Name: Lum Chee Xiang Michael (Lan Zhixiang)
Student ID: 111102750
Assignment 4

Module: Introduction to Computing and the Internet
Module number: CO1110-01

University of London International Programmes
BSc in Computing and Information Systems: Introduction to Computing and the Internet
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Question 1

Definition

While many academic institutions have varying interpretations of the term, the generic definition, as described by Oxford ("Plagiarism", 2012, paras 1 – 4), is that plagiarism has taken place when:

- any form of work belonging to another party is taken and passed off as one's own original content ("Plagiarism", 2012, paras 1 – 4)

From this, we can infer that **academic plagiarism** refers to plagiarism that take place within formal institutions or organizations of higher education ("Academic", 2012, paras 1 – 16).

Also, it is important to note that academic plagiarism is not limited to the aforementioned definition; some academics cite ideas (Colantuono, 2009, paras 6 – 9) and expressions (Clarke, 2006, para 11) as content that are also covered under it.

Causes and impact

There are varying reasons academic institutions take harsh stances against plagiarism, but the consensus is that it is an act of dishonesty ("Defining academic dishonesty", 2009, paras 1) that undermines the education system's integrity (Clare, 2000, para 1). Such views make sense; academic institutions exist to impart values and knowledge, and students who have no reservations about cheating their way to the top may be inclined to do the same thing in the working world.

Furthermore, with the widespread proliferation of internet-capable devices, ("Causes of plagiarism", 2006, para 3), it is easy to see how plagiarism is becoming more widespread today. However, singling this reason out as the sole motivation for plagiarism is fundamentally wrong, as the Internet is only an enabler for a variety of tasks ("A Definitive Guide to Social Intranet Strategy", 2012, para 1). Rather, the key motivations have always involved at least one of the following factors:

- Stress
- Competition
- Laziness ("Helpful Strategies: OK, so why do students plagiarize?", n.d., para 2)
- Inability to understand course material ("Why Students Plagiarize and What to do if You are Suspicious", 2012, para 1)
- "Impossible to get caught" belief ("Reasons Of Plagiarism Among Students", 2011, para 1)
- Indifference

Many of these points were brought up in an old research paper (Sheilah & Barth, 1993, p. 5) published well before the proliferation of the Internet took place. That these factors (the last one in particular) still exist today is proof that such temptations have not been adequately addressed by academic institutions, and that any policy which casts blame on the Internet has missed the point.

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Relevance to computing courses

While the definitions of plagiarism described in the preceding pages work well in arresting plagiarism in traditional fields, enforcing them in any academic computing course is a significant challenge. This is because such courses typically involve some form of programming within its curriculum ("Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing and Information Systems, 2012, paras 1 – 5), which entails the writing of source codes. And therein lies the problem.

Unlike other academic fields, "essay mills" for relevant source code are virtually non-existent due to significant variations in specifications and requirements of programming assignments issued by different academic institutes ("Source code plagiarism detection", 2012, para 2). Furthermore, it is held that "there are only so many ways" one could write code; and that programming will eventually reach a point where one's program may look like a simple "copy-and-paste" job when stacked against a similar application ("How do I safely write code in my own 'words' and not plagiarize?", 2011, paras 1 – 2).

For example, the candidate can only identify so many ways a "Hello World" program can be written in Java, based on his understanding on the programming language:

```java
public class helloworld {

    public static void main(String[] args)
    {
        System.out.print("Hello world.");
    }

}
```

```java
public class helloworld
{
    public static void main(String[] args)
    {
        System.out.print("Hello" + "world.");
    }

}
```

```java
public class helloworld
{
    public static void main(String[] args)
    {
        helloworld w = new helloworld();
        w.getHelloWorld();
    }

    public void getHelloWorld()
    {
        System.out.println("Hello world.");
    }

}
```

```java
public class helloworld
{

    public static void main(String[] args)
    {
        String a = "Hello";
        String b = "World";
        System.out.println(a + b);
    }

}
```

```java
public class helloworld
{
    String a = "Hello";
    String b = "World";

    public static void main(String[] args)
    {
        helloworld w = new helloworld();
        w.getHelloWorld();
    }

    public void getHelloWorld()
    {
        System.out.println(a + b);
    }

}
```

Lastly, the adoption of object-oriented programming further confounds established definitions of academic plagiarism as the candidate was taught about how it was explicitly designed to encourage code reuse among different programs, a trait which contravenes the notion of originality that anti-plagiarism policies enforce. This issue has been brought up by at least two academics, where they noted that such acts cannot be automatically qualified as plagiarism, even after accepted boundaries and limits have been established (Cosma & Joy, 2006, p. 117).

Based on these observations, it is this candidate's belief that any conclusion derived from research on the topic of source code plagiarism can be challenged if it was not written from a student's perspective. To back this claim, the candidate has sourced out three journals on source code plagiarism, one of which has been written from a student's viewpoint. These journals are:

- Source Code Plagiarism – A Student Perspective (Joy et al, 2011)
- Plagiarism Detection across Programming Languages (Arwin & Tahaghoghi, 2006)
- Source Code Plagiarism – A UK Academic Perspective (Cosma & Joy, 2006)

In Cosma's and Joy's journal on plagiarism from a staff's viewpoint, both academics claim that a student has plagiarized if he or she re-uses source code that:

- is written by another party, with or without permission, and passes it off as original content
- is written by themselves for a previous assignment, without acknowledging it

These points can be challenged by pointing out that certain programming assignments explicitly call for the reuse of source code from other programs or previous assignments. For example, the candidate's Java assignments in this course specifically state that Assignments 2 and 3 should be centred around the modification of the original source code written in Assignment 1, while Assignment 4 requires that the candidate acquire a working program from a suitable source and modify it to create a new program unique to the candidate.

