

# Being a Plagiarism Officer at UEA: Some Guidance on the Role and its Responsibilities

## Contents

### 1. Introduction

#### Section 1: The Role and its Responsibilities

2. The nature of the role
3. Deputy plagiarism officers
4. Plagiarism officers' period of appointment
5. Experience necessary for the role
6. Time allocation
7. Training for the role

#### Section 2: Dealing with cases of Plagiarism & Collusion

8. Not all plagiarism is intentional
9. Each case is unique
10. Plagiarism meetings as opportunities to learn
11. Assembling evidence

#### Section 3: The Plagiarism & Collusion Meeting

12. The purpose of Plagiarism & Collusion Meetings
13. Establishing the facts and determining the most appropriate outcome
14. Tone
15. Educational outcomes
16. The balance of probability
17. Accompanying persons
18. Determining the level of offence
19. Mitigating circumstances
20. SpLDs and health issues
21. After the Plagiarism & Collusion Meeting

#### Section 4: The role of the Learning & Teaching Service

22. LTS support for Plagiarism Officers

#### Section 5: Promoting good academic practice amongst staff and students

23. Promoting good academic practice
24. Designing-out Plagiarism by employing robust and creative assessment design
25. Natural justice
26. Further sources of information and research

#### Section 6: Appendices – Case studies

# Being a Plagiarism Officer at UEA: Some Guidance on the Role and its Responsibilities

## 1) Introduction

This document forms part of the induction for all Plagiarism officers and deputy Plagiarism Officers at the University. The document provides what we hope is useful guidance to Plagiarism Officers in the execution of their duties and responsibilities. We welcome feedback on these guidance notes so that they can be continually enhanced in the light of practice. If you have any feedback or enhancements you would like to suggest, these should be drawn to the attention of Michele Pavey in the Learning and Teaching Service: E mail: M.Pavey@uea.ac.uk

These guidance notes should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Policy on Plagiarism & Collusion

[http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs\(gen\)/plagandcoll](http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(gen)/plagandcoll)

Plagiarism & Collusion Policy – Guidance for Students and Staff

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/discipline/P+%26+C-+Guidance+for+Staff+and+Students>

Policy on the Use of Proof Readers

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/assessment/PolicyonuseofProofreaders>

Guidance Note – Assessing Groupwork

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/assessment/GuidanceNoteonGroupwork>

Flow charts relating to the application of the Policy on Plagiarism & Collusion

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/discipline/Plagiarism+and+Collusion+Staff+Guidance>

General Regulation 15: Misconduct in Research. Where plagiarism is identified in the work of a postgraduate research student then the procedures outlined in GR15 must be followed

[http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs\(gen\)/gen-regs-for-students/15-conduct-of-research](http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(gen)/gen-regs-for-students/15-conduct-of-research) except where the plagiarism is identified in the taught components of the

professional doctorates (ClinPsyD, EdD). In these circumstances the University's Plagiarism and Collusion policy and this guidance note will apply, and references to the Learning and Teaching Service (LTS) should be taken to refer to the Postgraduate Research Service. The use of Turnitin by Plagiarism Officers for investigating suspected cases of plagiarism and collusion involving postgraduate research students will require the prior approval of the Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes.

In addition, information on plagiarism and collusion is drawn to the attention of staff and students in the following documents:

University Student Handbook

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/student/University+Student+Handbook+for+Taught+Programmes+14-15+FINAL>

School Handbooks (UG)

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/students/gettingstarted/handbooks/undergraduate>

School Handbooks (PGT)

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/students/gettingstarted/handbooks/postgraduate>

## SECTION 1: THE ROLE & ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

### 2) The nature of the role

The responsibilities of the Plagiarism Officer include both **educative** and **policing** elements. They investigate suspected cases of plagiarism and collusion, but also have an important role in promoting/sharing best practice in assessment design amongst academic colleagues.

#### ❖ **Promoting good academic practice (the educative dimension)**

Championing good academic practices amongst staff and students in their school. This may include:

- Working with programme teams to inform the development of assessment strategies that minimise opportunities for students to readily plagiarise the work of others or to collude with others in the execution of coursework submissions.
- Informing the design of and contributing to the delivery of Induction programmes for students in their school and leading plagiarism awareness and good academic practice sessions as appropriate.
- Assisting programme teams to develop ongoing study skills sessions which give students opportunities to explore aspects of good and poor practice and to reflect on how they can avoid plagiarism and collusion in their own practice and in their coursework submissions.
- Highlighting and initiating strategies that help to subsequently 'reinforce' this training in subsequent stages of study (e.g. at the beginning of Year 2, or in advance of the execution of research projects and dissertations).
- Working with colleagues (e.g. Course Directors, School Director of Teaching) to ensure that information/guidance about Good Academic Practice given to students on programmes in their school is consistent and of a high quality.

#### ❖ **Investigating suspected cases of plagiarism and collusion (the policing dimension)**

- Plagiarism Officers have responsibility for investigating suspected cases of plagiarism and collusion and for grading the cases as Low, Medium or High level, and applying penalties allowed within the published policy.
- PO's may consult module organisers and/or the internal assessors (markers) of the original submission(s) but the responsibility for grading severity and imposing penalties lies with the PO.
- In cases where Turnitin is employed in the investigation process, this will be conducted and carried-out by the PO. The PO will be responsible for interpreting the Turnitin report.
- The University will make training available annually to all Plagiarism Officers in the use of Turnitin as an investigative tool.

