

PLAGIARISM HANDBOOK



**For academic and teaching staff in the
School of GeoSciences**

2015/2016

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DECLARATION: This guidance reflects current wisdom for procedures for the School of GeoSciences in adhering to College of Science and Engineering procedures for dealing with plagiarism.

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Purpose of this guidance:

Of the Schools in the college of Science and Engineering, GeoSciences and Engineering by their size have the largest number of plagiarism cases. Ultimately College hopes we can reduce the number of cases. Section A of this handbook discusses how to handle detected plagiarism and the end-to-end procedure. Section B provides guidance to give to students in course handbooks/lectures/in class assignments, and recommended procedures for courses where multiple offences have occurred. Appendix 1 contains a “Do’s and Don’ts” set of recommendations.

Section A: The plagiarism procedure

1. What happens first: detecting plagiarism

The course organiser, course marker or course secretary find evidence of plagiarism. This typically occurs through knowledge of the topic by the course organiser/marker or by a high ‘Turnitin’ score.

College has a rule of thumb that a ‘Turnitin’ score of ~20% may be regarded as plagiarism, BUT THIS IS NOT A GENERAL RULE OF EVIDENCE. It may be easy for a set assignment or piece of coursework with tables, identical dataset etc to easily achieve such a score. The course organiser/marker must review the coursework to objectively assess and put forward any potential cases of plagiarism.

2. Discussing potential cases, guidance on filling in the report form and marks in the meantime

Whether familiar with the plagiarism procedure or not, please drop me (the SAMO) an e-mail (ruth.doherty@ed.ac.uk) if you’d like to discuss the case before filling in the plagiarism report form, especially if there are multiple cases. Note that it is likely that I will need to see the plagiarism form to further the case.

A Plagiarism report form most likely needs to be filled out. This can be found at: <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SCISAMO/Forms> . This is the college Wiki page which still points to: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/plagiarism>

Please fill in an e-version if at all possible as it makes it easier to pass onto college if needed.

2.1 The report form

This is a standard form used across the college of Science and Engineering. Most parts of this form are self-explanatory, but there are GREY (i.e. unclear) areas. In addition, the boxes that you fill in can expand and this can lead to tick boxes underneath being deleted accidentally, so take care with that. As a course organiser or marker you need to fill in Part one.

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University of Edinburgh

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT REPORT FORM

Suspected cases of academic misconduct should be reported to the relevant School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO) in the first instance. The SAMO will decide whether the case can be handled at School level or should be referred to the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO).

PART ONE: For completion by the marker or course organiser before referring a case to the SAMO.

Please note that if the case is formally investigated the student(s) will be provided with a copy of this report.

1. Staff details:

Name of staff member reporting the suspected offence _____

Role (e.g. marker / course organiser) _____

Name of SAMO _____

2. Student Details

Please provide the following information:

Student name: _____

Matriculation number: _____

Programme and year of study _____

Course affected (credits) _____

Name of assessment affected and proportion of course _____

Face value mark for work _____

Page 1 of the report form

mark will only come from college by the College Academic Misconduct Officer (CAMO) after an interview and referral by myself as SAMO. This means as a school we do not have the jurisdiction to give a mark penalty due to plagiarism. Please do make sure that course markers know this. We have had incidences of course markers giving a mark penalty which has had to be rectified. One school of thought is that if the assignment contains text that is highly plagiarised it is unlikely to have addressed the assignment questions or goals and will therefore not necessarily receive a good mark anyhow. However, there will also be many instances where the student will have benefitted- this is to be addressed in section 3 of the form.

Section 3:

This section asks:

“Brief summary of the reasons for suspecting academic misconduct and details of any evidence gathered to date. Please include an approximate estimate of any benefit to the students’ mark from plagiarised sections (i.e. <10%, between 10% and 30%, greater than 30% of their mark):”

This section is the most important section for myself as SAMO and if necessary the CAMO to see the evidence and judge the outcome of the case. Please provide as best you can the evidence for your case. The current CAMO is in biological sciences and the SAMO is an atmospheric scientist so please use as plain language as possible to make your case! At the end of this section there are 5 check boxes. Do make sure you provide the evidence for the 2nd and 3rd check boxes and check these boxes.

- *Details of any previous advice or warnings given to the student*
- *A copy of the affected work with relevant sections highlighted*
- *Copies of any source documents identified with relevant sections highlighted*
- *Comments of the marker, if relevant*
- *Clear notes in plain English explaining the evidence currently available (Section 3 completed)*

The section also has a repeat of the check box in section 2:

Section 1:

This section contains staff details. Name of SAMO: Ruth Doherty

Section 2:

Please remember to clearly fill in the proportion of the course that the assessment represents.