In both cases, the candidate is required to engage in acts that fall under Cosma's and Joy's definition of source code plagiarism; by this logic, the candidate should have been charged for plagiarism upon submission of his Java coursework. Interestingly, Cosma and Joy did mention that such acts can be excused if the assignment specifically calls for code reuse (2006, p. 119), but the fact that this point was left out in their conclusion suggests that they were of the belief that such assignments are not commonly issued to students.

Similar arguments can be made against Arwin's and Tahaghoghi's hypothesis (2006), in which both academics theorize that one way to detect plagiarism in source code that has been translated into different programming languages is to note the similarities between both programs' code structure (p. 1), and that various tools can be used to determine the degree of such similarities.

Based on the candidate's understanding of Arwin's and Tahaghoghi's research, it is this candidate's belief that both academics have focused their efforts on explaining how such detection techniques can be used to identify plagiarism in more advanced source code, and have neglected to take into account how beginner-level code tends to share near identical structures and syntax among different programming languages. A good way to illustrate this point will be to compare the "Hello World" codes between two high-level programming languages, C# and Java ("Console Application Development (C# vs Java), 2012, paras 5, 8):

```
/*  A Java Hello World Console Application */
public class Hello {
    public static void main (String args[]) {
        System.out.println ("Hello World");
    }
}

// A C# Hello World Console Application.
public class Hello
{
    static void Main()
    {
        System.Console.WriteLine("Hello World");
    }
}
```

Based on the code examples above, one would realize that the syntax and methods called in both examples are almost identical between both programming languages despite having been written from scratch; by Arwin's and Tahaghoghi's logic, the degree of similarity between both "Hello World" programs should be significant enough to flag one of these programs as having plagiarized from the other even though no such act was committed.

This leaves us with Joy et al's (2011) research paper, which, unlike the prior two papers, were specifically written from a student's point of view instead of an academic staff's. In it, Joy er al (2011) briefly mentioned various motivating factors (p. 126) that might tempt a student to commit an act of plagiarism for assignments, many of which are backed up by prior research made by other academics. Furthermore, their paper also takes into consideration that the students who plagiarize can be split into three groups, mainly:

- "those who plagiarize deliberately" (Joy et al, 2011, p. 131);
- "those who (plagiarize) negligently" (Joy et al, 2011, p. 131);
- those who are ignorant about what constitutes plagiarism (Joy et al, 2011, p. 131)

Key to Joy et al's (2011) research is their finding that most students are generally aware why academic plagiarism is frowned upon and do make conscious attempts to turn in an original piece of work (p. 128 – 129), only to be let down by a variety of issues such as imperfect knowledge about what constitutes plagiarism and how programs or source code must be referenced when re-used or re-purposed (Joy et al, 2011, p. 129).

Having come from a journalistic background, it is this candidate's contention that unless students have prior experience in a reference-heavy course such as Journalism or Law, they are unlikely to be aware about the implications of plagiarism, what kind of material should be cited, and the methodology involved in doing so. This makes Joy et al's research paper (2011) the only paper that the candidate can relate to, and whose conclusion the candidate was unable to challenge under any circumstances.

Word count: 1499 (including in-text citations)

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Question 2

In this question, the candidate is required to seek out three websites that serve content about academic plagiarism, evaluate them based on the importance of the issues addressed in each site, and subsequently summarize his findings in a table of a specified template that has been provided by the question.

Ideally, the candidate believes that, where possible the websites chosen for this question should have some relation to the points and opinions that were previously raised in Question 1 of this assignment. The benefits of such an approach are centred around the need for consistency in research papers; it is the candidate's opinion that covering all aspects of a specific set of issues is better than adopting a 'touch-and-go' approach with multiple spanning issues.

With this in mind, the candidate has identified the following websites as having suitable content to meet the aforementioned requirement:

- The Plague of Plagiarism: Academic Plagiarism Defined (Hexham, 2005, para 1)
- PlagiarismdotORG (“PlagiarismdotORG”, 2012, para 1)
- The Purdue OWL: Using Research (“Purdue Online Writing Lab”, 2012, para 1)

In the first website listed above, it would seem that Hexham (2005) shares the candidate's opinion that detailed information covering a specific subset of points related to plagiarism contains more depth and value than simply adopting a touch-and-go approach in which surface-level information about the many causes of plagiarism is provided. This can be seen by the nature of the content published by Hexham; the entirety of his webpage is centred around three main topics, namely:

- what constitutes plagiarism (Hexham, 2005, paras 4 -14);
- how plagiarism is committed, either intentionally or unintentionally (Hexham, 2005, paras 14 – 59), and
- how one should make use of citations and quotations to avoid getting accused of committing plagiarism (Hexham, 2005, paras 14 – 67)

Based on the nature of the content in Hexham's article, it is this candidate's contention that the author agrees, to some extent, with Joy et al's (2011) findings that was brought up in the previous question; that students generally make conscious attempts to cite their sources, but are let down by the use of improper techniques in doing so. That Hexham actually provides examples of both correct and incorrect methods of citing one's sources in his writeup only serves to back up the candidate's belief that proper citation methodology is probably the most important issue that should be tackled in any writeup that deals with academic plagiarism, as it is generally accepted that most academic institutions already expect their students to be fully aware about proper citation methods and do not entertain excuses (“items tagged with plagiarism checking, 2012, para 4) such as instances of incorrect or non-standard citations (Vernal, 2003, p. 2) as valid forms of defence against any plagiarism charges.