The Learning Enhancement Team (LET) in the Dean of Students Office (DOS) provides additional materials and resources relating to plagiarism and collusion for UEA staff. These can be found at:

[https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/plagiarism\\_staff](https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/plagiarism_staff)

These resources include the following:

- A 16 minute video titled 'What is Plagiarism'. See: <http://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/video>
- An accompanying video worksheet that staff can use with their students. See: [https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/video\\_worksheet](https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/video_worksheet)
- A Plagiarism Awareness hand-out that staff can provide for their students. See: [https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/awareness\\_overview\\_handout](https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/awareness_overview_handout)
- Are you at risk of plagiarism? Lecturer's notes for use with students. This worksheet encouraged students to reflect on whether their study strategies leave them vulnerable to committing plagiarism or collusion. See: [https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/lecturers\\_notes](https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism/lecturers_notes)

LET also provides a series of tailored resources for students. These can be found at:

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/plagiarism>

### **3) Deputy Plagiarism Officers**

Plagiarism Meetings must involve a panel of two Plagiarism Officers (one from the home school of the module, one from another school). Consequently, it is sometimes difficult to pair-up POs and convene Plagiarism Meetings in a timely fashion. Having a deputy Plagiarism Officer who can occasionally be called upon to consider cases inside and/or outside their school helps considerably to address these problems.

For this reason, Heads of School have received guidance from the PVC (Academic) to appoint a deputy Plagiarism Officer who can support the Plagiarism Officer in the execution of his/her duties. The deputy may attend Plagiarism Meetings in place of the Plagiarism Officer when the latter is unavailable and/or to facilitate the timely convening of Plagiarism Meetings. The appointed deputy is encouraged to shadow the Plagiarism Officer for a period of time and attend some Plagiarism Meetings in an observatory capacity to become familiar with the role.

### **4) Plagiarism Officers' period of appointment**

Experience demonstrates that it takes a considerable period of time for a Plagiarism Officer to develop case-history and experience in the role. Heads of School have therefore received guidance from the PVC (Academic) that they should avoid appointing Plagiarism Officers for 1 year wherever possible, and seek to appoint colleagues to the role for a period of 2-3 years.

### **5) Experience necessary for the role**

The Plagiarism Officer's role involves the exercise of considerable responsibility and authority and this should be reflected in the experience of staff appointed. Plagiarism Officers have a key role to play in defending and maintaining the integrity of the University's awards. Their decisions and judgements can have far-reaching consequences for students and it is expected, therefore, that Plagiarism Officers will have prior experience of teaching, and designing, setting and marking assessments in University settings before being appointed to the role. Heads of School are expected to take the level of experience of staff into account when appointing to the role of Plagiarism Officer and/or deputy Plagiarism Officer.

### **6) Time allocations**

The amount of time required to undertake the Plagiarism Officer role will, inevitably, vary between schools of different size and complexity. Heads of School should take this into consideration in establishing workload allocations.

### **7) Training**

All POs must engage with training and continuing professional development opportunities congruent with the demands of their role. This will normally include:

- An annual meeting of Plagiarism Officers. This is a sharing practice event and is led by the ADTP and experienced Plagiarism Officers
- Tailored CSED training workshops for Plagiarism Officers. These will be led by the ADTP and facilitated by experienced Plagiarism Officers.
- Tailored CSED training workshops on the use of Turnitin as an investigative tool.

There may also be opportunities to attend national conferences focusing on plagiarism & collusion and promoting good academic practice.

## **SECTION 2: DEALING WITH CASES OF PLAGIARISM & COLLUSION**

### **8) Not all plagiarism is intentional**

An important aspect of UEA's policy is the recognition that not all plagiarism is intentional or involves cheating. Students are learners and the skills of appropriate scholarly research and attribution require time to learn. Some students come from different educational cultures and require time to adapt to a new set of expectations and academic conventions. Research suggests that many students will plagiarise in some way as they develop scholarly competence. If students are not learning or developing academic skills as expected, they need to be made aware of this and helped to improve. Most cases of plagiarism occur accidentally, and are the result of poor academic

practice rather than a deliberate attempt to cheat. A focus on “plagiarism as cheating” can often lead students to disregard plagiarism awareness activities believing that, as honest students, the issue is not relevant to them. This in turn can lead to a lack of understanding about avoiding plagiarism and developing good academic practice, and therefore result in study strategies that put students at risk of unintentional plagiarism.

In reality there are many reasons why students plagiarise, and Plagiarism Officers should take this into account when investigating suspected cases:

- Poor time management – running out of time to do assignments properly
- Poor note-taking practice – forgetting to record where you found information
- Not understanding how and when to use references
- Not understanding how to present paraphrasing and direct quotation clearly
- Not feeling confident in your academic writing style
- Not knowing how to read critically and include your own ‘voice’
- Not understanding the difference between searching and researching
- Not knowing what constitutes ‘common knowledge’ or other people’s
- Deliberate cheating for a variety of reasons

### **9) Each case is unique**

Each case of plagiarism or collusion is unique. Each must be judged and considered on its own merits. The Curtin Grid should be used by Plagiarism Officers when determining the nature of the infringement, the level of the offence (Low, Medium or High) and the appropriate penalty to be applied. The principle of ‘balance of probability’ should be applied when determining the outcome of a case.

### **10) Plagiarism meetings as an opportunity to learn**

Whilst cases of plagiarism and/or collusion may result in penalties, the Plagiarism Meeting should always have an educative outcome too – that is, the student should be made aware of how they can avoid similar infringements of the policy in the future. A Plagiarism Meeting should be viewed, at least in part, therefore, as a learning opportunity for the student to learn important lessons in good academic practice. Plagiarism Meetings may also, however, provide Plagiarism Officers with opportunities to learn – e.g. a case may reveal short-comings in the provision of plagiarism awareness training, gaps in training on academic referencing, or problems in the way assignments are designed.

### **11) Assembling evidence**

All academic staff have a responsibility to be vigilant when marking student work, and to report suspected cases to their School PO. If a marker suspects plagiarism and/or collusion, s/he will continue to mark the work as if not plagiarised, keeping a separate copy of the annotated work as evidence. S/he will gather the necessary evidence to allow the school Plagiarism Officer to pursue the appropriate investigation. If an internal marker suspects plagiarism and/or collusion but is unable to identify the original sources, s/he should collect what evidence is available and present it to the Plagiarism Officer, who will decide if there is a prima facie case for plagiarism and/or collusion which would warrant a Plagiarism/Collusion Meeting.

