

ANNEX G: THE ROLE OF FACULTIES AND DEPARTMENTS IN PREVENTING AND DEALING WITH PLAGIARISM

Education Committee has agreed a strategy for preventing and dealing with plagiarism on the part of students. This document outlines a key element of that strategy which is the role of faculties and departments in educating students in good academic practice, and raising their awareness of plagiarism. Their responsibilities in this respect are set out below.

GUIDANCE ON PREVENTION

Recognising the need for a set of University resources as part of a prevention strategy, Education Committee has produced and approved an extensive set of web pages, including new video resources on academic skills such as note-taking and time management. These can be found via www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills.

Education Committee is clear that all resources of this sort need to be used as part of a co-ordinated strategy to educate students. It therefore asks divisions, faculties and departments to ensure that:

Course handbooks (and websites) include the following, as set out in the template for handbooks¹:

- The University definition of plagiarism given below and a link to the Oxford Students Website guidance on plagiarism (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism)

[Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.]

- Appropriate subject-specific guidance on plagiarism, including a range of relevant examples;
- Specific guidance on academic good practice and topics such as time management, note-taking, referencing, research and library skills and information literacy and a link to the Oxford Students skills webpage (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills);
- a style guide to inform students of good referencing practice.

In addition, faculty/department induction sessions should – in Education Committee's view – always incorporate separate sessions on good academic practice and the avoidance of plagiarism, which should include advice on note-taking, referencing practice and study skills. They should also emphasise how different university learning methods are from those employed at school. It should be made clear to students when it is and is not appropriate to re-use or draw closely on work already submitted for assessment. Further sessions on plagiarism and academic practice should be organised as students prepare to undertake projects and dissertations. The University has invested in an online course (weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/skills/plag) and Education Committee has endorsed its use as part of faculty/department induction sessions. Online

¹ Included in Education Committee's 'Policy and Guidance on Course Information' www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pandgoncourseinformation

learning works most effectively when it is reinforced with face-to-face teaching. Faculties and departments are strongly advised to direct their students to complete the course within the context of their academic induction.

Faculty/departmental guidance should also consider the particular needs of students who are non-native speakers of English.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES OF POOR ACADEMIC PRACTICE AND PLAGIARISM IN TAUGHT DEGREE EXAMINATIONS: GUIDANCE FOR CHAIRS OF EXAMINERS

Introduction

Procedures have been developed for dealing with the full range of situations in which examiners are presented with submitted work for taught degrees that gives rise to concerns about the standard of scholarly referencing and attribution. These will range from students using the wrong type of referencing style, to knowingly trying to pass off the work of others as their own. The procedures aim to deal with this wide range proportionately and without undue delay. Boards of Examiners have a clearly defined role that is strictly academic in nature. The Proctors will take forward investigation for disciplinary action for plagiarism only when cases are referred to them by Chairs of Examiners, and only then when they are satisfied that such action is warranted.

This guidance does not cover cases of poor academic practice and plagiarism in research degrees, as research degree students are advanced students for whom different procedures are appropriate. Cases of suspected plagiarism in research degrees should continue to be referred to the Proctors.

Level 1: procedures for Examination Boards

If a marker, or a Turnitin report generated in the course of examination procedures, raises concerns about the proper attribution of a passage or piece of submitted work, the matter will be reported to the Chair of Examiners. The Chair will compile and retain any evidence and decide whether or not the case is one which may be dealt with by the Board (poor academic practice) or whether it is one that requires reference to the Proctors for investigation and possible disciplinary action. The Chair may consult the Proctors in cases of doubt. This procedure is intended to ensure that cases are dealt with at the lowest appropriate level.

The following step-by-step guidance is provided in order to assist the Chair with this decision.

Step 1

If the concern has been identified by a high Turnitin score, follow the guidance below on interpreting Turnitin reports to establish the report's accuracy.

If the concern has been identified by a marker, examine the source the marker has referred to; or in the case of suspected collusion or copying between students, examine all pieces of work giving rise to this concern.

Step 2

Consider the characteristics of the passages which have given rise to concerns.

