



GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH PLAGIARISM AND COLLUSION

1. What is plagiarism?

The University treats plagiarism as a matter for academic judgement.

Section 8.1 of the University's *Code of Practice on Assessment* provides the following definition of plagiarism:

“Plagiarism occurs when a student misrepresents, as his/her own work, the work, written or otherwise, of any other person (including another student) or of any institution. Examples of forms of plagiarism include:

- the verbatim (word for word) copying of another's work without appropriate and correctly presented acknowledgement;
- the close paraphrasing of another's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without appropriate and correctly presented acknowledgement;
- unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another's work;
- the deliberate and detailed presentation of another's concept as one's own.”

All types of work submitted by students are covered by this definition, including, for example, written work, diagrams, designs, charts, musical compositions and pictures.

2. Is plagiarism a deliberate act?

Not always. For example, inexperienced students might not properly reference information that has been obtained from another source, without any deliberate intent to deceive. There would be no excuse for a more experienced student not to reference information properly.

Many students, particularly international students, come from academic backgrounds where plagiarism (as we know it) is not considered wrong and can even be considered a mark of respect to the original author. Some students for whom English is a second language may not feel sufficiently confident to assimilate and represent the views of the original author and so lift wording directly from the text. Sometimes students can plagiarise without being aware that they are quoting another source. For example, students may repeat ideas from a textbook or a lecture without even being aware that they are doing so, and so do not reference the source. Such circumstances could not be regarded as an excuse for more experienced students who are suspected of plagiarism.

Early advice on the nature of plagiarism and training in citation and referencing is important to help students avoid committing plagiarism.

3. What is collusion?

The University treats collusion as a matter for academic judgement.

Section 8.1 of the University's *Code of Practice on Assessment* provides the following definition of collusion:

“Collusion occurs when, unless with official approval (e.g. in the case of group projects), two or more students consciously collaborate in the preparation and production of work which is ultimately submitted by each in an identical, or substantially similar, form and/or is represented by each to be the product of his or her individual efforts. Collusion also occurs where there is unauthorised co-operation between a student and another person in the preparation and production of work which is presented as the student's own.”

Plagiarism and collusion should always be treated seriously, with action appropriate to the circumstances being taken (see below).

4. How can I help students to avoid plagiarism and collusion?

‘Plagiarism – A Good Practice Guide’ by Jude Carroll and Jon Appleton¹ identifies a number of recommendations for good practice that may help lessen the number of instances of plagiarism.

Departments should hold an event early in the first semester of the students' registration (but not necessarily during induction week) which introduces students to the skills of academic writing and citation, and which emphasises what plagiarism and collusion are and how and why they should be avoided. The use, at such events, of active learning techniques, which provide opportunities for discussion, practice and feedback, should be considered. Departmental/programme handbooks should also refer students to guidance on plagiarism and collusion.

Taking the following actions may help in combating plagiarism and collusion:

- a) Changing the assessments regularly. Using the same essay titles regularly or setting the same case studies or practicals increases the opportunity for students to plagiarise the work of others.
- b) Reviewing the learning outcomes of the module/programme so that students are required to demonstrate analysis, evaluation and synthesis rather than simply knowledge and understanding. If students are required to demonstrate their own thoughts and ideas, they will find it more difficult to plagiarise the ideas of others.
- c) Adding citation and referencing skills to the list of learning outcomes of some modules. This is particularly useful in the early stages of a student's academic career, in order to help them to understand plagiarism and how to avoid it.

¹ ‘Plagiarism – A Good Practice Guide’, Jude Carroll and Jon Appleton, Oxford Brookes University/JISC, May 2001 – http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/brookes.pdf

- d) Developing a system for keeping records of instances of plagiarism and collusion in relation to individual assessments or modules in order to monitor whether it is particularly prevalent in certain areas of the syllabus, and whether particular strategies and initiatives are effective in combating the problem.

Departments should require students, when submitting work for summative assessment, to provide a signed declaration that they have not plagiarised material for the assessment, nor have they colluded in producing the work. The appended coversheet may be used for this purpose, but departments may use their own procedures/forms to obtain the necessary declaration. Where anonymous marking of assessments is carried out, departments should establish procedures for the declarations to be separated from the work to be assessed before being passed to the marker(s).

The University will aim to provide advice and training in its staff development programme on how to detect and deal with plagiarism and collusion and on how to help students to avoid them.

5. What should I do if I suspect plagiarism or collusion?

Action will vary according to the individual case and examiners will need to exercise discretion when considering the offence that has occurred. In the interest of helping students to avoid continued acts of plagiarism and collusion, when cases of suspected plagiarism and collusion are detected they should be investigated as promptly as possible.

