Plagiarism Policy - Award-bearing and postgraduate accredited short courses

This policy applies the University’s regulations concerning plagiarism to the Department’s award-bearing courses, and to postgraduate accredited short courses. The policy clarifies the difference between matters of poor presentation and plagiarism (whether deemed inadvertent or deliberate) and how suspected cases are to be dealt with.

1. University’s guidance and disciplinary regulations

The University provides extensive guidance on plagiarism (see: [http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism)). As is stated there:

“Plagiarism is the copying or paraphrasing of other people’s work or ideas without full acknowledgement.”

Collusion, that is the unauthorised collaboration of students, or anyone else, in a piece of work, is another form of plagiarism, as is auto-plagiarism (submitting work which you have already submitted for another course).

Cases of suspected plagiarism in assessed work are investigated under the University’s disciplinary regulations concerning conduct in examinations ([http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/08-19_Part_19_Proctors_Disciplinary_Regulations_for_Candidates.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/08-19_Part_19_Proctors_Disciplinary_Regulations_for_Candidates.shtml)).

Intentional, deliberate or reckless plagiarism is a form of cheating, and may incur severe penalties, including failure of your course or expulsion from the University.

2. Guidelines: Procedures to be followed in cases of poor presentation and suspected plagiarism

(a) Poor presentation

When deciding whether a piece of work contains plagiarised material a judgement should be made by the markers/examiners about whether the student has made an attempt to reference their work. If attempts have been made, however inexpertly or incompletely, and it can be clearly determined which parts of the work are the student’s own, the case should be dealt with as one of poor presentation and not of plagiarism. An appropriate mark (which in some cases may be a fail mark) should be awarded and the student should be provided with guidance in their feedback.

If no attempt has been made to reference, or if it cannot be clearly determined which parts of the work are written in the student’s own words, then the matter should be dealt with as a case of suspected plagiarism.

If the view of the examiners is that the assessment has been plagiarised, but that the plagiarism is likely to have been inadvertent, then the procedure under (b) i) below should be followed. If their view is that the plagiarism is likely to be deliberate, then the procedure under (b) ii) below (i.e. referral direct to the Proctors) should be followed.

In reaching their view on, the evidence for plagiarism and, on whether there was intent, those concerned may wish to take into account whether the assignment is in the first one or two assignments submitted, whether the student has little or no recent experience of higher education in the UK, whether they have received guidance and support, and whether it is reasonable to consider that they should be familiar with UK referencing systems.
(b) Suspected plagiarism

Examiners/markers who suspect plagiarism should inform the Course Director and Registry. The Registry will consult the Course Director to arrive at a second view as to whether the alleged plagiarism is likely to be inadvertent or deliberate. The Registry will also arrange for the board of examiners, including the external examiner, to review and comment on the assessment. If the view is that the assessment has been plagiarised, but that the plagiarism is indeed likely to have been inadvertent, then the procedure under (c) below should be followed. If the view is in fact that the plagiarism is likely to be deliberate, then the procedure under (d) below should be followed.

(b) i Inadvertent plagiarism

If inadvertent plagiarism is suspected, then a meeting with the student should be arranged, normally within three weeks of the assignment submission. Typically, this meeting will include the Course Director and the Chairman of Examiners, and it may also involve a Deputy Director of the Department and a representative from Registry.

The purpose of the meeting is to seek to establish whether the student was aware that their work contained plagiarised material, and whether there is evidence that supports the view that this was either done inadvertently or deliberately. The meeting should also provide the student with feedback about their assignment writing techniques and offer support and guidance. During the meeting, the student should be warned that should s/he continue to fail to make proper use of references their work may in future be referred to the Proctors. It may be appropriate to proceed by telephone/e-mail communication in the case of an online/overseas student.

During the course of the meeting, the student may or may not acknowledge the fact of plagiarism, and may or may not assert it was inadvertent, or accept that it was deliberate. Those conducting the meeting should consider all the evidence available to them, and reach a view on whether there is still a case of alleged plagiarism to answer, and whether they consider it was inadvertent or deliberate.

Students should be asked to sign a formal report of the meeting summarising the academic deficiency and outcome. This report should be lodged with Registry. This may be used as evidence of support provided to the student.

If the view is that there is in fact a case only of poor presentation, then the examiners should deal with it as in (a) above.

If the view is that there is a case of alleged inadvertent plagiarism to answer, then the case will be referred, via the Registry Officer, to the Chairman of the Board of Studies.

The Chairman of the Board of Studies may recommend that:

- The student receives advice on assignment writing; and/or
- The student resubmit the piece of work properly referenced for reassessment; or
- The student resubmit the piece of work with the unreferenced sections removed for reassessment; or
- The assessment mark be reduced.
The student must be informed in writing of the Chairman of the Board of Studies’ decision and be provided with constructive written feedback by the examiners and Course Director. The Course Director should ensure the student is given guidance to improve referencing and assignment writing skills.

If the view is that there is a case of alleged deliberate plagiarism to answer, then the case should be dealt with under (d) below.

If the student fails to attend (or, in the case of an on-line or overseas student, to participate), having been given two opportunities to respond, then the case should be dealt with under (d) below (i.e. referred to the Proctors).

(b) ii Deliberate plagiarism

If deliberate plagiarism is suspected then the case should be referred direct to the Proctors, via the Registry.

The accompanying material for the case will include:

- The assignment(s) alleged to be plagiarised;
- The student’s declaration(s) of authorship;
- A letter by the Chairman of Examiners outlining the case and giving examples of work which the student has not cited and has portrayed to be his or her own work. Where possible, examples of texts (books, periodicals, web pages, etc) which have been used but not cited should be given;
- The information provided to the student on the department’s policy on plagiarism, and guidance provided to the student on referencing their work.

If this procedure takes longer than five weeks, the Registry will inform the student in writing that, because of suspected irregularities, a mark cannot be given until their work has been considered by the Proctors.

If the Proctors decide that there is a case to answer on grounds of deliberate plagiarism, the student will be formally charged with an offence and a university disciplinary process will follow. The outcome will depend on the severity of the case and may range from a reduction in marks to expulsion from the course. Alternatively, the Proctors may decide that there is a case to answer on grounds of inadvertent plagiarism, or of poor presentation, either of which will be dealt with as above, or that there is no case to answer.

3. Appeals

Students wishing to appeal against the decision of the Chairman of the Board of Studies on inadvertent plagiarism must do so in writing to the Registry Officer within two weeks of being notified of the decision. The Registry Officer will consult with the Chairman of the Board of Studies, who will refer the appeal to the Proctors.

Students wishing to appeal against the Proctors’ decisions should do so in accordance with the applicable University statements and regulations.

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