There is much concern in British Higher Education Institutions that instances of plagiarism (the passing of someone else's work as though it were one's own) are on the increase. In response to this, assessment has become more focused on traditional examination and/or on-line testing using large question banks and randomly created tests. Whilst they may be appropriate in many disciplines, these types of testing fail to address some important learning outcomes in Statistics, not least the ability of students to analyse a set of data appropriately and report results effectively. However, giving students the same data to analyse has serious risks of plagiarism, either in the analysis, or in the reporting. Group work, which is used to give students opportunities to develop team skills, has its own plagiarism problems. Various strategies have been developed by some lecturers to try to minimise the possibility of plagiarism in Statistics - for example, giving each student a unique random sample from a larger data set or developing methodologies to allocate marks fairly in group work.

The Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research Network have funded the Plagiarism in Statistics Assessment (PiSA) project, which aims:

- to survey HE lecturers in Statistics to find out what methods of assessment and strategies to deter plagiarism are being employed currently;
- to identify and synthesise elements of good practice;
- to disseminate findings widely.

The project team are Penny Bidgood (Kingston), Neville Hunt (Coventry), Brad Payne (Royal Statistical Society Centre for Statistical Education, Nottingham Trent) and Vanessa Simonite (Oxford-Brookes).

If you have some good practice in plagiarism detection or deterrence that you would like to share and/or if you would be willing to discuss your concerns about the effect plagiarism is having in Statistics assessments, please contact Vanessa Simonite (vsimonite@brookes.ac.uk) in the first instance.

Also, look out for the JISC discussion list which has been created to facilitate discussion on this project. http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/PISA.html