In the second website listed above, it appears that PlagiarismdorORG (2012) has opted for the 'touch-and-go' approach and has attempted to convey as much surface-level information to a reader about what plagiarism is all about, the different ways plagiarism can occur and why it is an important issue to be made aware of, among many others. In addition, the site also provides 'Read More' links to direct interested readers to pages that contain slightly more depth than the short stubs published on its index page.

That said, while the candidate has made it known that he prefers in-depth content that deals with highly specific issues, the candidate is also aware that such preferences are not shared by many other readers. Indeed, sites such as PlagiarismdotORG, while lacking in in-depth content that students will eventually need to access to enhance their understanding on the topic, serve as extremely good 'one-stop' sources that provide readers with much of the surface-level knowledge needed to attain basic understanding on the academic vice that is plagiarism, and what are the recognized techniques they should employ to ensure that they do not run afoul of plagiarism checkers.

Lastly, the third website (“Purdue Online Writing Lab”, 2012, para 1) has apparently combined both the benefits of highly-specific, in-depth content with those of short, surface-level stubs to provide what is probably a true 'one-stop source' on plagiarism that offers readers a variety of content that is available in both formats. However, the biggest advantage of this website is its inclusion of a proper navigational bar that offers readers quick access to various specific within its website, as opposed to the simpler layout of PlagiarismdotORG in which there is no easy to return to the main table of contents as navigation is only provided by a pair of 'Back' and 'Next' text links.

Finally, the candidate's views on each website can be summarized in a table as shown below:

Plagiarism Issues	**Name of Webpage**	**URL**	**Best feature**	**Worst feature**
Types of plagiarism, Correct / Incorrect citation techniques	The Plague of Plagiarism: Academic Plagiarism Defined	http://people.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/content/articles/plague-of-plagiarism.html	Detailed information on two important aspects of plagiarism prevention	Absence of proper navigational structure; all content is crammed into one page with only simple anchors to link to respective sections
Facts, types of plagiarism, proper citation, prevention of plagiarism	PlagiarismdotORG	http://plagiarism.org/	Easy-to-understand surface-level information and use of a simple but effective layout allows readers to attain basic understanding of the topic in no time	Lack of proper in-depth information limits proper understanding of issues
Proper citation, prevention of plagiarism, acceptable citation methods	The Purdue OWL: Using Research	http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/9/	Combines the best features from both aforementioned sources to provide more comprehensive information	Absence of a dynamic and interactive 'drop-down' navigational bar affects speed of access to relevant material

Question 3

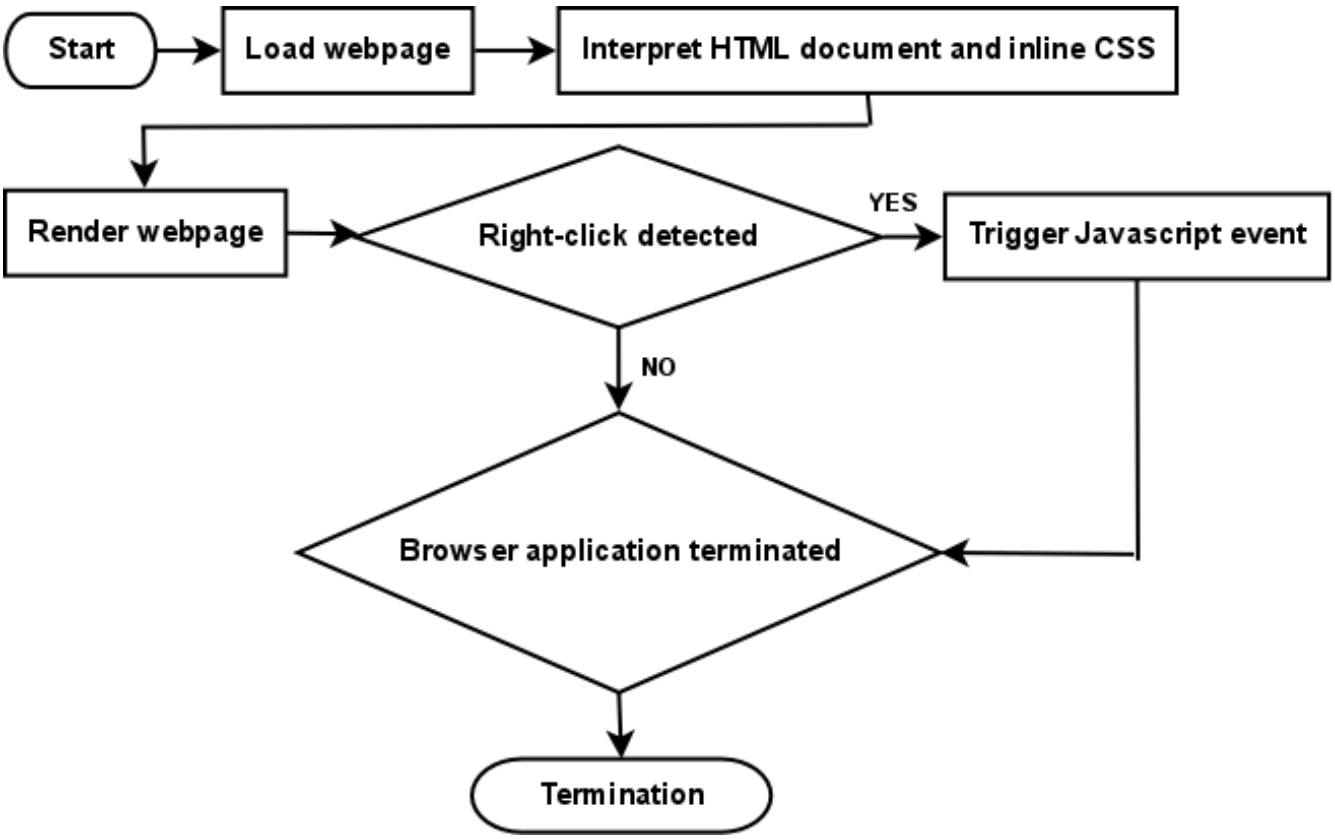
It is the candidate's opinion that Hexham's writeup on the types of plagiarism and the proper methods of citing content referenced from other sources (2005), while deep enough to provide a lot of value to any reader, could benefit from the addition on a section which explains why it is so important that students get their citations correct. For example, within this section, Hexham can describe how academic institutions today are not accepting ignorance of proper citation methods as a valid excuse for committing any acts of plagiarism.