If, after investigating a case of suspected plagiarism/collusion the PO is satisfied that the offence is a Low level offence he/she is not required to convene a plagiarism meeting, but is free to do so if it is felt that this is the most effective way of establishing an appropriate action plan or educational response for the student. In cases where the PO is satisfied that the offence is a Low Level offence, it is acceptable for a warning letter to be issued which makes it clear how and to what extent the student’s work appears to demonstrate aspects of poor academic practice, and to suggest/recommend strategies which will help them to develop sound academic practice in future submissions. On receipt of a Low level warning letter from the PO, the student has the right to request a Plagiarism Meeting. Such requests should always be complied with.

As far as is possible, all evidence of poor academic practice or plagiarism/collusion should be assembled prior to the Plagiarism Meeting. The student will be provided with a copy of the annotated work and the Turnitin report, where appropriate with the letter requiring them to attend a Plagiarism/Collusion meeting. Even in cases where the Plagiarism Officers find additional evidence of poor academic practice or plagiarism/collusion after the Plagiarism Meeting has taken place (and after a penalty has been applied), this cannot be used to retrospectively amend the judgement or penalty, but would initiate a new plagiarism investigation where appropriate. It is allowable within the policy to investigate past coursework submissions of a student within the limits stated by the policy.

### SECTION 3: THE PLAGIARISM MEETING

#### 12) The Purpose of Plagiarism/Collusion Meetings

The key purposes of the Plagiarism Meeting are to:

- Confirm whether plagiarism or collusion has occurred or not. If there is no case to answer, no further action need be taken.
- Formally record the student's admission or denial of guilt.
- Determine the experience of the student, the extent of the plagiarism and/or collusion, and the likelihood of intent (i.e. whether the student set out to cheat, or did so unwittingly).
- Decide on the level of the offence (Low, Medium or High) and the appropriate penalty to be applied.
- Identify an educational package that will help the student to enhance their practice in future and avoid subsequent infringements of the policy. This is especially important where it is clear that plagiarism/collusion has occurred due to a lack of awareness of good academic practice. This may include referral to the Learning Enhancement Team in the Dean of Students Office (DOS) for additional training or support.

#### 13) Establishing the facts and determining the most appropriate outcome

What facts should the Plagiarism Officers be trying to discover or uncover? This will vary from case to case, but these might include:

- Does the student admit they have plagiarised or colluded, or deny having done so?
- Has the student received or accessed appropriate training on good academic practices and engaged in scheduled sessions focusing on plagiarism awareness?
- Does the student have a sound understanding of good academic practices?
- What are the student's working methods and ways of working with sources? Have these influenced their submission and contributed to a possible infringement of the policy?
- Can the student defend the way in which the assignment has been completed and establish that it is their own work?
- What sources appear to have been plagiarised?
- What evidence of collusion is identifiable?
- Are there cultural factors or extenuating circumstances that might be pertinent to the case? UEA students come from over 120 countries. Does the student come from a country with a very different HE culture?

In establishing such facts, it is important to ask questions directly, but without being combative or aggressive.

The marker presents the evidence for plagiarism/collusion, and is not a member of the panel. The marker will not be involved in determining the outcome or the penalty. This is the responsibility of the Plagiarism Officers on the panel.

#### 14) Tone

The tone in which the Plagiarism Meeting is conducted is extremely important. The meeting should be conducted in an objective, calm and respectful manner. There should be no need for aggressive questioning or raised voices. The PO needs to have some skill in reading the situation and responding accordingly – something which can be helped by training but which also requires a

particular blend of communication skills, and experience. Being accused of plagiarism or collusion can be profoundly upsetting for a student and the cause of considerable stress and anxiety, regardless of whether they have committed an offence or not. Anxiety on the part of the student should not, therefore, be interpreted or read as evidence of guilt.

### **15) Educational outcomes**

Whilst one of the purposes of a plagiarism meeting is to educate students on good academic practice, Plagiarism Officers should be aware that students may not be entirely receptive to such guidance during the plagiarism meeting itself due to the stress sometimes accompanying such meetings. If the Plagiarism Officer believes that important educational guidance should be conveyed to the student, this can be articulated briefly during the meeting, but should then be conveyed separately to the student in the outcome letter which is forwarded to the student by colleagues in the Learning and Teaching Service after the meeting.

### **16) The balance of probability**

The judgement made by the two Plagiarism Officers who comprise the panel should be based on the 'balance of probability'. It is not a requirement that guilt is proven beyond all reasonable doubt.

### **17) Accompanying persons**

Within the policy it is allowable for a student to bring an accompanying person (a friend) to the Plagiarism Meeting to support them or present their case. This is often another student, but might also be friend from outside the University but shall not be a member of UEA staff. Students are strongly advised to bring a member of the Student Union Advice Service since this ensures that they receive high quality guidance and support throughout. Questions asked by the Plagiarism Officer should be responded to by the student themselves. The role of the accompanying person is to provide emotional support if required or to prompt them if, due to anxiety, the student forgets to mention something that the accompanying person knows to be highly relevant to the consideration of their case.

In cases where the student has an SpLD or mental health condition that may impact on their ability to respond to questions from the Panel, the accompanying person may (with the permission of the Panel) assist the student by clarifying what is said by the student so that there is a clear communication of key points between the student and the panel members and to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting. Where a disabled student has a person to assist them with aspects related to their care or studies, this person will not be deemed to be an accompanying person, should the student wish to bring another person to the meeting.

If, in the opinion of the Plagiarism Officer, the accompanying person is interfering with the proper conduct of the business of the meeting, the Panel has the right to adjourn the meeting and reconvene it at a later date and to exclude the friend from attending the reconvened meeting (the student is permitted to bring a different accompanying person to the reconvened meeting).

