

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Document data:

Document type: Rule/**Policy**/Plan/Guidelines/Operating Procedures

Administering entity: Academic Board

Date approved: 03 Mar 09

Latest amendment date: 11 June 09

Approved by: Principal/**Academic Board**

Indicative time for review: Annual

Responsibility for review: Provost

1 Purpose

The presentation of genuine, original work is an indispensable cornerstone of good scholarly practice. This Policy explains the Institute's expectations for honest academic practice on the part of students. It sets out the responsibilities of academic staff in developing and promoting academic honesty, and penalising plagiarism and other forms of misconduct. It also outlines the procedures to be applied in the investigation and resolution of cases of alleged plagiarism whilst ensuring procedural fairness for students.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all Academic Staff including full-time and part-time/sessional lecturers and students at the Institute.

- It is the responsibility of academic staff and the Program Directors to promulgate techniques of and expectations about appropriate acknowledgement of sources to students.
- It is the responsibility of students to ensure that they understand the acknowledgement practices relevant to every piece of work they submit for assessment.

Sections 5, 6 and 7 are taken for the UNE Policy (Student Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct Policy, 2009) and modified slightly for the Institute. The UNE policy is considered an example of best practice in dealing with plagiarism.

3 Definitions

The Principle of Academic Honesty

Any work by a student of the Top Education Institute must be work:

- that is original;
- that is produced for the purposes of a particular assessment task; and
- that gives appropriate acknowledgement of the ideas, scholarship and intellectual property of others insofar as these have been used.

Plagiarism is intentionally or unintentionally using the work of other persons, copying (in whole or in part) the work or data of other persons, or presenting substantial extracts from written, printed, electronic or other media in a student's written work without due acknowledgement. Plagiarism involves giving the impression that a student has thought, written or produced something that has, in fact, been taken from another. Plagiarism has also taken place when direct use of others' words is not indicated, for example by inverted commas or indentation, in addition to appropriate citation of the source.

Intentional plagiarism occurs if students plagiarise with the deliberate intention of representing the work of others as their own.

Unintentional plagiarism occurs if students inadvertently plagiarise due to a lack of knowledge or understanding of the concept of plagiarism, or lack of preparation, skill or care. International Students new to tertiary study may be especially vulnerable to the risk of unintentional plagiarism.

Plagiarism Register means a database, maintained by the Administration Office, where the records of investigations of allegations of plagiarism are stored. For any student, their records will be deleted fifteen years after graduation from Top Education. Access to this file is restricted to the Academic Management Team – including the Directors of Programs and Administration Manager.

Plagiarism Declaration Form is a form to be included by the student as part of every task submitted for assessment or examination. The specific content of this declaration will require the student to affirm:

- that the student has read the Policy on Plagiarism and any guidelines provided in the Unit Study Guide; and
- that the work being submitted is the student's own work, that all sources have been acknowledged in the work, that the information contains no Plagiarism, and that the information provided is not knowingly inaccurate.

4 Penalties for Plagiarism

The nature of any action will depend upon whether the instance is judged to have arisen through carelessness or deliberate dishonesty (i.e. unintentional or intentional). The Program Directors, in consultation with relevant teaching staff will make a judgement on whether the breach is intentional or unintentional.

4.1 Unintentional Plagiarism

If the Directors of Programs determines that Unintentional Plagiarism has occurred, one or more of the following actions must be taken:

- the student is appropriately counselled, including giving a warning or reprimand to the student;
- reduce the mark for the assessment task by up to 50%;
- require the student to rewrite and resubmit the assessable task, for a maximum possible pass mark of 50%;
- require the student to undertake a comparable alternative assessment task, for a maximum possible pass mark of 50%;
- a record stating that the student has been counselled including a description of the Policy breach, countersigned by the appropriate Lecturer, is placed on the central Plagiarism File.

4.2 Intentional Plagiarism could occur in the following incidents:

- where the student has previously been counselled following an earlier breach;
- where the student is in a later year and therefore relatively experienced in the scholarly practices of the institute;
- where there is evidence that the student engaged another person to produce part or all of the work;
- where there is extensive verbatim reproduction of another's work with no acknowledgement that this is quotation (even where the source is acknowledged), and this is difficult to construe as a careless oversight.

