

Plagiarism Policy
Adopted by Academic Council on 11th November 2008

Background

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and students are responsible for educating themselves in relation to it. Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty that is used by a person to gain benefit from another person's work. Plagiarism can include *inter alia*:

- failing to properly cite an author or contributor for ideas incorporated into a piece of work
- failing to cite sources of information and data used in a piece of work
- directly copying a piece of work by another person
- cutting and pasting paragraphs from different websites or documents to produce a piece of work including computer code
- handing in a paper downloaded in part or whole from the internet
- cheating in an examination

All are forms of plagiarism.

There are three central things all ITT Dublin students should know about the consequences of plagiarism:

- 1) Plagiarism is an Institute offence. Lecturers are expected to report in writing all instances of plagiarism to the appropriate Head of Department and the Registrar. A review of the work in question and all associated documentation will then take place. In other words, in addition to dealing with the course lecturer, students who plagiarize must also deal with the Institute. Students found guilty of deliberate plagiarism will have this entered into their record and in extreme cases may be expelled from the institute.
- 2) Plagiarism in most instances is easy to identify and expose. The very fact that makes plagiarism easy and tempting to some students - the internet – also makes its detection easy. Most lecturers can locate the source of suspected plagiarism within a few minutes of searching the web. In this context, plagiarism is as much lack of judgement as it is dishonesty. Students should be aware that all lecturers have access to Turnitin.com, a very effective resource for catching plagiarism.
- 3) All parties to plagiarism are considered equally guilty however this assumption is reputable. If you share your coursework or other such materials with another student and he or she plagiarises it, you are considered as guilty as the person who has plagiarised your work, since you enabled the plagiarism to take place. Under no circumstances should a student make his or her coursework available to another student unless the lecturer gives explicit permission for this to happen.

Students who plagiarise are highly likely to be caught, and the consequences will be severe and will include anyone who enabled the plagiarism to take place. Institute policy will apply, regardless of the feelings of either the students or the staff members.

Student Responsibilities

All students must familiarise themselves with this policy.

Procedures and sanctions for the different levels of offences are laid out in this document. As a source of information relating to on-line plagiarism the following article may be of interest:

Julie H.C.H. Ryan, [*Student Plagiarism in an Online World*](#) (an excellent article written for faculty members but useful for students to read as well)

Avoiding Plagiarism

Copying someone's work is extreme and blatant plagiarism. More commonly, however, students plagiarise without realising they are doing so. This generally happens when a student fails to acknowledge the source of an idea or wording. While unintentional plagiarism is generally treated more leniently than intentional plagiarism, it is nonetheless a sign of sloppiness and/or failure to educate oneself about what plagiarism is.

ITT Dublin has produced a writing style guide 'ITT Dublin Style Guide 2008' and students have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with this document.

If plagiarism is not discussed with students early in their programme of study, possibly during induction, the likelihood for accidental or deliberate plagiarism is increased. It is therefore recommended that in addition to providing students with the ITT Dublin 'Style Guide 2007' academic departments make arrangements in the first weeks of a programme to highlight the issues and implications of plagiarism to their students. These arrangements should take place in advance of students being required to submit work.

Departmental Plagiarism Record

Any student who plagiarises work either accidentally or deliberately will have their name and details entered in the 'Departmental Plagiarism Record'.

All academic departments of the institute shall keep a record of plagiarism offences whether accidental or deliberate. Each offence should be clearly recorded and marked as accidental or deliberate. Staff members who identify either accidental or deliberated plagiarism must inform the appropriate Head of Department who will ensure the 'Departmental Plagiarism Record' is updated to record the incident.

The record allows recidivism to be identified and acted upon. It is the responsibility of the department to ensure that the record is kept up to date. The record will be used in any subsequent sanction process.