Students are not permitted to bring a solicitor, barrister or other member of the legal profession with them to the meeting. The Plagiarism officer will therefore request that such persons leave the room prior to the formal business of the meeting commencing, or adjourn the meeting and reconvene it at a later date. Guidance for accompanying persons is available on the LTS website. See: <https://www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/students/studying/plagiarism>. This guidance is drawn to the attention of students in the letter inviting them to the Plagiarism Meeting.

### **18) Determining the Level of the Offence**

Plagiarism Officers can employ a number of criteria in determining the level of an infringement and in determining the appropriate penalty. Detailed guidance is provided in the Curtin Grid which forms part of the Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion. See:

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regsgen/plagandcoll>

The criteria can be briefly summarised as follows:

- **Nature** of the breach of academic scholarship (what did they do?). Is there an absence of referencing or just poor use of citation methods? Has the student failed to apply good academic practices in terms of citation or simply struggled to apply them fully, consistently or in a manner one would expect.
- **Amount** or extent of the assessment item or work that is not the student's own, and/or the extent to which the assessment process is compromised (how much?). Has the student plagiarised a small section of text (e.g. a few sentences or a paragraph) or an entire piece of coursework? Have they colluded to a small extent and gained a small or negligible advantage, or has their collusion been extensive and resulted in a significant unfair advantage?
- **Intentionality** of the act. Most students are well-intentioned and do not set-out to deliberately cheat or deceive, but in cases where there is evidence that they have, the level of 'intent' is an important consideration.
- **Experience** of the student (e.g. the stage of study, or level of study).

### Using the Curtin Grid

Plagiarism Officers on the panel will use the Curtin Grid to determine the level of the offence. The three levels are:

#### **Low Level**

This describes cases that are probably due to the student's lack of knowledge about the correct conventions to use or their lack of skill in using them. It may also be due to carelessness or neglect rather than planned deception. A student who is found to have engaged in practice that results in a Low Level offence should be viewed as a learner who is struggling to understand the rules. A Low Level offence should always result in an educational intervention (this may take the form of oral guidance and advice offered by the PO at a Plagiarism Meeting, or a letter which draws the student's attention to sources of information on good academic practices). A case of Low Level plagiarism is typically identified by one or more of the following:

- An inexperienced student (first year of course or first semester at a UK HEI);
- Work showing evidence of a genuine, but faulty, attempt at referencing (e.g. inadequate in-text citations, mixed conventions);
- Poor understanding of the boundaries between acceptable groupwork and unacceptable collusion;
- Poor standard of writing (e.g. clumsy paraphrasing);
- Plagiarism extending to only small sections of the work.

More detailed guidance is provided in the Curtin Grid which forms part of the Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion. See: [http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs\(gen\)/plagandcoll](http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(gen)/plagandcoll)

#### **Medium Level**

Medium Level plagiarism/Collusion is typically identified by one or more of the following:

- If a previous Low level plagiarism or collusion has been identified/logged (this can again be Low Level plagiarism as described in previous section);
- Little attention to the details of in-text citations and referencing;
- Attempts to paraphrase but a proportion of the work is too close to one or more direct quotes without any acknowledgement;
- Copied sections from other sources without appropriate acknowledgement; and/or segments of another student's work.

More detailed guidance is provided in the Curtin Grid which forms part of the Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion. See: [http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs\(gen\)/plagandcoll](http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(gen)/plagandcoll)

Repeated acts of plagiarism/collusion are treated very seriously. A student who is found to have committed three separate Medium Level offences will normally be treated after the third offence as having committed a High Level offence.



### Re-marking coursework in Medium Level cases

In accordance with the policy, it is the responsibility of markers to flag concerns about plagiarism/collusion and to indicate those sections or aspects of a submission which are a cause for concern or suspicion.

In accordance with the policy, the marker will re-mark the student's submission as far as is possible excluding the plagiarised elements. In cases of collusion where two or more students have worked together and it is impossible to determine who has produced the work, the pieces of work will be marked as they stand and the highest mark of those awarded will be divided equally among the number of students deemed to have colluded. If, however, it is clear that one of the students has produced most/all of the work and lent it to the others, the Plagiarism Officer shall record marks to take account of the effort put in by the student who produced the work, and the lack of effort from the other students who colluded.

It is the Plagiarism Officers' responsibility to confirm this revised mark and ensure that it is conveyed to LTS and the student.

### **High Level**

This describes cases where either the student has set out to deliberately cheat or deceive by way of plagiarism or collusion, or the work contains a very high proportion of plagiarised material. This is the most serious level and results in referral to the Senate Student Disciplinary Committee (SSDC).

Typical of this are that the submitted work:

- Is identical or very close to another student's work, either from the same year or previous years;
- Consists of large sections copied from other sources and presented as the student's own;
- Contains fabricated citations and/or references;
- Uses appropriated and unacknowledged or fabricated research data;
- Is suspected of having been commissioned or secured from a third party (e.g. an online essay bank, or web-based essay commissioning site).

More detailed guidance is provided in the Curtin Grid which forms part of the Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion. See: [http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs\(gen\)/plagandcoll](http://www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(gen)/plagandcoll)

It is the sole responsibility of the Plagiarism Panel to make a judgement on whether an offence has been committed, and the level of the offence. The Panel may seek the views of the original marker(s), and seek guidance from LTS where necessary, but the final judgement is for the Panel to make. Coursework found to have been the product of High Level plagiarism/collusion is **NOT** to be re-marked. A mark of zero will be recorded.

### **19) Mitigating Factors**

There are no mitigating factors which excuse plagiarism/collusion. There is always an alternative to cheating – whether it be a formal request for an extension, an intercalation, seeking support from DoS, or a request to a module convenor for additional guidance about the completion of an assignment. However, Plagiarism Officers may take into account mitigating factors and may recommend to the relevant Head of School that the level of the offence and the penalty are down-graded (or adjusted), e.g. from High Level to Medium, or from Medium to Low Level. The Head of School should consult with the Chair of SSDC in order to ensure consistent treatment of students across the University.