4.3 If the Directors of Programs determine that Intentional Plagiarism has occurred, one or more of the following actions may be taken:

- reduce the mark for the assessment task by at least 60%;
- require the student to rewrite and resubmit the assessment task, for a maximum possible mark of 40%;
- require the student to undertake a comparable alternative assessment task, for a maximum possible pass mark of 40%;
- reduce the grade for the unit;
- a record stating that the student has committed a breach of the Policy, including brief details of the breach, countersigned by the appropriate Lecturer is placed on the Plagiarism Register.

4.4 Repeated Intentional Plagiarism

If the Directors of Programs determine that repeated Intentional Plagiarism has occurred, and the case merits a severe penalty, the Directors of Programs will refer the matter to the Academic Board. The Academic Board may impose one or more of the following penalties:

- an award grade of Fail for the unit; or
- exclude the student from enrolment in a particular unit for such period as the Academic Board may decide.

4.5 Rights of Students

Where any academic penalties are applied, students have recourse to appeal procedures under Section 7 of this policy.

4.6 Responsibilities of Students

It is the responsibility of each individual student to ensure that:

- they are familiar with the expectations for academic honesty;
- work submitted for assessment is genuine and original;
- appropriate acknowledgement and citation is given to the work of others;
- they complete the plagiarism declaration form;
- they do not knowingly assist other students in academically dishonest practice.

4.7 Responsibilities of Academics

It is the responsibility of individual academic staff teaching a unit to:

- provide information that enables all students taking the course to become aware of this Policy;
- provide information that enables all students taking the course to become aware of the expectations for academic honesty and the potential consequences of breaches of this Policy;
- make regular attempts to detect academic dishonesty in the work submitted by students;
- report incidents of suspected plagiarism to the Program Directors for discussion during the weekly Academic Management meeting.

5 Process for handling allegations of plagiarism

5.1. Principles

Overarching principles for judging a case of alleged Plagiarism:

- (i) each case will be treated on its merits;
- (ii) the intent to deceive, the extent of the Plagiarism, and the student's history in regard to prior Plagiarism will be the principal criteria;
- (iii) judgments may be more lenient for students in the first semester of undergraduate study; and
- (iv) investigations under this policy and advice to the student of the outcomes of the investigation will be dealt with in as timely a manner as possible. The response from the Institute at each stage should normally be within 20 calendar days.

Students will be given 20 calendar days to respond to the allegations at each stage.

5.2 Detection

If a member of staff or a fellow student has reason to suspect Plagiarism, that person must inform the Lecturer at the earliest opportunity. The Lecturer will investigate whether there is any evidence to support the suspicion.

5.3 Allegation

When Plagiarism is suspected, and there is some evidence to support the allegation, the Lecturer must present a written report on the matter to the Program Director detailing the evidence on which the allegation is based. If the allegation is one of Plagiarism, the Lecturer must also present a copy of the written work with the alleged Plagiarism identified and any other evidence to support the claim of Plagiarism. The Lecturer and Program Director will discuss whether or not there is a prima facie case of Plagiarism.

5.4 Notification

If a prima facie case of Plagiarism is found to exist, the Program Director will notify the student in writing, to be sent by recorded delivery wherever possible, of:

- (i) the allegation;
- (ii) the student's rights; and
- (iii) the student support available.

5.5 Accompanying Documents

The written advice to the student will be accompanied by:

- (i) a copy of this policy;
- (ii) in the case of Plagiarism, a copy of relevant sections of the written work with the allegedly Plagiarised passages identified;
- (iii) a copy of any other documentary evidence used to support the claim of Plagiarism whether arising from an electronic detection system or otherwise.

5.6 Invitation to Respond

The student will be invited to respond to the allegation within 20 calendar days of the date in the letter of advice. The student will be informed that the response should be directed to the Program Director.

5.7 Record of Investigation

A record of the investigation will be kept and will be noted on the Plagiarism Register. Any written response from the student will form part of the record of the investigation. In the case of any other response an accurate written record of the discussion must be made and dated by the Program Director as soon as possible after the event.

