



“ALL MY OWN WORK?” Plagiarism Awareness Resources: Notes for staff

The enclosed student resource “ALL MY OWN WORK?” was commissioned by the Learning and Teaching Committee to help combat the growing problem of plagiarism by ensuring that all students understand the issues involved and are fully aware of the University regulations governing this and other forms of academic misconduct. It was originally developed by Alison Bone, Head of the Law Group in the Business School, Rosemary Friedel, Academic Standards and Research, and Pauline Ridley, Centre for Learning and Teaching. The pack is now updated annually to take account of feedback from staff as well as new GEAR regulations on academic misconduct.

The pack is designed primarily for use by course tutors as part of an appropriate introductory session for new students, scheduled before any coursework assignments are due. It is not intended to replace the subject-specific advice on referencing conventions which most courses include in their handbooks. It includes a brief explanation of why and how students are expected to take care over their use of information sources, and a number of prompts for group discussion about examples and penalties. These should enable course tutors to clarify common uncertainties and reinforce key messages. Here is what one course leader said:

“The booklet provides engaging scenarios for workshop discussion – the fact that the issues are not all clear-cut is a particular strength. The Plagiarism Awareness Pack also provides a way in to discussing a range of expectations with regard to academic practice, and it can be used in such a way so that students can get to know each other at the start of the course.”

Why is it necessary?

Evidence from the UK and overseas shows that written guidelines on referencing and information about the penalties for plagiarism, are not sufficient to avoid misunderstandings or deter problem behaviour.¹ Students tend to be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of written information they receive at the start of their course, so it has been found to be more effective to include some group discussion of the key issues during induction week or soon afterwards, followed by more detailed information at appropriate stages in the course. See the list of resources below for further advice on the prevention of plagiarism.

What is involved?

For the person using the pack (normally the Course Leader or Level One coordinator):

- Please read through the materials and the tutor notes overleaf.
- Get sufficient copies of the pack for all first year students on your course.
- Allow at least half an hour for the students to work through the materials and for you to answer any queries they may have. This could be done during induction week or at any

¹ Jude Carroll and Jon Appleton, **Good Practice Guides** commissioned by JISC for the JISC Plagiarism Advisory Service available online at <http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/resources/good-practice-guide> [checked 14/08/2012]

time before students start working on their first assignment. **Merely distributing the printed materials to students is NOT enough – they need an opportunity to discuss the issues and ask questions.** A set of powerpoint slides for the activities and discussion points included in the pack is available from the Centre for Learning and Teaching website at <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/clt/plagiarism/plagiarism.html>

- This is also a good time to draw students' attention to your own course guidelines on citation and any other referencing conventions that may be used in your discipline. Sample materials for library activities that could be used to reinforce these are also available from the CLT website at the URL above.

We would be very grateful for feedback on how the pack was used and how it could be improved, in the light of your own experience and responses from students.

Additional notes for tutors

Some students' experiences may have led them to perceive a 'good' piece of work as one that reproduces as accurately as possible the material delivered by their teacher in the classroom. Many will not have referenced their coursework or understood the need to do so, while easy availability of online resources tends to encourage the habit of cutting and pasting information from a mixture of sources. Even mature students, unless already educated outside the school environment, may be ignorant of the need to attribute and reference their sources. Whatever their previous experiences, all students need help to understand what is now expected of them and what the penalties will be for any breach of regulations.

This applies to all students, but some may need extra encouragement to put forward their own views, particularly if they have come from educational systems where copying the work of authoritative authors is considered respectful rather than dishonest. Understanding this background and clarifying expectations can help to avoid problems; you can find advice on the variety of educational experiences and expectations of international students, and how tutors can help, at <http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/international/>.

The exercises in the pack are designed to provoke discussion, so there are no model answers. Ideally, like other aspects of study and writing skills, what is learnt in relation to plagiarism should be practised and reinforced throughout the course. It is important to convey the message that the University is strict in its approach to plagiarism and that work may be subject to the scrutiny of several people as well as the tutor/lecturer running the course e.g. internal moderators and external examiner.

All instances of plagiarism, however early in the course, minor or inadvertent, should be challenged. In the past, students perceived that some lecturers were more rigorous than others in their approach to paraphrasing and referencing, and academics could be reluctant to formally report suspected minor infringements where the only penalty available was inappropriately severe. That is why Academic Board approved revised regulations on plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, which distinguish between a first minor offence and major or subsequent instances. **All academic staff and students need to be clear about these procedures.**

However, it is also worth stressing that none of this means that students shouldn't work with each other. Most courses positively encourage collaborative team working, informally and for assessed group projects. Students just need to understand that it should always be possible to distinguish their own contributions from those of other people in whatever way is appropriate to the context.

Useful resources

For staff:

The CLT website at <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/clt/plagiarism/plagiarism.html> includes links to a range of educational resources on plagiarism including the JISC Plagiarism Advisory Service at: <http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/resources> [checked 8/7/10] which offers:

- Good Practice Guides for staff including “Designing out Opportunities for Plagiarism” which is particularly recommended to help staff think about the inadvertent messages we give students through the design of assessment tasks;
- guidance on copyright and data protection issues relating to plagiarism;
- generic advice for institutions, academic staff and students;
- Turnitin electronic plagiarism detection service and training on its use;

The staffcentral Plagiarism information page at <http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/plagiarism/> has guidance for staff on using the Turnitin service.

For students:

The pack stresses that students should follow the subject- and course-specific advice they receive from you on referencing conventions and expectations. Please also encourage them to use the additional resources in the online ASK Academic Study Kit, <https://student.brighton.ac.uk/ask/> on Studentcentral. This contains helpful advice on all aspects of studying, including critical reading, notemaking, the general principles of proper referencing (along with further reminders to follow course guidelines) and an interactive resource on plagiarism.