

PLENARY SESSION – Quality and Funding

Speaker 1 – Mark Pendleton, RMIT – Plagiarism & Turnitin.com

Mark talked about how the issues associated with plagiarism and Turnitin.com are playing out at universities, including RMIT.

Plagiarism at RMIT :

- definition can be summarized by using another person's work or creation as if it is the author's own
- includes both intentional and unintentional
- different faculties have different 'definitions', both from each other and the RMIT University definition

Background on Plagiarism:

- plagiarism is a Western construct
- intellectual work is perceived to be private property
- people's from diverse non-Western backgrounds don't necessarily have this definition of plagiarism and the connotations tied to it. This is sometimes the perception that there is no 'original' idea.

30% of RMIT's student body is not from Western cultures

Increase in plagiarism?

There is no documented increase of plagiarism in Australia, just lots of talk and a perception that there is a rise. Some people are saying that the Internet has led to an increase in plagiarism. While there have been some high profile media cases there is no real evidence.

Identification & motivation?

There has been a n increasing emphasis on recognizing and punishing plagiarism as institutions are stories of plagiarism can be interpreted as compromising the quality and image of institutions.

Plagiarism software

27 universities are using plagiarism software, with Turnitin.com as the main leader in the field.

Turnitin.com looks for text similarity by running papers through its own database and then through the Internet. The paper comes back colour coded, identifying similarities and how close it is to 'original' sources. The sources are also identified.

It is then up to the academic to determine whether the similarities constitute plagiarism.

Student Rights

Any work that is run through Turnitin.com automatically becomes part of their database. Not only does this raise concerns about intellectual property but student work is being used by a corporate body to enable them reap commercial benefit.

There is a statement on Turnitin.com's website regarding the legal advice that they have received saying that it is pretty much a-okey.