

Lancaster University

A Plagiarism Framework

Our Commitment, Approach and Procedures for Promoting Good Academic Practices

2014

Section 1: Commitments and Responsibilities

INTRODUCTION

Plagiarism involves the unacknowledged use of someone else's work and passing it off as if it were one's own. This may occur for many reasons. For example, the University recognises that students may submit plagiarised work because of poorly developed study skills (e.g. inadequate paraphrasing), and that some students, particularly those from different cultures and educational systems, may find UK academic referencing/acknowledgement systems and conventions unfamiliar.

However, some students do plagiarise deliberately, sometimes because they are unable or unwilling to do the required work, and with the intent to deceive and gain academic benefit. This is a conscious, pre-mediated form of cheating and is regarded as a serious breach of the core values of the University and damaging to the reputation of the University and its programmes.

This Plagiarism Framework explains how the issues of plagiarism are to be handled at Lancaster University and defines how possible cases of plagiarism will be dealt with under the terms of the University Rules, and the institutional procedures by which this will be done.

This framework applies equally to all assessments submitted by students for examination by the University in all academic taught programmes (UG and PGT).

PLAGIARISM AS AN OFFENCE

Lancaster University is committed to:

- defending the academic credibility and reputation of the institution
- protecting the standards of its awards and their value to graduates
- ensuring that its students receive due credit for the work they submit for assessment
- advising its students of the need for academic integrity, and providing them with guidance on best practice in studying and learning
- educating its students about what intellectual property is, why it matters, how to protect their own, and how to legitimately access other people's, and
- protecting the interests of those students who do not cheat.

In support of these commitments plagiarism is understood to include, in whatever format it is presented, including written work, online submissions, groupwork or oral presentations, the following:

- the act of copying or paraphrasing a paper from a source text, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, without appropriate acknowledgement (this includes quoting directly from another source with a reference but without quotation marks)
- the submission of all or part of another student's work, whether with or without that student's knowledge or consent

- the commissioning or use of work by the student which is not his/her own and representing it as if it were
- the submission of all or part of work purchased or obtained from a commercial service
- the submission of all or part of work written by another person, whether by another member of the University or a person who is not a member of the University
- reproduction of the same or almost identical own work, in full or in part, for more than one module or unit of assessment of the same Lancaster University programme of study
- directly copying from model solutions/answers made available in previous years.

Where any of the above occur then in consideration of that case due account will be taken of such things as the level of intent, the proportion of assessment affected and any previous offences of the same kind.

PREVENTING PLAGIARISM

Lancaster University recognises that preventing plagiarism is of at least equal importance to dealing with cases that are detected, and will therefore develop, periodically review and improve:

The informing and education of students

- (i) By raising awareness of the positive and negative reasons why they should not plagiarise (positive reasons including getting reliable feedback on their progress and learning, upholding core values of academic integrity; negative reasons including risk of being caught and penalised).
- (ii) By ensuring that students are advised of good study practices and how to avoid unintentional plagiarism.
- (iii) By requiring that each department or programme of study makes clear to its students its expectations and norms for how students should use quotations, cite sources, paraphrase material, and construct bibliographies.
- (iv) By providing appropriate study skills advice, both generic and subject-specific, to inform students about best practice in note-taking and writing assignments, and to warn against poor practices that may lead to plagiarism.
- (v) By ensuring that all students receive study skills advice at the start of their studies, sufficient that students understand expectations and proper procedures for quotations, citations and referencing.

The informing, development and support of teaching

- (i) Ensuring all staff teaching or assessing students (or administering these activities) understand their responsibilities regarding plagiarism and are given guidance on how to deal with suspected cases.

- (ii) Encouraging and developing good practice in the design of assignments that best allow students to demonstrate their achievement of expected learning outcomes without giving opportunities for plagiarism.
- (iii) The promotion of a clear understanding of how plagiarism is dealt with at Lancaster University, in order that students and staff understand the policy and procedures for dealing with suspected cases, including what the outcomes of any investigations might be.

