

Academic Integrity - Guidance for Faculties

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The [Regulations Governing Academic Integrity](#) and the associated procedures for students on taught programmes and research students can be found in the [University Calendar](#).
- 1.2 In these regulations there is an emphasis on 'good practice', and considerable flexibility is given to Faculties, within an overall framework, in determining how they take forward suspected breaches. Faculties will therefore need to keep under review their internal processes for handling academic integrity, and will need to be pro-active.
- 1.3 This guidance document is to assist Faculties in using and working with the Regulations governing Academic Integrity. It is not itself regulatory and may be updated on an on-going basis as additional guidance or examples of good practice become available.
- 1.4 The input from Faculties that will be needed in future is detailed in the following sections:

2. Education and Training

- 2.1 Faculties will need to ensure that their students are familiar with the Academic Integrity Statement and its implications. A positive approach to this is desirable – including a web link in a student handbook would not be considered adequate on its own. Preferably there should be evidence available to show that this has occurred for any given student.
- 2.2 Faculties will need to give students detailed information on the various aspects of the statement, in the context of their own disciplines and programmes.

Examples:

- Explicit and consistent guidance on conventions for citation and referencing, appropriate to discipline and purpose;
 - Arrangements for collaborative, group or joint work, so that all students are clear how such work is to be assessed and marked (e.g. how far individual contributions will be assessed separately, and how far the mark will relate to the input from the whole group);
 - Ethical and professional conduct and conventions including probity in research;
 - What type of material is sufficiently generic or 'common knowledge' as to not require referencing.
- 2.3 Whether this should be done as a stand-alone activity, as part of an induction process, or in the normal run of learning and teaching activities, is a matter for Faculties to decide – many different models are possible.
 - 2.4 Faculties may wish to consider using online learning resources, such as the Epigeum Ltd [plagiarism project](#) to develop and reinforce these messages. Please contact iSolutions for details of how to access these and other relevant e-resources.
 - 2.5 The [Academic Skills website](#) includes advice for students on all aspects of good academic practice, such as referencing, and has a section dedicated to helping them think about academic integrity
 - 2.6 Whatever model is followed, Faculties will need to be aware of, and explicitly address, cultural issues (where, for example, 'plagiarism' of learned scholars' work may be considered desirable in students' own work). Staff should not assume that all students, including those educated through the UK school system, will necessarily understand that what we consider

to be plagiarism is inherently 'wrong'. The expectation of what is acceptable in the UK HE system should be positively explained and reinforced. In advising students staff should ensure that the language they use, while appropriate to the circumstances, is clear and unambiguous; references to the 'need to find one's own voice' or work being 'derivative' may not always be picked up by students.

3. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

3.1 Learning, teaching and assessment practices should actively encourage academic integrity and discourage bad academic practice in all its forms. Examples of how to achieve this include:

- Writing learning outcomes that encourage students to analyse and evaluate, rather than list, describe or explain;
- Avoiding 'assessment overload' and bunching of assessment deadlines wherever possible, as these can encourage students to take 'short cuts' which can lead to bad academic practice;
- Making sure that students are clear about what is expected of them for each assessment task, being aware that some students may have different cultural experiences, or learning needs;
- Identifying forms of assessment which provide variety, and require students to present their learning in a range of different formats;
- Varying, where practicable, assessment tasks and topics from year to year, as this will help to prevent students getting answers from previous cohorts;
- Setting assessment tasks which focus on analysis and evaluation of knowledge rather than the repetition of facts and description of material;
- Including something topical, specific, or personal to the student, in an assignment task;
- Setting tasks which encourage the submission of personalised answers (possibly by encouraging students to include, in addition to the final result, early drafts, workings, or statements about why a particular approach was adopted);
- Avoiding general questions, to reduce the possibility that students will be able simply to download information from the internet;
- Asking students to submit an essay plan or similar, to demonstrate ownership;
- Assessing the learning process, for example awarding marks for an essay plan or reflective diary;
- Writing assessment criteria that reward referencing and citation, individual approaches, reflection, higher level learning such as analysis, comparison, evaluation;
- Providing feedback on assessment which is clear and appropriate to the student's level of study and which draws attention to issues of academic writing and/or academic integrity;
- Providing ongoing opportunities for students to explore issues relating to academic integrity and good academic practice – this may include the use of electronic learning resources, e.g. the Epigeum Ltd plagiarism project and the Academic Skills website.

3.2 Faculties should continue to use declaration statements for all work carrying more than 15% weight in each module assessment load. Faculties may however use their own wording for such statements. Faculties using an electronic plagiarism detection service should make this explicit within the declaration statement.