Seriousness of Offence

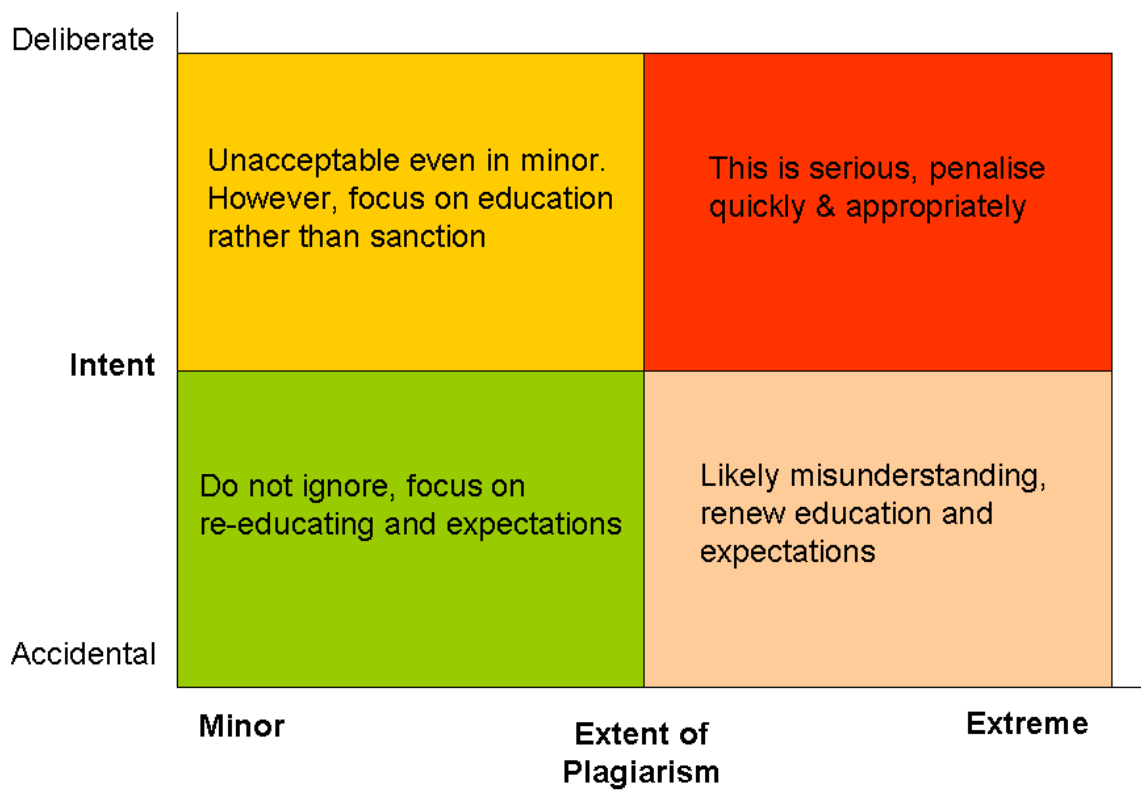
Plagiarism can be represented on a continuum ranging from EXTREME PLAGIARISM (e.g. downloading materials and submitting as one's own) to MINOR PLAGIARISM (e.g. misuse of

quotes or referencing conventions in the ITT Dublin ‘Style Guide 2007’). Obviously, sanctions will vary across this continuum.

As with any offence the issue of intent is central to establishing the seriousness of the offence. The graphic below developed by Devlin (2002) is often used as a framework for plagiarism offences and sanctions.

Minor offences must not be ignored and students should be informed of their error(s) and reminded of the expectations placed upon them in relation to plagiarism. Serious offences when they come to light must be dealt with quickly and be subject to serious sanction.

It is almost impossible to produce a prescriptive list of offences and sanctions but using the framework staff should be able to initially use their professional judgement to locate an offence on the framework.



Sanctions

The following sanctions would normally apply across the spectrum of plagiarism. The list of sanctions is based on the understanding that students have been formally informed of their obligations and institute expectations in terms of plagiarism before being required to submit work or sit exams.

1. Minor offences (accidental) - fail the task (marked as 0) and refer offender to institute expectations
2. Minor offences (deliberate) - fail the task (marked as 0) and warn student in writing of possibility of failing subject in addition to referring offender to expectations

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| 3. Repeated minor offences (same subject) | - | fail the task (marked as 0) and fail the subject (marked as 0 repeat all subject elements CA, Exam, etc.) if third offence |
| 4. Repeated minor offences (multiple subjects) | - | fail the task (marked as 0) and fail the subjects (marked as 0 repeat all subject elements CA, Exam, etc.) if cumulative third offence |
| 5. Extreme offences (accidental) | - | fail task (marked as 0) refer offender to institute expectations and warn student in writing of implications of repeat offence |
| 6. Repeated extreme offences (accidental) | - | fail subject (marked as 0) |
| 7. Extreme offences (deliberate) | - | fail subject (marked as 0) |
| 8. Repeated extreme offences (deliberate) | - | fail subject(s) (marked as 0) and suspend student for 1 academic year if second extreme deliberate offence |

All offences must be recorded on the departmental record. Sanctions 6, 7 & 8 above are institute level sanctions and may only be invoked with the full consent of the President. All others are departmental level sanctions to be applied by the Head of Department. The Registrar must be informed of all sanctions.

