ANNEX 1

**Draft Code of Practice on Plagiarism Detection**

**1. Introduction**

This Code of Practice is intended to ensure consistency of practice in relation to plagiarism detection, while allowing some flexibility to take account of legitimate subject-related variations in local practice.

**2. Definitions**

2.1 Plagiarism is defined in paragraph 2 of University Regulation XVIII as “submitting work as the candidate's own of which the candidate is not the author.  This includes failure to acknowledge clearly and explicitly the ideas, words or work of another person whether these are published or unpublished.”

2.2 Academic misconduct in paragraph 2 of Regulation XIV also includes:

* Assisting another candidate to gain an advantage by unfair means, or receiving such assistance, for example by impersonation or the passing off of one individual's work as another's.  This includes undeclared failure to contribute to group coursework assignments.
* Misleading the examiners by the fabrication or falsification of data.
* Engaging in any other activity likely to give an unfair advantage to any candidate.

**3. Guidance**

3.1 Schools/Departments should distribute written guidance to students in programme materials and through other media as appropriate, within a subject-specific context, about correct referencing techniques (of both printed and web-based material), plagiarism avoidance, and how to distinguish between acceptable collaboration and unacceptable collusion. This guidance should be included in induction materials, and 'top-up' training provided at appropriate times.

3.2 Schools/Departments should be expected to find ways of embedding guidance and support for good referencing and plagiarism avoidance within the curriculum of all programmes (in partnership with, and making full use of the library and other support services) to ensure that all students are aware of, and fully engaged with the issues involved. This can be done in a number of ways, for example as part of one or more core modules (either subject specific or skills-based), or as part of schemes similar to the Information Literacy Skills and Plagiarism Avoidance initiative in English and Drama, delivered at an early stage of programmes, before other coursework is set. In relation to joint programmes and programmes incorporating service-taught modules, close communication between the Schools/Departments involved is important, to ensure consistency in the guidance and support given to students.

3.3 There are specific issues relating to international students and plagiarism, particularly where the culture in students’ previous institutions may have been different in relation to good referencing practice. Support on good referencing and plagiarism avoidance for new UG and PGT international students should be provided as part of ELSS pre-sessional programmes, and reinforced with additional central sessions co-ordinated by the library [***This additional central provision is a proposal from the Working Group****]*.

**4. Plagiarism Detection and the Use of Text-Matching Software**

4.1 The University reserves the right to use all legitimate means at its disposal to detect plagiarism. All submitted work will be liable to scrutiny in order to identify plagiarism.

4.2 At present, Loughborough University’s preferred provider of Text-Matching software is Turnitin (TII). However, other software is also used in particular Schools and Departments for specific purposes (e.g. for foreign language texts), and it is possible that alternative providers will be used in the future. The generic term “Text-Matching software” should therefore be used in documentation relating to plagiarism detection.

4.3 It is important to use the term “Text-Matching” software rather than “Plagiarism-Detection” software. The function of the software is to detect matching text. It makes no judgement about whether a student has plagiarised; it simply shows the percentage of the submission that matches other sources. In many cases the software highlights correctly cited references or ‘innocent’ matches. The responsible examiner must carefully review originality reports to determine whether the matching text is plagiarised. The classification of an assignment as ‘plagiarised’ is a matter of academic judgement.

4.4 Staff and students should be made aware that some online Text-Matching tools, particularly those available free-of-charge, are unreliable. For students, it will not be a defence against a charge of plagiarism to explain that the work was submitted through a Text-Matching service.

4.5 Text-Matching software cannot be used to analyse material submitted in the form of an image; or laboratory assessment/practical work; or drawn, painted, sculpted, animated, fired, performed, sung or machined visual work. However, other electronic tools are available to support academics in detecting non-written plagiarism.

4.6 The use of Text-Matching software similarity index thresholds (e.g. 25% for the overall assignment, 5% for an individual match) as a trigger to prompt further investigation of an assignment is not encouraged, even as a guide, as there is no specific similarity index score to indicate plagiarism, and assignments with a very low similarity index could still be plagiarised. [***There was some disagreement in the Working Group here, though, with some feeling that some sort of trigger level is needed to reduce the overall number of cases to be investigated, and that some examples of major/minor infractions are needed to aid consistency across the University*.]**

4.7 Schools/Departments should be encouraged to establish systems for the e-submission of appropriate coursework assignments, where possible, as this facilitates, and may be used in conjunction with Text-Matching software.

4.8 Where practicable (i.e. where coursework is submitted electronically in the first instance), if plagiarism is suspected in one or more assignments and these are submitted through Text-Matching software, all assignments from the same cohort should also be submitted through the software, in order to ensure consistency of treatment. This approach recognises that it is not always possible for academic staff to identify plagiarism, particularly in modules covering a broad range of publications.

4.9 Schools/Departments should be encouraged to use Text-Matching reports as a developmental tool, as part of the embedding of support for good referencing and plagiarism avoidance (e.g. Reports generated from work submitted by students at an early stage of their programmes can be discussed as part of feedback meetings with tutors, and subject-specific, anonymised examples of reports, generated in relation to real cases of plagiarism, can be used in individual or group tutorial sessions).

4.10 Students should not be permitted to generate their own independent reports from the University’s Text-Matching software provider, in order to avoid unscrupulous students using the software to finesse work so that plagiarised content is no longer detectable.

**5. Procedure**

5.1 Where circumstances arise which appear to an examiner to suggest that a candidate has committed plagiarism, the procedures detailed in Regulation XVIII should be followed.

5.2 As part of the initial investigation stage (before any formal allegation of academic misconduct is made) a decision will be reached about whether the case constitutes plagiarism as opposed to poor scholarship, and as part of this decision, account will be taken of a number of factors, including the extent to which the circumstances appear to indicate that the student intended to obtain an unfair advantage (noting that intent is difficult to prove, but that information such as the amount of improperly referenced material; any attempts at referencing within the work; circumstantial evidence; and the student’s representations, can provide an insight into this question).

5.3 Where an initial investigation is conducted, and the student is required to attend an interview, the student will be provided with reasonable notice, and advised of their right to be accompanied. [***Do we want to specify a procedure for collusion cases, or should this be left to the discretion of the HoD/AD(T)/nominee concerned. Maybe the CoP could say here: “In cases where inappropriate collusion between two or more students is suspected, the students may be interviewed separately and/or together, at the discretion of the relevant HoD, AD(T), or nominee*.”]**

5.4 Where it is decided that a case constitutes poor scholarship, the School/Department must ensure the student is aware of what s/he has done wrong and has been given appropriate instruction on how to avoid the problem in future.

5.5 Students found guilty of a first offence of academic misconduct will, in conjunction with any other penalty imposed, be required to undertake an online course on Plagiarism Awareness, and pass an associated test in the same semester as the course was taken. [***This is taken from a proposal from Bryan Dawson/Murray Thompson. The course could be based on, or incorporate, parts of the PLATO online resource, or it could be an adapted version of the English and Drama Literacy Skills and Plagiarism Avoidance initiative. However, some procedural issues would need to be resolved, e.g. Where the student belongs to a School/Department which has a plagiarism test in Part A which all students are required to complete, does the punitive test have any added value? Or does the existence of the School/Departmental test provide prima facie evidence of intent? What sanctions would be available to make students complete the test, and what could be done if they didn’t?]***