5.8 Support Person

The student may invite a support person to any meeting. The support person may provide the student with advice, but may not act as an advocate or make direct comment to the meeting without the permission of the Program Director.

5.9 Further Information

The Program Director may seek such further information or advice on the substance of the allegation as is deemed necessary from academic staff other than the Lecturer. Such information or advice will be made formally in writing and sent to the student for response.

6. Decision

6.1 When the student's response has been received, or when no response has been received after 20 calendar days, the Program Director will decide:

- (i) whether or not the evidence is sufficient to support a finding of Plagiarism; and
- (ii) whether the Plagiarism was intentional or unintentional; and
- (iii) whether mitigating circumstances exist.

6.2 Prior Instances

Where the Program Director determines that Plagiarism, has occurred, he/she will consult the

Plagiarism Register for prior instances by the student before determining the course of action. Existence of prior instances may be cause for imposing a harsher penalty (see 4.4).

6.3 Action by Program Director

As a consequence of the decisions made in 6.1 and 6.2, the Program Director shall follow one of the following possible courses of action:

- (i) conclude that the allegation of Plagiarism is not supported and dismiss the allegation;
- (ii) conclude that Unintentional Plagiarism occurred but that mitigating circumstances do exist, and apply a penalty chosen from 4;
- (iii) conclude that Intentional Plagiarism occurred but that mitigating circumstances do not exist, or are not persuasive, and apply a penalty chosen from 4; or
- (iv) conclude that Intentional Plagiarism occurred and is such as to merit a severe penalty and refer the case to the Academic Board.

6.4 Action by Academic Board

Where the case has been referred to the Academic Board, the Program Director will provide the student with a copy of all materials sent to the Academic Board and the student will be given an opportunity to further answer the allegation. The Academic Board will review all aspects of the case and will do one of the following courses of action:

- (i) conclude that the allegation of Plagiarism is not substantiated. The student will be advised of this outcome in writing;
- (ii) conclude that Unintentional Plagiarism occurred, then advise the Program Director what action is to be taken under 4;
- (iii) conclude that Intentional Plagiarism occurred, but that the severity of the case only warrants choice of a penalty from 4, decide on such penalty, and advise the Program Director accordingly;
- (iv) conclude that Intentional Plagiarism occurred and merits a severe penalty, decide on a penalty from 4, and take the appropriate administrative steps to enforce the relevant penalty; or
- (v) conclude that Intentional Plagiarism occurred and then decide that the most severe penalty under 4 may be warranted.

6.6 Determination and Notification

As a consequence of any decision referred to in 4, the decision maker will advise all relevant parties. In the case where a penalty is applied the student will be advised at this time of the right to, and procedures for appeal.

6.7 Record Keeping

At each stage of the investigation, records should be kept of all relevant documentation including:

- (i) the piece of work in which the alleged Plagiarism occurs;

- (ii) the Plagiarism Declaration Form, where submitted;
- (iii) records of meetings and/or telephone conversations with the student, which records should be made as soon as possible after the event and should be signed and dated by the person making the record; and
- (iv) copies of correspondence whether or not in electronic form.

Administrative staff will establish a case file.

6.8 Plagiarism Register

At the end of the matter, whatever decision is reached, records referred to in 6.7 and a record of the final decision will be deposited in the Plagiarism Register.

6.9 Annual Report

At the end of each academic year the Administrative, HR and Finance Manager will submit a report to the Academic Board listing the number of investigations that were carried out and the nature of the penalty.

7. Appeals

7.1 A student who wishes to appeal against a decision made by the Program Director may appeal to the Academic Board. The Academic Board will consider all information relevant to the case and the appeal lodged by the student and will decide that:

- (i) one of the courses of action listed in 4; or
- (ii) the decision of the Program Director be upheld.

7.2 A student who wishes to appeal against one of the decisions made by Academic Board and who believes that he or she can present new grounds or to appeal the penalty imposed may request that the Principal refer the case to an External Independent Arbitrator.

7.3 The decision of the External Independent Arbitrator will be final.

8 Related Documents

- i. Student Assessment Policy
- ii. Assessment Appeals Process
- iii. Plagiarism Register