DETECTING PLAGIARISM

Responsibilities

The primary responsibility for detecting plagiarism in student work rests with the individual marker (perhaps supported by colleagues in teaching offices), who must always use their specialist knowledge and academic judgement in deciding what is and what is not acceptable within their subject. For example, in many subjects it is difficult to decide what is common knowledge and what should be attributed to sources, which is where the marker's expert judgement is exercised.

Where a marker is uncertain of whether plagiarism or poor academic practice has occurred or how to deal with it then they should be able to seek the advice of a more experienced colleague, their Head of Department or the Academic Officer for the department or equivalent unit.

Assessment by non-university staff

Where student work is assessed by anyone other than a member of Lancaster University academic staff e.g. by external teachers or Graduate Teaching Assistants, then there must be a nominated staff member with responsibility for the assessment procedures, including moderating the assessments in respect to plagiarism. This will by default be a nominated module convenor or in their absence the Head of Department.

Use of software

Markers may use software such as Turnitin to assist in their responsibility to detect plagiarism but should be aware of the limitations of such software, the care needed in interpreting reports and understand that use of such software does not replace the need to employ their own knowledge and academic judgement.

Where the administrative staff of a department or programme passes submitted student work through such software, either separately or as part of electronic submission via a Virtual Learning Environment, then this is done to assist the academic processes, not to replace any part of them. It remains the responsibility of the marker, not the administrative staff, to review and interpret the results.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic Marker

Each Academic Marker identified as such by a department or equivalent shall be responsible for (in addition to the expected award of appropriate credit and feedback for the assignment) identifying poor academic practices or plagiarism in assessed work and dealing with this in the appropriate way (as detailed below).

Academic Officer

Each department or equivalent shall designate one senior academic member of staff, to be known as the Academic Officer, who shall when required take responsibility for the investigation of and subsequent action for plagiarism in coursework at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

LU Students' Union

When any case of poor academic practice or suspected plagiarism or academic malpractice is suspected then the student shall have access to LU Students' Union support and advice at all stages in the procedures that follow, and an appropriate LUSU representative may accompany the student in any meetings/hearings or correspondence with the Academic Officer or the Standing Academic Committee.

Standing Academic Committee

The Standing Academic Committee of the Senate shall hear cases referred by the Academic Officer or where a student appeals a decision taken by the Department. Meetings of the Standing Academic Committee will be conducted as detailed in the University Rules. At such meetings in respect to suspected plagiarism the Academic Officer will normally be accompanied by the Academic Marker or person responsible for the degree scheme for which the student is registered. The Academic Officer will normally present first the evidence at the hearing.

The Academic Officer and student will have equal rights to question or challenge evidence presented. The student will have the right to see all evidence in advance of the meeting.

Section 2: Procedures and outcomes

The following procedures shall be followed for all cases of suspected plagiarism or other form of academic malpractice in coursework in any Lancaster University taught programme (UG and PGT). The steps may be concluded at any point in the procedures.

ACADEMIC MARKERS

It is part of the normal academic responsibilities of Academic Markers to be aware of and alert to all forms of academic malpractice, including plagiarism. All Academic Markers should follow departmental procedures for assessment or ensure that they have followed alternative procedures that are justifiable to the External Examiners of that module.

Academic Markers should, if they suspect plagiarism or some other form of academic malpractice has occurred, use their judgement (in consultation with the Academic Officer if necessary) to:

EITHER

Decide that plagiarism has occurred because of poor study skills and there has been no attempt to gain unfair advantage.

In this case the marker should:

- Give the submitted work an appropriate mark by deducting marks for poor academic practices or marking the work remaining after setting aside the affected text.
- Ensure that the feedback to the student identifies the problem and the sections concerned.
- Offer a meeting with the student to discuss their mark, the action taken and provide appropriate academic advice for the improvement of future work.
- Ensure that a record is made in the Academic Practice and Support section of the student's record in LUSI that marks have been lost through poor academic practice.