### **20) SpLDs and other disability/health issues**

Students with specific learning difficulties and certain health conditions may have more difficulty with academic conventions in writing than their peers. LTS will provide Plagiarism Officers with any relevant information on a disability for student who is suspected of plagiarising/colluding before the Plagiarism Meeting is convened.

## **21) After the Plagiarism Meeting.**

At the end of the Plagiarism Meeting the panel may wish to consider the specifics of the case and reflect on the evidence further before making a final judgement. However, it is also permissible, at the end of the meeting, to ask the student to leave the room and wait outside for 5-10 minutes whilst the Plagiarism Officers consider the case and the most appropriate judgement or outcome, so that the student can be told the outcome in person, and be given feedback and guidance verbally before leaving.

### The Minutes of the Plagiarism Meeting

These will be produced by the LTS staff member present at the meeting. They will be agreed with the Plagiarism Officers on the panel. Minutes of Plagiarism Meetings and any other documented evidence will be held by LTS and added to the student's file/record.

### Correspondence with student after the meeting

Panel members and the student should confirm that they are satisfied with the content of the report before receiving a written copy of the minutes (attached to an e mail) of the Plagiarism Meeting if one is held. This will include details of the outcome of the meeting and the level of offence. It should also include - in Low level cases - an educational action plan including sources of guidance/support/training on referencing, and avoiding plagiarism. The outcome of the Meeting should be conveyed to the student according to the timeframe set out in the policy.

### Record Keeping and Reporting on cases

LTS staff will keep records of all cases of plagiarism and collusion on an LTS database. This information includes a brief overview of the case, the level of the offence and the recommendations of the Panel. Each year the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) considers statistics on the number of cases, by School, for the previous year.

Each year School Plagiarism Officers are asked to complete an annual report for LTC. LTS staff will provide data to assist POs in producing this report.

## **SECTION 4: THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING AND TEACHING SERVICE (LTS)**

### **22) LTS support for Plagiarism Officers**

Plagiarism Officers will be supported in their role by the Learning and Teaching Service of the University. LTS staff will:

- Attend Plagiarism Panel meetings and take notes of the meeting for future reference.
- Identify and communicate with the second Plagiarism Officer from another school, required for the Panel.
- Use standardised templates and will communicate with students by email for speed, with confirmation by letter.
- Provide information relating to the student's academic history and will provide copies of student work on request (where this is in keeping with the policy).
- Provide guidance to the PO on the likely implications for students of a particular penalty (e.g. the impact of a reduced mark from Medium level decision on their aggregate Stage marks or final classification).
- Provide Plagiarism Officers with guidance on the application of the University's Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion and the timeframes/deadlines that inform the process and procedures.
- Provide guidance to Plagiarism Officers on any evidence of Mitigating Circumstances as part of the investigation and the Plagiarism Meeting. (Please note: *Mitigating Circs never excuse Plagiarism/Collusion but may influence penalty imposed. Heads of School make this decision following consultation with Chair SSDC*).
- Assist Plagiarism Officers in identifying module organisers, markers, instructions and details relating to specific assignments, and details of any training on plagiarism/collusion within the student's programme of study.

- Take the lead on referring cases to the SSDC and providing the SSDC with any pertinent evidence, reports, minutes of plagiarism meetings etc.

## SECTION 5: PROMOTING GOOD ACADEMIC PRACTICE AMONGST STAFF AND STUDENTS

### 23) Promoting Good Academic Practice

There are many ways in which good academic practice can be promoted in your school:

- Include guidance on plagiarism/collusion in Course Handbooks
- Include workshops on plagiarism/collusion during induction – these workshops should give students an opportunity to look at case studies and explore for themselves examples of good and poor practice. Colleagues in LET can help with developing and delivering workshops.
- Allow time for students to watch the DOS Video on ‘What is Plagiarism?’ get them to complete the dedicated questionnaire whilst watching it, and then reflect on their responses.
- Devote time to explaining academic referencing/citation conventions and give detailed, constructive feedback on how well students are using them repeatedly during the first year, and subsequently.
- Share with students anonymised cases of plagiarism/collusion which allow them to explore both the technical and moral aspects of cases.
- Create a climate of involvement and interest rather than one of detection and punishment.
- Model good practice –staff can set an example by exhibiting good referencing in teaching materials.

Plagiarism Officers can be very effective champions of good academic practices amongst staff and students in their school. This can be achieved in a number of ways. Examples include:

- Working closely with programme teams to inform the development of assessment strategies which minimise the opportunities for students to readily plagiarise the work of others.
- Informing the design of and contributing to the delivery of Induction programmes for students in their school and leading plagiarism awareness and good academic practice sessions.
- Assisting programme teams to develop study skills sessions which give students opportunities to explore aspects of good and poor practice and to reflect on how they can avoid plagiarism.
- Highlighting and initiating strategies that help to subsequently reinforce this training in subsequent stages of study (e.g. at the beginning of Year 2, or in advance of the execution of research projects and dissertations).
- Meeting with new members of staff to discuss Plagiarism & Collusion.
- Promoting the use of a formative assignment early in a course focused primarily on raising awareness of plagiarism and collusion.
- Helping to ensure that consistent, high quality information/guidance about Good Academic Practice is given to students in their school.

### 24) Designing-out Plagiarism by employing robust and creative assessment design

Opportunities for students to commit plagiarism or engage in collusion can be minimised via effective and creative assessment design. This includes:

- Being specific about expectations. It has been claimed that a major source of poor student papers (including plagiarised ones) is the ‘unclear’ assignment, where the student is unsure about what is expected of them.
- Changing topics or essay questions from semester to semester (or between years) whenever possible.
- Require specific components in the paper. For example, “Your written response must make use of two internet sources, three book sources, three journal sources from the following list.
- Get the students to demonstrate their learning by ‘presenting’ their written work verbally – e.g. in the form of a video essay.

