Addressing plagiarism in academic writing: punishment or pedagogy?

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Plagiarism is ….

- "The incorporation of material derived from the work … of another, by unacknowledged quotation, paraphrased imitation or other device, which in any way suggests that it is the student's own work."   (NTU Quality Handbook, 2018)

- "… an ever increasing practice and problem." (Chandrasoma et al, 2004)

- "… a growing threat to the integrity of the academy." (Hyland, 2001)

From the NTU Quality Handbook

"Nottingham Trent University considers that committing an academic irregularity is wrong because it undermines academic integrity and the value of the University's awards. The Academic Irregularities policy seeks to ensure that this principle is defended and upheld for the benefit of former, current and future students."

The dominant discourse of plagiarism

- university plagiarism policies typically use discourse of criminal law to describe plagiarism (Sutherland Smith, 2014)

- offence, penalties, hearing, witness statement, incident, allegation

  (NTU Quality Handbook, 2018)

"The policy is part of a balanced institutional approach which also seeks to develop good academic practices, including:

- Supporting students in understanding what constitutes an academic irregularity;

- Supporting students in developing skills to avoid academic irregularities;

- Supporting students in developing their academic writing skills;

- Designing assessment activities that reduce the opportunities for academic irregularities."

(NTU Quality Handbook, 2018)

Changing the discourse

- the term 'plagiarism' is "… too laden with negative and moral connotations." (Briggs, 2003)

- it is more an issue of academic literacy than academic dishonesty

- should be seen as a developmental problem

- alternative terms without negative connotations – language re-use, textual appropriation, textual borrowing, intertextuality –   but can also be used to describe misuse of sources (e.g. 'inappropriate textual borrowing', 'transgressive intertextuality')

- NTU policy now refers to 'poor academic practice'

The developmental nature of academic writing

- "Gaining membership of a specific academic discourse community, such as law or engineering, takes a great deal of time and practice …" (Howard, 1999)

- students must write competently in the discourse of their discipline and appropriate certain linguistic features of that discourse

- students are at different levels of writing development – many are novice or apprentice writers - learning how to use sources appropriately is not easy!

- "Academic language is….no one's mother tongue." (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1994)

Patchwriting as a learner strategy

- patchwriting (Howard 1999) is "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structure or plugging in synonym substitutes"

- patchwriting can be at the level of phrase or sentence and can involve longer textual strings

- no intention to deceive

- this not effective use of sources but a useful transition – a necessary passing stage

- patchwriting reflects students desire to write in academic discourse when they still lack the linguistic resources

Patchwriting

Student text:

have been spread in modern societies. While the identification of traditional media by [1] the "one-to-many control of information flows (through books, magazines, newspapers, TV, etc.), social media are characterized " many to many 'sharing of information. Social media, then, are the media networks, it allows for the exchange

Matched text (source text):

and distributed in modern culture. Whereas traditional broadcast media have been characterised by the 'one-to-many' control of information flows (through books, magazines, newspapers, televisions, etc.), social media are characterised by 'many-to-many' information sharing. Social media, then, are

Can culture explain plagiarism?

- teachers often express a belief that cultural differences explain plagiarism

- it is true that L2 students may come from an educational background where the importance of authorial voice in student writing is not emphasised

- but research shows that L1 writers' behaviour is not significantly different from L2

- we should resist temptations of essentialism!

A pedagogic response

- we need to raise awareness of what good academic practice looks like

- we need to go beyond simply informing students about university policy

- we should provide "ample opportunities for practicing (source use) in a supportive learning environment in which students are not accused of plagiarism for making errors in the process of learning." (Pecorari and Petric, 2014)

- we should focus on teaching academic English skills and strategies not just technical aspects of using a particular referencing style

Which of these is most serious?

