

ACADEMIC GUIDANCE 4a:

**PLAGIARISM:
Saying No is not enough
A Staff Guide**

2011-2012

This document is available in hard copy and on the University intranet and internet sites. Please contact the Student Information and Advice Centre (Cooper House) or the Kingston University Students' Union (KUSU) Student Support Centre if you have any difficulty in obtaining a copy that you can read, or find any aspect of these regulations difficult to understand.

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INTRODUCTION

This staff guide has been prepared by the Academic Development Centre (ADC) to provide advice on plagiarism education, prevention and detection.

Plagiarism is not a new concept however it has recently become the focus of increasing attention in both the HE sector and more broadly in the media. Research with academic staff indicates that instances of student plagiarism in assessment is increasing and may often go undetected (Bidgood et al 2010), and news reportage has highlighted high profile instances of plagiarism (Batty 2008). This interest has occurred alongside the development and growth of the internet which has arguably provided greater opportunities for students to plagiarise than was previously the case (Carroll 2002). Hence many UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are grappling with ways to address the implications of these changes.

The guide describes Kingston University's approach to dealing with plagiarism and outlines some strategies that individual lecturers and course teams can take to reduce opportunities for student plagiarism, it also provides information about how to educate students to help them avoid it. A student guide is also available on Studentspace and staff should make students aware of this document and the additional support that is available. The guide can be located under the following link:

[Plagiarism: A Student Guide](#)

The University defines plagiarism as:

'Presenting the work of another person (or people) as one's own without proper acknowledgement' (AR6 2011).

The emphasis then is on making *proper* acknowledgement when using of the ideas of others so it is failure to properly acknowledge where source material is from that constitutes plagiarism. However, there are many types of plagiarism therefore it is essential that staff and students are familiar with them. It is also important to recognise that if certain procedures are not adhered to students can still be accused of plagiarism even when they have attempted to avoid it. For example, failure to make proper acknowledgement also refers to 'almost word for word' paraphrasing from books, journals and so on. Thus even if a student has used and acknowledged source material but has only changed one or two words it can be treated in the same way as plagiarism because the original ideas are not substantially changed. Plagiarism also occurs if a student re-uses work they have received credit for in a previous assessment. Therefore plagiarism is more complex than simply copying material without indicating where it is from, which is a common misconception (Carroll 2002).

Plagiarism constitutes academic misconduct which is defined as: "any attempt by a student to gain an unfair advantage in assessments or to aid another to gain such advantage" (AR 6 2011:3). In this context plagiarism is viewed as cheating and therefore it will be treated in the same way as other forms of cheating for example taking notes into examinations, impersonating another student, falsification or fabrication of data or unauthorised communication in examinations.

It should also be noted that the university does not distinguish between intentional and unintentional plagiarism, therefore all identified cases of plagiarism should be treated according to the regulatory guidelines provided in Kingston University's Academic Regulations document 6 (AR 6 2011). These guidelines should be used to inform curriculum development to ensure that students receive appropriate education about plagiarism as early

as possible when commencing their programme of study at the university. The regulatory guidelines about how to proceed if plagiarism is identified in student work can be located under the following links:

Academic Regulations (AR6 2011) - [Academic Misconduct Procedures – Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses](#)¹¹

Academic Regulations (AR7 2011) - [Academic Misconduct Procedures – Research \(staff\)](#)¹²

Academic Regulations (AR8 2011) - [Academic Appeals – Undergraduate and Postgraduate Courses](#)¹³

Types of Plagiarism:

Given the complexities of recognising and dealing with plagiarism it is essential that staff and students have a shared understanding of what it is, why it is viewed as serious misconduct, and which actions can be taken to avoid it. When defining plagiarism the emphasis was placed on acknowledgement of published source materials, however there are many types of plagiarism including those that involve students using either their own work, or the work of other students to gain advantage in assessment. Additionally, policy varies in different institutions and cultural contexts so it is important for staff at Kingston University to become familiar with the types of plagiarism that are regulated here. The following descriptions have recently been developed by the University's Academic Regulations Committee (ARC), (AR6 2011: 3-5):

Copying: This refers to the use of *any* source material without making proper acknowledgement to the author. Any source material includes information from published and unpublished sources such as books, journal articles, websites, other students, visual and graphic designs and a range of other types of material.

