

**Code of Practice on Plagiarism and
Academic Misconduct for Higher
Education**

Approved by the Academic Regulations Committee
Reviewed August 2025

1. Principles

- 1.1 An overriding principle will be fair, appropriate and considered handling of any Plagiarism or Academic Misconduct case.
- 1.2 Plagiarism is the act of a student claiming as their own, intentionally or by omission, work which was not done by that student. For the purpose of this Code of Practice, this includes self-plagiarism (re-submission of your own work for an alternative assessment), fabricating evidence, results or data, copying work done by others, cheating in examinations and/or obtaining assessments through a commercial transaction ('contract cheating') and inappropriate use of AI.
- 1.3 Plagiarism may arise in a number of differing ways within an academic context, including the copying of the work of another student, the reproduction of course materials, notes or data (without due reference), the cutting and pasting of material derived from the Internet/AI tools and the direct transcription of the contents of a textbook or journal. It may include the adaptation of existing texts.
- 1.4 Plagiarism also includes a student deliberately claiming to have done work submitted by the student for assessment, which was never undertaken by that student, including the buying of essays and fabrication of data. This constitutes a deliberate attempt to deceive the marker.
- 1.5 In each School the Head of Department (or nominee) will be the first point of contact for staff within the School where plagiarism is suspected or detected. Where a case requires further intervention, the Deputy Dean will be contacted. Serious cases will require consultation with the Executive Dean.

2. Guidance and Prevention

- 2.1 UCB will ensure that students have access to the appropriate levels of support, counselling and advice and that staff receive regular briefings and support.
- 2.2 UCB will publish written guidance to students as to what constitutes effective academic writing and UCB's referencing guidelines.
- 2.3 It is the responsibility of each individual student to ensure that referencing conventions used in the University are understood and acted upon at all times.
- 2.4 Schools will support students to develop appropriate referencing skills throughout the duration of their studies.
- 2.5 For hard copy submissions, UCB will use assignment frontispieces within which

students certify that the submitted work is their own work. For online

submissions, the virtual learning environment (Canvas) incorporates a declaration on all module sites regarding student ownership of work being submitted in accordance with this Code of Practice.

3. Detection of Plagiarism

- 3.1 UCB reserves the right to use all legitimate means at its disposal to detect plagiarism where it arises. All submitted work will be liable to scrutiny in order to identify any plagiarised elements.
- 3.2 Plagiarism cases will be assessed on the 'balance of probability' to determine whether plagiarism has occurred and to what extent, before a judgement is made and appropriate course of action is decided.

4. Process for dealing with suspected Plagiarism

- 4.1 Where a member of staff considers that a student's work contains unattributed or questionable material following an initial investigation, that member of staff should notify the Head of Department (or nominee) of their findings. Possible initial evidence/findings could include, but are not limited to, another student's assignment, other documents that have been copied and/or notification of third-party involvement. In some cases, suspicions may be explored via a meeting with a student (by the Module Leader or nominee) about the assessment content, with the expectation that a student should be able to reasonably answer questions about their own assessment. Such meetings should also be used for assessments with high Turnitin Similarity/AI detection scores, as these scores are not definitive evidence. AI detection reports should be shared with the student in such cases. Where further intervention is required, the Head of Department will discuss the case with the Deputy Dean.
- 4.2 The student will be invited in writing to meet with the Head of Department or Deputy Dean, setting out the fact that they are suspected of plagiarism. They may invite another UCB student/Guild representative to support them. The person invited for support may not answer on behalf of the student. Any evidence, if relevant, will be included in the invitation.
- 4.3 At the meeting, the Head of Department or Deputy Dean will go through suspected plagiarism concerns with the student. The student will be invited to respond, explaining how they believe that suspected plagiarism may have taken place and, if necessary, to refute the allegation.
- 4.4 Where a student does not attend a meeting, the Head of Department/ Deputy Dean may use an appropriate means of communicating with the student in lieu of a meeting, in order to obtain a detailed response concerning the allegation of plagiarism.

4.5 If a student does not respond to the request, the Head of Department/or Deputy Dean will make a judgement as to whether they believe plagiarism has taken place on the balance of probabilities. A written record of the decision should be made, setting out the grounds on which this decision was taken.

4.6 Should the Head of Department or Deputy Dean be satisfied that plagiarism has taken place, whether knowingly or unknowingly, they should then assign it a category. A number of factors will be taken into account in this categorisation, including;

- a) the academic level of the student;
- b) the proportion of the assignment affected; and
- c) any previous recorded instance of plagiarism by that student;
- d) The wider circumstances around the submission;
- e) Any relevant evidence presented.

