 and 1993 found that plagiarism by undergraduate students had slightly *decreased* over the thirty year period but was none-the-less still occurring at significant levels at the latter point in time.

The incidence of academic misconduct at universities has also been investigated using comparative studies. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995) surveyed second year undergraduate students and staff at two English universities on their views regarding the seriousness and frequency of 22 types of behaviour that involved either cheating in examinations or plagiarism in assignments. Students rated plagiarism as less serious and undertaken more frequently than cheating in exams. Staff rated most of the types of behaviour as serious and undertaken less frequently than suggested by the students. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995, p.170) argue that these findings suggest that staff are not fully aware of the amount and type of cheating in exams and plagiarism undertaken by students.

Chapman and Lupton (2004) compared students’ attitudes to academic misconduct at universities in different countries. They surveyed business students enrolled at a U.S university and a university in Hong Kong. Just over a half of the American students and one third of the students in Hong Kong responded that they would be prepared to engage in academic misconduct while enrolled at university (Chapman and Lupton, 2004, p. 429). Chapman and Lupton (2004, p. 432) argue that “cultural nuances, societal values, teaching and educational philosophies” may be responsible for these different views. For example, Hong Kong students are from a culture where collectivism and cooperation is encouraged while American students are encouraged to be individual performers. This may lead the former to engage in incidental plagiarism when taking a co-operative approach in American style cultures and the latter to engage in plagiarism when competitive pressures are combined with significant time constraints (Chapman and Lupton, 2004, p. 433). Regardless of the *difference* in views held by the students in these different countries, a significant number of respondents in both countries indicated they were prepared to be involved in academic misconduct.
McCabe, Butterfield and Treviño (2006, p. 296) analysed survey data collected in the academic years of 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 from 32 colleges and universities in the U.S and Canada by the Centre of Academic Integrity at Duke University. They separated the survey data into business postgraduate students and non-business postgraduate students and found a significantly larger number of business students engaged in plagiarism than non-business students (McCabe et al., 2006, pp. 299-300). While the higher level of plagiarism by business students could be due to a greater willingness on their part to self-report academic misconduct, McCabe et al. (2006, p. 300) suggest that it could also be due to an attitude among business students that this type of behaviour is more acceptable than it is among non-business students. These findings imply that the increased effort by universities to make students aware of the definition and repercussions of plagiarism does not appear to have had a major impact.

Nitterhouse (2003, p. 218), however, points out that often students do not realise they are plagiarising when they directly copy very small amounts of material without acknowledgement. Students can also be uncertain about whether the material they are paraphrasing or closely copying from a source is common knowledge or not. Consequently, universities need to make sure that the resources they provide to students on writing assignments allows students to gain a clear understanding of the different forms of plagiarism and how the university expects students to reference material included in assignments. In addition, if students know that there is a high probability that any plagiarism in their assignments will be detected they will be less likely to plagiarise (McCabe et al., 2006, p. 296).

Plagiarism is not a problem that only has repercussions for students when they write and submit assignments at university (Nitterhouse, 2003). Once students leave university and enter the workforce, they also need to avoid plagiarism. Nitterhouse (2003) argues that employers will not accept material from employees that is poorly written and the integrity of a business can be adversely affected if reports and literature that they publish contain material that is simply copied from work undertaken by other businesses or individuals. Employees can be forced to resign or be dismissed when they copy material from sources and claim the work as their own (Nitterhouse,
Employers would also not reward an employee for submitting work that they have simply replicated from other sources.

In terms of discouraging plagiarism, the literature identifies a number of strategies including peer reporting and anti-plagiarism software. McCabe, Treviño and Butterfield (2001) examined the use of peer reporting as a way to decrease the incidence of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct. They surveyed students attending 31 colleges in the U.S regarding the likelihood of them reporting incidences of academic misconduct; whether they thought other students would report incidences of academic misconduct; whether they had actually reported an incidence of academic misconduct; and whether their college placed an obligation on them or encouraged them to report incidences of academic misconduct. An academic honour code that placed upon students a responsibility to report incidences of academic misconduct was in place at 14 of the colleges surveyed. McCabe et al. (2001, p. 43) found that the level of academic misconduct tended to be lower and the level of reporting higher at honour code colleges than at non-honour code colleges. However, the incidence of actual reporting by the survey respondents at both the honour code and non honour code colleges was very low.