All sanctions, appeals and adjudications shall be recorded in the 'Departmental Plagiarism Record'.

Communication With The Student(s)\Staff

Once an allegation of deliberate or repeated accidental plagiarism has been made the Head of Department shall write to the student\staff in question outlining the full nature of the allegation and invite them to reply in writing within 5 working days.

The Head of Department shall arrange and chair a formal meeting(s) to discuss the allegation with the student and staff member(s) at which minutes will be taken. At the conclusion of the meeting(s) the Head of Department shall reach a decision on the outcome of the discussions and if appropriate invoke the relevant sanction. The outcome shall be communicated to the student\staff in writing along with details of the appeals procedure.

All this documentation must be kept in the relevant file and the decisions recorded in the 'Departmental Plagiarism Record'.

Plagiarism Audit Trail

When an allegation of plagiarism is made all relevant documentation must be placed in a specifically created file in the school office within which the allegation has arisen. All relevant documentation includes the work in question, in addition to records of meetings and all other communications with the alleged offender(s). The file must be updated as appropriate if any

other meetings or discussions take place on the allegation. The file, in addition to forming an official record, will be used to inform adjudication on any subsequent appeal.

Plagiarism Appeals

Given the serious nature of a plagiarism offence and the weight of potential sanction a student or member of staff has the right to appeal a departmental or institute plagiarism ruling.

The Institute shall convene a plagiarism hearing to deal appeals against plagiarism sanctions within 5 working days of receipt of a written appeal. Appellants have the right to representation at any plagiarism hearing.

In the case of a departmental level sanction the hearing will consist of a Head of School other than the one in which the appeal has arisen, 2 members of academic staff from schools other than the one in which the appeal has arisen and 1 appropriate member of the Registrar's team. Adjudication by this hearing is an institute adjudication and any resulting sanction can only be appealed to independent adjudicators.

In the case of an institute sanction the hearing shall consist of three independent adjudicators from other academia and/or the legal profession.

The adjudication by the three independent assessors is deemed to be a final ruling by the institute without prejudice to the legal or constitutional rights of those involved.

Guide for Staff

Major studies of plagiarism from around the world all tend to work within the general framework above and one recent report from the 'Australian Universities Teaching Committee' provides the following 36 strategies to avoid plagiarism against the backdrop of this framework:

Together these thirty-six strategies can be summarised into a three-point plan:

- Make expectations clear to students.
- Design assessment to minimise opportunities for plagiarism.
- Visibly monitor, detect and respond to incidences of plagiarism.

Teach students about authorship conventions and about how to avoid plagiarism

- 1) Create a climate of involvement and interest rather than of detection and punishment (Carroll, 2000).
- 2) Warn students of the possibility of their work/programs/files being stolen/copied if left on the hard disks of university computers and teach them how to delete this work when they have finished.
- 3) Teach the skills of summarising and paraphrasing (Carroll, 2000).
- 4) Teach the skills of critical analysis and building an argument.
- 5) Teach the skills of referencing and citation.
- 6) Include in assessment regimes mini-assignments that require students to demonstrate skills in summarising, paraphrasing, critical analysis, building an argument, referencing and/or citation.

Counter plagiarism through the design of assessment tasks

"I think that some of the assignments are just asking for students to plagiarise"

