

TCPS Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism:

“Plagiarism is a practice that involves knowingly taking and using another person’s work and claiming it, directly or indirectly, as your own”. (Neville, 2007)

Thames College of Professional Studies follows a strong plagiarism policy. At TCPS, we want to make sure that students achieve their qualifications reflecting their knowledge and skills through fair presentation of their work. TCPS makes sure that all students achieve their qualification through fair means and takes all possible measures to ensure the fairness of the system. Plagiarism can also be seen as a breach of trust between lecturers, students, and also between society and its members.

TCPS is committed to the detection of plagiarism and to taking appropriate measures when it is detected including:

- The implementation of electronic means of plagiarism detection
- The training of its staff in plagiarism prevention and detection
- Informing its students of the College position on plagiarism, and of the methods being used to aid detection
- The promotion of effective assessment design and assessment practice
- Ensuring that students are properly instructed in what constitutes fair practice and appropriate referencing
- Taking disciplinary action as appropriate

As part of its approach to the detection of plagiarism the College has implemented the Viper plagiarism service. This service uses extensive databases of material from a range of sources, including the work of other students, in order to detect when the material submitted by a student has been copied from another source. The responsibility for judging whether plagiarism has taken place remains with teaching staff.

Under the Data Protection Act students have a number of rights which are described in the College Data Protection for Students policy. Plagiarism detection will be implemented in line with this policy, and with the provisions of the Act.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all students and staff to ensure that student work submitted for purposes of assessment, is in fact their own work. The following details the specific responsibilities of students and various members of staff.

Responsibility of students:

It is the responsibility of students:

- To ensure that work submitted for purposes of assessment is their own.
- To ensure that the words and arguments of others are appropriately cited and referenced using an accepted referencing system such as the Harvard referencing system.
- Students must not simply copy materials from other students, past or present, from written sources, from the Internet, or from any other source whether this is through cutting and pasting, rewriting or by any other means. Changing a few words within a copied piece of text does not render these original and still counts as plagiarism.
- In short, work submitted by students must be their own unless it is specifically indicated within the text through appropriate referencing that this is not the case – or where originality was clearly not a requirement of the assessment being undertaken.

Responsibility of the Teaching staff

It is the responsibility of teaching staff:

- To stress to their students the unethical nature of plagiarism
- To make clear to students the College's policy on plagiarism and the consequences if they fail to comply
- To ensure that students have the knowledge and skills required to enable them to cite and reference appropriately
- Developing appropriate attitudes and practices in College students and facilitating discussion around plagiarism and related issues
- Co-ordinating information on students across the range of their course so as to detect and address multiple instances of plagiarism
- Issues surrounding plagiarism provide a useful and appropriate context for the discussion of wider issues of fairness, citizenship and employability.
- Ensure that appropriate technical means of plagiarism detection are effectively implemented and maintained.
- Provide statistics on usage for purposes of self-evaluation and the effective management of contracts relating to plagiarism detection between the College and third party providers

Action on detection of plagiarism:

All instances of plagiarism, whether intentional or not, require action. In all cases, the member of staff must take care to ensure that there is indeed clear evidence that plagiarism has taken place.

1. If the plagiarism would have altered the result obtained by the student if it had been undetected then at the very least the assessment must be retaken by the student. This will count as a second attempt at the assessment.
2. If the problem arises from a failure on the part of the student to reference properly, or to understand the requirements of the assessment, then this issue must be addressed before the assessment is retaken.
3. If it is clear that the plagiarism was minor and did not constitute intentional cheating, then guidance and support should be provided to address any underlying issues.
4. The students Guidance Tutor should also be informed of this so that any more general issues, or patterns of behaviour, can be identified.
5. If the plagiarism is more extensive, but again it is the judgement of the member of staff that this was not intentional cheating, then more extensive action will need to be taken. This might be the case where a student has answered an assessment simply by cutting and pasting material from the internet, but was unaware that this was an unacceptable way of completing the assessment or was unable to complete the assessment in any other way. Care must be taken in making this judgement as a student found cheating may well claim a failure to understand rather than deliberate intent.
6. If the case is genuine, then serious attention will need to be paid to whether the student is actually on the right course, whether there has been a serious failure of teaching or learning, whether the course content itself needs to be modified in some way, or whether the assessment instructions are unclear. Judgement on these matters will, of course, depend on whether problems being encountered are general or are limited to a single student.
7. Finally if it is the judgement of the member of staff that this is an instance of genuine cheating, with deliberate intent to deceive, then disciplinary action must be taken. The procedure for this is contained within the College "Internal Assessment" (though the procedure can be taken as applying to all courses and units). Guidance staff should, of course, be kept fully informed. Individual cases of plagiarism should, of course, be dealt with due concern for confidentiality.