

Plagiarism Notes of Guidance for Markers

AU-RSC-21-4836-A

Applicable to students in all Stages/Years of programmes

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CONTENTS

Policy Summary2

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance2

Version Control2

Plagiarism Notes of Guidance.....3

Use of “plagiarism detection” software3

Summary.....4

Policy Summary

This document provides guidance to staff on the appropriate response to varying types and extents of possible plagiarism encountered in the assessment of students.

This guidance summarises indicators of both incorrect referencing and potential plagiarism, and the actions that should be taken by markers in each case.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

The University’s [Fixed-Time Assessment Regulations for Candidates](#) provide guidance on processes for academic offences other than plagiarism committed within a fixed-time assessment room. The [Regulations on Student Discipline](#) provide further information on the discipline of students and the processes that may be enacted in these cases.

The University’s [Assessment Regulations](#) include the Text-Matching Software Policy, which sets out the University’s approach to the use of Turnitin.

Version Control

Ref No	Version	Responsible Officer	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date
AU-RSC-18-1864	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2019	Sep 2019
AU-RSC-19-2818	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2020	Sep 2020
AU-RSC-20-3969	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2021	Sep 2021
AU-RSC-21-4836	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jul 2022	Sep 2022

Plagiarism Notes of Guidance

This document provides guidance to staff on the appropriate response to varying types and extents of possible plagiarism.

[Regulations on Student Discipline](#) C1.2 define plagiarism as: ‘where a student uses, without appropriate acknowledgement, the work of other people and presents it as their own which may give an unfair advantage over others. Intentional and unintentional acts of plagiarism will be construed as offences.’

Regulation C1.6 states: ‘It is the responsibility of members of staff to refer cases of suspected academic offences to the Academic Offences Officer of the College in which the student is enrolled, or the person designated by the Senate in the case of a student enrolled on an inter-College or collaborative programme.’

A member of staff must exercise judgement when the apparent offence is limited in extent, or may arise out of ignorance of the academic culture within UK HE institutions (e.g. College leavers submitting their first coursework, international MSc students). In such cases it will normally be most appropriate to take the opportunity of normal assessment procedures to penalise what amounts to poor technique and to offer formative feedback to the student to prevent further error. It is important that such feedback must attribute any marking consequences for this sort of error to poor technique rather than to plagiarism (which is by definition a disciplinary matter). However it may be appropriate to mention the risk of being accused of plagiarism in future if the error is repeated. This would be construed by the University as an ‘informal warning’ and should be notified to the Academic Offences Officer in the appropriate College.

A member of staff may consider that plagiarism has occurred, for example because of the extent of copying, attempts to conceal copying, or because the student is well versed in what is required (e.g. a second Stage student). Then it is necessary to refer the case to the Academic Offences Officer in the appropriate College, who will make a final judgement on whether there is a case to answer. Thus students accused of plagiarism have their work seen by at least two members of staff before a charge is brought.

Use of “text-matching” software

Where concerns that plagiarism has occurred have been highlighted through the use of text-matching software, such as [Turnitin](#); care must be taken to ensure that there has not been poor academic practice. Staff must consider the ‘outcome score’ in the context of the work that has been undertaken and in relation to any associated works that might legitimately lead to a similarity of content, such as the original project proposal in relation to a dissertation/project by the same student and/or the individual indices which make up the overall index.

Summary

Some common indicators of incorrect referencing	Some common indicators of plagiarism
Accidental	Deliberate
Arising from lack of understanding of UK HE requirements	Showing reckless disregard for expected standard of referencing guidelines/advice
Small number of 'problem' references	Greater number of 'problem' areas (suggesting systematic approach)
No substantial advantage gained from 'problem' references	Substantial advantage gained from 'problematic' references (suggesting deliberate offence)
No attempt to conceal	Attempt to conceal (suggesting deliberate offence)
First assessment	Subsequent assessment (suggesting deliberate offence)
Action in the event of poor referencing	Action in the event of plagiarism
Reduce the mark given to the assignment by an appropriate amount due to poor referencing. Ensure student has appropriate information to ensure the problem is not repeated. Students should be warned if they are 'in danger of committing plagiarism' (informal warning – report to College Assessment Offences Officer) BUT plagiarism has not been committed in this assignment.	Mark as if plagiarism has not been committed. Refer work immediately to College Assessment Offences Officer indicating that marker suspects the offence of plagiarism has been committed. Students may be told plagiarism is suspected, and the work has been referred to the College Assessment Offences Officer who will contact them separately.

Senate has agreed a [Tariff of Penalties](#) which will be applied by the Academic Offences Officer. If the student chooses or fails to respond to a written charge (after reasonable attempts have been made to contact him or her) or if the alleged offence is of high severity the case will be referred to the University [Disciplinary Board](#) which has a range of more severe penalties at its disposal.