Where the student work displays some form of poor academic practice as above, but the student has not taken note of previous advice of similar problems, then the student must be informed of the repeated problems, be required to meet with their Director of Studies, and an 'academic warning' shall be recorded by the department in the LUSI Student Record.

OR

Decide that the quantity of the plagiarised text is too great to be dealt with by setting the text aside or that there is suspicion of some form of academic malpractice.

In this case the marker should:

- Refer the case for consideration by the Academic Officer.
- Provide all the evidence they can, including Turnitin reports and source texts, including the work of other students, where possible.
- Recognise that where there is a clearly identified match to work already submitted to Turnitin then that match is sufficient evidence and there is no requirement to produce a copy of the previously submitted material.
- Record no mark for the student work or record a mark of zero or equivalent grade until the case is resolved.
- Inform the student that the mark is being withheld, that the case is being investigated and the nature of the concerns.
- Ensure a temporary entry is immediately made in the Academic Practice and Support section of the student's record in LUSI to record that the case has been referred to the Academic Officer.

ACADEMIC OFFICERS

The Academic Officer shall, when a case of suspected plagiarism or academic malpractice has been passed to them use their academic judgement and experience to decide that:

EITHER

The case is one that would normally be dealt with by the Academic Marker and not warranting further investigation or a Hearing.

In this case the Academic Officer should:

- Instruct that the work be given an appropriate mark with the plagiarised passages set aside as above, along with the relevant communications about the reasons for a reduced mark being communicated to the student.
- Ensure that a record is made in the Academic Practice and Support section of the student's record in LUSI that marks have been lost through poor academic practice.

OR

The case is one that warrants further investigation and a Hearing.

Hearings by the Academic Officer

When an Academic Officer decides that a case should be investigated and discussed at a Hearing then they should:

- Arrange for a Hearing where the student will have the opportunity to discuss the case.

- Encourage the student to be accompanied by another member of the University, for example a friend, a LUSU representative, College personal advisor or Departmental tutor.
- Provide the student with the opportunity to see any documentary evidence prior to any hearing, e.g. a Turnitin report or coursework annotated by the Academic Marker.
- Check in the LUSI Student Record System for any previous difficulties recorded in the same student's Academic Practice and Support.

Attending at the Hearing will be:

- the Academic Officer
- the student with, if they wish, a friend as suggested above.
- one non-academic staff member from the student's department, who should take a record of the hearing
- the Academic Marker of the submitted work.

The student will be asked to respond to the allegations regarding their work and may also wish to consider if there are any mitigating circumstances which should be made known to the Academic Officer. The Academic Officer may ask the Academic Marker or course convener to present evidence. After hearing all the evidence the Academic Officer shall decide on appropriate action.

The student will be formally informed of the decision and outcomes of the Hearing within three working days, though an informal communication of the outcomes may be given sooner.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF A HEARING BY AN ACADEMIC OFFICER

The Academic Officer may decide that either

There has been no offence and will instruct the Academic Marker to mark the work normally.

Or

There has been plagiarism but due to poor study practices and instruct the Academic Marker to mark the work on that basis.

Or

There has been a plagiarism offence or some other form of academic malpractice.

Where a plagiarism offence or academic malpractice has occurred

Where it is decided that a plagiarism offence or some other form of academic malpractice has occurred then the Academic Officer may:

1. Require the student to undertake a new assessment item. This work shall be eligible to receive only the minimum pass mark appropriate to the student's programme of study. If the student refuses or fails to submit the new work, a mark of zero or equivalent grade shall be recorded. A record of plagiarism will be recorded in the Academic Practice and Support section of the student's record in LUSI.

Where the offence is in connection with cheating in a class test this choice is never available.

Where the offence is in connection to an already granted resubmission opportunity then this choice is never available.

2. The student is awarded zero or equivalent grade for the assessment with no opportunity for resubmission.

Only where this later results in a failed module that would prevent graduation or progression would a later resubmission be permitted as part of the Summer or other re-assessment arrangements.

