§1. **Introduction.** Our current policy is that work for credit must not be made publicly available at any time (unless the lecturer issuing it allows this on an *ad hoc* basis). One reason for this is to allow the reuse of practicals; e.g., by issuing them, suitably updated, after a year or more. It would be unrealistic to expect completely new practicals to be issued every time. This is partly a matter of resource but also for certain areas there are only so many natural types of practicals that are appropriate.

The policy had the very attractive virtue of simplicity. While it was reasonable at the time of formulation many years ago it is no longer appropriate for one important reason. It is common practice for employers to look through online publicly accessible repositories and follow up based on what they see. Clemens Wolff (UG4 student rep) kindly agreed to collect examples from fellow students; here are a few:

- After posting the Carneades extensions we did last year for AILP I got mentioned in a paper, which was presented at ICCSW.

- During an interview I was asked about some of my Github code. The interviewer made it clear that without it, I would probably not have been contacted.

- A company who knew that Edinburgh is not the most ‘hands on’ university asked me to show if I can code. I showed them my GitHub. I still have a job offer from them.

- I was contacted by a Bath-based company after they checked my GitHub. They flew me down for an interview which was a 30 minute chat and another chat over lunch — ‘we already know you are competent from looking at your portfolio, this is just to check that you are a cultural fit’. They made me an offer.

§2. **Misconceptions.** One claim made about student work is “it is my work so I can do what I like with it”. This argument is false even if it can be established that copyright belongs outright to the student. Ownership establishes the right to do whatever is within the law or rules of a relevant
institution. For example I own my car outright but I am not entitled to
drive through red lights even when it is clear that I can do so safely.

Another claim is that forbidding the posting of work on publicly acces-
sible sites is not guaranteed to stop plagiarism of the work so it is pointless
to do so. The point is to make it more difficult, nobody imagines that it can
made impossible. I lock my front door when I go out but have no delusion
that this will stop all crime or indeed crime aimed at my home; all the same
I will keep locking the door!

§3. Options. Broadly speaking we have the following options:

1. Keep the current policy.

2. Make all work publishable.

3. Ask lecturers to decide for each practical if it can be published and
state that in the issuing document (ideally the information would also
be recorded on the course portal).

I have already argued against the first two options and so will concentrate
on the third one. First of all it should always be at the lecturer’s discretion
to decide if work can be published, he or she is best placed to make such a
decision. This runs the possible risk that not enough will be available but
conversations with some staff suggest otherwise: SDP, CSLP, SELP, AILP,
Extreme Computing will all be declared publishable\textsuperscript{1}.

We must not turn this into a micro-managed administrative burden:
the ITO sends out a request each year for lecturers to check various details
about their course (weightings etc.). That email can include a request for the
publication status of each practical, showing the status as recorded before
(after the first year of operation).

In conveying the publication status of a practical’s solution we have two
options:

- Solutions can be published unless prohibited.
- Solutions cannot be published unless allowed.

Student reps have argued for the first of these. However this runs a very big
risk: if for some reason a non-publishable practical is not declared as such
then by the time the mistake is discovered it is likely to be too late: if the
practical’s solution has been published then little can be done. The second

\textsuperscript{1}I am grateful to Henry Thompson, Allan Clark, Stephen Gilmore, Alan Smaill and
Stratis Viglas for their help.
option does not suffer from this serious problem: if there is an oversight about the publication status a correction can be issued with little harm.

Naturally there will be a complete ban in publishing solutions when a practical is live. Due to the possibility of deadline extensions for mitigating circumstances it is suggested that, by default, solutions cannot be published until two weeks have passed after the deadline (this can be extended if there is good reason to do so but that will be a rare occurrence).

There is one natural exception to the policy on publication: by their nature most projects consist of individual and non-repeatable work. It is conceivable that there are exceptions but these would be quite rare. Thus the publication policy on projects would be best reversed: a project can be published (after submission\(^2\)) unless otherwise stated by the proposer (or supervisor where different). This is intended to apply to all UG4, MInf4, MInf5 and MSc projects.

To sum up:

- Lecturers are requested to decide each year the publication status of solutions to each of their practicals, prompted by the ITO’s call to check course details (the default being that solutions cannot be published).

- Proposers of projects are asked to state the publication status of each of their projects (the default being that it can be published). This information will be given as part of the project proposal, so the proposal forms need an extra field with a ‘yes/no’ option set to ‘yes’ by default.

- A solution cannot be published unless stated otherwise on the handout (this information to be shown on the course portal as well). Solutions declared publishable cannot be published at all until at least two weeks have passed after the deadline (or an extended period if this is announced to the class).

  - In case of doubt, the publication status as given on the handout takes precedence (unless modified by the lecturer who issued it\(^3\)).

\(^2\)It can be argued that publication should be possible before submission. However this runs the risk plagiarism of parts of similar projects, there have been various examples of closely related projects run in the same year. For this reason publication must be after submission. There seems little reason to impose a two week wait after submission.

\(^3\)Arguably the information should be given in only one place but having it on the handout and the course portal seems quite manageable provided the ITO is tasked with a consistency check.
Decisions will be reviewed each year by the course lecturer, so should not be put in the EUCLID course descriptor.

This proposal is a modest change, it is essentially organisational in nature. It has always been possible for lecturers to declare solutions publishable but it is not clear if this has happened to any significant extent. Having an official policy and mechanism will help.

It is a good idea to encourage staff to make solutions publishable whenever possible. Presumably students will want to present their best work. This will act as a good advertisement for the achievements of our students; increasing their employment opportunities and, as a side benefit, it could help with recruitment.

§4. The current situation. It is clear that we currently have practicals whose solutions could be published but cannot be because they have not been declared as such. It is highly desirable to carry out a survey as soon as possible and inform students which solutions can be published. This would be an exceptional event and can be handled by an email from the ITO, possible text is:

Dear Lecturer,

Under current rules students cannot place solutions to any work for credit on publicly accessible sites (i.e., they must keep them private). At the meeting of Teaching Committee on 4 December 2013 it was agreed that in future lecturers will be asked to classify each practical’s solutions as non-publishable or publishable 2 weeks after the deadline (this will be done with the annual call from the ITO to check course information). For the current year we need to know the situation regarding the practicals for your courses, please let us have this information now so that students can be advised. The ITO will circulate a summary of responses to be checked before releasing them.

Acknowledgement: I am grateful to Stephen Gilmore and Allan Clark for their comments and helpful suggestions on a draft of this paper.