

### 3.10 Academic Malpractice including Plagiarism

There is an online plagiarism unit which all new students must complete. If the unit is not completed by the deadline given access to computer systems and examination results will be restricted.

The University uses electronic systems for the purposes of detecting plagiarism and other forms of academic malpractice and for marking. Such systems include TurnitinUK, the plagiarism detection service used by the University.

As part of the formative and/or summative assessment process, you may be asked to submit electronic versions of your work to TurnitinUK and/or other electronic systems used by the University (this requirement may be in addition to a requirement to submit a paper copy of your work). If you are asked to do this, you must do so within the required timescales.

The School also reserves the right to submit work handed in by you for formative or summative assessment to TurnitinUK and/or other electronic systems used by the University.

Please note that when work is submitted to the relevant electronic systems, it may be copied and then stored in a database to allow appropriate checks to be made.

Attempting to cheat in examinations is treated severely by the University. The penalty is usually more severe than a zero in the paper concerned. One recent student of Computer Science did not graduate because of this.

Plagiarism, or copying of course or lab work, is also a serious academic offence, as explained in the University guidelines. In Computer Science these guidelines apply particularly to laboratory exercises and to final year project reports. Two Computer Science students were recently downgraded one degree class because of plagiarism in their project reports.

The following section describes in detail what we mean by the term 'academic malpractice'.

#### Academic Malpractice Guidance Note

Academic Malpractice is defined by the University of Manchester (<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=2870>) as:

- Plagiarism (i.e., the presentation of another's work, ideas etc., intentionally or unwittingly, without giving full and proper credit)
- Falsifying Results
- Collusion\_ (collaborating with other students when this is prohibited)
- "Anything else that could result in unearned or undeserved credit for those committing it"

"Academic malpractice can result from a deliberate act of cheating or may be committed unintentionally"

This note is intended to give some explicit examples of what would be included under **Collusion** or the "**Anything else...**" categories. Many of these examples are taken from real cases or incidents in the School.

Collusion basically means collaborating with another to gain a mark or credit that is undeserved.

The "Anything else ..." is more subtle but would certainly include the soliciting for or obtaining of 'unhealthy' help with assessed coursework, and the offering or supplying of such. Examples of unhealthy help include a student being given the solution, rather than, say, hints on how to create the solution.

Specific examples of this include (but are not limited to):

- asking to see the solution of another student.
- offering or agreeing to show your solution to another student.
- student to student `help' which is too detailed.
- asking for or accepting unhealthy help from an external source, including but not limited to:
  - a friend or relative
  - online web sites, such as stackoverflow, or programmer-for-hire sites, such as freelancer.
  - the web, or books, etc.. e.g. copying an algorithm which you have been asked to design.
  - generally publishing your solution, whether intending to permit cheating by others or not, including but not limited to:
    - negligently leaving a hard or soft copy in a public place.
    - the use of sites such as pasteBin for your convenient transfer of work, but leaving it publically accessible afterwards.
    - giving your password to another.

Note: if you post your code on a help site, you are risking a charge of both soliciting unhealthy help and of publishing your solution!

If you are found guilty of Academic Malpractice you face penalties ranging from zeroing of specific marks, to reduction of Degree classification, or even expulsion from the University.

We understand that it is only natural for you to seek help when you need it, but we urge you to seek help within the School in an open and transparent way. If your course has a Moodle or Blackboard Forum. If you are a Y1 or Y2 student, you could use PASS. This way you should receive assistance that helps you to learn how to solve problems, rather than have the problem solved for you.

Remember, it is okay to ask for help from **any source** in order to obtain a better understanding of something you have **not** been asked to create, including the coursework **question**. It is not okay to ask for someone else to do your work for you, or for such detailed help that it amounts to nearly the same thing.

So, for example, if you are asked to write a program, it is not sufficient that you are able to understand the solution created for you by someone else. By the way, if you come across a solution to coursework (e.g. code) which has been posted by other students from the school, please pass on the URL to whomever is in charge of the associated course.