The grey area is the **face value for the mark** question. This means that you must mark the assignment without taking into account plagiarism as best you can. This is perhaps a very unsatisfactory answer if the assignment contains a large amount of plagiarised text. I have consulted heavily with college on this- but the same advice above has been given on all occasions. A mark has to be provided in this box even though this may be highly difficult (however see section 3 below).

The logic behind this question is that any penalty to the

- The face-value mark awarded and the basis for that mark
NOTE: If no face value mark is supplied please provide an explanation and inform SAMO as soon as it is available.

However, a mark needs to be recorded. College has always asked for a mark in section 2, but please discuss any issues with this in the box below this entitled “Any further comments”.

2.2 What happens about “marks” in the meantime whilst the case is being assessed or progressing?

College now recommends that given the short turnaround for marking that coursework marks of any plagiarised cases are not withheld whilst the case is being investigated. (However, I am still waiting for a definitive statement from College on this). Instead, all students should be aware that their marks can be altered following the enquiry of a plagiarism case. The SAMO recommends that a statement to this effect be added to any course handbook.

3. SAMO decision and process

Section 2 of the report form is where the case is decided on as minor (handled by the school with no mark penalty) or major (passed to college CAMO with likely mark penalty) and the decisions justified. I also record cases of poor scholarship under the minor category for school purposes as these do not get passed to college but the paperwork is there in case needed for future for details of previous warnings.

3.1 Outcome categories

Plagiarism case can have 4 outcomes: dismiss, poor scholarship, minor and major. The middle two categories will involve school interviews that involve the course organiser and in a minor case the Student support co-ordinator. Please note the following:

- The decisions on the outcome is usually made in conjunction with the course organiser (CO) sending in the report so that the SAMO and the CO are in agreement.
- The Student support co-ordinator (and now if in any doubt the personal tutor) will be asked if there are any special circumstances to be aware of before any decisions is made. The special circumstances will generally need to be applicable to the period of the assignment.
- Interviews take place to educate the student

Dismiss: the SAMO find not enough evidence for a minor/major case or for poor scholarship.

Poor scholarship: In cases of poor scholarship: usually an informal interview with the course organiser is recommended and sometimes with the SAMO also. There is no mark penalty.

Minor Offence: In minor cases an interview with the SAMO, course organiser and student support officer happens.

Major offence: Major cases are sent to college, and an interview take place with the CAMO. Such a case usually incurs a mark penalty. In this case the personal tutor may attend the case if requested by the student to support them.

The purpose of the interview is educational.

3.2 Basis of outcomes

1. Any repeat offence is automatically a major offence (we haven't had one of these to date!).
2. Any case involving a 3rd or 4th year undergraduate or a taught MSc student cannot be considered a minor case. All cases of this nature either have to be deemed as major invoking the formal mechanism or the informal mechanism under poor scholarship.
3. Any case where a mark penalty is warranted (bearing in mind that the interview process is a serious issue anyhow) must be deemed a major case.
4. Any case involving a 1st or 2nd year undergraduate (and a first offence) can be deemed as minor if the SAMO is satisfied there is no deliberate intention and that a case can be appropriately dealt with without recourse to a mark penalty.

3.3 Follow-up

The SAMO usually suggests that the students support co-ordinator or the nearest equivalent for MSc students send a follow-up email to the students after their interview to see if they have any outstanding questions.

3.4 Role of the course Organiser

The role of the course organiser is a) to raise and discuss any potential case with the SAMO and b) in the case of poor scholarship or a minor offence to attend an interview. See also section B for general guidance to students.

3.5 Role of the Personal Tutor

The main role of the personal tutor is to support the students during the process. For a case in the School of Geosciences (either poor scholarship or minor offence) a student support co-ordinator always attend an interview to support the student. The student can ask the personal tutor to attend an interview for a major case at college. [N.B. the role of the personal tutor must not go beyond providing support to the student for a specific case no matter how keen they may be to teach the student about plagiarism].

4. Most common reasons for plagiarism:

The most common causes of plagiarism are:

- a) The student “cuts and pastes” text often from a web-source and either only cites the appropriate reference at the end of the paragraph or not at all. This is usually because they do

not understand referencing guidelines. For web-sources this is a particular problem. In some cultures this habit is not uncommon in academia and hence not seen as plagiarism by the student.

- b) The student copies someone else's work (collusion). In this cases both students are interviewed. The most common reason that this happens is poor time management and stress.

Section B: guidance to students, course handbook statements, and courses with multiple offences.

1. Student communication on how to avoid plagiarism:

Section B provides some guidance to give we can all give to students in course handbooks/lectures/in class assignments as well as declaration form locations

There has been extensive discussion about whose role it is to educate students so that they avoid plagiarism.