5. Categorising Plagiarism

5.1 The suspected plagiarism should be placed into one of the following categories based on the exercise of academic judgement and experience. In selecting a category, consideration should be made of whether there is a reasonable expectation that the student should have learned the appropriate referencing skills and received sufficient guidance regarding the attribution of source material.

5.2 Poor Academic Practice

5.2.1 Poor academic practice would be considered as not following appropriate academic conventions. This may particularly apply to students who may not yet be familiar with the requirements of Higher Education level assessment.

5.2.2 This category would include any first offence amounting to inadequate referencing.

5.2.3 This category will consider whether factors of well-being and state of mind contributed to the identified poor practice.

5.3 Process for Dealing with Poor Academic Practice

5.3.1 Where poor academic practice has been determined, the Head of Department (or nominee) should ensure the student is aware of the nature and extent of the poor academic practice and has been given appropriate support and guidance on how to avoid this in future. A record should be kept by the Head of Department (or nominee), but no further measures shall be taken.

5.3.2 A copy of the notification of the outcome should be forwarded to the Examinations Unit to ensure that the student's records are amended accordingly, and a note will be added to the Student's Dashboard record.

5.3.3 Where a student's state of mind was a contributing factor, the student will be directed towards internal support.

5.4 Moderate Plagiarism

5.4.1 Moderate plagiarism is most likely to arise from a failure to follow guidelines on what is regarded as a student's own work, ignoring conventions and acceptable academic practice.

5.4.2 This category includes collusion, auto plagiarism (submission of an assignment identical or closely related to one submitted at an earlier point and for which a mark has been received) or a moderate inclusion of un-attributed or incorrectly attributed copying. It also includes repeated poor academic practice.

5.5 Process for Dealing with Moderate Plagiarism

- 5.5.1 Where moderate plagiarism has been determined, the Head of Department or Deputy Dean should ensure that the student is aware of the nature and extent of moderate plagiarism and has been given appropriate support and guidance on how to avoid this in future.
- 5.5.2 In such cases, the Head of Department or Deputy Dean should meet with the student to seek clarification /explanation about the concerns raised.
- 5.5.3 Where a case of moderate plagiarism has been determined. The mark obtained in the assessment may be downwardly adjusted to an appropriate level (reflecting the actual contribution of the student) and reported to the Examinations Officer.
- 5.5.4 A copy of the notification of the outcome should be forwarded to the Examinations Unit to ensure that the student's records are amended accordingly and that it is added to the central record of academic misconduct.
- 5.5.5 Where the investigation finds that the student would benefit from additional support, the student will be directed accordingly.

5.6 Right to Appeal the outcome of a Moderate Plagiarism case

A student may appeal the penalty imposed for plagiarism on grounds of the appearance of new evidence or procedural irregularity. Any such appeal must be submitted to the Assessment Appeals Committee of the Academic Board using this form within five working days of receipt of the notification of the outcome of the plagiarism decision.

5.7 Serious Plagiarism

- 5.7.1 Serious plagiarism arises from deliberate attempts to deceive.
- 5.7.2 This category includes using significant unattributed material, clear intention of deception or repeated moderate plagiarism.
- 5.7.3 Serious plagiarism also includes any use of material obtained from a website or other source that involves a commercial transaction and the production of

academic work by a third party for gain.

5.8 Process for Dealing with Serious Plagiarism

5.8.1 Where serious plagiarism is suspected, the Deputy Dean will inform the Executive Dean (or nominee), who will carry out an initial review of the information collated and will determine whether further action is required.

5.8.2 If the Executive Dean (or nominee) initially determines that the case may be of a serious nature, the student will be invited to attend a Plagiarism Panel. Membership of this panel will include:

- Executive Dean of the School (or nominee)
- An independent senior academic manager
- An elected representative of the Guild of Students

Additionally, the Head of Department or Deputy Dean will attend the panel to present the findings of the investigation and explain why the case is considered a serious plagiarism offence.

The student may bring another UCB student/Guild representative for support to the Plagiarism Panel. The person invited for support may not answer on behalf of the student. The Guild of Students can be contacted at guildinfo@ucb.ac.uk for further information.

5.8.3 Where a student does not wish, or is unable, to attend a Plagiarism Panel, the Executive Dean (or nominee) may use an appropriate means of communicating with the student in order to obtain a detailed response concerning the plagiarism allegation.

5.8.4 The student should be informed of the next stage of the process. This should indicate the potential consequences of plagiarism and invite the student to attend. The student may be accompanied by a 'friend' if they wish (i.e. another member of UCB or a representative from the Guild of Students). The person invited for support may not answer on behalf of the student.

