FAQs about detecting plagiarism

Highlighted questions are unlikely to be covered at the seminar on 17 March 2009.

From individual teachers

1. What am I supposed to be 'detecting'?
2. What methods can I use?
3. Which software package is the best?
4. How do I use this particular software package?
5. Do I have to go looking for plagiarism or is it OK if I just wait and see what I notice as I grade student's work?
6. Why should I spend my time in detecting plagiarism? I have so much to do already – why make more work for myself?
7. Why should I spend my time in detecting plagiarism? I'm a teacher, not a 'detective'.
8. How do I become skilful at spotting plagiarism? Can it be quick and easy?
9. What about all the reasons for **not** finding plagiarism (besides the time factor)? What about: looking bad to my colleagues; damaging relationships with my students; facing students' anger (perhaps); having to start acting like a lawyer; not being 100% sure what I am doing, etc?

From programme managers

1. Some teachers find plagiarism in their students' work and some don't ever find it. What should I do about that difference?
2. Some teachers find plagiarism in a large proportion of their students' work – like, say, 50% of the students hand in work that is plagiarised [65 out of 110 in one case]. I can't manage 65 cases – so what should I do?
3. How do I teach new teachers how to detect plagiarism?
4. We have procedures in place for detecting plagiarism but teachers are not using them. What should I do?

From institutional managers

1. Should we invest in software?
2. If we invest in software, which one should we buy?
3. What are the risks and benefits of investing in software?
4. How do we inform students and teachers about detection strategies?
5. How do we train people to use a range of detection strategies (including using software)?
6. How do we track and monitor how software is being used?
7. What kind of quality assurance procedures are in place?
8. What kind of quality enhancement procedures are in place – are we learning from what we currently do and feeding those lessons back into Quality Assurance processes such as course design, assessment design, introduction for new teachers, students' skill development etc?