Characteristics of cases to be dealt with as poor academic practice

In all cases dealt with wholly by the Examination Board the extent of the material under review must be a relatively small proportion of the whole. Small will be in the context of the length of the work but as a guide it will not exceed 10%.

If the case is then best described by one or more of the criteria below, on balance this is likely to indicate a case of poor academic practice and can be dealt with by the Examination Board.

- The material is widely available factual information or technical description that could not be paraphrased easily.
- The passage(s) draws on a variety of sources, either verbatim or derivative, in patchwork fashion. This is likely to indicate poor English/poor understanding rather than an attempt to deceive.
- Some attempt has been made to provide references, however incomplete (e.g. footnotes but no quotation marks, Harvard-style references at the end of a paragraph, inclusion in bibliography)
- The passage is 'grey literature' i.e. a web source with no clear owner
- The student is not known to have previously received a marks deduction for poor academic practice or been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism. (This will only be relevant for Honour Schools examined in Parts, or master's courses with multiple submission deadlines.)

Thresholds for reference to the Proctors

If the passage(s) giving rise to concern meets any of the criteria below, this is likely to indicate that referral to the Proctors is warranted.

- The extent of the material under review is a substantial proportion of the whole.
- The material contains passages of analysis or research data that is clearly the intellectual property of the original author.
- The passage(s) exhibits heavy reliance on one source which may indicate plagiarism of ideas/arguments.
- There is evidence that the student has copied the development of an argument (which may not be verbatim quotation – it could involve paraphrasing a line of argument or sequence of points).
- There is evidence of copying or collusion between students.
- The student has previously received a marks deduction for poor academic practice or has been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism in the same or earlier programme of study.
- The submission clearly infringes rules on resubmitting material (autoplagerism) for examination.

Step 3

Where the Chair finds that the matter can be dealt with by the Board, assessors will mark the work on its academic merits. The Board will then deduct marks for derivative or poorly referenced work according to a pre-determined scale set out in the marking conventions. Boards are free to operate marks deductions of between 1 and 10% (maximum) of the marks available for that particular piece of work. In practice, it will often

be difficult to operate very fine-grained distinctions and it is acceptable for examination boards to exercise their judgement within a small range of 'bands' e.g. on a 100 point scale a Board might judge cases to fall in one of three bands for which 3, 6, or 10 marks are deducted. Where the consequence of the marks deduction would result in failure of the assessment and of the programme (i.e. no resit opportunity) the case must be referred to the Proctors.

Where the Chair finds that the matter should be dealt with by the Proctors, the Chair should follow the steps outlined in Level 2 below.

Step 4

For their academic development, students should be informed that marks have been deducted for poor academic practice if they have further examinations to take during their course (for example if it is a preliminary examination, a part of a FHS examination before the final year, the qualifying examination for MPhil, or early examinations for other master's courses), and an explanation should be given of where and how in their work this was evidenced. This feedback should be provided via the Chair of Examiners to the Senior Tutor in the case of undergraduates, or the Course Director in the case of graduates. Students should also be reminded of the disciplinary regulations concerning plagiarism.

Level 2: procedures for the Academic Conduct Panel

Examination Boards will refer cases to the Proctors' Office if the Chair has made a decision that a case exceeds the criteria for dealing with Level 1.

Step 1

The Chair should first summarise the case for the Proctors indicating the relevant sources, extent, and seriousness of the plagiarism. A report printout from Turnitin is insufficient on its own and will be returned to the Chair for analysis and summary. In cases of students suspected of colluding or copying from each other, the Chair should examine the work of both the students involved, so that the nature of the apparent collusion can be established. All materials should be securely submitted to the Proctors' Office. Support will be provided by a caseworker in the Proctors' Office who will ensure that all relevant materials are collated and presented. The Proctors' Office will expect to receive the following:

- a) Turnitin reports (including text-only version which links to sources rather than generic website) and copies of any sources which are not readily available;
- b) a marked up copy of the assignment or assignments, to show the principal passages of concern;
- c) a clean copy of the assignment or assignments;
- d) signed declaration of authorship;
- e) course handbook;
- f) instructions for the assignment;
- g) any evidence of previous discussions of plagiarism with the candidate.

