

# UCC Plagiarism Policy

## UCC Plagiarism Policy

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as your own without appropriate attribution.

Whether done deliberately or inadvertently, it is unacceptable, since it is an attempt to claim credit for work not done by you and fails to give credit for the work of others. Plagiarism applies not just to text, but to graphics, tables, formulae, or any representation of ideas in print, electronic or any other media, in addition to computer software and algorithms. Whether deliberate or inadvertent, plagiarism undermines scholarship, is a form of academic misconduct, and conflicts with the ethos of the University.

1.2 In some cases work can be plagiarised inadvertently, but this is usually due to carelessness and poor academic discipline. Whether deliberate or inadvertent, plagiarism undermines scholarship, is a form of academic misconduct, and conflicts with the ethos of the University.

1.3 Much of this policy document is aimed at informing undergraduate and postgraduate students about plagiarism.

1.4 In almost any academic pursuit, one learns from the ideas and the work of others. Therefore, in preparing any work to be presented as part of one's course or for research or scholarship, one must rely on other people's work to develop one's own. It is imperative, however, that this work is fully acknowledged, following the standard referencing practice within the particular discipline.

1.5 At a minimum one must indicate when any material is being quoted directly (e.g. by enclosing it in quotation marks [" "] in the case of text) and cite the source. Also, one must acknowledge the influence of other sources even when they are not being quoted directly. Acknowledgements must be provided at the appropriate point in one's work - it is not enough simply to list the sources at the end of one's work.

1.6 In some cases, particularly in the professional academic arena, plagiarism will also be a breach of copyright, which can expose the copier to civil or even criminal legal proceedings. However, plagiarism is not confined to cases of breach of copyright, since it can relate to unpublished material, such as someone else's notes, which may not be covered by copyright. Also, while copyright has an expiry date, no such date applies to plagiarism.

1.7 Collusion is a form of plagiarism. If one allows someone else to copy one's work, this is collusion and both parties are guilty of plagiarism. Also, if one presents work as one's own individual effort, where it has in fact been developed jointly with others, this is regarded as collusion. This would obviously not be the case where students work as groups and submit one assignment as a group. Appropriate cognizance should be taken of this fact in departmental or course plagiarism policies.

## 2. Best Practice

While the policy outlined here applies across the University, there is also a need for School/Departmental policies to take account of the different cultural and other issues that arise amongst different disciplines. Naturally, these policies may be similar for a number of departments. Each School/Department is obliged to make all candidates aware of the plagiarism policy through lecture(s), handbooks, handouts and the web etc. Also, each department should provide adequate training early in the academic year on plagiarism and collusion and on best practice to be followed when submitting work for assessment. When providing such information for candidates, departments should not merely warn them of the penalties for plagiarism, but should also help those students who put excessive constraints on themselves out of a fear of infringing any plagiarism regulations. In this regard it is recommended that all departments give at least one lecture where standard referencing conventions are explained and defined. This should take place in the first year of any course.

## 3. Transition to Best Practice

Unless one has informed students that their work will be checked for plagiarism, the abrupt enforcement of this policy would be unfair. It is therefore recommended that in the interim all Schools/Departments require students to sign a declaration that all submitted work is wholly their own work.

## 4. Procedures and penalties

Where a supervisor, examiner or an invigilator suspects plagiarism, then s/he should follow the procedures set out under the "Breach of Examination Regulations" in the "Guide to Examinations for Academic Staff & Students". These regulations cover assessments undertaken as part of invigilated examinations and also those undertaken outside of invigilated examinations. The relevant sections of the Guide are given in the next section. The penalties for cheating (including plagiarism) are outlined in the Guide. In the case of assessments that are not part of invigilated examinations, the Regulations allow the Head of School/Department to exercise discretion to pursue the cases of suspected plagiarism/cheating internally within the department (i.e. without reference to the Student Records and Examinations Officer). This should be done in cases of minor breaches of the plagiarism regulations where they are a first offence and are due to carelessness, poor academic practice or where they relate to a very small proportion of the overall assignment. Penalties for more extensive plagiarism (reported to the Student Records and Examinations Office) currently vary somewhat amongst departments, but are based on the principle that students should gain no marks whatsoever for plagiarised material.

Students have a right of appeal, where they believe that they have been treated unfairly by the plagiarism procedures. Such appeals would normally be dealt with through the standard UCC Examination Appeals Committee (which has independent legal oversight).

