

Procedure 2.8 Plagiarism regulations and guidance

1 Introduction

The Academy is committed to fair assessment procedures for all students.

Academic misconduct threatens fair assessment, which in itself can then disadvantage all students and challenge the quality of awards made by the Academy. Plagiarism is one aspect of academic misconduct, but it is also a subject which raises important learning and teaching issues. We take plagiarism seriously, but also acknowledge that in a complex learning climate, an educational driver is more important and more effective than a merely corrective or punitive approach.

The Academy is therefore committed to:

- enabling students to avoid plagiarism through a programme of support and education at programme level aligned with Academy policy and procedures
- ensuring that staff have a shared understanding of policy and procedure, and implementing this consistently across programmes

Awareness of plagiarism and effective means to avoid it in scholarly work is an important element of higher education. The acquisition of higher level skills is progressive. The approach to educating students, particularly in levels 4 and 5, should therefore be student-friendly, for example in language and exemplar material.

Inevitably, cases of plagiarism occurring at more advanced levels of study will tend to attract a more penalty-driven approach, but we wish still to emphasize the importance of developmental training and education at every level..

Wherever possible, assessment strategies across a programme of study should be designed in such a way as to minimise the opportunity for plagiarism.

2 Definitions

2.1 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the material, ideas, and arguments of another person/persons as one's own. To copy sentences, phrases or even particular striking expressions without acknowledgement, in a manner which may deceive the reader as to the source, is plagiarism; to paraphrase, in a manner which may deceive the reader, is likewise plagiarism. Plagiarism is identified in the composition of the work submitted by a student for assessment.

2.2 Copying

Incorporating into an assessment material from books, journals, the web, the work of another student or any other source, without acknowledgement and submitting it in verbatim or paraphrased form as one's own, is an act of plagiarism.

2.3 Collusion

Collusion through the submission of work for assessment that purports to be the student's own work but is in fact jointly written with another student or other students, is an act of plagiarism.

2.4 Duplication

Duplication of material means the inclusion in coursework (including essays, projects, reports, dissertations and theses) of a significant amount of material that is identical or substantially similar to material which has already been submitted by the student for the same or any other programme or course at this Academy or elsewhere.

2.5 Text boxes

The use of text boxes in work submitted to an anti-plagiarism software is undetectable therefore, as of 1st October 2019, assessors should not accept work that makes use of text boxes. The work should be returned to the student to so the text boxes can be removed and resubmitted in the correct format. Assessors should be wary of text boxes which have clear / white borders which may not be immediately seen when first looking at a document.

2.6 Essay mills

Contract cheating is where a student submits a work as their own but has in fact, had a third party complete the work for them. This may include third companies, who have developed over the past few years and can be disguised as 'student support' or 'tuition' that complete the work for the student entirely. Contract cheating or essay mills are not limited to paying a company to complete the set work but, could also be a friend or family member. There may not be a financial relationship involved at all. Essay mills or contract cheating is an act of plagiarism.

3 Signposting

To support consistency across the Academy, all assignment coversheets will carry the following statement:

The Academy is committed to fair assessment procedures for all students. Our plagiarism procedure is designed to help you in understanding what plagiarism is and how to avoid it in your work. To this end, please read your handbook carefully.

Students will also be required to sign declarations on coversheets. No student will be able to demonstrate that help was not offered in clearly-indicated ways.

Staff will be asked periodically to review with students the importance of both the statement and the declaration and to demonstrate this at programme level by an appropriate record and possibly by minutes from a staff-student liaison meeting.

4 Institutional support in educating students to avoid plagiarism

Appropriate support, information and educational materials are crucial, for example in programme handbooks, web- based support, classroom teaching and tutorials. Personal tutoring and workshops can also be used to identify students' concerns at an early stage.

4.1 Clarity of guidance for students

Clear guidance on what constitutes plagiarism and strategies to avoid it will be provided as generic text for use in handbooks.

4.2 Developing academic skills

The avoidance of plagiarism is part of education for effective academic writing and necessarily continues at all levels. Learning to write in a formal register, whilst ensuring that the work of others is acknowledged, takes time to learn and should be seen as a progression which may take time and skills to refine.

Education and formative development of students' understanding of plagiarism should be emphasised at all phases, particularly pre-detection, but also in the detection and investigation phase, so that no student can convincingly argue that help was not available and given in the key stages of their submission of work, or staff response to it.

4.3 Educational resources

In addition to any local resources, a central suite of educational resources will be available to students and tutors via a web interface. Items from the suite may be downloaded by tutors and embedded within modules. These will show an increasing level of sophistication to support student progression and staff expectations.

4.4 Referencing/citing correctly

The Academy has agreed that the common standards for citation and referencing will be the Harvard system.

5 Detection of plagiarism and follow-up investigation

The Academy has invested in comprehensive *Turnitin* plagiarism detection software and will use this to manage all detected instances of plagiarism. *Turnitin* reports can be accessed by academic staff when they are assessing student work.

5.1 Actions taken in the event of a case of suspected plagiarism

Students who are suspected of plagiarism will have the relevant work and personal circumstances investigated according to Academy disciplinary procedures. The procedures set out several possible courses of action and are designed to ensure that all students in the Academy are treated consistently.