- Making a mistake in your list of references
- Not changing the original text enough when you paraphrase
- Making a mistake with citation
- Summarising someone's work but forgetting to cite it
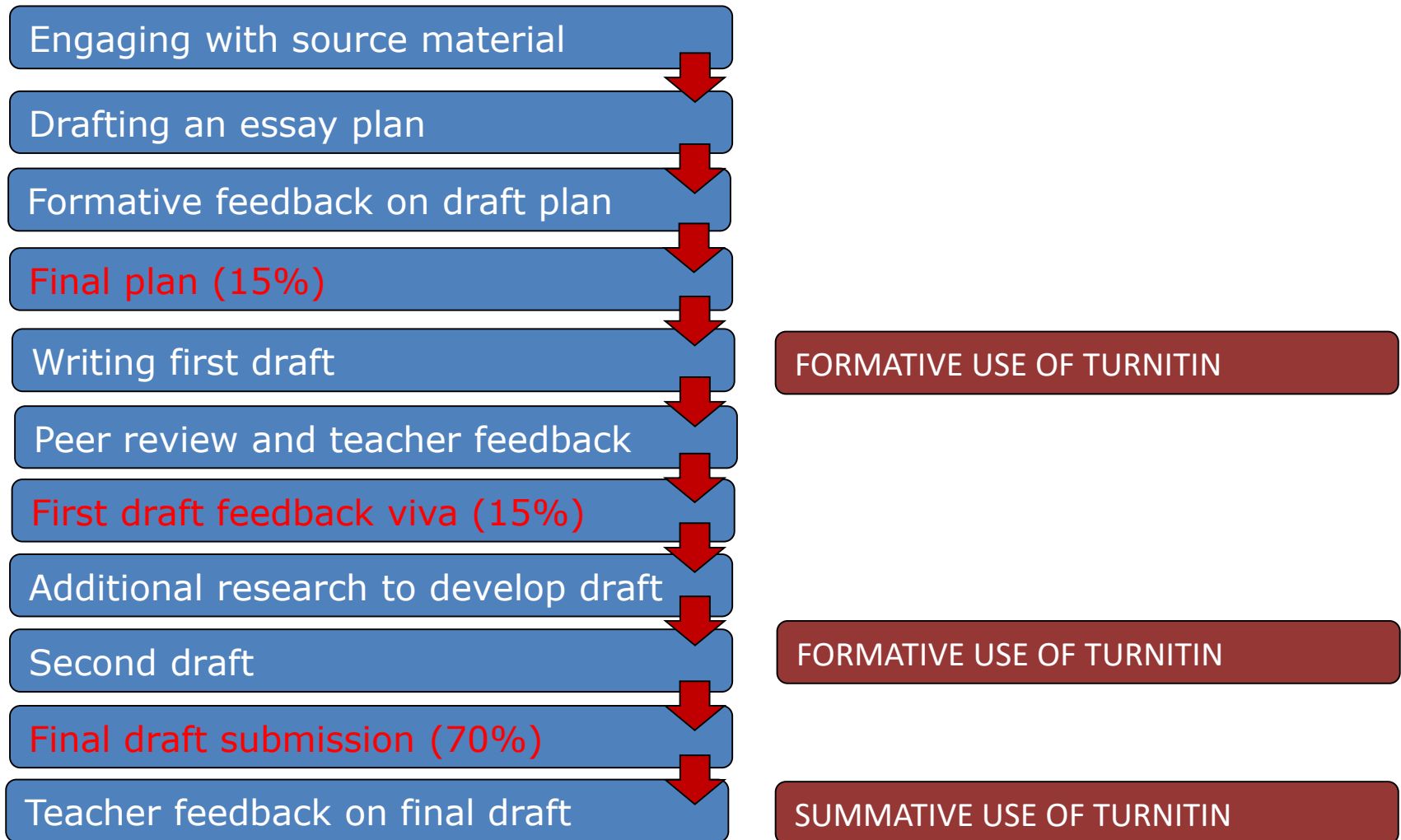- Quoting someone but not using quotation marks
- Using Google Translate

- Copying a classmate's introduction
- Working with another student to write the final draft
- Asking someone to write your essay for you

EXAMPLES OF **POOR ACADEMIC PRACTICE** – WE'LL HELP YOU TO **DEVELOP SKILLS** TO AVOID THESE

INTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM

COLLUSION

CONTRACT CHEATING

The PEAP assessed coursework essay

Engaging with source material

Drafting an essay plan

Formative feedback on draft plan

Final plan (15%)

Writing first draft

FORMATIVE USE OF TURNITIN

Peer review and teacher feedback

First draft feedback viva (15%)

Additional research to develop draft

Second draft

FORMATIVE USE OF TURNITIN

Final draft submission (70%)

Teacher feedback on final draft

SUMMATIVE USE OF TURNITIN

Teaching source use

- text comprehension & note taking

- evaluating sources

- summarising, paraphrasing & quoting

- synthesising

- commenting on sources

- using Turnitin formatively

- teacher feedback on drafts

- using exemplars

- peer review

- personal or group tutorials

- designing assessments which allow for learning

What can NLC provide?

- Academic English classes and tutorials for international students

- lectures/workshops on AE for whole cohorts if requested

- advice to colleagues on how to incorporate teaching on source use into their lectures and seminars

References

Howard, R. M. (1999) Standing in the shadow of giants: Plagiarists, authors, collaborators.Stamford, Conn.: Ablex Pub.

Pecorari, D. (2015) Plagiarism in second language writing: Is it time to close the case? SecondLanguage Writing, 30, 94–99.