The informal conclusion is that all course organisers should:

- Provide a statement on plagiarism in their course handbook
- R-iterate this in class and alert the students to this text in the handbook at the start of the course
- Also point out that the students should read carefully any “declaration of work” for assessed assignments before they tick/check or sign these, so they know they are declaring that their work is not plagiarised.
- It is strongly recommended that all course handbooks use text that links to the following: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/plagiarism> and point them in particular to a) the guidance on how to avoid plagiarism and related links and b) the plagiarism procedure
- It is recommended to add a statement that coursework marks can be altered following any plagiarism investigation
- It would be helpful to remind the students that they can ask the students support coordinator for an extension and this is far preferable than a case of plagiarism for all concerned.

2. Guidance for courses with multiple years of offences or multiple cases within a given year

If the course organiser experiences repeated plagiarism cases occurring in subsequent years then the SAMO requests that the course organiser make sure they follow the guidance in section B1 and emphasise to the students the importance of avoiding plagiarism. To date only 1-2 courses have fell in this category. If there are multiple cases for the same course (this happens occasionally) then the SAMO recommends a follow-up to the whole class about the importance of avoiding plagiarism.

3. Sample own work declaration

Below is a sample online declaration form. This form can be found at:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/geosciences/teaching-organisation/to-forms>

Own Work Declaration

When you submit your work to the Teaching Office in Crew, please sign the 'Own Work Declaration' form at the submission box to indicate that you have adhered to the University's policies. An example of what this form is below.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

OWN WORK DECLARATION

By signing below, you indicate that you have adhered to the University of Edinburgh's Own Work Declaration

I confirm that all this work is my own except where indicated, and that I have:

1. I have read and understood the Plagiarism Rules & Regulations in the course sections and Programme Handbooks (available at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/plagiarism>);
2. I have clearly referenced / listed all sources as appropriate;
3. I have referenced and appropriately indicated all quoted text of more than three words (from books, web, etc);
4. I have given the sources of all pictures, data etc that are not my own;
5. I have not made any use of the work of any other student(s) either past or present;
6. I have not submitted for assessment work previously submitted for any other course, degree or qualification;
7. I have not incorporated any work from or used the help of any external professional agencies other than extracts from attributed sources;
8. I have acknowledged in appropriate places any help that I have received from others (e.g. fellow students, teachers in schools, external sources);
9. I have complied with any other plagiarism criteria specified in the course and Programme handbooks and (available at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/plagiarism>)
10. I understand that any false claim for any of the above will mean that the relevant piece of work will be penalised in accordance with the University regulations

I understand that any false claim for this work will be penalised in accordance with the University regulations.

Course Name [Course Code]

Assignment Title			Office Use	
Matric Number	Name	Signature		
s0000001	Last, First			
s0000002	Last, First			
s0000003	Last, First			

Appendix 1: Do's and Dont's:

Do's:

Do be aware that any plagiarism case can have 4 outcomes: dismiss, poor scholarship, minor and major. The middle two categories will involve school interviews that involve the course organiser and in a minor case the Student support co-ordinator.

Do be aware that only major cases go to college and potentially receive a mark penalty. The School is not allowed to give a mark penalty; this can only be done at college level. As a school our role is in education not in punishment.

Do feel free to phone or e-mail me to discuss the case first especially if you are new to the process or have not been involved in a case for a while.

Do be aware of the word doc forms link: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/discipline/plagiarism>.

Do also be aware that there are guidance docs on avoiding plagiarism links at the link above also. College would like to change this link but as yet have not done so.

Do feel free to discuss at the beginning of your course, and in handbooks, guidance on plagiarism and make sure students always fill in their "own work" declaration forms even if it is an in class test/assessment. The two commonest forms of plagiarism are

- a) students lifting "chunks" of text particularly from web-sites without the use of quotes and sometimes references. So students could be reminded to use their own words and always use quotes if directly using text and reference appropriately and sufficiently
- b) copying between students. Students could be reminded that it is their own independent work that is being assessed and that they have signed an "own work" declaration form.

Don'ts:

Do not as a course organiser or marker discuss a case of plagiarism directly with a student, until after discussion with myself first and we decide on a case outcome. Any such discussions could lead to a college appeal and an interruption of the process.

Do not as a personal tutor act in any role other than supportive to your tutee. Personal tutors can attend college interviews but college insists they are not otherwise to be engaged in the process. A personal tutor is encouraged to discuss plagiarism in general or support a student with a collage case, but they should not be involved in judgement or further actions other than support post interview i.e. take matters of discipline into their own hands.

Do not deduct marks for suspected plagiarism. If you have markers on your course that are not academic staff please ensure they are aware of this. Marks must be given based on the best judgment of face value. It is the role of college only to provide mark penalties.

I (the SAMO) would be happy to talk further with different sub-research groups. If someone wishes to arrange such a group meeting please e-mail me.