Step 2

The case will be given initial consideration by one of the Proctors who will determine whether it is a case that should be referred back to the examiners to deal with at Level 1, a suitable case for the Academic Conduct Panel, or one that is so serious that it should

be directed to the Student Disciplinary Panel (SDP). Cases where it is likely that the outcome would result in failure of the whole degree will always be referred to the SDP.

Step 3

If it is decided that the case should proceed to the Academic Conduct Panel, the student's consent will be sought, offering the alternative of referral to the SDP. The Proctors' Office will as soon as possible notify the student of the referral to the Panel, except when the student is currently undertaking examination. In such cases, steps will normally be taken to delay notification to the student until a time that will not interfere with ongoing exams.

Step 4

An interview with the student will be conducted between the Proctor and the student with a note-taker as part of the preparation for the Panel meeting; this may be by telephone, email questions, or other means of telecommunication. If, during the interview, the student admits a breach of the regulations, the Proctor may offer the student the option of the matter being concluded without further meetings. The Proctor will arrange for the Panel to agree a penalty by email correspondence (the Panel may not impose a penalty which is more severe than the Penalty recommended by the Proctor, and the student will have the right of appeal as set out under Appeal process below). Otherwise, paperwork for the Panel, including a note of the interview, will be provided to the student who will be given a minimum of three clear days to submit any further information for inclusion.

Step 5

The Proctors will convene a meeting of the Academic Conduct Panel. The ACP will consist of three people, one of whom will be one of the Proctors and one of whom will have relevant subject expertise (but not be a member of the Examination Board concerned). The Panel will be convened as necessary to deal with plagiarism cases referred to it. The Panel will normally consider cases within one month of referral by the Examination Board.

The student, supported by a friend or a Senior Member, will be invited to attend the meeting, but the Panel may go ahead in the student's absence. The Panel may require the student to attend, or be available by telecommunication.

The Panel will have a range of outcomes available to it:

- Finding that plagiarism has not occurred
- Directing that the student has support and training
- Deduction of marks for the piece of work: examiners will conclude examination
- Submission awarded 0% - resubmission required in order to conclude examination but mark not capped
- Submission awarded 0% - resubmission required in order to conclude examination and mark capped
- Serious Academic Misconduct - Referral to the Student Disciplinary Panel

The Panel cannot give a penalty that would result in the student failing the whole degree or other award-bearing course.

Appeal process

The student will be able to appeal a decision of the Academic Conduct Panel by sending a written appeal within fourteen days of receiving the Panel's written decision. Two

members of the Academic Conduct Panel with no previous connection to the case will consider the appeal, and this will normally be a paper-based exercise.

The student will not be able to appeal a referral to the Student Disciplinary Panel but will, in such cases, have the right to apply for permission to appeal to the Student Appeal Panel following the outcome of the Student Disciplinary Panel.

Level 3: Student Disciplinary Panel

The Student Disciplinary Panel will deal with the most serious cases of plagiarism, and those referred to it by the Proctors or the Academic Conduct Panel because the likely outcome would be failure of the whole degree.

The procedures and regulations set out in Statutes and Regulations apply www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/352-051a.shtml#_Toc28142346
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/234-062.shtml .

Thresholds

In addition to those cases referred to the Student Disciplinary Panel by the Academic Conduct Panel as described above, the Proctors may refer cases to the Student Disciplinary Panel directly after receipt from the examiners and after their investigation, but will only do so in what appear to be very serious cases. This is likely to include cases of apparent deliberate deception such as purchase of submissions from an essay mill or ghostwriting service, students with a history of plagiarism, or very extensive plagiarism.

Outcomes

The Panel will have a range of outcomes available to it including:

- Submission awarded 0% - no opportunity to re-submit i.e. failure of programme
- Award classification reduced
- Failed award
- Expelled from institution and failed award
- Removal of a degree (in cases of former students)
- Additionally, any of the outcomes available at Level 2

Using Turnitin for plagiarism identification and online submission of work

Turnitin is **not** plagiarism-detection software. It is, according to the University's IT Services, "an electronic text matching system that can be used to find text matches between students' submitted work and existing electronic sources, including extensive databases of electronic articles, other student assignments, and the internet".

