A GUIDE TO...

PLAGIARISM
What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism can be defined as the unacknowledged inclusion of material from another piece of work in your submission. Plagiarism can be both intentional and unintentional. While intentional plagiarism involves deliberately submitting someone else's work as your own, plagiarism can also apply to unintentionally failing to properly cite references for words and ideas taken from other sources.

Examples of plagiarism

• Quoting someone else’s work word for word without placing the work into quotation marks and providing a reference for that work (this can apply to a mere sentence)
• Using other material such as charts, diagrams, tables, coding, formulae and figures without providing a reference for that material
• Presenting another person’s work in your own words without reference to the original source
• Copying work from another student, with or without their consent
• Collaborative work with another student if that work is presented as your own
• Submitting work that has been submitted to the University of Bristol or elsewhere, in whole or in part, without referencing the earlier work. This means that it is entirely possible to plagiarise yourself!
• Buying or commissioning work and presenting it as your own.

This leaflet gives basic advice about the University’s policies and procedure for dealing with incidences of plagiarism and exam cheating. It should be read in conjunction with the University of Bristol Exam Regulations: bris.ac.uk/secretary/student-rules-regs
It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive
As you can see, there are various ways to both intentionally and unintentionally plagiarise. While unintentional plagiarism may be dealt with more leniently, it can still result in the full range of disciplinary actions being taken against you and your work.

How can I avoid plagiarism?
As a student, you are expected to familiarise yourself with different types of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Your school or department may provide you with specific guidance on referencing, and your tutor should be able to help you with this too. You can also access guidance on referencing at the library, and you may be able to attend training sessions on academic writing skills. Contact Just Ask for more information on what is available.

How is plagiarism detected?
It is often obvious to academics when plagiarism has occurred. However, as well as this, the University uses plagiarism detection software called Turnitin to help them to identify instances of plagiarism. This software generates a report which gives a percentage “similarity index” to other sources. This shows the amount of text in the submission that is identical to text in books, journals, internet sources, other student’s submissions, etc. However, the report still has to be interpreted by an academic to ascertain whether or not there are plagiarism concerns.

If you reference correctly using quotation marks this text will not be picked up by Turnitin. Nor will references and bibliographies if they are appropriately labelled.
What happens if plagiarism is detected?
If it is suspected that your work contains plagiarism, your School will decide whether it appears to be minor or serious plagiarism. Minor plagiarism is dealt with at School level, whereas serious plagiarism must be considered at Faculty level. Not citing a reference correctly, or omitting to put a reference in the text of an essay despite putting it in the bibliography may be considered minor plagiarism, whereas a large chunk of text identical to another source which is not referenced at all may be considered serious plagiarism. Also, if the piece of work carries a lot of credit points, or if you are in your final year of study, it is likely that the incident will be dealt with under the serious plagiarism provisions.

Whether minor or serious, the first thing that happens is that you will be informed that there is a plagiarism concern and given details of the piece(s) of work under consideration. At this point students are often sent a copy of the Turnitin report so that they can see what parts of the text have been identified as identical to other sources.

The interview
You will then be invited for an interview, called a Plagiarism Review Panel, to discuss the allegations. You are entitled to bring an adviser, friend or representative along with you. A Just Ask adviser may be able to attend with you, depending on availability. Students are usually asked some or all of the following questions, as well as questions specific to the particular piece(s) of work:

• What do you understand by the term plagiarism?
• Have you considered the Turnitin report? How would you explain the level of plagiarism highlighted by the Turnitin report?
• How did you prepare for this assignment?
• How did you organise and gather your information?
• How did you write the assignment? Did you think about referencing?
• Do you understand what is required in terms of referencing your assignment?
• Have you been given information or training about plagiarism by your School?
• Do you have any extenuating circumstances that you would like the panel to consider?
• Is there anything else you would like to add?
of the meeting, and sent to you a few days afterwards. You will have the opportunity to read through the notes and check that the meaning of what you said in the meeting is conveyed correctly. Once you have agreed that the notes are an accurate record of the meeting, you will be told the penalty (if any) which is to be applied.

**THE PENALTY**

- Possible penalties in cases of minor plagiarism include:
  - No penalty other than recording the case on your file for future reference
  - Resubmit the work for the full range of marks
  - Resubmit the work with the mark capped at the minimum pass mark
  - Award lower marks for the work, or award no marks without the opportunity to submit another piece of work

Possible penalties in cases of serious plagiarism are as above with the additional possibility of:

- Award lower marks, or award no marks, for the entire unit of which the work was a part
- Award lower marks, or award no marks, for the entire year of study
- Award a lower class of degree or other academic award
- Award a lower qualification
- Exclude the student from an award

The Plagiarism Review Panel will normally recommend the penalty (if any) to the Faculty Board of Examiners. However, if they feel it appropriate, they may refer the matter to be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Procedures.

**Exam cheating**

If you are caught cheating in an exam, this is also covered by the Exam Regulations and is dealt with in a similar way to plagiarism. Examples of exam offences include:

- Bringing unauthorised texts into the exam room, or making use of unauthorised texts or items during an examination
- Copying from the examination script of another candidate
- Dishonestly giving or receiving help from another person during an examination
- Acting dishonestly in any way either before, during, or after an examination in order to gain an unfair advantage for yourself or to assist another candidate.
If you are worried about plagiarism or exam cheating, or would like any further advice or information on anything covered in this guide, contact Just Ask.

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