## Guidance to Students on Plagiarism and Other Forms of Academic Malpractice

### Introduction

1. This section describes the University and School of Computer Science Policy on Academic Malpractice. It is vital that you read and understand the following and that you are clear about its implications for yourself. Indeed, by signing your registration form you are declaring that you have done this. We hope that you will see this policy as fair and necessary.
2. The School will assume that you are familiar with this material on academic malpractice. If you have any problems or questions, please contact a member of staff to discuss them.
3. As well as reading this section, please refer to the Plagiarism and Academic Malpractice – Guidance for Students document:

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=2870>

The University policy on Academic Malpractice is given in University Regulation XVII: 'Conduct and Discipline of Students' available at:

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=6530>

4. **Academic malpractice** includes **plagiarism, collusion, fabrication or falsification of results** and anything else that achieves credit for a student when it not properly deserved.
5. As a student, you are expected to cooperate in the learning process throughout your programme of study by completing assignments that are the product of your own study or research. For most students, this does not present a problem, but occasionally, whether unwittingly or otherwise, a student may commit what is known as plagiarism, collusion or some other form of academic malpractice when carrying out an assignment.
6. Apart from being deliberate, this may also occur because students misunderstand or are ignorant of what is expected of them, or have been used to different conventions in their prior educational experience.
7. This guidance should help you understand what we regard as academic malpractice and therefore help you to avoid committing it. You should read it carefully, because academic malpractice is regarded as a serious offence and students found to have committed it will be penalized. At the very least, a mark of zero would be awarded for the piece of work in question, but it could be worse; you could fail the whole course unit, be demoted to a lower class of degree, or be excluded from the programme.
8. **You should note that work you submit may be screened electronically to check against other submitted work and external material, for example from the Web.** Your work may be submitted to external parties to undertake this. Copies may be retained to ensure that future works submitted at this institution and others are not plagiarized from your work. If you fail to submit your work in the manner required, then it may be systematically treated as though you are guilty of Academic Malpractice.
9. You should also be aware that the process of detecting cheating is not necessarily a quick one. *Thus it may be a long time after you hand in your work, and have had marks back, that you are challenged on it.* Even after marks have been made official, if evidence comes to light of unfair practice, they can be challenged. The worst case of this could be that a student passes into the second or third year but only *then* finds out that an earlier year had actually been failed!

## What is plagiarism?

10. **Plagiarism** is presenting the ideas, work or words of other people without proper, clear and unambiguous acknowledgement. It also includes 'self plagiarism' (which occurs where, for example, you submit work that you have presented for assessment on a previous occasion), and the submission of material from 'essay banks' (even if the authors of such material appear to be giving you permission to use it in this way). Obviously, the most blatant example of plagiarism would be to copy another student's work. Hence it is essential to make clear in your assignments the distinction between:
  - the ideas and work of other people that you may have quite legitimately exploited and developed, and
  - ideas or material that you have personally contributed.
11. To assist you, here are a few important do's and don'ts:
  - Do get lots of background information on subjects you are writing about to help you form your own view of the subject. The information could be from electronic journals, technical reports, unpublished dissertations, etc. Make a note of the source of every piece of information at the time you record it, even if it is just one sentence.
  - Don't construct a piece of work by cutting and pasting or copying material written by other people, or by you for any other purpose, into something you are submitting as your own work. Sometimes

you may need to quote someone else's exact form of words in order to analyse or criticize them, in which case the quotation must be enclosed in quotation marks to show that it is a direct quote, and it must have the source properly acknowledged at that point. Any omissions from a quotation must be indicated by an ellipsis (...) and any additions for clarity must be enclosed in square brackets, e.g. "[These] results suggest... that the hypothesis is correct." It may also be appropriate to reproduce a diagram from someone else's work, but again the source must be explicitly and fully acknowledged there. However, constructing large chunks of documents from a string of quotes, even if they are acknowledged, is another form of plagiarism.

• Do attribute all ideas to their original authors. Written 'ideas' are the product that authors produce. You would not appreciate it if other people passed off your ideas as their own, and that is what plagiarism rules are intended to prevent. A good rule of thumb is that each idea or statement that you write should be attributed to a source unless it is your personal idea or it is common knowledge. (If you are unsure if something is common knowledge, ask other students: if they don't know what you are talking about, then it is not common knowledge!)

12. As you can see, it is most important that you understand what is expected of you when you prepare and produce assignments and that you always observe proper academic conventions for referencing and acknowledgement, whether working by yourself or as part of a team. In practice, there are a number of acceptable styles of referencing depending, for example, on the particular discipline you are studying, so if you are not certain what is appropriate, ask your Tutor or the course unit coordinator for advice! This should ensure that you do not lay yourself open to a charge of plagiarism inadvertently, or through ignorance of what is expected. It is also important to remember that you do not absolve yourself from a charge of plagiarism simply by including a reference to a source in a bibliography that you have included with your assignment; you should always be scrupulous about indicating precisely where and to what extent you have made use of such a source.
13. So far, plagiarism has been described as using the words or work of someone else (without proper attribution), but it could also include a close paraphrase of their words, or a minimally adapted version of a computer program, a diagram, a graph, an illustration, etc taken from a variety of sources without proper acknowledgement. These could be lectures, printed material, the Internet or other electronic/AV sources.
14. **Remember:** No matter what pressure you may be under to complete an assignment, you should never succumb to the temptation to take a 'short cut' and use someone else's material inappropriately. No amount of mitigating circumstances will get you off the hook, and if you persuade other students to let you copy their work, they risk being disciplined as well (see below).