Boards of examiners may wish to use Turnitin as one tool in helping to identify potential cases of plagiarism. Points of guidance for this are given below. If examiners or assessors have *any* concern about the content of a written exercise (or about similarities between several candidates' work), they should discuss the matter with the chair, who in turn should seek advice from the Proctors. **An examiner or assessor should not decide to impose an academic penalty if intentional plagiarism is suspected, and examiners should not use a viva to follow up concerns. Any suspicions must be referred immediately to the chair to consider in accordance with the procedure described above.** The regulations relating to plagiarism and collusion can be found in [Disciplinary Regulations for Candidates in Examinations \(Proctors' Regulations 1 of 2003\)](#) clauses 3 – 5.

1. Boards of examiners first need to decide whether they want to submit *all* examined work to Turnitin; randomly-selected samples; or specific pieces where initial marking has thrown up concerns. Candidates need to be advised about the procedure to be followed. This can be done via the examination conventions, course handbook, or other specific communication to candidates from the chair.
2. Special subject regulations need to be changed so that candidates are required to submit electronic copies of their work (in almost all cases, in addition to hard copies). The regulations need to say when, where, and how electronic copies are submitted. Ideally, electronic copies should be submitted on CD-ROM or memory-stick, along with paper copies of work, to the Examination Schools. The electronic and paper copies must have identical content. Where work is to be randomly or selectively screened, these regulations might be expressed in terms of candidates being required to provide electronic copies promptly on request (instead of submitting these along with hard copies).
3. Online submission of work is available via WebLearn. If the examination regulations state that candidates must submit via WebLearn they must not also request that candidates submit a hard copy. If students are requested to submit a hard copy and an electronic copy, this electronic copy should be in the form of a CD or USB memory stick which must be submitted at the same time as the hard copy. Only the hard copy submission is deemed as the formal submission. Departments wishing to start using electronic submission must use the WebLearn anonymous Assignments function.
4. Users of Turnitin (for submitting papers and reviewing Originality Reports) should make use of the training and support provided by IT Services. Turnitin can be used either directly (via the TurnitinUK website, for which an instructor account is required), or via the Assignments tool in WebLearn. Use of Turnitin on examined material (essays, reports, dissertations, theses) by individuals who have not undertaken training is strongly discouraged, as misuse of the software could compromise a later disciplinary investigation by the Proctors.

Training courses include: Turnitin Fundamentals, and Interpreting originality reports using Turnitin (See the list of courses under 'Plagiarism' at: courses.it.ox.ac.uk/). Before using Turnitin for examined work, it is important that users learn how to carry out the basic software tasks, like how to submit work in such a way that the software

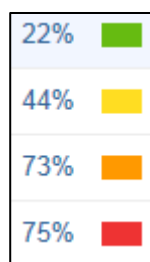
does not report 'matches' of text which is indented or included in quotation marks; and how to analyse a report so as not to become too concerned about a high Similarity Index which, on inspection, actually consists of a large number of trivial matches. IT Services provide a [staff support site in WebLearn](#) and termly meetings of the Oxford University Turnitin User Group, where issues and questions about the service can be raised. The [Turnitin User Group](#) provides a forum for dissemination of best practice and experience in using the tools in an Oxford context. For further information, see [\[IT Services\] About Turnitin](#) or contact turnitin@it.ox.ac.uk.

5. Candidates whose work is being screened or might be screened need to certify that the electronic copies of their work are identical to the hard copies. It is not essential to obtain individual approval for screening of work, but it is prudent to make students aware that electronic copies will be or might be screened (especially if the work is to be added to the Turnitin database). This can be covered by a subject-specific statement on the Declaration form which candidates submit. The sample declaration of authorship form is available from www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism.