In addition, for the sake of completeness, Hexham can also provide links to online articles that describe how academic institutions have penalized or charged students for plagiarism due to their use of unacceptable citation methods in their writeups or assignments. This will help to reinforce the notion that proper citation is probably the single most important skill that any student must acquire during their studies if they want to avoid finding themselves in a situation where their integrity is called into question. As such, the candidate's website will include this additional section in order to allow readers to gain a better understanding of the importance of having proper citations in academic papers.

Last but definitely not least, in order to further drive home the point that proper citations can make or break an academic paper, the candidate has decided to embed some JavaScript into his version of the webpage. When a reader right clicks on the site, a JavaScript alert containing a reminder that any content referenced from this site should be properly cited in order to avoid getting falsely accused for plagiarism.

Flowchart of site algorithm

The structure and workings of the webpage's coding can be explained in the flowchart shown below:



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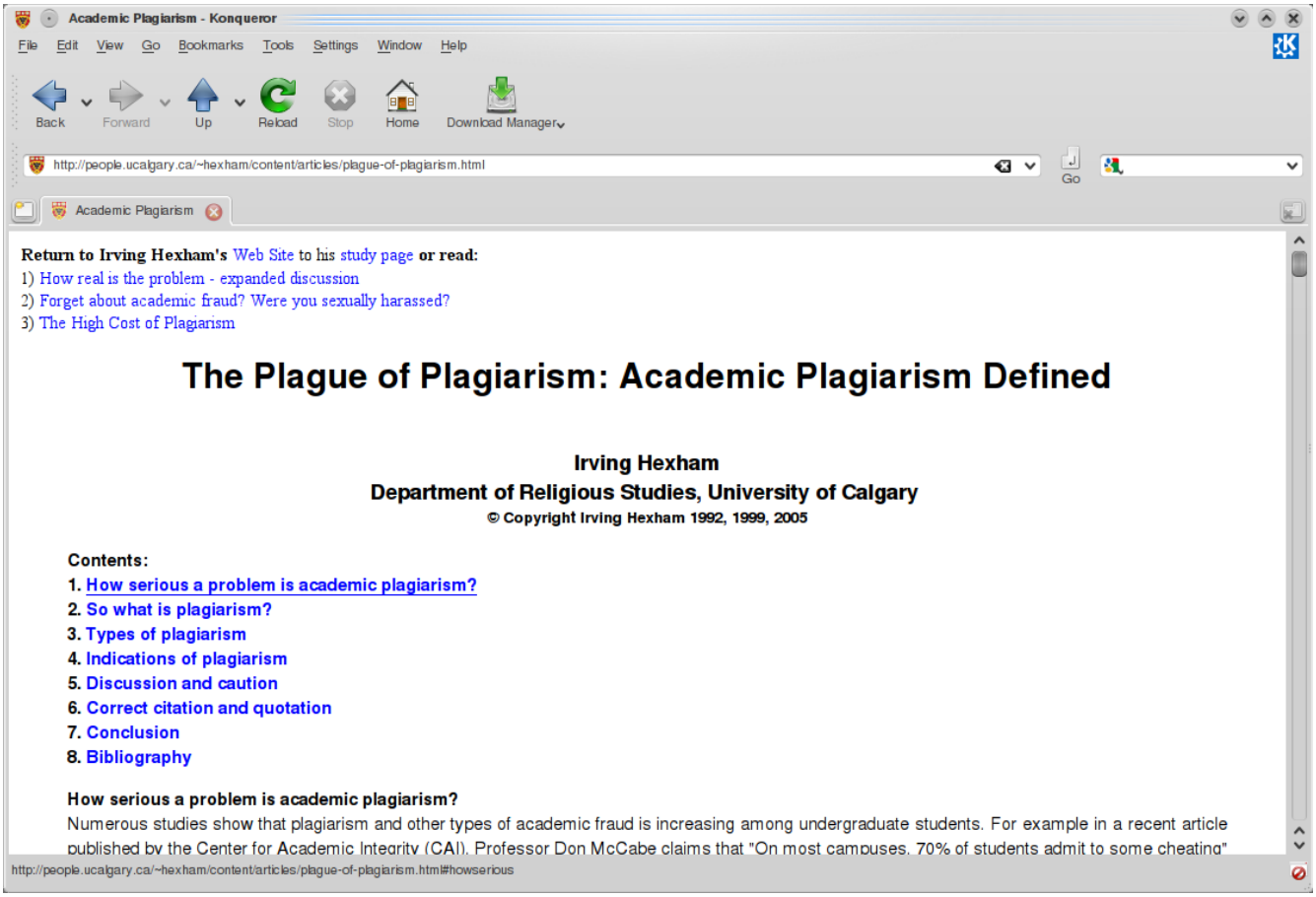
Website comparisons

For the comparison, the candidate has decided to use the **Konqueror** web browser to render both the original web page and the candidate's idea of a 'better' webpage that improves upon the original. Konqueror is chosen due to its status as being one of at least two web browsers that are preloaded into any Linux distribution (if the K Desktop Environment is loaded by default), as well as its KHTML rendering engine's capability to accommodate certain non-standard codes unique to Internet Explorer's rendering engine for maximum compatibility (“KHTML”, 2012, para 2).

