# Open College of the Arts

# Plagiarism and malpractice in coursework and assessments

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1. Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else’s work, in whole or in part, as your own. Work means any intellectual output, and typically includes text, data, images, sound or performance and includes material downloaded from electronic sources.
2. Malpractice occurs when a candidate attempts to mislead or deceive the examiners concerning the work submitted for assessment. This includes colluding with others (including other students) in the preparation, editing or submission of work. This applies to work which is submitted for assessment, including work that contributes to the mark for a module or for any award.
3. Examples of plagiarism and/or malpractice include:

* submitting assignments obtained from others, whether within or without the OCA, including on a commercial basis, and including from essay mills;
* fabrication of information;
* theft or misrepresentation of identity (which includes requesting others to undertake an assessment);
* misrepresenting or defaming the work or opinions of others;
* resubmitting one’s own work or part thereof when any of this has been submitted for marks or credits, even if in a different module or for a different qualification or completed prior to entry to OCA;
* submitting the same work to satisfy the requirements of two assessments;
* colluding with others to submit work which is not entirely one’s own.

1. All students will be asked to confirm at the time of submitting work for assessment that the work:

* is their own, not copied from elsewhere, and that any use of someone else’s ideas or words has been appropriately acknowledged and referenced;
* has been produced explicitly for that course unit, not copied from work undertaken previously.

1. OCA runs random checks on pieces of work that are submitted to tutors for review and for assessment. In addition, if a tutor or assessor suspects there may have been an instance of plagiarism, the matter is investigated.

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## Penalties

1. OCA will judge the severity of each situation regarding plagiarism or malpractice and the penalty will be assigned accordingly.
2. The penalties range from any, or a combination, of the following:

* written warning;
* written warning and a requirement to resubmit the work with a capped mark (if for assessment);
* the completion of an essay on the subject of plagiarism and malpractice;
* suspension from OCA for a period, through to (for severe cases) permanent exclusion with no award.

1. Mitigation may lessen the penalty but it does not excuse the offence. A student cannot have a degree conferred, or an award presented, while any such allegation against him/her remains unresolved and any dishonest work remains extant.

## How plagiarism and malpractice is dealt with: initial procedures

1. Where a tutor, assessor or other member of staff suspects a student is culpable of plagiarism in relation to coursework, s/he will:

* register that academic misconduct is suspected with OCA Head Office (Director of Curriculum & Quality);
* write a brief report detailing the location of any suspected plagiarism and provide a copy of the relevant piece of work and plagiarised sources. How plagiarism and malpractice is subsequently dealt with: formal investigative procedure

1. Upon receipt of any allegation of plagiarism, the Director of Curriculum & Quality will decide if there is sufficient prima facie evidence to suggest that the student has contravened the regulations.
2. If the decision is that there is not sufficient evidence, the case is dropped.
3. If the decision is that there is reason to believe that the student may have contravened the regulations, the Director of Curriculum & Quality will write to the student concerned: • to present the allegation(s);

* to request a written statement in response to the allegation(s) and any factors which the student would like taken into account;
* to request a reply within 7 working days of the date on which the letter is sent (also explaining the consequences of failure to reply);
* to enclose a copy of this policy;
* to also enclose copies of any evidence or report, if so desired. This would be at the discretion of the Director of Curriculum & Quality.

1. If the student replies within 7 working days of the date of dispatch of the letter denying the charge, the Director of Curriculum & Quality will consider the allegation, in light of the student’s response, and in consultation with those involved. This may include any or all of the tutor, assessor, and Head Office staff, as appropriate.
2. If, following the student’s response, it is considered that there is no case to answer, the charge will be dropped.
3. If a written reply from the student is received within 7 working days of the date of dispatch of the letter, admitting that academic misconduct has taken place, the Director of Curriculum & Quality will set an appropriate penalty.
4. Where the admitted misconduct is of a very serious nature that may merit the sanction of suspension or expulsion, the Director of Curriculum & Quality will refer the case to the Principal for decision (and see paragraph 20 below).
5. If the student replies denying the allegation – but it is nevertheless considered that there is still a case to answer - the Director of Curriculum & Quality will formally investigate the allegation(s). This will involve seeking written statements from any or all of the tutor, assessor, and Head Office staff, as appropriate. The student should also be invited to make any further submission at this point.
6. Where it is considered, following investigation, that the allegation is proven and might merit the penalty of suspension or expulsion, the Director of Curriculum & Quality will refer the case to the Principal for decision.
7. Where the student is on the ‘undergraduate’ route – and registered with the accrediting university – and where the Principal of OCA takes the view that the case is admitted or proven and merits the penalty of suspension or expulsion, he will refer it to the UCA, as the accrediting university. The case will then be dealt with in accordance with the UCA’s Regulations, details of which can be found at: <http://community.ucreative.ac.uk/index.cfm?articleid=31158>
8. Students not replying to the Director of Curriculum & Quality’s letter, without good cause, will be considered guilty of all allegations and an appropriate sanction will be imposed.