

Guidelines on interpreting Annex 10 Section 1.6:
Determining Minor Offences/Serious Offences

1. Defining plagiarism

The guidelines below aim to provide some assistance for staff making the academic judgement regarding plagiarism in written work (namely essays, projects, case studies etc). By reviewing sections 1 and 2 of this guide, it is anticipated that staff may have a better overview of what may be deemed plagiarism in a broad sense.

While plagiarism at the University means the inclusion of 'any material derived from work authored by another without clearly acknowledging the source' in work submitted for assessment, the precise definition of what constitutes plagiarism varies across disciplines, stages (university levels) and individual assessment tasks. In addition, although these guidelines have been written to assist judgement of plagiarism within written work, the Academic Integrity website lists the following as material which should be fully referenced (Schools may add to this list):

- exact words (written or spoken) *Note that exact words must be placed in quotation marks or indented depending on the referencing style you use.
- summarised or paraphrased text
- data or results
- images (graph, tables, video, multimedia etc)
- pictures or illustrations
- ideas or concepts
- theories
- opinion or analysis
- music or other performance media
- computer code
- designs, drawings or plans

If work is deemed to have been plagiarised, the table below lists features to consider within the student's work to determine whether the plagiarism is minor or serious. Aspects of Section 1.6 of Annex 10 have been taken to guide this process and staff are reminded that at all times, the points below should be judged within the context of the discipline, the particular case and any other relevant circumstances.

Finally, 'The identification of plagiarism is an **academic judgement**, based on a comparison across the student's work in general, and/or on knowledge of the sources, of practice in the discipline and of expectations for professional conduct' (Annex 10 s1.2).

2. Determining minor/serious plagiarism

Annex 10 Section 1.6 states:

"Whether for a first or subsequent offence, where the Chair considers the evidence is substantive he/she will determine if the breach should be regarded as constituting a minor or a more serious offence. In reaching this determination, the Chair will take into account such factors as the following:

- The **contribution to the overall mark for a module** made by the piece of work in which the instance of alleged plagiarism has been detected;
- The **proportion of the piece of work that is plagiarised**;
- Whether the student is **in receipt of a formal warning**, issued under section 1.5 of this Annex;
- The **number of previous or contemporaneous offences**, if any, with any instances of repeat offending normally to be regarded as constituting a more serious offence;
- **Evidence of intent to deceive**, with any such evidence normally to be regarded as requiring the treatment of the case as per a more serious offence"

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Plagiarism offences may be viewed as falling on a sliding scale from **misunderstanding** to **misuse** to **misconduct**. In order to reflect this notion that plagiarism offences may occur as a result of students' developing understanding of and skills in academic writing, it is suggested that the considerations within Annex10, Section 1.6 (above) are reviewed in the order set out in the table below.

Each dot point can be viewed as individually: it is not necessary to satisfy every example of a particular category to determine minor/serious offences. Steps 1-5 tend to indicate an escalation of severity; however, the examples do not aim to define serious/minor forms of plagiarism.

Use the table to assist your judgement as to whether a case should be deemed minor or serious: e.g. a first offence with only **background** material plagiarised but occurring in a **capstone** project may still be deemed minor. (Consider all relevant contextual factors when making a judgement).

This guide aims to provide a **framework for academic judgement** and to assist **consistency** across Schools rather than set fixed conditions around plagiarism.

Minor*	Serious*
1: in receipt of a formal warning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no other offence 	
2: number of previous or contemporaneous offences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one existing minor offence • Stage 1 u/g • first offence and in first year of enrolment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two existing minor offences • one or more serious offences
3: contribution to the overall mark for a module	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment contributes less than 10 or 15% to the total module mark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • major project/dissertation • assessment contributes more than 15% to the total module mark
4: proportion of the piece of work that is plagiarised	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • background information or sections not central to the work • incomplete sentences • incomplete paragraphs with some attempt to reference in text or reference list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key findings; arguments or core ideas; results of data analysis • whole paragraphs • more than 50% of a section • no attempt to acknowledge sources in whole paragraphs or section
5. Evidence of intent to deceive	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of purchased work • falsified reference list

* the suggested interpretations of Section 1.6 are a guide only, and Schools may wish to adapt this table to suit specific disciplinary needs.

Additional useful references

Carroll, J. (2013) [Managing Student Plagiarism in 2013](#). Presentation given in the [Plagiarism Forum Day](#), 16 January 2013. University of Kent (unpublished).

Available from <http://www.kent.ac.uk/ai/staff/docs/Carroll-16-01-2013.pptx>

Carroll, J. (2007) *A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education* 2nd Edn, Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.