The rapid development and use of anti-plagiarism software over the past decade also represents a response to plagiarism. Anti-plagiarism software allows detection of plagiarism online by assessing the level of similarity between work submitted online by a student and material that is publicly available online or work submitted by other students in the same or a previous semester (Ledwith and Risquez, 2008, p. 372).

A large number of universities have adopted this software as a way to prevent plagiarism occurring. Ledwith and Risquez (2008) surveyed first year engineering students enrolled at an Irish university during autumn semester 2005 on their views regarding the use of anti-plagiarism software. Forty percent of students’ overall performance in an engineering subject involved submission of six peer-reviewed assignments with marks being deducted if plagiarism was detected. Four of the assignments were peer-reviewed manually while two were peer-reviewed after being submitted online through the software program Turnitin. The marks were significantly lower on the two assignments marked through Turnitin than they were for the four that were marked manually. In addition, the level of plagiarism was significantly lower in the second assignment than in the first
assignment submitted through *Turnitin*. The majority of student responses to a questionnaire supported the use of *Turnitin* to detect originality of work in peer-reviewed assignments. Some students felt that the use of *Turnitin* made them more accountable while others claimed they put greater effort into their assignments submitted through *Turnitin*. Ledwith and Risquez (2008, p. 382) argue that the results of their study do not necessarily support the view that anti-plagiarism software can develop academic integrity values. However, it does show that the use of the software made students more aware of the need to submit original and correctly referenced work.

While oral presentations have not been suggested as an anti-plagiarism strategy, their value in developing a range of skills, especially for business students, *has* been discussed. Magin and Helmore (2001, p.290) emphasise the use of oral presentations for communication skill development and the provision of feedback. Watts (2006, p. 160) argues that in-class presentations can also deepen students’ understanding of material covered in a subject by requiring them to engage more closely with this material. He describes a teaching strategy that combined a team assignment with in-class presentations in two economics subjects offered at a U.S university. In these subjects, groups of up to five students selected a topic on which to complete an assignment. Half way through the semester, each team member submitted and was graded on a book report relevant to their topic. Soon after submitting the book reports, each team submitted an outline of their written assignment and presentation, and then met with the lecturer to have their outlines approved. The presentations and submission of the assignments took place in the last weeks of lectures. Watts (2006, p.160) found that after introducing the in-class presentation, the number of students enrolling in the subject significantly increased, providing support for the idea that this approach was effective for student learning and this information circulated between student cohorts.

The value of presentations for student learning lies partly in the incentive they give students to engage more seriously with topic resources because they will have to face their teacher and classmates in person and thus have a more personal connection with the work they produce. Given the widespread use of oral presentations in business education, there may exist an additional role for them if this personalising of work quality can also be linked to “originality” and
absence of plagiarism. The next section outlines this strategy in the context of its implementation at UTS.

3. THE TEACHING STRATEGY AND ITS CONTEXT
The literature on plagiarism considered in the previous section indicates the importance of addressing plagiarism especially in the context of business education. It emphasises the role of cultural influences on student behaviour surrounding plagiarism and it suggests that the mere provision of information about plagiarism may not be very effective in reducing its incidence. It suggests that the necessary conditions for reducing plagiarism include; creating a culture in which the nature of plagiarism is clearly understood and in which plagiarism is regarded as unacceptable; providing students with an incentive to engage with information about the nature of plagiarism and with support resources for writing; and providing students with feedback about whether their writing efforts have successfully avoided plagiarism.

