

Plagiarism

Welcome to Advice Direct..., the written information service from Guild Advice.

This leaflet is designed to provide you with information on plagiarism - how to avoid plagiarism and the procedures that take place for suspected cases of plagiarism within the University guidelines.

What is Plagiarism?

The University of Birmingham takes plagiarism **very seriously** and there are procedures in place to deal with suspected cases; therefore it is important that you understand what it is and take steps to avoid it.

Plagiarism is when work is submitted by a student that is not their own, but has been taken from another source. The original material is then hidden from the marker, either by not referencing it properly, by paraphrasing it incorrectly or by not mentioning it at all.

The most common forms of plagiarism are:

- cutting/copying/pasting material from the internet;
- copying the work of another student (past or present), including essay material, laboratory data or computer source code;
- copying course material or lecture notes;
- copying material out of a textbook or journal.

Please check the codes of practice on Plagiarism for the full list on this guidance.

If you are unsure about how to reference, and concerned about the risk of plagiarism, always consult your department for further support as soon as possible, and before submission of any pieces of work.

How To Avoid Plagiarism?

By following a few easy guidelines when studying, you can be sure that your work will be precise and accurate.

- Use the referencing systems suggested to you by your department
- When researching or writing up notes, clearly distinguish references from your own words.
- Clearly indicate references and provide the sources- do this as you write your work; do not rely on adding them in at the end
- If you fall behind on your work contact your tutor and try to get an extension (apply through the **extenuating circumstances** procedure as required)
- If you are working in a group, although you may be able to share certain tasks such as researching information, make sure that your work is your own.
- Ask your tutor if you are unsure about anything
- Always check your work once completed
- Do not ask to see a course mate's written work or share your own

'i-cite' is the Library Services Guide to citing references

www.i-cite.bham.ac.uk

It provides information and gives advice about how to reference sources using the **Harvard (Author-Date) System**, the **Numbering or Vancouver System** and **Footnotes**.

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/icite/referencing/index.aspx>

What Happens If I'm Accused Of Plagiarism?

Allegations of plagiarism are considered under the University's Code of Practice on Plagiarism. The process is split into 2 distinct parts.

Detection of Plagiarism

Where your principal academic unit suspects that a piece of submitted work is plagiarised they must invite you, in writing and/or by email, to the Plagiarism Meeting with your School's Plagiarism Officer and another academic member of staff.

This **Notification Letter**, and/or email, will include the following information:-

- that you are suspected of having committed plagiarism,
- a summary of the suspected plagiarism, to allow you to understand what the allegations relate to,
- that you have the right to be accompanied by a "friend" within the University definition – this is a member of University staff, a current registered student, or a Full time Officer from the Guild of Students Executive Team, and;
- that you have the right to respond in writing to the allegation of plagiarism. This **must be made within 5 working days of receipt (pro rata/reasonable adjustment if student is abroad)** of the Notification Letter.

The letter may also include a date for the Plagiarism Meeting to take place on, this will be **within 5 to 10 working days from the date of the Notification Letter**.

Your response to the Notification Letter needs to include an explanation of the plagiarism – and whether there were any specific circumstances that the relevant academic staff should be aware of, and whether you will be attending the Plagiarism Meeting.

If you are unable to attend the Plagiarism Meeting, please seek further advice from Guild Advice as quickly as possible.

A **Guild Full Time Officer** is a University of Birmingham Student who has been elected to provide representation for students, an officer can attend a meeting with you to provide support and ensure procedures are followed.

This can be arranged through Guild Advice Advisors.

The Plagiarism Meeting

Following the Notification Letter, you will be required to attend a meeting with your School's plagiarism officer. There may be an additional member of academic staff also present.

At this meeting the plagiarism officer will explain the reasons for suspecting plagiarism has taken place, and you will be asked about your position and your understanding of plagiarism. If you have any circumstances which you feel are relevant to the allegations of plagiarism, you should try and raise them at this meeting – providing copies of any relevant evidence where necessary.

The members of staff present will have to decide whether the allegations have been found to have taken place and therefore make a categorisation of the plagiarism – and subsequently whether to apply a penalty as per the Code of Practice on Plagiarism.

This will be based on a number of factors, more specifically:-

1. your level of study
2. the proportion of the piece of work affected
3. whether you have any previous recorded instances of plagiarism
4. whether there is a reasonable expectation that you should have learnt the appropriate methods of referencing and had appropriate support in how to reference from your School.

Regardless of whether you are told your outcome during the meeting, you will receive an Outcome Letter within 5 working days confirming the outcome, reasons for the decision, and next steps (see **but I am not happy with the outcome**, below, for further information).

The 3 Categories of Plagiarism

Poor Academic Practice – this involves **a lack of understanding** of academic practices particularly for those students who are not yet familiar with the requirements of university level assessments. This would normally include first offences which relate to inadequate referencing, small amounts of paraphrasing, or very small amounts of unattributed or incorrectly attributed copying.

