

Keele University: Student guide to the plagiarism regulations

This is a brief guide for students. It is not an alternative to the full Regulations and the Guidance on them. You should consult those for full details, particularly Regulation 8.12 at

tinyurl.com/keelereg812 This guide or its update is at tinyurl.com/keeleregsguide

Note that the plagiarism regulations do not consider issues of fitness to practice or professional conduct. Some schools have separate procedures for this and an incident of plagiarism, collusion or other academic misconduct, once proven, may also then be considered by that school procedure.

1. Once you know how to acknowledge the sources you use in your writing for a module, you then write in your own words and present your work honestly to the University for assessment, you will not have a problem with plagiarism or collusion. But you should be aware of the University regulations so that you can be sure to avoid a problem.
2. Most of Regulation 8.12 concerns plagiarism and collusion, in coursework or other assessment situations (like open book exams) where you are using the work of others as sources. The “work” could be the actual text someone else wrote, whether another student or a published author, but it could also be designs or images or the ideas of someone else.
3. Plagiarism in Keele’s regulations includes
 - copying and pasting from an electronic source into your own work, or re-typing it from a paper source
 - collusion, where two or more students produce work jointly but claim it as their individual work
 - buying work to present as your own, either existing work or written for the purpose, including using Web sites that offer that service
 - submitting your own work for more than one coursework assessment.
4. Re-using other people’s work is not a problem if the source of the work is acknowledged. In fact, you may well get credit for your use of relevant sources. Acknowledge your sources by citing the source in your own writing and giving the full reference or source in a footnote or list of references at the end. Course handbooks should indicate the format expected. If you are re-using the exact text of another author, it must be put into quotation marks. It may be appropriate to make such quotations in your writing. However, if you use many quotations and cite them properly, while it is not dishonesty or plagiarism, it is not your own work so you may receive a poor mark for it.
5. In the case of other people’s ideas, it can be difficult to know what needs to be explicitly acknowledged and what does not, because it is “common knowledge” for the subject and level of study. If you are not sure what ideas need acknowledgement you should consult your programme or module handbook, or the guidance available from The Centre for Learning and Student Support, or your module tutor or personal tutor. If you are uncertain, it is better to be safe than sorry and to make the acknowledgement. Information from the Internet needs to be acknowledged just as much as that from books and journals, and in addition you should provide the date you accessed it.
6. Plagiarism is plagiarism whether it is intentional or not. Students must make sure they understand the principles of acknowledging the work of others and the regulations.
7. Each School has an Academic Conduct Officer, and one or more Deputy ACOs, whose job it is to investigate cases of possible plagiarism or collusion or similar misconduct. Academic Conduct Officers have the task of interpreting the regulations and making a decision in each case.
8. The regulations distinguish minor plagiarism from major plagiarism. “Minor offences of plagiarism may be characterised by unattributed quotations; persistent inappropriate paraphrasing or word substitution in unattributed text; multiple missing, incorrect or incomplete citations; or up to a few paragraphs of direct copying without acknowledgement of the source.” (paragraph 12.8.1) So inappropriate paraphrasing, or “plagiphrasing”, is plagiarism – taking someone else’s text and

rearranging phrases or substituting words to disguise it and then claiming (or implying) that it is your own.

9. Major plagiarism “is characterized as including copies of multiple paragraphs in full from public sources, or from a fellow student, without acknowledgement of the source; or submissions of the same piece of work for assessment, in whole or in large part, for more than one assessment without acknowledgement of the source; or the commissioning or buying of work for assessment from individuals or enterprises, or attempt to do so.” (paragraph 12.8.2).

10. There is a similar distinction between minor and major collusion. Note that allowing one’s own work to be submitted by another student as theirs is an offence.

11. If someone marking your work suspects some form of plagiarism or collusion, they will attempt to find the source. Even if they cannot find a source, if they have good grounds for suspicion they will pass it to the School Academic Conduct Officer who will investigate. The ACO or marker may use “plagiarism detection software” (e.g. Turnitin) that compares text with the Web, with electronic journals and books, and with other students’ work from Keele and elsewhere. If there is a case to answer, the ACO will write to the student to invite them to an interview to discuss the problem, at a specific date and time. The marker will probably be present and notes will be kept. A student has the right to be accompanied by a representative of his/her choosing as long as they are a member of the University, and to be represented by such a person in their absence. If the student wants to present information by way of explanation or mitigation, they must send it to the ACO two days before the date set for an interview. The letter from the ACO will explain the details. A student who receives such a letter should get advice from the Independent Advice Unit in KUSU or from other university student support.