- 7) 'Design out' the easy cheating options, for example, using the same essay/prac questions year after year (Carroll, 2000).
- 8) Avoid assignments that ask students to collect, describe and present information as these are more prone to plagiarism than those that ask for analysis or evaluation (Carroll, 2000).
- 9) Randomise questions and answers for electronic quizzes/assignments.
- 10) Ensure assessment tasks relate to the specific content and focus of the subject (and therefore the students) so students are less tempted to simply copy something from the web.
- 11) Set the assignment specification on a unique or recent event on which there is unlikely to be much material available (Culwin & Lancaster, 2001).
- 12) Use essay/assignment topics that integrate theory and examples or use personal experience (Carroll, 2000). For example, a field trip report, a task with no right answers or a personal reflection on a task.
- 13) Use assignments that integrate classroom dynamics, field learning, assigned reading and classroom learning (Gibelman, Gelman and Fast, 1999).
- 14) Use alternatives to the standard essay, such as case studies, which present more difficulties in locating suitable material to plagiarise (Culwin & Lancaster, 2001).
- 15) Assess work produced in class, possibly with preparation allowed beforehand, to reduce the opportunities to plagiarise (Culwin & Lancaster, 2001).
- 16) A timed open book essay in class is a variation on the above theme (Carroll, 2000). This is possible with large classes as long as the class is in one room at one time or parallel groups have different questions to answer. Administration and marking are considerations.
- 17) Where feasible and manageable, viva (i.e. orally examine) a random selection of the students briefly in order to check what they have learned and that they are familiar with the ideas in the submission (Culwin & Lancaster, 2001).
- 18) Ask students to make brief presentations to the class based on their written assignments (Gibelman, Gelman and Fast, 1999).
- 19) Require all students or a random sample of students to submit essay outlines and/or non-final versions of assignments. Ensure that all students are informed that they may be called on to submit such drafts.
- 20) Minimise the number of assessment tasks - continuous assessment and overassessment contribute to plagiarism. While three pieces of assessment per subject might ease the emphasis on the exam, this number multiplied by four subjects means a student faces the equivalent task of completing a serious piece of work each week of each semester (Langsam, 2001).

Ask students for evidence that they have not plagiarised

- 21) Ask students to include the library site and call number of each paper source they use and to include the date they accessed each website.

- 22) Ask students to supply photocopies of any references used as part of an appendix (or to have such an appendix available). This helps to ensure all their references are genuine (Culwin & Lancaster, 2001).
- 23) Collect an annotated bibliography before the submission is due. This can be hard to construct from a supplied paper and ensures that the students have done some work before the submission date (Culwin & Lancaster, 2001).
- 24) Insist on evidence for significant claims and let students know that the assignment will not be marked if this evidence is missing.
- 25) Return assignments to students to redo if requirements for providing evidence of sources are not met. If they are never met, disallow students from using the assignment as part of their assessment for the subject.
- 26) Evans (2000) suggests using a meta-essay or meta-assignment where students are asked to answer the question "What did you learn from your assignment?" or "What problems did you encounter while undertaking this assignment and how did you overcome them?"

Make positive use of collaborative work

- 27) Make a virtue of collaborative work in subjects with large student numbers and common assignments. Use group work or syndicates. Ensure that both the criteria for assessing group work and the difference between collaboration and copying are transparent and clearly understood.
- 28) Ask students to work on a task in groups but to submit individual assignments. Ensure the division between collaboration and collusion is clear - give examples of each. Have a mechanism in place to account for 'shirkers'.

Become familiar with resources that may be used for plagiarism

- 29) Educate yourself about electronic options available and attractive to students in your discipline. Culwin & Lancaster (2001) suggest checking that you are familiar with available resources related to the assignments you set.
- 30) Use a search engine to help find the sites students are likely to find. Simply choose a phrase that students are likely to use - a history example is "Thomas Samuel Kuhn was born".
- 31) Demonstrate to your students your awareness of electronic resources available to them. Evans (2000) suggests downloading examples of the sorts of information students are likely to find in relation to the assignment and distributing it to them - to show that you are aware of their existence. You might even consider discussing the quality of the prepared work with students. As Evans (2000) says, the 'meat and potatoes' of most [undergraduate] research papers can be found on the sites below.

<http://www.dogpile.com>
<http://www.netacrawler.com>
<http://www.askjeeves.com>

Make use of detection software and other deterrents

- 32) Require all students to submit essays and assignments electronically, while making students aware of the plagiarism checking software that exists. Limits on document

size may be an issue. The threat of using such software, even on a random sample of essays, may be sufficient deterrent.

- 33) Archive electronic student essays and assignments to enable later crosschecking across students or between pieces of work submitted by an individual student (to establish an authorship index). Issues of expense and IT skills may arise. However, the threat of checking may be sufficient deterrent.
- 34) Use deterrence penalties. For example, a first offence results in failing the assignment, a second means failing the subject (Langsam, 2001).
- 35) Request that all work outside of examinations be submitted with a cover sheet defining plagiarism and requiring the student's signature.

Respond quickly to incidents of plagiarism

- 36) Do something about blatant examples of plagiarism immediately (Carroll, 2000).