When **plagiarism** is suspected in relation to work submitted by a student on a taught programme of study, the first step is to consider whether the alleged plagiarism falls into the category of **minor plagiarism** or the category of **major plagiarism**

The University defines **minor plagiarism** as a small amount of paraphrasing, quotation or use of diagrams, charts etc. without adequate citation. Minor plagiarism may result from poor scholarship (i.e. when a student, through inexperience or carelessness, fails to reference appropriately or adequately identify the source of the material which they use) or it may be a deliberate act but on a small scale.

The University defines **major plagiarism** as:

- extensive paraphrasing or quoting without proper citation of the source;
- lifting directly from a text or other academic source without reference;
(*Where material is taken directly from a text or other source the cited material should be demarcated with quotation marks or in some other accepted way **and** the source should be cited.*)
- the use of essays (or parts thereof) from essay banks, either downloaded from the internet or obtained from other sources;
- presenting another's designs or concepts as one's own;
- continued instances of what was initially regarded as minor plagiarism despite warnings having been given to the student concerned.

Where an examiner identifies paraphrasing or quotation without referencing which would fall into the category of **minor plagiarism** defined above, the normal course of action would be for him/her to issue a written warning to the student, but not to apply any penalty. (A standard form of wording for such a warning is attached to this guidance document.) Before issuing any such warning, however, the examiner should check the student's record to ascertain whether any previous warnings for minor plagiarism have been issued. If two previous warnings for minor plagiarism have been issued, the examiner should regard the student as persisting in committing minor acts of plagiarism and should initiate the procedure for dealing with alleged acts of major plagiarism, detailed below. If the student's record shows that the student has previously been found to have committed major plagiarism or to have colluded in the production of assessed work, then, notwithstanding that previous warnings for minor plagiarism may not have been issued, the examiner should initiate the procedure for dealing with alleged acts of major plagiarism, detailed below. An examiner who issues a warning for minor plagiarism must ensure that this is noted in the student's records, including their records on SPIDER, and that the Assessment Officer for the student's department is informed.

When an instance of alleged **major plagiarism** or **collusion** is identified, the first step is to report the matter to the Assessment Officer in the department which 'owns' the module concerned. The Assessment Officer, together with the examiner who suspects the plagiarism or collusion, will investigate the allegation on behalf of the Chair of the appropriate Board of Examiners, according to the procedure set out in Regulation 6 of the Regulations for the Conduct of Examinations, by inviting the student(s) to provide an explanation of the circumstances for the plagiarism or collusion. The student(s) must be afforded the opportunity to make any representations that they may wish to make. If the investigation involves a face-to-face meeting between the Assessment Officer, the examiner and the student(s) suspected of plagiarism or collusion (which the student(s) may request), then each student will be entitled to be accompanied by another member of the University, e.g. a fellow student. If, following the investigation, the Assessment Officer and the examiner concerned conclude that plagiarism or collusion has taken place, the Assessment Officer will advise the Chair of the appropriate Board of Examiners and provide information on the circumstances. If the Chair of the Board of Examiners, after appropriate consultation with the Board of Examiners, accepts the findings, the student(s) will be awarded a mark of zero for the assessment. If, as a result, they fail the module as a whole, they will be required to re-take the assessment to which the plagiarism or collusion related. In the case of non-clinical undergraduate programmes, the resulting mark for the module will be capped at the designated pass mark for the module for carry forward and final assessment purposes. It should be noted that, where permission has been granted for a re-sit opportunity **not** to be provided within a given session for an assessment, then a student who is found to have committed major plagiarism or to have colluded in that assessment may be unable to progress to the next year of their studies.

If two or more students are found to have colluded in producing a piece of assessed work (this includes one student allowing another to copy his/her work and submit it as his/her own), then each should be given a mark of zero for the assessment. If one or more students are found to have copied the work of another student in any form

without his/her knowledge, then this should be treated as plagiarism and the penalty applied only to those students who have committed the plagiarism.

When students are found to have committed major plagiarism or to have colluded in an assessment, the Board of Examiners should arrange for other work submitted by the student(s) for assessment to be scrutinised to determine whether such work contains previously undetected instances of plagiarism or collusion.

If a student is found to have committed major plagiarism or to have colluded in the production of assessed work, the Board of Examiners concerned is responsible for ensuring that this is noted in the student's records, including their records on SPIDER.

Students may not appeal against the decision of the Board of Examiners, except on the grounds of procedural irregularity.

Should a student be found to have committed major plagiarism or collusion on a third occasion, the Board of Examiners shall determine that the student has failed to satisfy the requirements of the programme. It shall also determine in those circumstances whether or not any award is to be made to the student. The student has a right of appeal against the decision of the Board of Examiners through the assessment appeals process (see http://www.liv.ac.uk/sas/administration/assessment_appeals_ug&pgt.pdf)

Students should be aware that committing plagiarism or collusion may have serious consequences and that the University may choose not to award a Degree or other award to those students who have committed either of these acts.