12. Absolute proof such as a source is not required for the ACO to decide “beyond reasonable doubt” that there has been plagiarism or other misconduct covered by the regulation. The ACO will impose a fixed penalty or refer the case to the central Misconduct Panel. The fixed penalties or “tariff” (Regulation 12.9.1) is attached below. The penalty is generally having the mark of the particular assessment, or of all assessments of the module, set to zero. Normal consequences then follow, for example, having a reassessment opportunity. Note that plagiarism in a reassessment is therefore particularly serious. The ACO can require a student found guilty to undertake some instruction in how to avoid plagiarism.

13. First minor offences are dealt with (from October 2009) as mistakes due to poor understanding of academic writing. As “unacceptable work” it is not accepted and must be resubmitted as soon as possible with the problems fixed. This constitutes a first offence in the tariff, and is recorded centrally.

14. A second offence is one where a penalty under these regulations has already been applied and recorded before the submission date of the work in question. All offences are recorded centrally. The ACO will keep the details of the case. Both central and ACO records remain until the end of a student’s study at Keele, or longer if a School has advised the university that a professional body would require it. If the ACO decision on a case is that no offence was committed, no record is kept. After an ACO has made a decision, a student can appeal against it but only on grounds of procedural irregularity or of extenuating circumstances. Such an appeal goes to the central Misconduct Panel.

15. All third and subsequent offences are referred by the ACO to the University Academic Misconduct Panel, which meets regularly. An ACO may also elect to refer any case to the Panel, for example, if the consequences of an ACO’s penalty for a student’s progression in a programme would be severe. The Panel invites the student for an interview. The ACO presents the case and the student is then interviewed, with a representative if they wish, who must be a member of the university (including the KUSU Independent Advice Unit). The Panel can take extenuating circumstances into account. It can recommend any penalty but it would not normally impose a less severe penalty than would an ACO.

16. In a case of possible collusion which falls under the ACO’s jurisdiction, if it is not possible to establish the guilt of each individual but there is nonetheless clear evidence that some collusion or

plagiarism has occurred, the ACO can reject all the work involved as ‘unacceptable work’ and require new work from all those involved, as a first submission without capping.

17. Students asked to an interview with an ACO or the Misconduct Panel are advised to immediately see the Independent Advice Unit in KUSU or The Centre for Learning and Student Support.

18. The table below sets out the scope of the jurisdiction and fixed levels of penalty available to the Academic Conduct Officer. It applies to students in courses at all academic levels.

	Student history	Major or minor case	Action of the ACO
A.	First offence	Minor	The original mark, if any, held back until an acceptable version is submitted. (Not reassessment.) The final mark is awarded on merit but will not exceed any original mark given. Appropriate instruction and practice in academic writing is required of the student. A central record of ‘unacceptable work’ is kept.
B.	First offence	Major	The issue of a written warning for academic misconduct plus allocation of a mark of zero for the assessment unit in question and with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment. A central record of academic misconduct is kept.
C.	Second offence	Minor	The issue of a written warning for academic misconduct plus allocation of a mark of zero for the assessment unit in question and with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment. A central record of academic misconduct is kept.
D.	Second offence	Major	The issue of a written warning for academic misconduct plus allocation of a mark of zero for the module in question and with the normal consequences, if any, for reassessment. A central record of academic misconduct is kept.
E	Third and subsequent		Referred to the Academic Misconduct Panel.

Notes:

a) Module marks are capped at the minimum pass mark if they include any reassessment.

b) The assessment units are those defined in the electronic Student Records System (SCIMS) for each module.

c) Setting the module mark to zero means setting all elements of assessment for the module to zero, whether first or re-assessments.

d) An ACO has the discretion to send any case to the Academic Misconduct Panel rather than use the tariff, for example, if the consequence of the tariff penalty in a particular programme is disproportionate, if mitigating circumstances seem severe, or if the offence is particularly serious.