### What is Collusion?

15. Collusion is any agreement to hide someone else's individual input to collaborative work with the intention of securing a mark higher than either you or another student might deserve. Where proved, it will be subject to penalties similar to those for plagiarism. Similarly, it is also collusion to allow someone to copy your work when you know that they intend to submit it as though it were their own and that will lay both you and the other student open to a charge of academic malpractice.
16. On the other hand, collaboration is a perfectly legitimate academic activity in which students are required to work in groups as part of their programme of research or in the preparation of projects and similar assignments. If you are asked to carry out such group work and to collaborate in specified activities, it will always be made clear how your individual input to the joint work is to be assessed and graded. Sometimes, for example, all members of a team may receive the same mark for a joint piece of work, whereas on other occasions team members will receive individual marks that reflect their individual input. If it is not clear on what basis your work is to be assessed, to avoid any risk of unwitting collusion you should always ask for clarification before submitting any assignment.

### What Is Fabrication or Falsification of Results?

17. For many students, a major part of their studies involves laboratory or other forms of practical work, and they often find themselves undertaking such activity without close academic supervision. If you are in this situation, you are expected to behave in a responsible manner, as in other aspects of your

academic life, and to show proper integrity in the reporting of results or other data. Hence you should ensure that you always document clearly and fully any research programme or survey that you undertake, whether working by yourself or as part of a group. Results or data that you or your group submit must be capable of verification, so that those assessing the work can follow the processes by which you obtained them. Under no circumstances should you seek to present results or data that were not properly obtained and documented as part of your practical learning experience. Otherwise, you lay yourself open to the charge of fabrication or falsification of results.

### Why is Academic Malpractice a Bad Thing?

18. It is very easy to cheat in the laboratory or other assignments, by handing in somebody else's work, so it is nothing to be proud of. In fact it is seriously damaging to your education, to other students and to the University. By getting marks which you do not deserve, you are attempting to trick yourself (and others) into believing that you are far better than you really are, that you understand something when you do not, or that you are coping with your work, when you actually have problems. Teaching staff will not be able to assess your individual abilities, nor give you the feedback you might have otherwise received. This is an extremely short-term strategy and will backfire on you sooner rather than later. It is far better to be honest, to get the marks you deserve and/or to face up to any problems you may have -- you can then start to get help and to rectify these problems at an earlier stage.
19. For other students and for the University, you will be undermining the standard of University of Manchester degrees -- if your degree result is not a true reflection of your abilities, because you cheated, an employer will be suspicious of the standard of future University of Manchester graduates.
20. It is also easy to impress your friends, giving them 'help' by telling them the answers. However, you are not 'helping' them at all. In fact, you are holding back their education and undermining their confidence in learning and understanding for themselves.

### The Consequences of Academic Malpractice

21. In an isolated case of academic malpractice, the default result will be for us to withdraw ALL marks for the work for ALL those involved in 'with-knowledge' malpractice, e.g. if you were knowingly involved in your work being similar to someone else's.
22. However, where such behaviour is repeated, or more than one exercise is involved, or there are other factors, we reserve the right to take further action, for example by withdrawing all marks across every course unit involved. We may inform the Faculty, or University Student Disciplinary Committee, which has wide-ranging powers, including the power to exclude a student from a degree programme.
23. By default, peer-to-peer plagiarism (where one student copies from their peers without their knowledge) will be treated more severely than collusion. The innocent party will have their marks restored, but the guilty party will by default receive zero for the plagiarised exercise plus a penalty of the same weight as that exercise.
  - (a) **Do not** leave your work on printers
  - (b) **Do not** give your passwords to other students
  - (c) **Do** ensure that files permissions are appropriately set to restrict access to your data
  - (d) **Do not** allow other students to access a machine to which you are logged in (lock the screen if you need to leave it temporarily)
  - (e) **Do not** show any aspect of your coursework to other students in any form
24. Incidents of academic malpractice will be added to the student's record, and may therefore be included in any references produced by the School.