A screenshot of the original website can be seen below:



Source: http://people.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/content/articles/plague-of-plagiarism.html

The next four screenshots are those of the candidate's webpage:

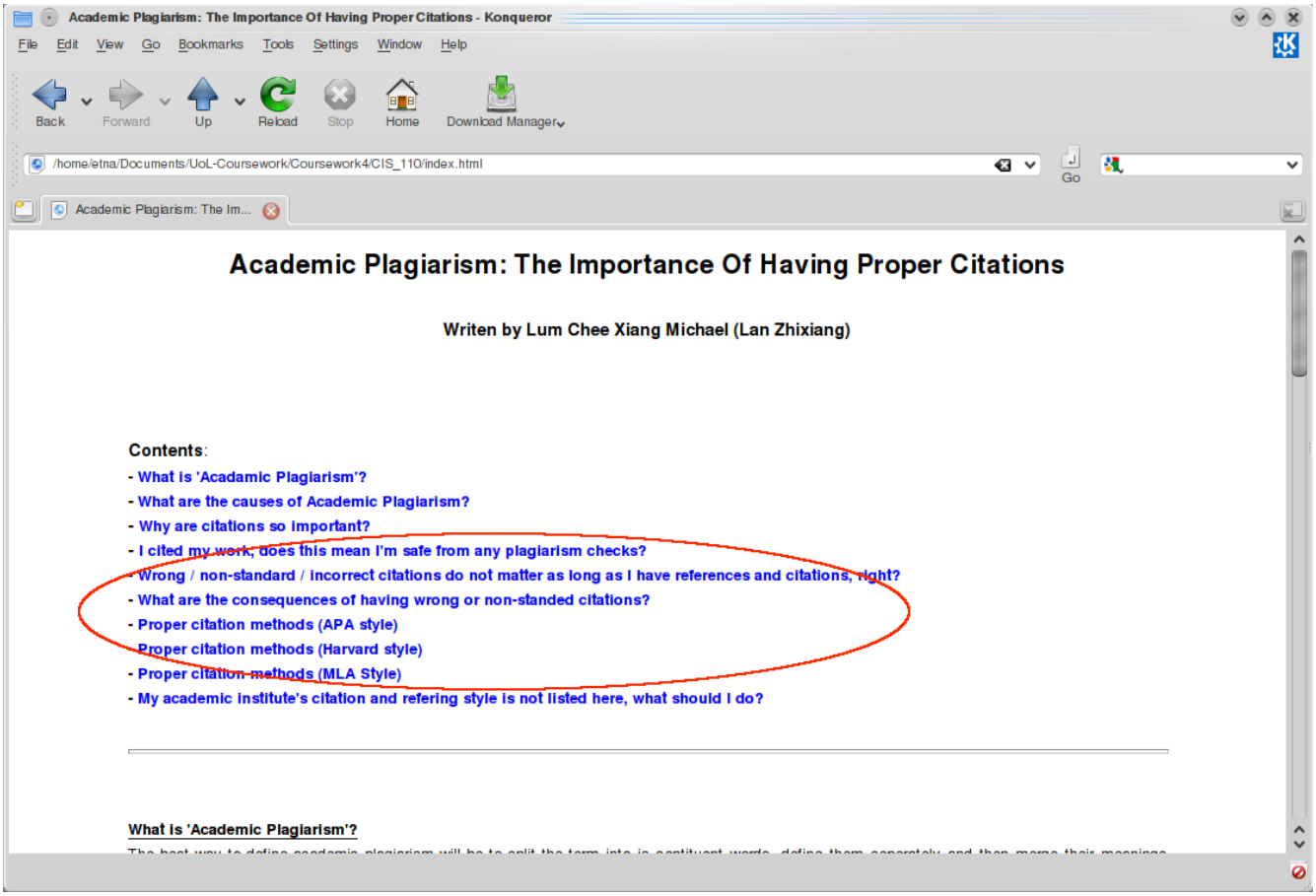


Figure 3.1: More comprehensive table of contents with additional sections

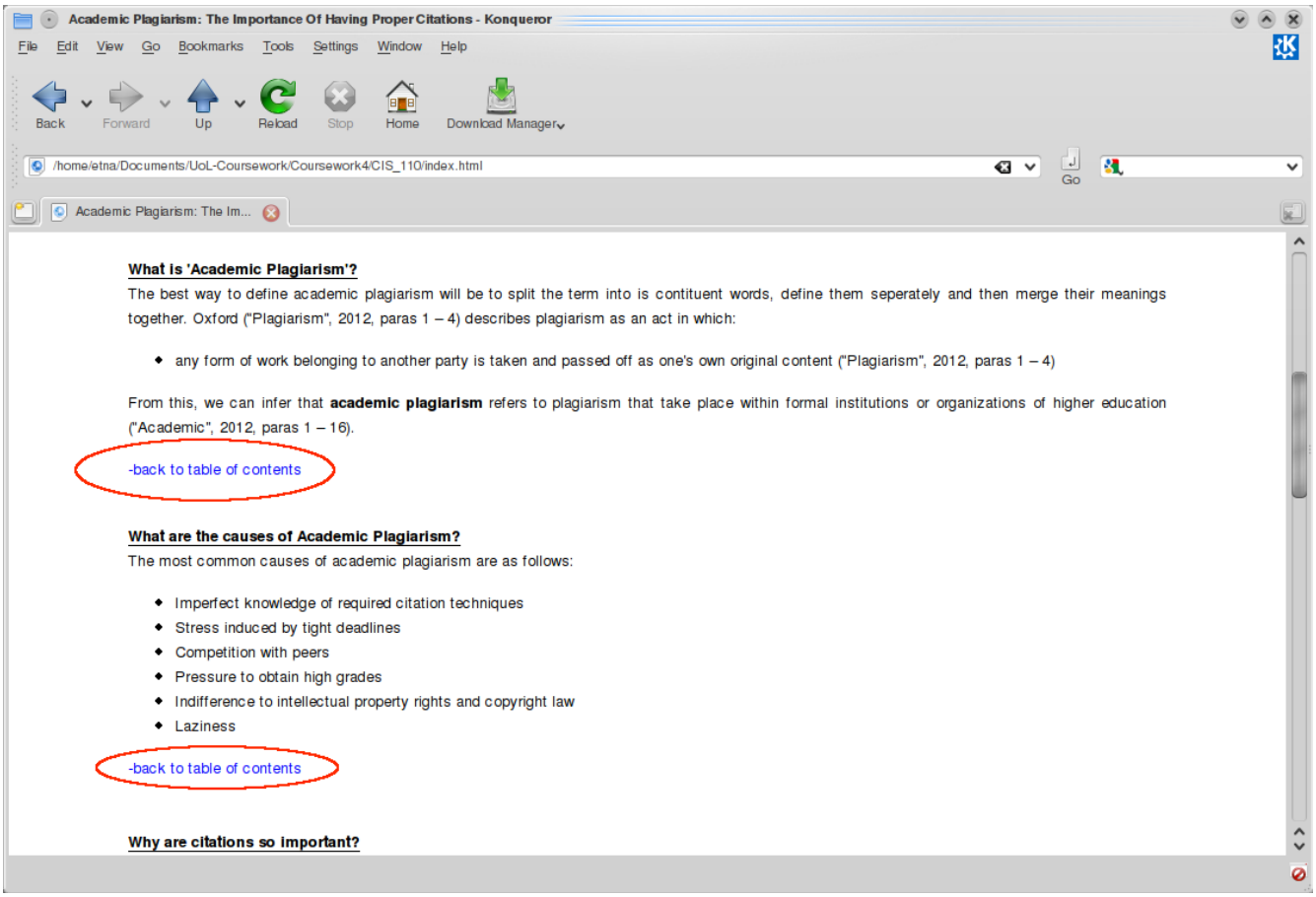


Figure 3.2: Inclusion of 'Back to table of contents' anchor for easier navigation