## 5. Relevant extracts from the UCC "Guide to Examinations for Academic Staff & Students" (Breach of Examination Regulations)

6.1 Cheating means an attempt to benefit oneself, or another, by deceit or fraud or other breach of the examination regulations. Such breaches include personation and plagiarism. As regards plagiarism a significant amount of unacknowledged copying shall be deemed to constitute prima facie evidence of deliberation. Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as your own. When done deliberately, it is cheating, since it is an attempt to claim credit for work not done by you and fails to give credit for the work of others. Plagiarism applies not just to text, but to graphics, tables, formulae, or any representation of ideas in print, electronic or other media.

6.2 If any candidate is adjudged by the Registrar & Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Chairperson of the Discipline Committee or in the case of their being unable to act, their nominees from the Discipline Committee, to have violated any of the regulations of the examinations, or in any other way to have acted improperly, they will have power to deprive the candidate of their examination, or of any part thereof, and also to publish their name as having been deprived of their examination, either wholly or in part, for having violated the regulations of examination, and they will have power, to exclude the candidate from the examination for a period not exceeding two years.

6.3 In cases of personation, the personator and the personated will be liable to permanent exclusion from the university or any other appropriate penalty.

6.4 Any candidate found violating these regulations may be requested to leave the Examination Hall by the Senior Invigilator and to have their case reported to the Registrar & Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

#### 6.5 Assessments undertaken as part of Invigilated Examinations

6.5.1 Where an Invigilator suspects a candidate of cheating, the Senior Invigilator, or at least one other Invigilator, will be informed and asked to confirm their suspicions. The candidate will be warned that a report will be made to the Student Records and Examinations Officer. Any unauthorised material will be removed from the candidate, who will be allowed to finish the examination. A written report will be made by the Invigilators to the Student Records and Examinations Officer.

6.5.2 A candidate who has been given a verbal warning by the Invigilator that a report will be made to the Student Records and Examinations Officer will be informed in writing by the Student Records and Examinations Officer that the candidate may submit a written statement, before the matter is considered.

6.5.3 The Student Records and Examinations Officer may request a report from the Head of the relevant Department or School where appropriate.

6.5.4 Each alleged case of cheating will be considered in the first instance by the Student Records and Examinations Officer and the Head of the relevant College/Dean of the relevant Faculty or his/her nominee, who will invite the candidate to a meeting to discuss the matter, unless the Head/Dean is a member of the Department or School responsible for the examination in question, in which case the Registrar & Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs may nominate another Head/Dean to act. In the event of the Student Records

and Examinations Officer being unable to act, the Registrar & Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs will nominate an alternate.

6.5.5 An Examiner, who, when marking examination scripts, suspects that cheating has taken place will consult the Head of the Department or Head of School or nominee. If the Head or nominee considers that there is evidence that cheating has occurred, he/she will make a written report to the Student Records and Examinations Officer and will warn the candidate that this report has been made. The Head or nominee will also inform the candidate in writing that he/she may submit a written statement to the Student Records and Examinations Officer.

6.5.6 The corresponding reports will be considered by the Student Records and Examinations Officer and the relevant Head/Dean or nominee who will invite the candidate to a meeting to discuss the matter.

6.5.7 Following the meeting with the Student Records and Examinations Officer and relevant Head/Dean, or nominee, if it is considered that there is not a case to answer, the matter will end there and the Student Records and Examinations Officer will so inform the candidate and where relevant the Head of Department or Head of School.

6.5.8 If it is considered by the Student Records and Examinations Officer and the relevant Head/Dean or nominee that there is a case to answer, the Student Records and Examinations Officer will refer the matter to the Registrar & Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs and will accordingly inform in writing both the candidate and, when involved, the relevant Head of Department or Head of School.

6.5.9 The Registrar & Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Chairperson of the Discipline Committee will consider the matter and provide the candidate with an opportunity to present an explanation in writing or orally; if they conclude that cheating has occurred, they will determine an appropriate penalty.

6.5.10 Any lesser penalty than the above, may, include one or more of the following:

- (a) Assigning a mark of zero for the particular examination concerned
- (b) Assigning a mark of zero for all or part of the course/unit/module of which the examination was a component part
- (c) Setting aside all or part of the overall examination while permitting the candidate to take the examination again at the next available opportunity or in the following year
- (d) Suspension of the candidate from the university for a period not exceeding two years
- (e) Permanent exclusion from the university in case of personation

6.5.11 The penalty will be notified in writing to the candidate by the Registrar & Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs who will also inform the Head of Department or Head of School where involved.