The strategy undertaken at UTS attempted to meet these conditions. It was implemented in a postgraduate subject dealing with Australian financial markets in the spring semester of 2007. This subject was compulsory in the Finance stream of the University’s MBA program and students attended one of four weekly seminar classes of three hours duration across a thirteen week semester. The average number of students in each class was forty.

The first objective of the strategy was to modify the academic culture of the subject so as to raise the general level of awareness about plagiarism. A second objective was to encourage students to identify more closely with their written assignments so that heightened awareness about plagiarism would affect their behaviour in approaching the writing of their assignments, avoiding plagiarism in particular. This was done by structuring the assessment regime so that students delivered an oral presentation on a topic before submitting a written assignment on the same topic. In previous semesters only a written assignment had been required for the non-exam part of the subject’s assessment structure. A third objective was to provide feedback to students before submission of the written essay about the degree of plagiarism in their presentations, among other things. This was designed to ensure that students who might be using plagiarist-type practices without being fully aware of it would have this brought to their attention and would alter their behaviour accordingly.
The first objective of raising general awareness about plagiarism was done in the context of providing students with essay writing support. Prior to 2007, students in the subject were strongly encouraged during lectures and in the subject outline to read and make use of the UTS Faculty of Business (2006) Guide to Writing Assignments and other writing resources such as websites and workshops provided by the University. All students were provided with an example of a well written and correctly referenced essay that had been submitted by a student in a previous semester and had received a high grade. During the first class of semester and in the class preceding the assignment deadline, lecturers would discuss the issue of plagiarism and review material on plagiarism provided by the University and in the subject outline. An email would also typically be sent to each student the week before the deadline warning them about the repercussions of engaging in plagiarism. However, when marking the submitted essays, lecturers often found that a high proportion of students had copied material from publications and websites without correctly acknowledging sources. So whilst information regarding plagiarism was provided to students, this information appeared not to be used when students came to write their assignments, confirming an important finding in the literature.

In 2007, several new measures were introduced to draw student attention more pointedly to the availability of assignment writing resources and the issue of plagiarism. Students were provided with a new handout entitled Guide on Oral Presentation and Written Answer for Students in addition to the inclusion in the subject outline of the same information about Faculty of Business and other University resources on assignment writing that had been included in previous semesters. This new Guide was written by the course coordinator with the assistance of the UTS ELSSA Centre and included information on factors specific to the assignment task in the subject. It provided tips on making a successful oral presentation, such as the structure of the presentation and making PowerPoint slides simple and easy to read, as well as information on essay writing. It referred students to Faculty of Business and University resources on assignment writing where these particular issues were covered in more detail than in the smaller

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1 The ELSSA (English Language Study Skills Assistance) Centre at UTS provides services to students and academics in the areas of English language and academic literacy.
subject-specific *Guide*. The *Guide* also contained the sample essay that had been provided in previous semesters (which had received a high grade) as well as an essay that had received a fail grade (an innovation over previous semesters). This latter essay displayed weak writing skills, provided a poor answer to the question being answered and had copied material from several sources without correct, or in some cases *any*, acknowledgement. Comments were written in the margin of this essay to draw attention to these features. An alternative version of the essay was also provided which had been modified to correct these features and would have enabled the essay to have received a pass grade.

Students were also offered the opportunity to attend two workshops run by the ELSSA Centre specifically for students enrolled in this subject. These workshops were held in a non-teaching week just after the start of semester. The first workshop discussed what was involved in preparing and giving oral presentations and the second workshop was on avoiding plagiarism. Of the 33 students who signed up to attend the first workshop on oral presentations only 10 actually attended. The second workshop on avoiding plagiarism was attended by only 5 of the 34 students who signed up.