3.3 Faculties are also strongly encouraged to use academic integrity declaration statements to reinforce the potential seriousness of penalties for breaches of academic integrity.

3.4 For postgraduate research students there is a declaration of authorship form that is to be used by all Faculties for submission with the final thesis.

4. Procedures and Penalties

4.1 Faculties are responsible for identifying breaches of academic integrity and deciding on the appropriate reaction to them. According to the context, the reaction may be of a purely

academic nature (poor marks, and formative feedback) or may have a very significant penalty associated with it. There is a graded series of possible penalties in between.

4.2 To apply the procedures, Faculties must develop policies and undertake staff training to provide a consistent approach. Such a policy may involve the following aspects:

- Distinction between the seriousness of different offences – e.g. by the amount of plagiarised text;
- What should be the penalty for a first offence, in the light of the training which has been given (see above)?
- At what point should an individual staff member escalate the process to the Faculty level?*

* The above list is not exclusive or compulsory; all items may not apply in all cases.

4.3 Where there is significant cross-teaching between two or more Faculties they should consult to make sure that their policies are compatible, and that there is no scope for confusion among students. Where for good reasons there are differences, this must be made very clear to students.

4.4 Faculties should identify a senior member/members of academic staff (e.g. Heads of Academic Units, Directors of Programmes) to take overall responsibility for the management of academic integrity issues. S/he will be responsible for developing and maintaining the policy, ensuring it is working as expected, and making sure there is a process by which staff and students may become familiar with it. S/he will become experienced in the practicalities of the policy, and will be able to advise and support others in applying it. Faculties may wish to call this colleague the 'academic integrity officer'. Faculties may wish to appoint further members of staff at discipline/programme level to assist with implementation of training and management of offences.

4.5 In determining cases on the basis of 'the balance of probabilities' staff should take into account evidence of a student's engagement with and ownership of the work in question, for example, by asking the student to provide drafts, discussing with them references cited in the work, talking through their thought processes for preparing the piece of work, asking questions more broadly around the subject to test evidence of reading. Where applicable, the level of penalty imposed should take into account the strength of the evidence presented.

4.6 Faculties must maintain a record system which will flag up second or subsequent suspected breaches of academic integrity for an individual, and will also provide monitoring information which should assist the Faculty in improving its training under 'Education and Training' above and refining its policy under 'Staff Development' below.

4.7 In investigating a suspected breach, the academic integrity officer or their nominee may, if appropriate, investigate other work by the same student(s) submitted at around the same time or earlier. Should evidence of another breach be found, there will have to be careful consideration of the way forward. If earlier undetected incidents occurred, the student may not have had the benefit of feedback from them. Similarly with simultaneous incidents. In such cases, multiple breaches might be considered part of the same incident. On the other hand, if it is clear that the student had received definite feedback before some of the newly discovered cases, then they might be considered as multiple or serial offences. Each case must be carefully considered on its merits.

4.8 Incidents involving two or more students in different roles (e.g. copying) must also be carefully handled: it is quite possible that the person copied from genuinely did not intend or expect the copying to take place. This belief might be naïve, but does not indicate an offence. On the other hand, when the material is clearly handed over with a view to copying, this would be an offence.

4.9 In cases involving copying where the students are not following the same programme, or are in different years, it may be difficult to identify an appropriate penalty for the person providing the material. Reduction of marks or failure in a particular module will not be

relevant. This leaves only options 'Failure in the year as a whole' and following. If these are not appropriate, action may be taken through the [disciplinary](#) route.

- 4.10 When deciding a penalty, consequential effects should be borne in mind. For example, a reduction in marks for one student may have no effect beyond the current assignment, while for another student, the same reduction might lead to failure in the module which could, in extreme cases, lead to termination of programme. Care should be taken that the final severity of penalty (including consequences) is appropriate to the situation.

5. Staff Development

- 5.1 Faculties will need to ensure their staff are familiar with the above issues, and with the Academic Integrity Statement for Students.
- 5.2 Staff should model good practice, for example, by ensuring that references are appropriately acknowledged in handouts, etc.
- 5.3 More general staff development should be targeted at means of supporting Academic Integrity and designing teaching materials and assessments in such a way that breaches of it are less likely to occur.
- 5.4 To support them in considering and addressing all these issues, Faculties are encouraged to share ideas and good practice, both internally and more widely (for example in discussions within the Faculty, across wider groups of academic integrity officers, or equivalent).
- 5.5 Faculties may also wish to seek regular feedback from students about the effectiveness of the approaches they are using to develop students' understanding of academic integrity and encourage good academic practice.

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