Copying also refers to students copying or reproducing another student's work. Because of this the university expects all students to take responsibility for the security of their own work by ensuring that other students cannot get access to it. Failure to keep work secure can result in the same penalty being imposed on all those accused of plagiarism even if a student was unaware that their work had been submitted for credit by others.

Duplication (or self plagiarism): This refers to the act of presenting part, or all of an assignment that has previously been submitted to meet the requirements of a different assessment except where the nature of assessment makes this permissible, for example in group work. In this context plagiarism involves re-use of work that has already received credit elsewhere.

Work that has previously been published in peer reviewed or other academically acceptable contexts can be used (unchanged) by its author in more than one assessment, however it must adhere to the appropriate conventions of citation and referencing. For example, if use of material is word for word it should follow the rules for quotations.

Unpublished work that is not substantially unchanged for second and subsequent usage cannot normally be used for credit unless it is part of an Accredited Prior Learning (APL) process.

Collusion: This concerns collaboration by two or more students presenting a piece of work they have jointly produced without acknowledging the collaboration. This is the case even when those involved in the collusion are unaware that their work has been included.

Collusion also involves one student presenting work as their own by implying it was independently undertaken when it was collaboratively produced by a group of students. With group work all members of the group should ensure the legitimacy of all parts of the work as *every* member is responsible for the total product. If part of a group assignment is found to contain academic misconduct penalties will be imposed on all members.

Purchasing or commissioning: This refers to students purchasing or commissioning assignments either from the internet or by paying another person to produce it and then submitting it for credit as if it has been self-produced.

For more information on academic misconduct read the regulations concerning **cheating in examinations or tests**, and **fabrication or falsification of data** (AR6 2011).

The definitions provided here apply to the use of all types of source material. For example, music, art and design works, images, drawings, diagrams, data, and computer programme ideas and inventions. So make sure students you work with are familiar with these definitions and university regulations if they are breached. Additionally, take responsibility for ensuring that they understand the general principle that plagiarism refers to using *any* original idea without giving credit to or acknowledging the original author(s) or producer(s).

Identifying and dealing with plagiarism:

While the definitions above provide some guidance about what constitutes plagiarism it can be difficult when marking assignments to judge whether there is evidence of plagiarism and assessing the extent of it. Nonetheless, identifying distinctions between the ideas, opinions, summaries and syntheses which are a student's own and those that are attributable to other sources is a matter of academic judgement. However knowing when to act and how to proceed is a fundamental aspect of professional development. Therefore, it is necessary for staff to develop their skills to ensure that the appropriate processes can be implemented.

Plagiarism is often detected because staff are familiar with the materials they recommend so it is possible to recognise them even when they have not been acknowledged. However there are other features in students' work that can alert staff when plagiarism may be evident including:

- Complete or partial lack of references and citations
- Sudden changes in terminology
- Differences in sentence construction
- Changes in academic style and formatting
- Production of work that significantly differs from material taught in lectures
- Written work that exceeds a student's known level of competency
- Unusually sophisticated argumentation (for the level of study)

If plagiarism is suspected staff should follow university the procedures for dealing with it, these can be found in the registry section of Staffspace as indicated above.

Plagiarism Education:

Many students entering the UK higher education system have little or no previous knowledge about plagiarism. The university recognises this and also recognises that it takes time for students to develop plagiarism awareness. This is why there is now an induction period that allows all students to receive education about plagiarism and academic misconduct before penalties will be imposed (AR6 2011).

Therefore, while penalties should be imposed to ensure parity and fairness for all students, plagiarism education is the preferred strategy for helping students to avoid accusations of plagiarism. It may also help to remember the following points when designing courses, particularly those that incorporate opportunities for plagiarism education and awareness raising activities:

- Some pre-entry courses do not teach students citation and referencing skills nor do they emphasise the importance of acknowledging sources
- Direct reproduction of staff notes and/or feedback may also be encouraged at pre entry stages of a student's education
- Some groups of students, for example, mature or overseas recruits into UK HEIs may not have used academic conventions or been exposed to the problems that can arise concerning acknowledgement of intellectual property
- Students from different cultural backgrounds may perceive acknowledgement of source material as inappropriate because they have previously been taught that everything should be written in their own words
- Students from some cultural backgrounds may not even have a word for plagiarism

Therefore, staff should never assume that students have knowledge and understanding about plagiarism and its potential impact on their progression, whatever their entry route into university has been. A highly significant point in this respect is that plagiarism should be taught across and through the curriculum. Thus course teams should ideally work together to develop a cohesive and continuous strategy throughout each year level *including* level seven. These concerns should be taken into consideration for curriculum development but it is also important to treat plagiarism as a serious academic misdemeanour, therefore, even though it may sometimes seem easier to ignore it, where it is suspected staff should follow the procedures outlined here to ensure parity across the institution. However, it is better to take preventative action by reducing opportunities for plagiarism than dealing with the consequences.