The procedures are also designed to ensure that all investigations into suspected plagiarism are carried out fairly, thoroughly and impartially. This is achieved by the convening of independent panels of academic staff to investigate the alleged plagiarism and, where appropriate, award a suitable penalty. It is fundamental, as part of natural justice, that students facing charges of plagiarism must (i) understand properly and fully the case being brought against them, and (ii) be allowed to meet the panel in order to put their case.

The Academy recognises that plagiarism offences are not all equally serious; they vary from quite minor cases to those that are extremely serious. If a student offends a second time, this is more serious by virtue of it being a subsequent offence. Initially, offences are divided

into two broad categories, minor and serious. The procedures allow for investigation by a Programme Panel for minor offences or by a Faculty Panel for serious ones. The Academy permits students to contest the decision of a panel if they feel it was unjust and have their case reconsidered by a higher level by the Academic and Advisory Board.

6 Standardised guidance for handbooks

The Academy is committed to fair assessment procedures for all students. These procedures are designed to help in understanding what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. To this end, students are advised to read their handbook carefully.

Academic misconduct threatens fair assessment, which in itself can disadvantage all students and challenge the quality of awards made by the Academy. The Academy is committed to enabling students to avoid plagiarism through a programme of support and education at programme level. In addition to educating for the avoidance of plagiarism, the Academy is committed to detecting and acting when a case of plagiarism is suspected.

The avoidance of plagiarism is part of education for effective academic writing and necessarily continues at all levels. Learning to write in a formal register, whilst ensuring that the work of others is acknowledged, takes time to learn and should be seen as a progression which may take considerable time to refine.

7 Obligations upon students to prevent plagiarism

In order to distinguish between their own work and that of others, students should ensure that:

- phrases, sentences and passages taken verbatim from a published work are placed in quotation marks/grades, or indented, and the source is acknowledged
- paraphrasing, ideas and arguments taken from a published work are clearly referenced
- the inclusion of any other intellectual property, for example, illustrations, diagrams, proofs, designs, computer software, in written text or project work is clearly identified and acknowledged
- the inclusion of material from electronic sources is carefully referenced and only web-sites freely accessible to the marker should be used
- the use of the work of others is not of such volume or importance to the submitted work as to compromise ownership of the work
- no significant collaboration has occurred where there is a requirement to submit the work as an individual piece. Where work is done collaboratively and a single piece of work is submitted, the collaboration must be permitted by the programme director and it must be declared on the work
- they have not presented previously or simultaneously for assessment in the Academy or elsewhere, any work, or any substantial amount of such work, that is submitted

7.1 Citations, references and bibliographies

When writing a report or an essay, it is important that each time someone else's ideas from a book, article, TV programme, newspaper report or conference proceeding are used, readers are informed immediately in the text. This is called a 'citation'. The citation links to a reference usually provided as a bibliography at the end of the work (failure to provide a reference may expose a student to charges of plagiarism).

Citations are normally used to:

- give support for arguments used in essays or dossiers, and/or
- acknowledge a writer who has influenced the writer's thinking.

References provide details for the reader of:

- the source of particular ideas and models
- the source of quotations
- the source of statistics or other data
- the sources of diagrams, pictures or charts

Expectations of standards of citation and referencing should conform to those agreed institutionally. The Academy has adopted the Harvard style of bibliographical citation and referencing.

The Academy recognises that some disciplines require alternative systems, eg. to meet professional standards at a national level. Where this is the case, guidance will be given on using the alternative system equivalent to that provided for the Academy standard.

8 Obligations upon staff to minimise plagiarism

8.1 Designing out plagiarism in assessment

It is important that assessment practices allow for the designing out of plagiarism, that is, to create and to implement specific programme and course assessment initiatives which are known to reduce the incidence of inadvertent and/or deliberate plagiaristic activity. Some of these strategies involve placing emphasis on certain kinds of well-known summative assessment techniques, for example terminal examinations, but there is a range of possibilities in designing assessment tools which are both formative and plagiarism-resistant. In addition to specific assessment tools, courses and programmes can also factor in specific anti-plagiarism procedures. A combination of tools and procedures might include the following):

8.2 Reworking assessments on a continuing and randomised basis

This ensures that questions are not recycled. The editing out of 'essay banks' is also useful in this area. Cosmetic changes to assignment drafts should be avoided, as they are easily spotted by students. This technique should apply not only to essays and analogous coursework examples, but also to practical assignments, reports, reviews and case-studies.

8.3 Avoiding obvious links between learning outcomes and essay setting

Assessors should make analytic tasks more three-dimensional, and use information-gathering more widely in assessments.

8.4 Individualising tasks whenever consistent with good pedagogy.

The use of poster work is particularly helpful in this area, as is tutorial-based essay-title planning. Some tutors may find that abandoning 'set' essay titles on the one hand, and disallowing wholly student-created titles on the other, helps in resisting the temptation to plagiarise, as well as providing other assessment benefits, eg. tailoring tasks to specific skills and interests of students.

8.5 Building in specific plagiarism-moderation procedures

The principle of checking assignments should be embedded within programme or course documentation and made clear in handbooks and other information material.

8.6 Using specific assessment tools

Assessors should use methods which are known to reduce the incidence of plagiarism, for example academic reviews and information searches, posters and annotated bibliographies. Variety in assessments tends to reduce plagiarism.

8.7 Creating a collaborative research environment

This will tend to reduce plagiarism through peer pressure, for example, group written projects moderated by peers and/or tutors. The challenge of peer evaluation tends to reduce plagiaristic activity, as does group assessment.