- Keep it current - Requirements that will strongly inhibit the use of a copied paper from an essay will include requiring 'up-to-date' sources – e.g. “three sources written within the past year”.
- Design a 'bespoke' assignment – An assessment focused around a local or recent case study will make it more difficult for students to plagiarise large chunks of the assignment.
- Be creative – Rather than setting another essay (e.g. 'Discuss Plato's attitudes to women in the *Republic*'), get the students to design, instead, a script for a 10 minute radio interview between Plato and Jeremy Paxman.
- Require 'process steps' for the assessment – Set a series of due dates throughout the term for a series of small formative exercises which feed into the summative submission at the end of the semester or stage.
- Require students to critically reflect on their learning as part of a formative or summative submission – A student who has plagiarised or colluded will find it problematic to do so.
- Require students to submit their rough notes for an assignment, or an early draft, as part of the submission.
- Get students to present their work to their peers – If students know at the beginning of the term that they will be giving a presentation on their research papers to the rest of the class, they will recognize the need to be very familiar with both the research process, the underpinning resources and the content of the paper.
- Adopt strategies that prevent procrastination – Students sometimes plagiarise because they have planned their time poorly and leave writing major assignments to the last moment. You can help them to avoid this by breaking-down large tasks into smaller sub-tasks, and getting students to complete these small tasks in a set sequence.
- Avoid questions that enable students to copy from each other – This can be done by giving students individualised data to work with. Or you can get students to look at the same case study/scenario from different perspectives.

Note: Some of the ideas above were adapted from: <http://www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm>

## 25) Natural justice

The rules of natural justice exist to ensure fair dealing with individuals who find themselves before a court, tribunal or any hearing to whose judgement an individual is subject. Natural justice is thus an umbrella term for the standards of basic fairness. Interpretations of natural Justice vary and there is no single agreed definition. In this section some guidance is offered on the key characteristics and requirements of natural justice. These requirements should inform and guide Plagiarism Officers when applying the Plagiarism and Collusion Policy.

The principles of natural justice require that a student be presented with all the evidence should an accusation of plagiarism be pursued and be given an opportunity to challenge it in front of the body that will determine the allegations. All participants in the process should be given appropriate notice; and the student in particular should be told about their right to be accompanied at such a hearing.

The right to challenge the evidence is particularly important in cases where it has not been possible to identify the origins of the allegedly plagiarised material. While plagiarism can properly be identified through academic judgement, such judgements must be open to testing both by the student and by the institution. Certainly, at least one of the two should do so. Thus a case brought without the ability to cite an original text should be sufficiently strong to satisfy the requirements of civil law. Hart (2001) reminds Higher Education institutions that ...it is generally accepted that the criminal standard [*of proof*] is too strict for internal disciplinary proceedings. However, it is also considered that the more serious the charge, the more satisfied the panel need to be that the offence has been committed. The criminal standard of proof is “beyond reasonable doubt” as opposed to civil procedures where decisions are made “on the balance of probabilities”. It is the latter which Plagiarism Officers are required to make a judgement on.

In addition to being a requirement of natural justice, the process of debating and testing the evidence of a case of plagiarism is also a key opportunity to reinforce the definitions and examples of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable academic citation, paraphrasing, etc. The case of *Flanagan v University College, Dublin* [1988] (quoted in Hart, 2001) made clear that a university must ensure a complete separation between the role of prosecutor and that of the body that determines guilt and imposes a penalty. This means that whoever argues the case for plagiarism (the marker) must not be the body determining punishment (the panel of Plagiarism Officers). In addition, penalties and outcomes for students should be proportionate and fair – i.e. the punishment should fit the crime, and should not be overly severe if the infraction is relatively minor or limited in extent. This is why Plagiarism Officers should make direct reference to the Curtin Grid when determining their judgement.

We can therefore summarise the characteristics of Natural Justice as follows:

- Right to a fair hearing:
  - prior notice of the case/meeting
  - fair opportunity to answer the case
  - the opportunity to present their case properly
- Right to appeal against a decision/judgement.
- Right to be accompanied by a third party at any meeting.
- Balance of probability
- Separation of role of prosecutor (marker) and judge (the Plagiarism Officers on the panel).
- Investigators and decision-makers should act without bias in all procedures connected with cases.
- Decisions and judgements should be made on the basis of appropriate evidence.
- The basis for a decision/judgement should be communicated clearly to the student.
- Penalties and punishments should be 'proportionate'.

## 26) Further sources of information and research

The following sources have been reproduced from a short publication by Jude Carroll available on the HEA website. It is titled '*What kinds of solutions can we find for plagiarism?*'

- Evans J., 'The New Plagiarism in Higher Education: From Selection to Reflection', Jim Evans, Centre for Academic practice, University of Warwick.  
<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/resource/interactions/issues/issue11/abevans>
- *This summarises the issues and offers a comprehensive series of hyperlinks to sites on detection of plagiarism, its correction, and prevention. A good starting point for anyone with an interest in plagiarism and collusion.*
- Franklyn-Stokes A. and Newstead S. (1995) 'Undergraduate Cheating: who does what and why' in *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol 20 no 2, 1995, pp 159-72. *This paper is one of the first to look at academic misconduct in Britain.*
- Ashworth, Bannister P. and Thorne P., (1997), 'Guilty in whose eyes? University students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism in academic work, in *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol 22 no 2 June, 1997 pp 187-203. *This paper examines how differently students and teachers see plagiarism and why students choose to cheat.*

The JISC Plagiarism Service also published a high quality series of guides and research papers that Plagiarism Officers will find useful. These include:

- Plagiarism: A Good Practice Guide, by Jude Carroll & Jon Appleton  
<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/plagiarism/brookes.pdf>
- JISC Plagiarism Resources: Detection Technologies  
<http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/resources/detection-technologies>
- JISC Plagiarism Resources: Teaching Resources  
<http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/resources/teaching-resources>
- JISC Plagiarism Resources: Engaging students in discussion about P & C  
<http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/resources/engaging-students>
- HEA Report on Addressing Plagiarism in HEIs

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/academicintegrity/policy\\_works](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/academicintegrity/policy_works)

- JISC Mail – Home Page for Plagiarism – all staff can join JISC Mail  
<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=plagiarism>

Dr Adam Longcroft  
Academic Director for Taught Programmes  
UEA  
December 2014

## Appendix 1

### Case study A: Plagiarism at Low or Medium Level?

#### Notification:

The school plagiarism officer (PO) was notified by first marker to evaluate a 1<sup>st</sup> year student's piece of writing with reference to plagiarism. This assignment was set in the first term of study and 'academic study skills' module was on-going.

