

PLATO – PLAGiarism Teaching Online

An introduction for academic staff



PLATO

How can PLATO help you teach students about Plagiarism?

Across the Further and Higher Education Sectors in recent years, the rise in the number of detected incidents of plagiarism in student's work has increased the focus on academic offences. This type of behaviour is linked to issues of developing student academic skills, assessment methods and quality procedures.

Plagiarism behaviour can be characterised in a variety of ways, from the deliberate use of "cheat sites" where students can purchase academic essays, the copying from sources without referencing the original source, through to the unauthorised collaboration of learners in contravention of the requirements of an assignment.

Some of the reasons why students are known to plagiarise include a lack of confidence in their own academic writing, a shortage of skills to develop a written argument or an inability to manage their time. Sometimes there is a natural desire on the part of some overseas students to adhere to the style of learning in their own country where the acknowledgment of sources is not required. This may include the acceptance of the ideas of a tutor without question and the inclusion without a citation to the words of the tutor within their assignment.

When an incidence of plagiarism is suspected it can take up a great deal of academic and administrative time to identify the appropriate evidence. When cases of investigation are initiated it risks prejudicing the relationship between the teachers and the learners involved and threaten a student's progression on the programme.

So plagiarism can be a complex issue without a simple solution. The authors of PLATO believe that the adoption of this courseware will enable students to recognise this behaviour and improve the quality of their academic practice.

What is the aim of PLATO?

There are three main objectives for the development of PLATO:

- 1) To demonstrate to students what plagiarism is.
- 2) To demonstrate the principles of how students should cite and reference sources of information.
- 3) To achieve these, by using interactive software and diagnostic tests to help build up the "scaffolding" of learning for a practical understanding of plagiarism.

What is the pedagogical basis for PLATO?

To help develop an understanding of plagiarism, PLATO begins with a low level of assumptions of prior knowledge and experience. Upon this foundation, the “scaffolding” of learning has been erected. This begins with definitions of plagiarism from statements contributed by academic staff and students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The student then progresses through practical demonstrations of different forms of plagiarism behaviour. The learner will have opportunity to grasp the principles established in the first part of PLATO, “What is Plagiarism?” and return to them as appropriate.

Likewise in the second part “Learn how to cite and reference”, there is an explanation of the principles involved with locating the information to reference.

PLATO then enables the learner to build on this knowledge by using examples from a wider variety of the resources.

What methods are adopted in PLATO?

A variety of tools are used to encourage and support the learner.

These include the following:

- Introducing diagnostic testing to help assess prior knowledge
- Provision of specific feedback in response to testing and an opportunity for follow up practice
- Making use of video, audio and interactive animation to underpin the teaching of basic concepts of referencing
- Opportunities to progress beyond basic materials to reference sources such as official publications and audio resources

What skills are required to use PLATO?

A basic competency in using a PC mouse and keyboard.

When is the most appropriate time to introduce PLATO?

Initially in the first few weeks after induction and prior to the first assignment.

Activities:

Some suggestions for Classroom activities are:

While introducing the concept of plagiarism try using “About Plagiarism” and you will find that it includes the following topics:

- What are the principles of good academic practice?
- Why should learners acknowledge their sources in academic work?
- Defining what Plagiarism behaviour is, from “Plagiarism and Other Cheating”
- A group work activity – look at “Forms of Plagiarism” and “Check Your Understanding”
- A series of Case studies, “You are the Judge” that could form the basis of group discussions about the scenarios and the advice given

A total of 40 minutes approximately will be needed.

You will need a PC Lab.

If you are introducing practical skills of citing and referencing use the section: “Know How to Reference”

Ask learners to work in pairs or individually using “What Do You Know Already?” diagnostic test.

This will lead to one of two options:

Firstly for those learners with low scores in the “What Do You Know Already?” test, ask them to try the Basic Tutorial.

Secondly for those with high scores in the “What Do You Know Already?” test ask them to try the Attainment Test.

Use the “Advanced Tutorial” section to explore the varied approaches to identifying authors and examples of how to reference a variety of materials.

Finally ask learners to try sections of the Advanced Referencing Quiz.

A total of 30 minutes approximately will be needed.

This session could be extended further to include learners practising referencing skills using a range of different resources.

Please remind students that they can reinforce their learning by accessing PLATO at any time via the VLE.

If you would like further information about PLATO, please contact

Innovation 4 Learning, University of Derby

E: info@preventplagiarism.co.uk

T: 01332 591586

W: www.preventplagiarism.co.uk

Forms of Plagiarism: Collusion