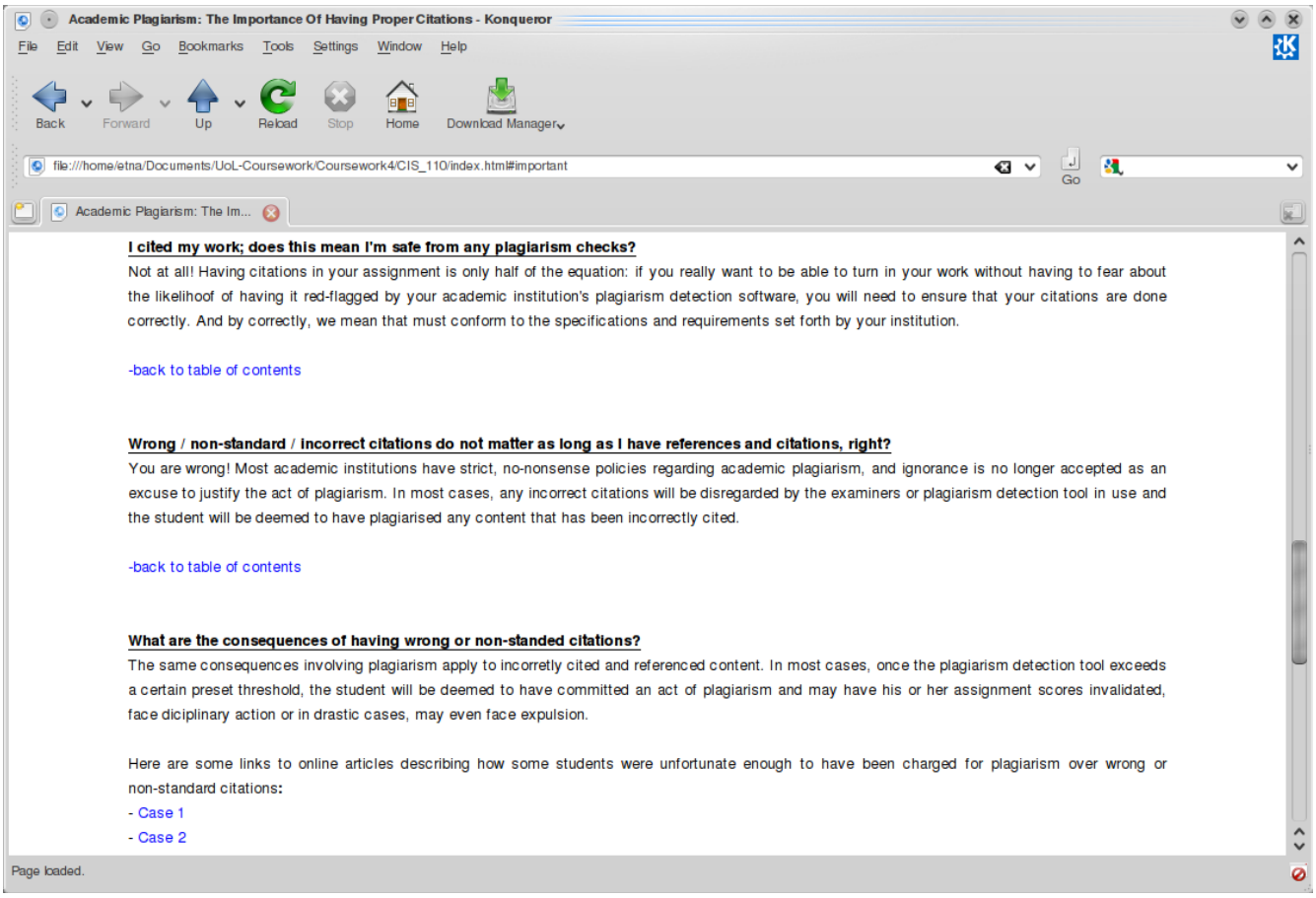


Figure 3.3: Illustration of content in additional sections and use of external links

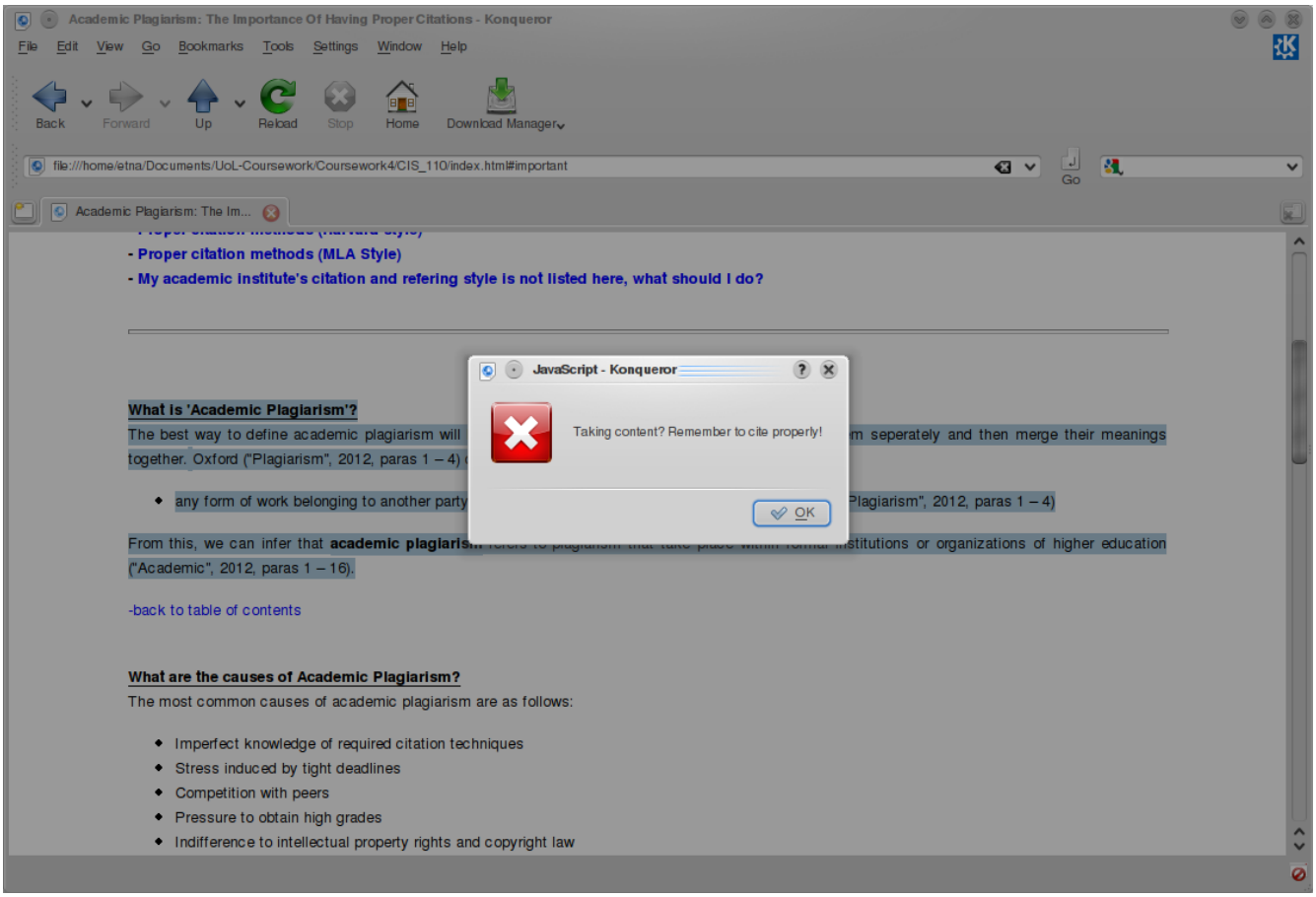


Figure 3.4: Use of Javascript to inform the user about need to cite any content taken from the website properly

Techniques used in creation of website

In creating the website, the candidate sought to preserve as much of the structure and functionality of the original webpage where possible. The first technique employed by the candidate to achieve this lies in how the table of contents present at the top of the webpage function. Like the original, the candidate's website made use of anchor links to link with content entry to its corresponding section in the webpage.