### What Should You Do, or Not Do?

25. **For Programming Assignments:**

- (a) **Do** get the help you need, if you find yourself in some difficulty with an assignment, rather than be tempted to cheat, which would put you in more difficulty. It is never too late to get help, but the sooner you do the better it is.
- (b) **Do** ensure that any code derived from a third-party, e.g. code supplied as part of the labscript, or given in lectures, is clearly labelled and its source properly acknowledged. You should assume that you should develop all code and pseudo-code on your own, /unless/ you are instructed to do otherwise.
- (c) **Do** ensure that, if you work together in informal groups, you fully understand the difference between 'healthy' working together and academic malpractice. Ensure you fully understand your assignment work, and that you do all the work required of you yourself. Unless explicitly instructed otherwise, such working together should be restricted only to discussing ideas and getting the work off the ground. Anybody who cannot actually do the work, should get help from a demonstrator or supervisor.
- (d) **Do Not** attempt to disguise third-party code as your own work.
- (e) **Do Not** allow your (so-called) friends to tell you the answer, or to give you 'too much help'. Equally, do not tell your friends the answer, or give them 'too much help'.
- (f) **Do Not** let other students have access to your code, pseudo-code, algorithm descriptions, logbooks and so on, in any shape or form.

## 26. For Written Assignments:

- (a) **Do** get lots of background information on subjects you are writing about to help you form your own view of the subject. Make a precise note of the source of every piece of information at the time you record it, even if it is just one sentence.
- (b) **Do Not** construct a piece of work by cutting and pasting or copying material written by other people, or by you for any other purpose.
- (c) **Do** properly reference other work, when you need to include someone else's words or diagrams, in order to analyse or criticize them. A quotation of text must be enclosed in **quotation marks** to show that it is a direct quote, **and** it must have the source properly acknowledged at that point. Any omissions from a quotation must be indicated by an ellipsis '...' and any additions for clarity must be enclosed in square brackets, e.g. "[These] results suggest...the hypothesis is correct." However, constructing large parts of an assignment from a sequence of quotes, even if they are acknowledged, is another form of plagiarism. It is also important to remember that it is not sufficient to include a reference to a source *only* in your assignment bibliography. You should always indicate precisely where and to what extent you have made use of such a source, at the point of use.
- (d) **Do** attribute all ideas to their original authors. A good rule of thumb is that each idea or statement that you write should be attributed to a source unless it is your personal idea or it is common knowledge. (If you are unsure if something is common knowledge, try asking other students: if they don't know what you are talking about, then it is not common knowledge!)
- (e) **Do** learn the acceptable styles of including and referencing others' material or ideas. Consult the separate guidance given for essay-writing and project reports:
  - First Year Essays:  
<https://moodle.cs.man.ac.uk/login/index.php> (COMP10120 course unit)
  - Second Year Essays:  
<http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/ugt/year2/readingweek.php>
  - Third Year Projects:

If you are uncertain how to properly acknowledge others' work in your own, then ask.

## Finally

If you commit any form of academic malpractice, teaching staff will not be able to assess your individual abilities objectively or accurately. Any short-term gain you might have hoped to achieve will be cancelled out by the loss of proper feedback you might have received, and in the long run such behaviour is likely to damage your overall intellectual development, to say nothing of your self esteem. You are the one who loses.

### 3.11 Appeals

If you have good reason to question a laboratory or coursework mark you have been given, you should in the first instance approach the course unit leader or supervisor responsible for the work. Problems with examinations should be discussed with your Year Tutor.

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, complaints or appeals should be submitted in writing to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, School of Computer Science. They will be considered by the internal and external examiners.

If matters cannot be resolved at School level it is possible to make a formal appeal. An appeal, in the form of a written statement which sets out the grounds of the appeal, must be submitted to the appropriate Faculty Office within 20 working days of notification of the result or decision. The grounds of such an appeal are limited, you cannot appeal against the academic judgement of the Examiners. Any possible appeal should be discussed with the Director of the Undergraduate School to ascertain whether the matter can be resolved at School level and whether grounds for an appeal exist.

**The Regulation XIX 'Academic Appeals' can be found at:**

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=1872>

Note:

(i) The purpose of this Regulation is to safeguard the interests of all students. It may be used only when there are adequate grounds for doing so and may not be used simply because a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of his or her assessment or other decision concerning their academic position or progress.

### 3.12 Complaints

Regulation XVIII 'Student Complaints Procedure' can be downloaded from:

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=1893>

The Complaints Form can be downloaded from:

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=1894>

If you have a complaint, please discuss the problem with the course unit leader or supervisor concerned. If this does not resolve the problem, consult your Personal Tutor or the Year Tutor.

Unresolved problems can be put on the agenda of the Staff Student Committee via your student representatives or submitted in writing to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, [Mr Toby Howard](#).

Problems concerning examinations should be discussed with your Year Tutor. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, complaints or appeals should be submitted in writing to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, School of Computer Science.