

Plagiarism Policy, Procedures and Guidance for Research Degrees (excluding MRes)

1 Policy

The University's policy is that plagiarism, whether deliberate or unintentional, is a form of cheating and is unacceptable. It is also a form of academic misconduct and all researchers should be familiar with the University's Code of Practice for Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research and the Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct. It is expected that research students are trained in correct academic practice, including writing and referencing, early in their careers at the University and know what is expected of them and understand the meaning of plagiarism and its consequences.

Definition of plagiarism

The University's definition of plagiarism makes explicit that copying from printed or web sources and copying work produced by others including research students e.g.: figures, diagrams, images, artefacts, methods, data, text and ideas constitutes plagiarism. Researchers submitting papers for publication or including in their thesis work previously completed also need to be aware of self-plagiarism and take care that all previous work is correctly cited and acknowledged.

The definition reads:

Plagiarism is the act of taking or copying someone else's work, including another student's, and presenting it as if it were one's own. Plagiarism is said to occur when ideas, texts, theories, data, created artistic artefacts or other material are presented without acknowledgement so that the person considering this work is given the impression that what they have before them is the student's own original work when it is not. Plagiarism also occurs where a student's own work is re-presented without being properly referenced. Plagiarism is a form of cheating and is a disciplinary offence.

This definition is given in the University Student Handbook.

Monitoring of Policy

The efficacy of the University's Policy as applied to taught courses, the MRes and research degrees is monitored by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee which receives annual reports from the Faculties and the Doctoral College Board.

Penalties

The University's Policy provides a simple, graduated framework of penalties for plagiarism relating the severity of penalties to the extent and the number of offences. Researchers should be clear that there are academic, disciplinary and legal consequences resulting from the plagiarising of work belonging to others and that the University will take action in each instance.

The framework of penalties for doctoral programmes and MPhil follows. A separate framework exists for taught courses and the MRes degree.

FRAMEWORK OF PENALTIES FOR PLAGIARISM OFFENCES IN RESEARCH PROGRAMMES (EXCLUDING MRes)

INITIAL ASSESSMENT	CONFIRMATION OR FINAL ASSESSMENT	THESIS	PLAGIARISM DETECTED AFTER GRADUATION
<p>Plagiarism will generally be dealt with by a verbal warning.</p> <p>The research student will be asked to resubmit the report.</p> <p>A record may be placed on the student file.</p> <p>The student may be referred to the University Disciplinary Committee.</p>	<p>The research student will be required to resubmit the report for further assessment.</p> <p>The research student will be interviewed by a senior member of staff (normally the Research Director).</p> <p>A record will be placed on the student file.</p> <p>The student may be referred to the University Disciplinary Committee.</p>	<p>Examiners will be asked to examine the thesis and to make an academic judgement on it, taking into account the nature and extent of the plagiarism. If the thesis is deemed worthy of the degree, it must be resubmitted with all plagiarised material eliminated.</p> <p>The student may be referred to the University Disciplinary Committee; alternatively, the case may be dealt with under the University's Research Misconduct Investigation Procedures</p> <p>Depending on the extent and nature of plagiarised material in the thesis, the examiners may recommend discontinuation of studies at the University.</p> <p>A record will be placed on the student file.</p>	<p>The award may be revoked.</p>

2 Procedure and guidance for dealing with plagiarism in research degrees (excluding MRes)

The University's Plagiarism Policy applies only to work submitted at formal assessment points during the research student's registration. Plagiarism detected in work produced for external use, including publication and unpublished reports to research sponsors should be dealt with through the University's Policy for the Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct. Work produced for internal use, including interim submitted material for discussion with a supervisor, is not covered by the Policy. This is not subject to a formal plagiarism penalty although it should not go unchallenged. Research students should initially receive formative feedback. In serious cases the supervisor may choose to refer the research student to the Research Director or to invoke Research Misconduct procedures. Research Governance and/ or the Office of the University Secretary shall inform the Doctoral College of any referral through the research misconduct or disciplinary procedures.

Where plagiarism is detected in work submitted for assessment by a research student, the student is penalised in accordance with the Framework of Penalties for Plagiarism Offences in Research Programmes (excluding MRes). The central plagiarism register should be consulted to establish whether the student has offended previously. The Framework outlines consequences in the event of plagiarised material being detected at interim assessment (e.g. Initial, Confirmation, or Final Assessment), during the assessment of the final thesis by the Board of Examiners and after graduation.

When, in the academic judgement of staff, the plagiarism is of a very minor nature and may be attributed to incorrect referencing techniques, it may be treated as such rather than as plagiarism. The decision is informed by the student's record including previous instances of plagiarism during their registration.

Procedure for interim assessments (i.e. Initial, Confirmation, or Final Assessment)

The following procedure sets out what staff should do when they suspect or find plagiarism in work submitted for an interim assessment (i.e. the Initial, Confirmation, or Final Assessment). Academic judgement should be exercised in order to determine if, in accordance with the agreed conventions of the specific research discipline, plagiarism of a very minor nature may be attributed to incorrect referencing technique and should be penalised as such, rather than as plagiarism.