6.5.12 If the Registrar & Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Chairperson of the Discipline Committee is for any reason unable to act, he/she will nominate a member of the Discipline Committee to act on their behalf.

6.5.13 Students have a right of appeal, where they believe that they have been treated unfairly by the plagiarism procedures. Such appeals would normally be dealt with through the standard UCC Examination Appeals Committee (which has independent legal oversight).

## 6.6 Assessments not undertaken as part of Invigilated Examinations

6.6.1 Students should note that when they submit written assessments they will be required to sign a declaration that this work is wholly their own work. All essays, dissertations and projects submitted will be checked for plagiarism. Where Examiners suspect candidates of cheating in an essay, dissertation, project, departmental or school tests or other assessed assignment, they will consult their Head of Department or Head of School or nominee.

6.6.2 If the Head of the Department or Head of School or nominee suspects that an offence has occurred, the Head or nominee will inform the candidate of the allegation and provide the student with reasonable opportunity to provide an explanation, following which the Head or nominee will either:

- (a) Make a full report in writing to the Student Records and Examinations Officer, in which case the procedures for an invigilated examination will be invoked; or
  - (b) Exercise discretion to pursue the matter without reference to the Student Records and Examinations Officer, in which case the Head or nominee will determine the appropriate penalty (if any), which will not exceed assigning a mark of zero in the piece of work to which the offence relates. For the avoidance of doubt, this provision relates to the mark allocated to the full piece work concerned and not the section or part deemed to have been plagiarised. No sanction may be extended beyond the result for the piece of work concerned. The candidate, having been informed of the penalty, may choose either:
    - (i) to accept the penalty as a final decision in which case a summary report of the circumstances of the case and level of penalty exacted will be lodged by the Head with the Student Records and Examinations Officer
- or
- (ii) to have the matter considered by the Student Records and Examinations Officer, thereby invoking procedures to be adopted in 6.5.5 through 6.5.11, whereupon the Head will make a full report in writing to the Student Records and Examinations Officer.

6.6.3 In all cases where a report has been submitted by the Head of Department or Head of School or nominee to the Student Records and Examinations Officer, the Head or nominee will warn candidates that this report has been made, and inform them in writing of their entitlement to make a written statement to the Student Records and Examinations Officer.

6.6.4 The corresponding reports will be considered by the Student Records and Examinations Officer and the relevant Head/Dean or nominee who will invite the candidate to a meeting to discuss the matter.

6.6.5 If it is considered that there is not a case to answer, or there is a case to answer but that a penalty within the range of discretion of the Head is appropriate, the matter will end there and the student and Head

of Department or Head of School will be so informed in writing by the Student Records and Examinations Officer.

6.6.6 If it is considered that there is a case to answer but a penalty outside the discretion of the Head may be appropriate, the allegation will be reported to the Senior Vice-President Academic and Registrar, who with the Chairperson of the Discipline Committee, will consider the matter and determine the penalty in accordance with the procedures applicable to invigilated examinations.

#### 6. Plagiarism at postgraduate level

Penalties for plagiarism at postgraduate level (in particular affecting the content of theses/dissertations) can to some extent be influenced by factors outside UCC as well as the procedures and penalties outlined above. Theses/dissertations are subject to External Examination and an External Examiner is entitled to fail any thesis in which significant plagiarism is detected. Postgraduates have a right of appeal against such decisions by External Examiners.

7. Plagiarism prevention and detection Hitherto in UCC, plagiarism has been dealt with largely as a disciplinary matter after it has been detected (by an ad hoc mixture of electronic and non-electronic methods). Over the next few years it is the intention that UCC move towards a transparent, non-confrontational approach that will prevent much plagiarism. Undergraduate and postgraduate students will be able to submit any material (in electronic form) for scrutiny by web-based software that assigns originality scores to their work. As far as students are concerned, it is intended that assignments will be submitted to their teachers after they have conducted such scrutiny themselves (together with the relevant software scrutiny report). It will be for Schools/Departments to determine the proportion of assignments that are dealt with in this fashion.

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