The second objective of encouraging students to identify more closely with their written assignments was supported by the introduction of oral presentations prior to submission of the written essay. The oral presentations allowed students to outline a summary version of their answer to the assignment question that asked them to evaluate events that had recently occurred in the Australian financial system, applying conceptual material previously covered in class. Students could chose one of the thirteen topics covered in class over the semester, and once this choice was made, they were assigned a specific question on that topic and provided with at least one reference in addition to the recommended textbook that would help them write the essay and prepare the presentation. The oral presentation for a particular topic took place in the class held three weeks after the topic was originally covered and the essay was submitted soon after the oral presentation took place. The maximum mark awarded for this assessment task was twenty marks with each of the oral presentation and the written essay being awarded a mark out of ten. The maximum word limit on the essay was 1,500 words and students could use up to twelve PowerPoint slides when giving their presentation.
Students completing this subject had always been required to attach a cover sheet to the front of their essay and this coversheet included a declaration that a student had not engaged in plagiarism, a standard practice in most business faculty subjects at UTS. In previous semesters, the cover sheet had also contained a table where the marker indicated whether the overall organisation of material, accuracy of spelling and grammar, clarity of expression, and acknowledgement of sources were regarded as poor, good or excellent. In 2007, the table was modified to show students how the overall mark out of twenty would be determined. The ten marks for the oral presentation were broken down into eight for how well the student was able to explain their analysis and two for their ability to encourage class discussion. The ten marks for the essay were allocated so that the student’s discussion and understanding of key facts and issues was marked out of five, use of examples and illustrations from the Australian financial system was marked out of three, and explanation of figures, diagrams and tables was marked out of two. The coversheet also included a section where the marker could indicate whether they had found none, a moderate level, or a significant level of plagiarism.

The third objective of providing feedback to students so that those in danger of engaging in plagiarism would have this plagiarism drawn to their attention, was done in two stages. Prior to giving their presentation, students were invited to submit their slides to the lecturer who would provide preliminary feedback that could be used to modify the presentation. If the lecturer detected plagiarism, he or she would advise students on how to correctly reference material in order to remove the plagiarism and advice was also provided on correcting grammatical and spelling mistakes. This was the first stage. The second stage occurred immediately following the in-class presentation itself when feedback was provided by classmates and the lecturer on the strength of the content, the standard of grammar and spelling, and whether any residual plagiarism was evident. Because the in-class presentations were spread out over the thirteen weeks of semester, students were effectively asked to develop the skill of looking for plagiarism rather than simply having it pointed out for them.

4. PRELIMINARY EVALUATION
The overall objective of the innovations described above was to modify the culture of the subject so that students were aware of what constituted plagiarism, so that they would regard plagiarism as a
completely unacceptable practice, and so that they would refrain from engaging in it. Our a priori expectation was that the measures introduced to achieve these objectives so clearly focused on plagiarism as well as providing students with positive alternative writing strategies, that we would observe very little plagiarism in the written essays.

For those students that continued to plagiarise despite the modifications made to the subject’s culture, we hypothesised that these would be students who had not engaged with the subject’s culture to any great degree, and were thus not significantly affected by it. We therefore asked students to complete a questionnaire to obtain information about this. The questionnaire asked students whether they had used the resources provided to aid them in their essay writing and oral presentations, and thus used this as a proxy for cultural engagement. More specifically it asked whether they had read the UTS Faculty of Business (2006) Guide to Writing Assignments or the Guide on Oral Presentation and Written Answer for Students.

The questionnaire was completed in the second last lecture of the semester to maximise the response rate (Alreck & Settle, 1985). The last lecture was a revision class, normally attracting a lower number of students. The questionnaire was completed by 101 students, a response rate of 73%.2

As explained above, to measure the degree of plagiarism in the written essays, lecturers recorded whether they found none, a moderate degree, or a significant degree of plagiarism when marking an essay. Students were identified as engaging in plagiarism if they copied material and did not acknowledge the source or paraphrased another author’s ideas but failed to acknowledge that they had done this. Incorrect in-text referencing was also recognised as plagiarism when students failed to correctly acknowledge the source of the material that they used. For example, when students directly copied material from a source but cited it as an indirect quote rather than as a direct quote this was regarded as plagiarism. It was decided to recognise plagiarism as being moderate when it only occurred in a few sentences whilst significant plagiarism would be recognised when the majority of the essay was copied or paraphrased without acknowledgement. Lecturers initially marked each assignment without

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2 Enrolment in the subject was 185 but the analysis included only 138 students as the questionnaire was not distributed to all classes.
taking into account whether plagiarism had occurred and then deducted marks based on the degree of plagiarism an essay was assessed as having.