Moderate Plagiarism – this involves **a failure to follow** guidelines on what is regarded as your own work, and that you have ignored conventions or academic practices. Limited collusion (where you work with another student to complete an assignment and both of you submit it as their own individual piece of work), auto-plagiarism (where your submission is identical/similar to a previous piece of your own submitted work which has been marked), or a moderate amount of unattributed or incorrectly attributed copying. Moderate plagiarism will also include multiple or repeated instances of poor academic practice.

Serious Plagiarism – this involves **an attempt by you to deceive** the marker(s) by passing off other work as your own. This can include the fabrication of data, multiple instances of moderate plagiarism, extensive quantities of un-attributed or incorrectly attributed copying, buying essays from a website or another source, or the production of work by a third party. Where the plagiarised material is identified in your research element of your course (both at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level) there is a strong possibility that this will be categorised as serious plagiarism, unless quantity is a minimum.

Always seek support from Guild Advice, either in person or via our email address, during this process, particularly if you are in doubt about what should be happening.

Possible Outcomes

If the members of staff at the Plagiarism Meeting reach a decision that the plagiarism has taken place then they will take the following action, dependent on which category the plagiarism is placed in:-

Poor Academic Practice – at this low level category the members of staff will ensure that you understand what you have done wrong, and that you are provided with appropriate instruction on how to avoid it in the future. You may be **required to resubmit the piece of work again** but no further measures will be taken.

Moderate Plagiarism – Under section 8 of the Code of Practice on Plagiarism Penalties for moderate levels of plagiarism include:-

- The assessment mark obtained to stand.
- **Resubmission** of the assignment in question, with the mark capped at the pass mark.
- The mark obtained in the assignment to be **downwardly adjusted** to reflect your actual contribution, including zero, with an opportunity to pass the module but capped at the pass mark, if this leads to a fail.
- The mark obtained be **downwardly adjusted** to reflect your actual contribution, including zero with no opportunity to resit.
- The mark obtained in the module be **downwardly adjusted** to reflect your actual contribution, including zero with no opportunity to resit the module.
- If the penalty applied results in a student failing the programme of study, the case shall be **referred to the College Misconduct Committee** where the matter will be looked at afresh.

For those on research based programmes of study, you may be allowed to resubmit your dissertation/thesis for the original qualification **within 20 working days of the date on the outcome letter**, however all plagiarised content will be need to be removed and further limited work may be instructed by the plagiarism officer. Any revised thesis submission for this purpose will not be considered as an additional submission under the University Regulation 7.4.3.

Serious Plagiarism – Where your case is categorised under this section it will become a student conduct case, under the University's Regulation 8 and Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees. Please refer to the **Advice Direct on Discipline** for further information on the process and what you need to do.

If you referred to a College Misconduct or College Fitness to Practice Committee, You are strongly advised to seek further support from Guild Advice.

But I am not happy with the outcome

Following the Plagiarism Meeting, you will receive an Outcome Letter within 5 working days.

If you are not happy with the outcome decided by your department, then you have the right to request that your case is re-heard afresh by the College Misconduct Committee.

They will re-hear the matter, and make a decision surrounding the allegations and any penalty they may wish to impose. However, all the penalties and sanctions in the Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committee will be available to the Committee. This means that they could increase a penalty in certain cases.

If you would like your case to be considered at the higher level, then you will have to inform your School Plagiarism Officer of this in writing within 5 working days of the date on the Outcome Letter.

Sources Of Help

Guild Advice, Guild of Students

Email: thearc@guild.bham.ac.uk

Visit the website at: <http://www.guildofstudents.com/support/thearc/>

Opening Hours

Drop In Clinics

Saturday/Sunday

Monday – Friday Term: 10am-4pm Vacation: 12pm-2pm

Monday - Friday

12 – 2pm

CLOSED

Student Conduct:

Email: conduct@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Website: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/conduct/index.aspx>

Code of Practice on Plagiarism:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/plagiarism.pdf>

Regulation 8:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/regulations-part8.pdf>

Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees:

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/misconduct-fitness-practise.pdf>

Guidance on Plagiarism (Undergraduate/Postgraduate):

For general guidance on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it:

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/conduct/plagiarism/guidance-students.aspx>

'i-cite' the Information Services Guide to citing references

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/icite/index.aspx>

University's Interactive Plagiarism Course

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/conduct/plagiarism/interactive-course.aspx>

Disclaimer: The information on this leaflet only provides general guidance on academic support and University policy. The leaflet should not be regarded or relied upon as a complete or authoritative statement of University policy or procedures. Guild Advice will not accept any liability for any claims or inconvenience as a result of the use of information on this leaflet.

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