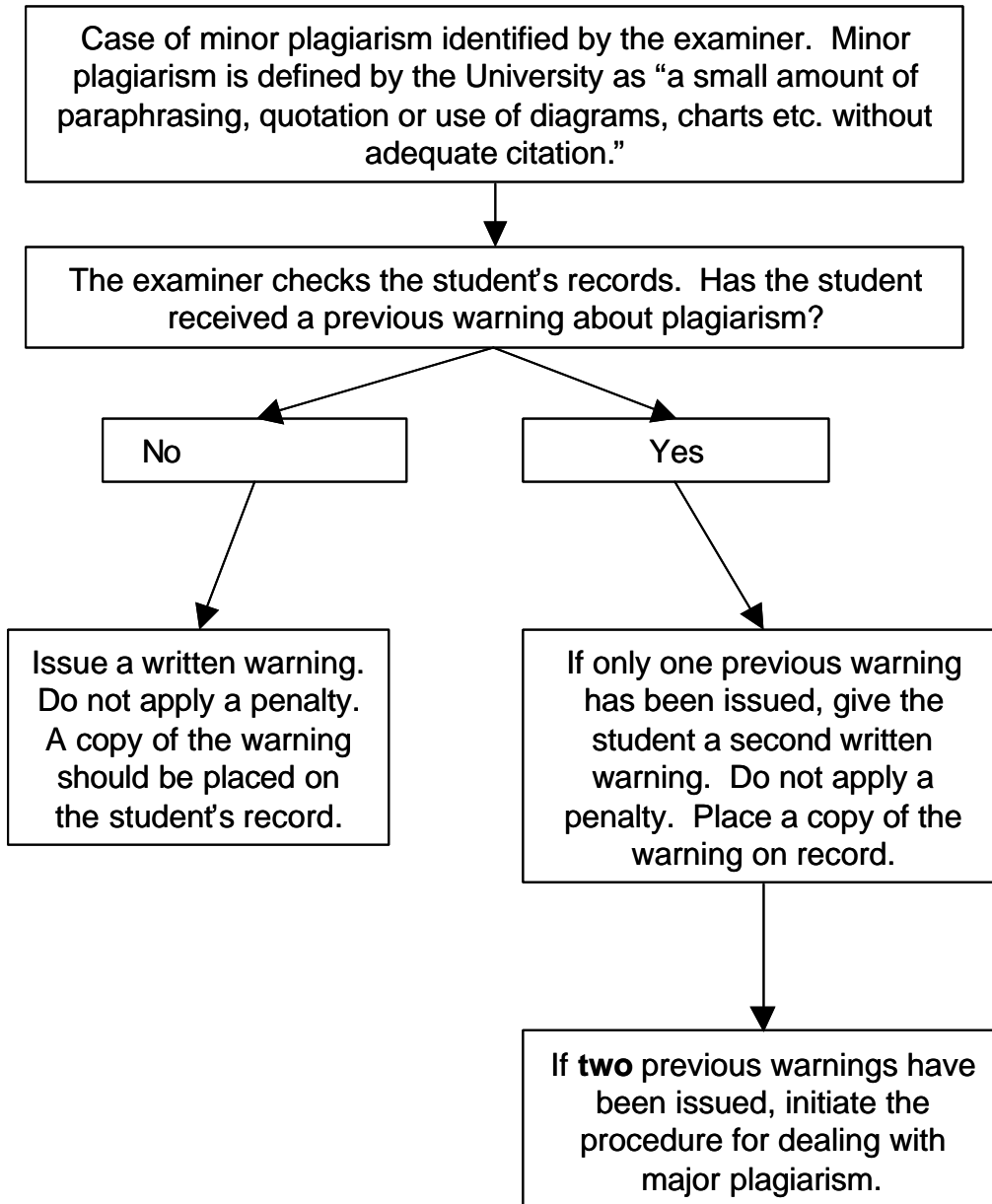
6. Higher degrees by research

Where a panel of examiners suspects a candidate of reproducing, in a dissertation or thesis, work of another person or persons without acknowledgement, they shall afford the candidate an opportunity to make any representations s/he may wish to make. Following consideration of such representations (if any), the panel of examiners will have the discretion to recommend the award of the degree or otherwise, in the light of the gravity and extent of the plagiarism involved.

Students may not appeal against the decision of the panel of Examiners except on the grounds of procedural irregularity.

Should it be suspected subsequent to the award of a research degree that the thesis concerned contains plagiarised material, the University has the right to conduct an investigation and, if plagiarism is found, to revoke the degree (see statute 25, clause 9: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/commsec/calendar/statutesb.html#25>)

PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH MINOR PLAGIARISM



PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH MAJOR PLAGIARISM AND COLLUSION