#### Response:

The PO met and discussed the case with the first marker. The first marker had identified 7 instances of matching text in a 1000 word essay, which were deemed to represent a significant proportion of the presented argument. The PO asked the Hub to invite the student to send an electronic version of the script to generate a Turnitin report. However, the student was unable to provide the final submitted electronic copy of the assessment.

#### Action:

The student was given the opportunity to present her case in a formal plagiarism and collusion meeting.

#### At the meeting:

The PO introduced the members of the meeting and outlined what it will and will not cover and summarised the relevant sections of the Plagiarism & Collusion policy applicable in this case. The first marker then outlined the problematic areas in the assignment. The student was shocked by the extent of the matched text but in her defence outlined that she had borrowed the relevant book from the library early, made the relevant notes and returned it (it had been requested by another student). She then left the writing till almost the deadline. She had referenced the original source but had not put the information in quotation marks because she had thought she'd synthesised information at the point of note taking. Before submitting she had made some further comments on the script at the University (using her server space). Since she was by now quite short of time, she thought she'd probably not read all the instructions that pop up on the screen and thus, had not saved the final version before submitting it electronically.

#### Outcome

Based on the evidence presented and as set out against the criteria in the University Policy of Plagiarism and Collusion regulations (specifically B.2) the student should have been awarded an automatic mark of zero since they were unable to provide an electronic copy that was the same as the original submission. This would have resulted in the student going to re-assessment.

However, the plagiarism officer set this against the student's responses, experience and level of study and concluded that, in this instance, it should be considered as falling between levels 1 and 2 (now termed Low and Medium level) under the UEA Policy of Plagiarism and Collusion regulation (as it was in 2011-12). The basis for this decision was as follows:

- **Experience:** although the student was a first year student and would have received plagiarism and collusion training in their first module, the plagiarism officer accepted that due to the availability of resources and the nature of the student's note-taking she unintentionally produced passages containing close paraphrasing and incorrect or incomplete referencing. Therefore, this was considered to be low level.
- **Nature:** the work was considered to be an exemplar of poor academic practice and time management and was therefore graded as low level.
- **Extent:** this was considered to be substantial and poor academic practice was evident throughout your essay. This was considered high level.
- **Intent:** the plagiarism officer agreed that the plagiarism appeared unintentional and was therefore graded as a low level.

**Overall level awarded:** Between levels 1 and 2 (i.e. between low and medium level in the current Plagiarism Policy). The plagiarism officer made the decision based on the student's insight and awareness into what went wrong in this assignment to treat this as a level 1 offence. The original submission was therefore considered void and the student will not receive a mark for the assignment based on the original submission. In line with section 5.2 (1), of the University Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion as it was in 2011/12 (detailed below) the student was required to resubmit the piece of work as if for the first time.

**Section 5.2 (1)**

**LOW LEVEL (LEVEL 1) OFFENCE:**

*The Plagiarism Officer shall recommend that no penalty should be imposed, i.e. the student may be given the opportunity of resubmitting the work as if for the first time. In order to help the student to prevent plagiarism and/or collusion in future assignments, the student shall be offered support which may be in the form of an appropriate learning support package.*



## Appendix 2

### Case study B: Collusion Case

#### Notification:

Following a year 2 reassessment Exam Board a second year student was failed and thus, would have to leave the University. A number of days later the University received a letter from the student who had failed the reassessment assignment which alleged collusion with another student at first submission of the assignment. The letter contained the following information:

*"I emailed my assignment after first submission to my flatmate. I then received my flatmate's assignment via email. I noted that this was essentially my assignment. I did not report this at the time because I shared a house with her but noted that she had passed, but I had not."*

#### Response:

Both assignments were passed to the school plagiarism officer (PO) after receipt of the student's letter. After careful scrutiny of both scripts the PO agreed that there was considerable evidence of similarity in both assignments. However, the script of the student who had passed contained a more critical, coherent argument and added evaluations to the argument which would have made it very difficult for any marker (unless the scripts were read side-by-side) to detect the similarities in the scripts.

#### Action:

After further discussions between the school's senior administrator and senior managers in LTS, a plagiarism meeting was held. In the event both students were accompanied by members of the Student Union Advice Centre and the student who had failed was also accompanied by a family member.

#### At the meeting:

Both students were seen separately with their respective representative(s). In both meetings the PO outlined what the meeting would and would not cover (e.g. re-instatement of student). The PO also summarised the relevant sections of the Plagiarism & Collusion Policy. In their respective meetings both students were given the opportunity to outline their side of the alleged collusion. Both students supported their side of the story with supplementary materials but the student who had passed the assignment, and had therefore stayed on the course, produced a folder containing her preparatory work for the assignment, including documents that both had shared.

#### After the meeting:

It was felt that the evidence available was inconclusive. The PO sought clarification on aspects of the Policy from senior LTS managers and from the Academic Director of Taught Programmes.

#### Agreed Outcome:

Clearly there were similarities in the work which could be construed as collusion. However, evidence presented by both parties left the direction of collusion inconclusive. On 'balance of probability' this was therefore considered to be a Level 1 offence and no penalties were applied to either student. The academic judgement of the assignments remained unchanged (one assignment is clearly a fail, the other clearly a pass). This meant that the complainant was withdrawn from the course, whereas the other commenced the third year of their course. The student was strongly encouraged to take advice on how to avoid plagiarism and collusion in the future (by engaging with DOS) and to seek additional guidance from their personal advisor.

