

The University of Manchester
Plagiarism and other forms of Academic Malpractice - Guidance for teaching staff

1. The following paragraphs are intended as guidance for staff. It is expected that Schools will use them as a basis for developing a climate of shared understanding in matters relating to plagiarism and other forms of academic malpractice.
2. Teaching staff responsible for assessment can minimize the opportunity for academic malpractice by following a few simple practices:
 - (a) Wherever practicable try to vary assessment tasks and topics from year to year.
 - (b) Consider forms of assessment requiring the demonstration of the understanding of knowledge rather than the relatively straightforward repetition of such knowledge.
 - (c) Ask students to submit a draft or outline of major pieces of work such as long essays; this allows useful formative feedback, affords you the opportunity to spot possible plagiarism, and helps to combat plagiarism from the Web.
 - (d) Consider submitting essays and dissertations for electronic scrutiny using the University's plagiarism detection systems (usually 'Turnitin') to check for passages found elsewhere on the web, in books and journals or in work submitted previously, and tell students that this may be done.
 - (e) The default setting is that students cannot routinely submit their own work to Turnitin, the plagiarism detection system, which is integrated with Blackboard. However, if academic staff wish to carry out a trial session of submitting students' work to the University's plagiarism detection systems in order to demonstrate to students how work can be checked for originality, staff should contact their eLearning teams who will be able to assist with this.
 - (f) Give students explicit guidance on the appropriate styles of referencing, the need for bibliographies and their layout, etc.
 - (g) Make it clear to students working in groups or teams how assignments arising from their legitimate collaboration are to be assessed and to what extent 'shared' material may be appropriate in individual assignments submitted for assessment.
 - (h) Where students are involved in the assessment of each other's work, always discuss the criteria for the assessment thoroughly with the students, and make sure that they understand them; it may be advisable to reserve to yourself some degree of moderation.
3. In coming to a view as to whether instances of academic malpractice have occurred, with the matter being referred to an appropriate academic officer at school level, as above, it may be useful for staff to remember that in general, malpractice is likely to form a pattern of behaviour that is repeated within an individual item or series of items of work.

- (a) A single instance of the copying or close paraphrasing of two or three sentences of perhaps no more than 50 words in total of someone else's material, without direct acknowledgement, or the reproduction of a single unacknowledged diagram should not necessarily be regarded as plagiarism. These might better be described as 'poor academic practice', rather than malpractice. In such cases, students should be informed why they fall below the standards required, and should then be penalized accordingly through appropriate assessment criteria, which explicitly mention the need for the use of quotation marks, referencing and the provision of a full bibliography.
 - (b) Similarly, it would be unhelpful to classify one or two unsubstantiated results in an extended series of otherwise verifiable results as evidence of falsification or fabrication. Students should be made aware of the need fully to document all programmes of investigation and research and an appropriate penalty, if merited, should be imposed through normal assessment procedures
 - (c) Before reporting suspected instances of collusion, it is advisable to check with the students concerned, at the earliest opportunity, that they have properly understood what is required of them in terms of the submission or presentation of assignments. In cases where misunderstandings have apparently occurred, a request for resubmission or re-presentation would probably be the most appropriate form of action.
4. Finally, in coming to a professional judgement in cases of possible academic malpractice, it is appropriate to consider both the nature of the assignment and the year of the student in question; assignments subject to formative assessment only should be used constructively to encourage good academic practice and first-year undergraduate students may expect a greater degree of understanding compared to final-year or postgraduate students.
 5. International students, who come from different academic cultures that may have different practices and expectations, should be treated with especial consideration. Appropriate induction arrangements should be put in place for both undergraduate and postgraduate international students, in order to clarify the conventions that are considered important within the UK system of HE, but once these conventions have been shared with these groups of students, they should be enforced in the same way as with all other students.
 6. For a clear, revised definition of academic malpractice, please see '*Academic Malpractice: Procedure for the Handling of Cases*' produced by the Student Support and Wellbeing Office (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=639>). Students are also provided with guidance on plagiarism and academic malpractice in '*Guidance to students on plagiarism and other forms of academic malpractice*' (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=2870>).

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Policy owner:	Louise Walmsley, Head of Teaching and Learning Support
Lead contact:	Miriam Graham, Teaching and Learning Adviser (Policies and Procedures)

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