Assisting students to avoid plagiarism:

Plagiarism prevention can be achieved by using good learning, teaching and assessment practices that help students to develop a better understanding of what is being assessed and why and encourages engagement with the concept of plagiarism in its many forms. One way of embedding this into the curriculum is through inclusion of assessment strategies that require evidence of reflection and analysis which facilitates demonstration of student learning. Ideally assessment tasks should be 'active' rather than passive in order to encourage engagement with ideas.

Carroll and Appleton (2001) recommend the following approach:

- Teach students what plagiarism is and facilitate development of the skills needed to avoid it

- Create a climate that discourages plagiarism and clearly indicates why there is a lack of tolerance
- Design out opportunities for plagiarism when creating courses

Designing out might include:

- not bunching assessment deadlines
- diversifying assessment types
- changing assessments (year on year)
- creating individualised tasks
- integrating assessment of plagiarism into the curriculum
- setting a range of formative assessments on a programme of study

Teaching students what plagiarism is how to avoid it:

Students may experience difficulties understanding the importance of acknowledging the intellectual property of others without assistance. However, there should be a balance between the University's responsibilities and those of the student. If plagiarism occurs after students have received plagiarism education the procedures for dealing with it should be adhered to. However, staff should not underestimate the time that may be required for students to develop the requisite skills. Incorporating formative assessments into modular programmes and other courses is one method that can be adopted. Formative assessment enables students to receive feedback on their progress and also facilitates reflection on process which subsequently has potential to enhance the learning and teaching experience.

It is essential that students are provided with the details of the conventions used for citation and referencing in the subject they are studying and given opportunities to practise them. A lenient and developmental approach should therefore be taken to plagiarism education. All students should be provided with clear information about plagiarism, citation and referencing and course teams need to be sensitive to the support needs of all students, including postgraduates.

Therefore, it is absolutely essential that staff adopt an approach that makes no assumptions about what students 'should know' rather staff should take responsibility to provide opportunities for development of skills and knowledge. For this reason written information in handbooks and a brief plagiarism session during induction are not adequate.

Plagiarism education should be revisited periodically as students move through their programme of study and they should be reminded about what constitutes plagiarism and what is required to avoid it. This approach can be defined as 'designing in' opportunities to avoid plagiarism (Carroll and Appleton 2001).

Designing in should include:

- defining the different types of plagiarism
- making distinctions between plagiarism and the use of academic conventions
- facilitating development of accurate and systematic citing and referencing
- providing clear and directive feedback if students are not using the conventions appropriately or systematically
- facilitating opportunities for students to practise citing and referencing
- testing knowledge and understandings about techniques and procedures
- providing examples and illustrations (of good and bad practice)
- using active learning methods (eg. case studies where students consider what does, or does not, constitute plagiarism);
- regularly revisiting these issues

- providing clear feedback to individual students on both summative and formatively assessed work

Plagiarism education then is directly linked to assessment and therefore encouraging originality and creativity in assessment can help to reduce the opportunities for plagiarism to occur. Additionally, testing students' knowledge and understanding is best done in an environment where plagiarism is not possible, for example tests and examinations. However for some students these types of assessment can be stressful and this may prevent them from achieving the results they desire. Thus while testing students in this way is effective for reducing plagiarism it is not inclusive as many students prefer more practical or applied activities. Therefore to ensure parity in assessment tasks should be both inclusive and diverse.