A record of plagiarism or malpractice (as appropriate) will be recorded in the Academic Practice and Support section of the student's record in LUSI.

3. Refer the case to Standing Academic Committee, with or without a recommendation for a particular outcome.

Where multiple offences are discovered, after the Senate Deadline (or PG equivalent), the case shall be referred to the Standing Academic Committee.

If the student does not accept the decision of the Academic Officer, he/she shall have the right to appeal it to the Standing Academic Committee, at which he/she will have the right to be heard, accompanied by a representative if desired.

THE STANDING ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

Where the Academic Officer refers a major offence, or where the student appeals a decision of the Academic Officer, to the Standing Academic Committee that body, having conducted a hearing with the student present (accompanied by a representative if desired) may, if it decided that a major offence has been committed by the student, impose one of the following penalties:

- (i) to impose any action which might have been imposed by the Academic Marker or Academic Officer previously;
- (ii) to award zero or equivalent grade for the assessment with no opportunity for resubmission even though this may later prevent graduation or progression;
- (iii) to award zero or equivalent grade for the whole coursework element for that module (or dissertation);
- (iv) to award zero or equivalent grade for the unit or module;
- (v) to award zero or equivalent grade as under (iii) and, where the inclusion makes no difference to the class of award, to recommend that one class lower than the one determined by the arithmetic be awarded;

- (vi) to exclude the student permanently from the University, where the offence is detected before the final assessment is completed;
- (vii) not to award the degree, where the offence is detected after the final assessment has been completed.

If the Standing Academic Committee confirms an offence, the student shall have the right of appeal to the Vice-Chancellor under Statute 21.

The Standing Academic Committee should consider the full impact of their decision for the future career opportunities of the student concerned.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Notification and support

For each offence of plagiarism the student will be sent a standard University letter which:

- spells out what they have done wrong, and why it is wrong
- points them towards appropriate sources of study skills help
- reminds them of the need to discuss their work with academic staff if they are uncertain about how to avoid subsequent difficulties
- warns of the serious consequences of subsequent offences, and spells out the sanctions that would be applied
- outlines the student's rights.

Group Projects

Where plagiarism has been discovered in a group project, wherever possible the individual(s) responsible for the plagiarized sections will be identified and treated in the normal manner. If it is not possible to identify individuals responsible, the case will be treated as a serious offence and whatever penalty is imposed will apply in full and equally to all members of the group.

Retrospective detection

Retrospective work is defined as any work that has been subject to final moderation and/or approval by an Examination Board.

The University reserves the right to review work retrospectively, and apply appropriate sanctions, if there are reasonable grounds for doing so. Where there are reasonable grounds, an Academic Officer should instigate a retrospective review, requiring the student to re-submit assessed work and referring the matter to the Standing Academic Committee with a recommended sanction where appropriate. The Standing Academic Committee can also request the retrospective review of any work in relation to cases referred to it. The existing University Charter allows for it to rescind or change the classification of a degree after one has been awarded.

Exam Boards

Exam Boards may not revisit decisions and or change the penalties already applied after a case has been heard by either a Hearing conducted by an Academic Officer or considered by Standing Academic Committee.

The decisions and recommendations of the Final Exam Board of any year of academic study will normally be regarded as the cut-off point beyond which allegations of plagiarism will not be considered.

Right of appeal

If the student does not accept the decision of the Academic Marker they should ask for a review by the Academic Officer.

If the student does not accept the decision of the Academic Officer they can opt to appear before the Standing Academic Committee.

In all cases the student has a statutory right of appeal under Statute 21.

Reporting of study histories

Each department will have discretion to decide whether any part of the student's Academic Practice and Support record should be mentioned if a request is received (particularly from another University or a professional body) for an academic reference for a Lancaster graduate, or whether to report any part of such record to professional bodies.

Amnesty on graduating

Any Lancaster graduate, who subsequently registers for any further studies at Lancaster, shall begin those studies with a clear record of Academic Practice and Support for equity of treatment with other postgraduate students from elsewhere.