5.8.5 Where a student does not wish, or is unable, to attend a Plagiarism Panel, the Executive Dean (or nominee) may use an appropriate means of communicating with the student in order to obtain a detailed response concerning the allegation of plagiarism.

5.8.6 If a student refuses or is unable to attend a Plagiarism Panel, the Panel will make a judgement as to whether they believe plagiarism has taken place in the absence of the student. A written record of the decision should be made, setting out the grounds on which this decision was taken.

5.8.7 If the outcome of the Plagiarism Panel is that it does not conclude that the student has committed plagiarism, no further action is taken. If the outcome of the Plagiarism Panel is that it concludes that the student has committed serious

plagiarism, a penalty shall be imposed as under 5.8.9 below

5.8.8 The outcome will be communicated to the relevant academic departments and the Examinations Unit who will record and take action as appropriate.

5.8.9 Where a student has committed serious plagiarism, penalties could include, but not be limited to:

- a. failure of a module
- b. disciplinary suspension for a period of one or two semesters
- c. expulsion

6 Cheating in an examination

6.1 Students must ensure that they do not engage in any form of cheating in connection with the examination. UCB treats any form of cheating under examination conditions as an extremely serious matter.

6.2 Cheating in an examination occurs when a student seeks to improve their performance in an examination by accessing or attempting to access material not listed on the front of the examination paper (the rubric).

6.3 Where a student is suspected of cheating or has been caught cheating in an examination, the invigilator will confiscate any unauthorised materials and complete an Examination Incident Report form.

6.4 The student is permitted to finish the examination. The student must be invited in writing to meet with the Head of Department (or nominee), setting out the fact they are suspected of cheating in an examination.

6.5 The Examination Incident Report form, together with any confiscated materials and the student's question and answer papers, is brought to the attention of the Head of Student Records and Academic Registry. The Head of Student Records and Academic Registry then notifies the appropriate Head of Department.

6.6 The student must be invited in writing to meet with the Head of Department (or nominee), setting out the fact that they are suspected of cheating in an examination. At the meeting, the Head of Department (or nominee) should go through the incident with the student, establishing why this is regarded as a possible case of cheating in an examination. The student should be invited to respond, explaining how they believe that the suspected case of cheating in an examination may have taken place and, if necessary, refute the allegation. If the student wishes, they may bring a friend (a UCB student) or a representative of the Guild of Students to support them. The Guild of Students can be contacted at guildinfo@ucb.ac.uk for further information.

6.7 Where the investigation finds that the student would benefit from additional support, the student will be directed accordingly.

6.8 Where cheating in an examination has been determined, the Head of

Department (or nominee) should determine an appropriate penalty as under 7.12 below.

6.9 The Head of Department (or nominee) should inform the student in writing of the outcome, and a record will be added to the Student's Dashboard.

6.10 Where a case of cheating in an examination has been determined to have occurred, one of the following penalties shall be applied (the penalty will be mindful of the student's personal circumstances at that time, which may have contributed to the case):

- a) The student will be deemed to have failed the examination.
- b) A penalty commensurate with serious plagiarism if appropriate.

7. Appealing the Outcome of the Plagiarism Panel (Serious cases).

A student may appeal against the decision of the Plagiarism Panel to the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Digital) or nominee if they can identify that some procedural irregularity has occurred in the handling of their appeal by the Plagiarism Panel.

The student must complete an Appeal Form within 10 working days of the notification of the decision of the Plagiarism Panel to the Appeals Panel, who will convene a meeting at the earliest opportunity (usually within 10 working days) to discuss the appeal.

The Appeals Panel may uphold the appeal and require the Plagiarism Panel to review the original decision. Alternatively, they may reject the appeal if it is determined that no valid grounds for the reconsideration of the original decision have been established.

If a student wishes to appeal further, they can contact the Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor who will review the evidence and provide a response within 10 working days in accordance with the Appeals Policy.

Independent External Review

If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal stage, they may escalate the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within their stated time limit. OIA will ensure the student has exhausted all UCB appeal procedures before reviewing their case. For advice and information concerning the OIA, please contact the Academic Registry (registry@ucb.ac.uk), an employee of the Guild of Students (guildinfo@ucb.ac.uk) or at the OIA website: www.oiahe.org.uk

Following receipt of a Completion of Procedures Letter, and if a student's programme of study is a University of Birmingham (UoB) degree, they may then also refer their matter to the relevant UoB office. Go to <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/policy/complaint-appeal/index.aspx> for advice on which forms to complete.

If a student's programme of study is a University of Warwick (UoW) degree award, they

may refer their matter to the University's Student Complaints and Academic Casework Team via email to complaints@warwick.ac.uk.