Good practice includes:

- changing assessments frequently (avoid using the same questions, case studies etc.)
- creating individual assessments that require the use of personal examples
- setting tasks that integrate theory and methods (with use of illustrative examples)
- setting a variety of assessment tasks
- asking for opinion, analysis etc., rather than description
- using 'meta-essays' (i.e. writing an essay about an essay)
- requiring submission of formative essay plans prior to a summative version
- using timed and open book assessments
- requiring electronic and hard copy submissions
- insisting on complete and accurate reference lists
- making distinctions between reference lists and bibliographies
- requiring students to sign a cover sheet identifying the work as their own and acknowledging awareness of plagiarism regulations and processes
- making it a requirement that students keep records of notes, drafts, copies of sources etc.,
- ensuring that students are clear about rules and responsibilities when undertaking group work

It is also essential to create an atmosphere that discourages plagiarism by:

- clearly indicating that plagiarism will not be tolerated after the induction period
- explaining why academic integrity is valued
- demonstrating how you value the learning process
- demonstrating that you value originality and creativity in students' work

And remember to **lead by example**. Make sure you acknowledge where the ideas you use are from, particularly on lecture slides as it can be problematic for students if they do not know who to acknowledge and in some cases this has resulted in accusations of plagiarism.

As noted above it is sometimes tempting to ignore possible instances of plagiarism but this results in a climate of tolerance which is not acceptable because suspected cases must be confronted, investigated and dealt with consistently to ensure parity for all students.

Make sure you know the university's procedures for dealing with academic misconduct and use them. Make sure your students have opportunities for education, and re-education where necessary. Course handbooks should include information for students about where to locate the academic misconduct regulations. Ensure that your students understand that suspected cases of plagiarism will be rigorously pursued. Finally, keep accurate records of any cases you deal with.

Use of electronic Detection Tools:

The University has not adopted a standard plagiarism detection tool. This is in part because different tools are suitable for different subjects and purposes, for example linguistic analysis, textual comparison, internet searches and so on. However, while there is no standard practice at Kingston University, there is some evidence to suggest that Turnitin plagiarism text matching software and other electronic detection tools are useful deterrents, particularly when there is a requirement that students submit work electronically (Savage 2006; Thompsett and Ahluwalia 2010).

Therefore, rather than developing our own service, colleagues are referred to the TurnitinUK Plagiarism Detection Service* which is available on Studyspace. Additional resources can be found via the Help tab in Studyspace and further information and resources are provided at <http://www.plagiarismadvice.org>.

***NB:** The TurnitinUK Plagiarism Detection service requires that students should be aware that their work may be screened and, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, they should be able to opt out. The University includes a standard statement in its student regulations which clearly states that assessed work may be screened. This information is provided for all students at enrolment and registration. Therefore, it is essential that a blanket statement is included in student handbooks, as follows: “you are advised that you may be asked to submit assessed work electronically and that it may then be screened using plagiarism detection software”. Staff should also note that while students have the right to opt out of the screening process, it is unlikely that this will happen. However, it should not be interpreted as evidence of plagiarism if a student does choose to opt out.

An additional deterrent is to make it a requirement that students sign a cover sheet when submitting assessed work to acknowledge that the work may be screened and confirm that they have not plagiarised. As stated above, staff should refer students to the document entitled: Plagiarism: A Student Guide

In addition to using the tools outlined here staff can check for plagiarism by using standard internet search engines such as Google. It is a good idea to search for any questions that you intend to set for students (before you set them) using the exact title wording. This will provide an indication of the materials that students can find. If you suspect that a student has plagiarised enter the precise wording from the student's work in quotes and if it exists anywhere on the web you will get a rapid return (note this only works if the student has copied a quote word for word).

In addition to the guidelines provided here concerning the use of e-resources, staff should also be aware that the university provides information about intellectual property rights (IP) and data protection (DP) which can be found under the following links:

[IP Policy - general](#)

[Data Protection](#)

For further advice and information about the use of electronic sources for detecting plagiarism contact Dr Tim Linsey, Head of e-Learning, Academic Development, who is the contact between the University and the TurnitinUK service.

For further advice or information about curriculum development, the availability of pedagogical tools and plagiarism awareness raising activities, contact Lorraine Allibone, Academic Development:

E: l.allibone@kingston.ac.uk Ext: 66306

References:

Academic Regulations 6 (2011) [Academic Misconduct Procedures – Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses](#)¹¹

Available at:

<http://www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/howtheuniversityworks/policiesandregulations/> [Accessed September 1st 2011]

Academic Regulations 7 (2011) [Academic Misconduct Procedures – Research \(staff\)](#)¹²

Available at:

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