For example, the entry entitled “What is Academic Plagiarism?” in the table of contents is linked to its corresponding section in the main content by first appending the tags to it in the XHTML document, and then subsequently adding the   to the anchor it is linked to, like so:

```
<a href=”#plagiarism”>What is Academic Plagiarism?</a>
<a name=”plagiarism”>What is Academic Plagiarism?</a>
```

The outcome of such a method is that the user can click on the anchor links in the contents section to immediately access the topic of interest within the webpage instantly, as opposed to having to scroll up and down the long webpage to find said content.

In the process of doing so, the candidate realized that therein lies a flaw present in the original website; while anchor links made it possible for visitors to access any content within the webpage instantly, the original website had seemingly neglected to provide an additional anchor link that would direct users back to the table of contents instantly. This oversight meant that visitors who wanted to access the table of contents again after clicking on an anchor link need to either manually scroll up to the top of the webpage or click on the 'Back' button on their browser to do so.

To fix this issue, the candidate came up with the idea of adding an additional anchor link under every section in the main content area that, when clicked, will instantly re-direct users to the table of contents situated at the top of the webpage. This feature can be seen in Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 of the screenshots provided in the previous pages, and is accomplished by adding the following codes:

```
<a name=”contents:”>Contents:</a>
<a href=”#contents:">-back to table of contents</a>
```

The next technique that the candidate has employed in the creation of this webpage is that of forcing links to external sites to open themselves in new windows (or tabs, depending on the web browser's behaviour) instead of in the same window or tab that the candidate's website is currently being displayed in, as shown in Figure 3.3. The motive behind such behaviour is rather simple: the candidate believes that any visitor who clicks on a link to open a page on an external site may want to refer back to the originating site's content to perform some comparisons in content between the two pages, and having the new page open in the same window introduces some complexity in such a workflow.

To accomplish this need, the candidate simply added an additional parameter into the <a href> tags to force such behaviour from the browser. The full code used is simply:

```
<a href=”http://hamptonroads.com/2008/08/university-virginia-students-accused-plagiarism-expelled-program”
target=”_blank”>Case 1</a>
```

Lastly, to emphasize once again that having proper citations in any academic assignment can make a difference between a paper that passes or fails a plagiarism check by plagiarism detection tools, the candidate has embedded a script within the <head> </head> tags of the XHTML document that will be triggered upon detection of any right-click activity on the webpage by a visitor. This can be seen in Figure 3.4 of the provided screenshots of the candidate's webpage.

This script, which is written in JavaScript, was re-purposed for use in this website from a generic JavaScript eventHandler template provided in a textbook written by Negrino and Smith (2004, pp 242 – 243). When the webpage detects any right-click activity, the script will call up an Alert dialogue box, in which users are reminded that it is perfectly fine to make use of content published within the site for their use, but they should be mindful about citing their sources appropriately in order to ensure that they do not commit plagiarism.

The code used to generate the dialogue box is as follows (Negrino & Smith, 2004, pp 242 – 243):

```
<script language="Javascript" type="text/javascript">
if (document.layers) {
document.captureEvents(Event.MOUSEDOWN)
}
document.onmousedown = captureMousedown

function captureMousedown(evt) {
if (evt) {
mouseClick = evt.which
}
else {
mouseClick = window.event.button
}

if (mouseClick==2 || mouseClick==3) {
alert("Taking content? Remember to cite properly!")
return false
}
}
  </script>
```

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Self-evaluation

As the candidate has had some prior experience in writing simple HTML pages in the early 2000s, the transition from HTML 4.01 to XHTML 1.0 Transitional and finally, XHTML 1.0 Strict was rather smooth, as many of the concepts that the candidate has picked up in HTML 4.01 are still applicable in XHTML 1.0 Strict, barring a few deprecated tags and added emphasis on tag and code structure. As such, the candidate attempted this assignment with the mentality that it serves as a good way to catch up on the developments of HTML standards in today's digital age.

One of the techniques that the candidate has picked up in the transition from HTML 4 to XHTML 1.0 Strict involves the use of Cascading Style Sheets or CSS; in the early 2000s, the candidate would typically attempt to bypass CSS in favour of deprecated HTML font formatting tags such as <b> and as it was much easier to implement them on a simple webpage as opposed to crafting inline or external style sheets.

However, for this assignment, the candidate felt motivated to make use of inline style sheets for text formatting as it allows for finer control over the webpage's content layout: for example, CSS made it possible for the candidate to make use of the text-align:justify attribute to perform text justification on the website. In the process, the candidate was also able to make use of the text-align:center attribute to centralize text in a webpage as opposed to utilizing the deprecated tag used in prior versions of HTML.

Other than the use of style sheets, it was gratifying to note that anchor links are still compatible under XHTML 1.0 Strict, as much of the candidate's website's functionality centred around the use of such anchors. The use of XHTML in this assignment has also brought to the candidate's attention the need for all tags to be closed under the XHTML specification; this is in contrast to the lax specifications in XHTML 1.0 Transitional and HTML 4.01, in which certain tags such as
 and <p> do not require closing in most circumstances.

That being said, if there was one aspect about the website that the candidate is extremely dissatisfied with, it will be the fact that the candidate's lack of any prior experience in the JavaScript scripting language forced him to re-purpose a generic JavaScript event handler template from an old JavaScript textbook (Negrino & Smith, 2004, pp 242 – 243) for use in this website instead of writing his own original script. Even though the candidate is confident that the scripting code has been properly cited and referenced in this assignment, the candidate cannot help but feel that he still lacks much of higher-level knowledge and techniques needed of webmasters and web administrators in the working world.

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