## Case Study C: Plagiarism & Collusion Case – ‘Professionalism’ implications

### Summary of investigation:

In October 2008 the School was copied into an email sent by X to a national newspaper. X stated he worked for an essay writing company and had been asked to edit a piece of work written by Student A. This piece of work was a draft version of a resubmission for Student A’s dissertation. The first submission had failed with a mark of 30%. X had also received electronic copies of the mark sheets written by the original markers in the School. X suggested that the work was “*heavily plagiarised from a document freely available online*” and that “*This seems to show that the university is not checking submitted work for plagiarism*”.

A comparison was made of the two documents and similarities were discovered. However, this work had not yet been submitted formally for marking. Therefore, a comparison was made with Student A’s first submission. The amount of verbatim text was extensive.

- The abstract was identical
- The introduction was identical except for 2 paragraphs
- A number of pages in body of text were identical

Student A was invited to attend a plagiarism meeting with the PO and the moderator of the first submission. Student A informed the PO prior to the meeting that his computer had crashed 3 weeks ago and he had no hard copies of any of his work.

### UEA Plagiarism and Collusion policy [2008-2009]

Section B, sub-section 2 - “Collection of Evidence”

*Wherever possible or appropriate, the main evidence for plagiarism will be the original source[s] that has/have been drawn on/copied from. In appropriate cases, the lecturer may collect other work completed by the student within the stage/Year.....”*

In view of the extensive nature of the plagiarised text, and the fact that other modules of study within this pathway led to a recordable qualification with the PSRB, the PO had concerns about the ‘safety’ of previous decisions and results. The Exams Office had retained copies of submissions from Student A. In applying the UEA regulation, the PO interpreted ‘Stage’ to mean Level of study. Both pieces of work were level 3 (equivalent of 3<sup>rd</sup> year) pieces of work. Also, in view of the manner in which this case came to light (via an email to a newspaper, rather than being identified by any of the original markers), the PO collected the additional evidence.

### Module A

The 1<sup>st</sup> submission was marked in January 2007 – mark received 28%

2<sup>nd</sup> submission July 2007 – mark received 35%

3<sup>rd</sup> submission was granted by the exam board, based on special factors. Marked in March 2008 42%

The PO examined the first submission of this work and undertook a *Google Scholar* search. The PO found verbatim text lifted from a published source.

Pages 1-5 were verbatim

Page 6 – high index of suspicion of plagiarism but relevant page was restricted access [web book].

PO’s search did not extend beyond page 6. The tone of the rest of the work was written in a similar manner to the confirmed plagiarised material and therefore there is a high index of suspicion for the rest of the work having been plagiarised. Other evidence considered as part of the PO’s investigations and in the formulation of the PO’s recommendations:

### General Regulations for Students

#### Regulation 14 Professional Misconduct and Unsuitability

1 “A student on a programme of study where a practical professional placement is required part of the course shall not act or behave in any manner which a) jeopardises the welfare of the subject (whether patient, pupil or client) 9i.e Professional misconduct) and/or b) Contravenes the relevant professional code of conduct [i.e. professional misconduct] and/or c) is incompatible with behaviour required by the profession [i.e. professional unsuitability]

### **The Code [PSRB2008]**

*“Be open and honest, act with integrity and uphold the reputation of your profession” [The PSRB’s Code of Conduct, 2008]*

### **Plagiarism Meeting**

The student admitted without hesitation the plagiarism of work of a student from another UK University. Student A stated that he did not know the student who produced the work at the other University. He had just found the work on line and copied it. Although Student A admitted plagiarism they also presented ‘mitigating’ factors:

- Student A’s spouse had been very ill
- Student A was struggling with academic writing
- Student A had experienced difficulty accessing academic advice

When asked if Student A had ever done this before in any of their other work the student said they had not. When presented with the plagiarised text in another module, Student A again suggested poor academic writing style and not being sure how to reference correctly. Student A had received a copy of the student handbook, which contains guidelines on correct referencing technique.

When asked if Student A had made it known to their academic advisor that they found academic writing difficult and required more targeted support for referencing, the student said they had not.

*Note: the policy has since been changed and students must now be informed of any suspected plagiarism in their work before the meeting.*

### **Findings**

Student A admitted, without hesitation the plagiarised text in the first submission for the dissertation. The student also admitted plagiarised text in their 1<sup>st</sup> submission of a script for a separate assignment. Student A admitted that if further investigation was carried out on this work, it would probably show further plagiarism. The given reason for this was poor referencing technique. Academic support had been offered to Student A, and their academic advisor had provided feedback on the proposal and introduction on four occasions. Student A also received an extension to this work in recognition of their difficult personal circumstances.

Student A accessed very little academic advice for the first submission of his other essay. They had academic advice and support on 7 occasions for their 2<sup>nd</sup> submission.

A module leader noted that Student A had a tendency to send draft work, “*at the last minute*”.

### **Outcome**

- The mark for Student A’s first submission was retrieved and a mark of 0% awarded.
- The separate submission on an earlier module received a fail grade.
- The Head of School considered whether any further investigation was necessary in terms of whether there was a prima facie case for professional misconduct under General Regulation 14.
- The confirmed evidence suggests a pattern of behaviour of plagiarism. Concern remained about the ‘safety’ of the other completed modules within this pathway, in particular module Y which leads to a PSRB recordable qualification.
- The Head of School considered whether there had been a Breach of the Professional Code and whether there was also a prima facie case to be investigated and brought to the PSRB. The difficulty here was proving an allegation with regard to the module in question. Even if it could not be proven, Student A’s previous pattern of behaviour was enough to report the case to the PSRB and let it make its own decision.
- The case was referred to SSDC and PSRB.
- Student A was given a 3 month practice suspension, which was then varied to a 3 year caution order.