1. All work submitted by research students for formative assessment will be processed through the Turnitin software by the Faculty support staff and the report passed to the Chair of the Assessment Panel.
2. Where a supervisor or other member of staff suspects that a piece of work contains plagiarised material, they should identify the source and provide this for discussion with the members of the Assessment Panel. The formal assessment should proceed, and the research student's submission discussed including the alleged plagiarised material. The research student should be afforded the opportunity to provide further information to explain the occurrence to the Assessment Panel during the assessment.
3. Where the Assessment Panel is satisfied that there is plagiarised material in a research student's work, the research student should be penalised in accordance with the Framework of Penalties for Research Degrees excluding MRes. The central plagiarism register should be consulted to establish whether the research student has offended previously. The research student should be informed of the penalty.
4. For a first offence, the research student should be invited to attend a 'formative interview', at which the student should be directed to appropriate resources on plagiarism avoidance, including the University's online study skills resource. This interview may be combined with the investigatory interview above.
5. After a research student has received formative advice offences are cumulative and carry over from year to year.
6. All offences (including first offences) and action taken must be recorded on the central plagiarism register within the Student Records Information System and a note placed on the research student's file. (See below - Recording of Plagiarism Offences.)
7. When a research student fails an assessment following the application of a penalty, the normal consequences of failure apply as set out in award regulations, in addition to any disciplinary penalty.
8. The research student has the right of appeal as provided for in the Procedures for Review of

- Decisions, or under the Ordinance on Student Discipline, as appropriate.
9. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) have their own policies with regard to being informed of plagiarism offences. Students on professionally accredited programmes should therefore be made aware, at induction, that any instance of plagiarism recorded against them may be reported to their professional or other body. The PSRB should be informed as appropriate.

Plagiarism in submitted thesis

Where plagiarised material is detected in a submitted thesis, the Board of Examiners has the following options:

- that the degree should not be awarded and no resubmission permitted;
- that the candidate should revise and resubmit the thesis for the degree of PhD or for the lower award of MPhil having first removed all plagiarised materials and completed any other required revisions;
- that the degree should be awarded subject to corrections to the thesis including the removal of all plagiarised materials.

Information on the research student's previous plagiarism record is made available to the Board to inform its decision. The Board may also decide that the case should be dealt with under the University's Research Misconduct Investigation Procedures.

Recording of plagiarism offences

All offences must be recorded on the Central Plagiarism Register which is accessed through the Banner Student Records System. Plagiarism offences are recorded by the designated member of support staff within the Faculty/School who has the general responsibility for inputting information on the Student Records System. This person can query the register on behalf of academic staff. (For those staff, the plagiarism register can be accessed via <http://inb.ulster.ac.uk> [open the 'My Banner' folder and go to the 'Person Comment [SPACMNT]' folder].) A record of plagiarism should also be documented in the student's paper file. Staff may find the form at appendix 1 useful for this purpose (available from the Academic Office's website at www.ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice/Documents&Forms.htm). It can also be passed to the member of staff responsible for entering the information on the register.

As inclusion on the plagiarism register is not a penalty per se, records of offences are not removed from the record. If a student withdraws from one programme and enrolls on another, any plagiarism offences are still counted cumulatively.

While offences are not carried over from undergraduate study to postgraduate study, any information regarding plagiarism offences by research students who have completed their undergraduate study at the University will still be held on the student's file and may be supplied as part of a reference to inform the postgraduate admission decision, but should not be taken into account in dealing with plagiarism following enrolment on the postgraduate course.

The Register is used for monitoring plagiarism in the University and contributes to the analysis made by Faculties and the Doctoral College Board for their annual reports to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee.

Information for Students

The faculties should consider the adequacy of their current arrangements for advising students on writing and referencing skills and the University's plagiarism policy. Advice on plagiarism should include reference to the definition of plagiarism, the use of electronic detection systems, an interview if plagiarism is suspected, and the penalties that apply.

The record of plagiarism or other research misconduct may be included in any reference provided for a research student.

Turnitin

Research students formally consent to the submission of their work to electronic detection systems at enrolment. The University has a University-wide licence to use *Turnitin*, which is an internet-based application designed to assess the degree of originality in a piece of written work. *Turnitin* is fully integrated with Blackboard.

Turnitin provides evidence of similarity and is not the sole means of detecting or confirming possible plagiarism. It cannot be relied on exclusively and requires academic judgement. Large plagiarised sections tend to be exposed fairly easily but other lesser material may be more difficult to detect. In some subjects, where extensive quoted material is commonly provided, the originality reports are not always useful but various filters can be engaged or disengaged and this can greatly affect the result. School and subject-specific training for staff is therefore strongly recommended.

Staff Development offers support for staff in the use of *Turnitin*. This includes sessions for newly appointed staff and bespoke sessions for Schools, as well as provision of documentation and guidance. Initial access for staff is managed by the Doctoral College, which arranges for registration with *Turnitin* to set up a personal account and password.

It is used routinely for all assessment material submitted for research degrees.

It is recognised that it is not possible to submit certain types of work to the *Turnitin* system, for example artefacts or visual images.

In relation to research study, *Turnitin* software is available for use by the faculty administrative support only; no other staff member or student is permitted to use this software for the purposes of uploading a research assessment or any part of the research thesis.

Collusion and contract cheating

Collusion, where a research student has supplied material to another student, is plagiarism on the part of the recipient, but not on the part of the supplier, who should be dealt with in accordance with the University's Research Misconduct Investigation Procedures. 'Contract cheating' is a process whereby students engage others to complete work on their behalf, often in return for payment. For example, students may advertise their assignment requirements on dedicated websites. Any such detected cases, as well as other offences where it is established that work has been completed by third parties, should be dealt with under the University's Research Misconduct Investigation Procedures.

Collaborative research

The research student should acknowledge any assistance received in the production of work submitted for assessment. Where the research programme is part of a collaborative group project the research student's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration must be clearly indicated. Any part of the work, which has been previously submitted for any other degree, must also be clearly indicated. Articles, which have appeared in journals to which the copyright has been assigned, should not be included within the thesis without the express permission of the journal.