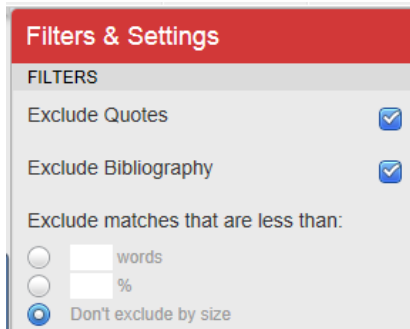
Interpreting Turnitin reports

- Interpreting Turnitin reports is a nuanced skill
- The 'Originality Report' (displayed within the software as the 'Document Viewer') indicates the percentage of words in the document that have been found to match existing electronic sources. The percentage is known as the 'Similarity index', measuring the amount of similarity with other sources.
- Turnitin cannot identify text that may have been copied from books (or any other sources) that are not available in electronic format. Even then, there are limits to the databases that Turnitin has access to for searching purposes – there may be some electronic journals or databases that do not have partnership agreements that allow Turnitin to search their content.
- Turnitin can match only electronic text, not equations, computer programs, images, tables, diagrams or pictures. Check the sources of any surrounding text to see whether the diagrams etc are also copied from the same source.
- The list of all submissions shows a visual 'traffic light' indicator next to each one, according to the extent of the match percentage:

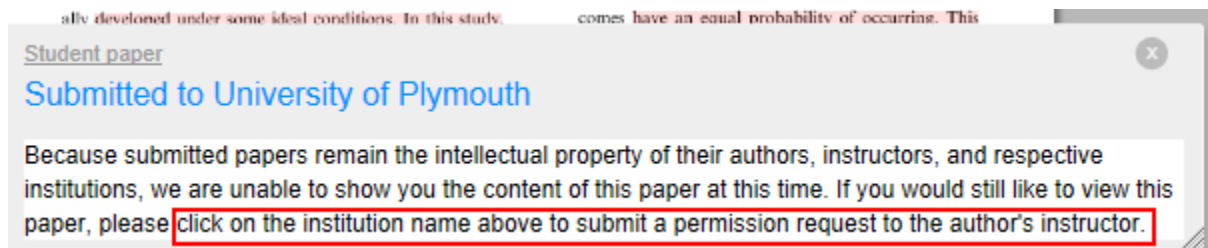
0%--Blue icon
1-24%--Green icon
25-49%--Yellow icon
50-74%--Orange icon
75-100%--Red icon



- There is no recommended 'threshold' as to what scores might be acceptable or unacceptable. Each case needs to be evaluated individually, taking into consideration the nature of the subject matter (e.g. in a Law essay it may be acceptable to cite legal cases without using quotation marks), the nature of the assessment task (e.g. the cognitive level of the task), and any other factors relevant to the particular task.
- A high percentage match should not be taken as an automatic indicator that there is a problem with the work; the list of matches may include correctly referenced sources, reference lists, declarations of authorship etc.
- There is a filter in the online report which can filter out correctly quoted material (only double quotation marks are recognised), and reference lists. A list of references may also be filtered out but must be preceded by the heading 'References', 'List of References', or 'Bibliography' in order for Turnitin to recognise it – the filter then ignores everything that follows that heading. Note that if the references are within a formatted table in MS Word, it will not be recognised as a list of references:



- A match of 0% may be suspicious. In the normal course of writing, one would expect at least some matches of short, commonly used phrases. A score of exactly 0% may indicate that the writing has been electronically manipulated to disguise words and confound the software (e.g. it is possible to insert 'non-displaying spaces' within words, which will make the words unrecognisable to the software).
- Double check that sources have been attributed correctly and not lumped together e.g. multiple articles from same website may show up as a single large match.
- Sources should be checked to ensure there is no misattribution e.g. a report may have been syndicated and published on different website, causing Turnitin to identify a different source from the one referenced by the student.
- Where the Turnitin report shows a match with work submitted to another university, check if there may be a third source that both students may have copied from.
- For privacy reasons, Turnitin does not allow access to student papers from other universities if these have been found as a match. Permission needs to be requested from the respective university to that piece of work, if required. This can be done through the online interface, by clicking on the match in question and then clicking on the name of the institution:



- If a match is found between two student papers (say, Student A and Student B), it is not possible via the software to identify who copied from whom. That is, the paper of the 'plagiarist' may have been submitted and saved to the Turnitin database before that written by the original author. Any such case should be referred to the Proctors for further investigation.

The Originality Report can be refreshed in the online document viewer. If this is done at a later date, it may yield a different score to the one first generated (due to the dynamic nature of content on the internet). Therefore a copy of the Originality Report should be downloaded at the time of the investigation, as evidence of matches found at one particular point in time.