The degree of plagiarism found by lecturers when marking the written essays is shown in Table 1. Only 33.81% of essays were found to contain no plagiarism at all, nearly 60%, that is 81 out of 138 essays, exhibited a *moderate* degree of plagiarism, and 8% exhibited a *significant* degree of plagiarism. Of the essays with moderate plagiarism, 50% contained a few sentences with words written by another author that were not acknowledged. About 31% of these essays had citations for the source of these words, however quotation marks were not used to indicate that these were quoted directly. The proportions of these essays that either did not include all information required when quoting the ideas of another author or of a website were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of Assessment</th>
<th>Degree of Plagiarism in Essay</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All essays (per cent)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays with missed in-text quotations:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few (per cent)</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many (per cent)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays with incorrect referencing in text:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct quote (per cent)</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication (per cent)</td>
<td>37.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website (per cent)</td>
<td>25.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average essay mark (/10)</td>
<td>7.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average oral mark (/10)</td>
<td>8.02</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

37% and 26% respectively. Of the 8% of essays that exhibited a *significant* degree of plagiarism by failing to quote a significant proportion of material copied directly from other sources, 27%

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3 This occurred when students included an author’s ideas without providing page numbers of the author’s publication or wrote information from a website and only provided the general web address and not the full URL.
acknowledged the source of some words that had been copied. However, these papers did this as an indirect quote rather than a direct quote. In addition, 27% of these essays did not include all information required when quoting ideas from a website.

At first pass these results suggest that the incidence of plagiarism in the written assignment was significantly higher than we expected given the prominence of plagiarism in discussion about the essay and the cultural milieu that we thought had been developed with respect to plagiarism in the subject. However a large proportion of the plagiarism detected was relatively minor and may be explained by the fact that students failed to pay sufficient attention to the detail of citation practice rather by a complete failure on the part of students to recognise the sources used in writing the essay. Thus only 8% of students engaged in the type of plagiarism that could be described as serious academic misconduct. While no statistics were available from previous semesters, lecturers felt this to be a noticeable reduction accompanied by an improvement in the general standard of writing.4

Table 1 also analyses the initial written essay marks before deductions were made for plagiarism. The average mark was higher for students not identified as engaging in plagiarism and students engaging in a significant degree of plagiarism did not answer the assignment question very well.

Table 2 shows student responses to the questionnaire regarding whether students had read the UTS Faculty of Business (2006) Guide to Writing Assignments or the Guide on Oral Presentation and Written Answer for Students when writing their assignments. Close to 70% of respondents indicated that they had read the Faculty’s Guide to Writing Assignments while 61% indicated that they had read the Guide on Oral Presentation and Written Answer for Students.5 Interestingly, close to 8% of respondents chose not to comment.

The 101 responses to the questionnaire were used to separate results for the written essay into two groups to see whether students who had read either the Faculty Guide or the subject-specific Guide were more more likely to have engaged in plagiarism. Table 3 breaks down

4 The three lecturers in this subject had lectured and marked assignments in this subject for several years.
5 Sixty seven of the 101 students who responded to the survey indicated that they had read both the guides, 27 indicated that they had only read the UTS Faculty of Business (2006) Guide to Writing Assignments and 17 indicated that they only read the Guide on Oral Presentation and Written Answer for Students.
Table 2: Answers to Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per cent of students answering:</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you read the Faculty’s ‘Guide to Writing Assignments’ when writing your assignment?</td>
<td>23.88%</td>
<td>68.66%</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you read the “Guide on Oral Presentations and Written Answer for Students” when writing your assignment?</td>
<td>31.11%</td>
<td>60.74%</td>
<td>8.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student responses to the survey questions according to the degree to which students were judged to have engaged in plagiarism. This table indicates that 7.75% of students who had read one of the writing guides were judged to have engaged in significant plagiarism while 12.5% of students who had not read one of the guides were judged to have done this. This is suggestive that students who engaged more closely with the subject’s culture were less likely to engage in plagiarism at this level. It is also true, however, that a greater proportion of the students who engaged with the culture but did not plagiarise at the significant level were nevertheless judged to have engaged in plagiarism at the moderate level compared to students who did not read any of the subject guides. This is somewhat surprising. It might suggest that students who decided to interact with course materials and thus avoided significant plagiarism were students who needed assistance with their essay preparation and thus found the finer details of plagiarism such as the distinction between direct and indirect quotations more difficult. This might suggest that the effectiveness of materials used in the writing support sessions needs to

Table 3: Degree of Plagiarism and Reading the Guides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Read one of the guides</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Average essay mark</th>
<th>Average oral mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read one of the guides</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not read the guides</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
be re-examined. It is of course possible that reading these documents is a poor proxy for cultural engagement and that students who had not read the guides may already have been knowledgeable about how to avoid engaging in plagiarism when writing essays.

These preliminary results suggest, however, that the plagiarism-reduction strategy used in this subject was promising but needs refinement and more detailed evaluation. The amount of serious plagiarism appeared to be at a low level and had fallen relative to previous semesters. The students who engaged in this type of plagiarism appeared either to be weak students or to have been severely time-constrained. Either way, a poor performance in the presentation may act as an early warning that a student might engage in plagiarism with increased probability. Lecturers could follow up these warnings with additional help either with the subject itself in the case of weak students or with time management advice for those severely time-constrained. It should be stressed, however, that this evaluation is merely preliminary and recommendations for more thorough evaluation are outlined in the final section below.

5. CONCLUSION
The incidence of plagiarism at universities is a matter that concerns academics. Written assignments allow academics to assess the knowledge students acquire during their study in a particular course as well as to develop students writing skills. When students plagiarise and it is not detected, however, they are rewarded with marks for work that is not their own and poor intellectual habits are encouraged which are likely to have implications beyond university.

This paper has outlined a strategy to discourage students from plagiarising by requiring them to make an oral presentation on the same topic as a written assignment before submitting the written version. Analysis of the results from such an assignment suggests that this strategy is a promising one. The proportion of written assignments displaying evidence of significant plagiarism submitted after students had made oral presentations was low and appeared to have fallen compared to the previous semester when no presentation was made. There was however a moderate level of plagiarism associated mainly with incorrect citation of sources that suggests room for improvement in students’ compliance with citation conventions. Those students that did engage in serious plagiarism appear to have been either the weakest students or students spending insufficient time on their
studies perhaps due to work pressures or problems with time management. In this case presentations might signal which students might be in need of additional assistance with these issues.

Evaluation of the strategy outlined in this paper is strictly of a preliminary nature and a more thorough evaluation needs to be undertaken. A data set could be accumulated across several semesters in which the measures outlined above were initially absent for two or three semesters, and then the anti-plagiarism campaign and writing support measures were introduced and left in place for two or three semesters. Anti-plagiarism software could then be superimposed over these measures for two or three semesters to test its relative effectiveness against the measures outlined above. The measures outlined above could then be removed for two or three semesters with the anti-plagiarism software left in place to provide a further comparison of this effectiveness. A questionnaire could also be used that provided more detailed information about student background, time pressures on students, attitudes to writing competence and plagiarism, and engagement with resources, to allow econometric testing of plagiarism incidence across these semesters against student characteristics.

Given the potential of oral presentations for developing skills generally valued in the business world, further investigation of the use of these presentations for reducing plagiarism and more careful evaluation of this use are warranted, and would productively be the subject of further work.

REFERENCES


Faculty of Business (2006), Guide to Writing Assignments, Sydney: University of Technology, Sydney.


