



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LAIRGE



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WIT
Academic Regulations
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Plagiarism

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10. Academic Offences: Plagiarism

10.1 Introduction: Scope, Definitions, Context

- 10.1.1 To plagiarise is when you use the ideas or words of another person without giving them explicit credit. Plagiarism therefore is passing off the work of others as one's own. It is defined by the act not the intention, so even careless accidental copying is still classed as plagiarism, for it gives the false impression that the student is the author and denies the genuine author their due acknowledgement. Plagiarism at postgraduate level is a particularly serious academic offence. When plagiarised work potentially leads to programme credit (in the case of all students) or to publication (in the case of postgraduates and staff), an attempted academic fraud has been committed.
- 10.1.2 WIT has developed an Anti-Plagiarism Policy. This policy applies to all students of the Institute. The following summary should be read in conjunction with the policy which provides more detail.
- 10.1.3 Allegations of plagiarism against staff members should be reported to the relevant Head of Department and shall be dealt with under either the Research Misconduct Policy or the Staff Grievance and Disciplinary Policy, as appropriate.
- 10.1.4 Waterford Institute of Technology aims to foster academic integrity. A key principle is that appropriate acknowledgments be made for the contributions of others to any work submitted for assessment or publication. The attribution of these sources should be in the form of standard and consistent referencing and bibliographic conventions. Clear referencing is vital both to avoid plagiarism and to allow the interested reader to follow up any of the works cited and read quotations in their original contexts.
- 10.1.5 It is the policy of WIT to be proactive in dealing with cases in which the principles of academic integrity are not upheld and cheating occurs. Plagiarism is dishonest, unfair and undermines the necessary trust upon which relations between learners and teachers are based. Students who engage in such practices will be subject to academic sanctions, including a reduced or fail grade for an assignment. They may also be subject to administrative sanctions, including suspension or expulsion.
- 10.1.6 Every assignment which leads to programme credit should contain a signed Plagiarism Declaration on the title page. Assignments in formats other than written also need to be accompanied by such a declaration, suitably modified to reflect the particular format in which the work is submitted. The declaration should be made available electronically to students and should always appear on the first page of submitted work, irrespective of any other submission forms used by the relevant School or department. An indicative Plagiarism Declaration is given in the Institute's Anti-Plagiarism Policy.

10.2 Sanctions for Plagiarism

- 10.2.1 One or more academic sanctions may be imposed for plagiarism. Academic sanctions may be imposed by a lecturer and/or Head of Department, with the student's agreement, through the Level 1 (informal) process. Academic sanctions imposed by the Level 2 formal hearing process shall be overseen by the Registrar.

- 10.2.2 Academic sanctions include:
- Re-submission of the assignment;
 - A specified reduction in the grade for the assignment and/or module;
 - A fail grade for the assignment and /or module;
 - Multiple sanctions (more than one of the above) may be imposed for any single transgression.
- 10.2.3 One or more administrative sanctions may be imposed for cases of plagiarism. These include:
- Suspension: Separation of the student from WIT student status for a definite period of time, after which the student is eligible to return. Conditions for re-admission may be specified;
 - Expulsion: Permanent separation of the student from WIT student status;
 - Multiple Sanctions: More than one of the sanctions listed above may be imposed for any single transgression.

10.3 Guidelines for Dealing with Plagiarism Informally (Level 1)

- 10.3.1 WIT recognises the importance of informal communication between staff and students and encourages informal communication as a means of resolving concerns over plagiarism. In many instances, when a faculty member suspects plagiarism, informal discussion between the faculty member and the student may resolve the concern. Every effort should be made to respect the rights of the student.
- 10.3.2 The guiding principle here is that complaints should be dealt with at the lowest possible level. Thus, a Level 1 resolution will normally be sought for a first allegation of plagiarism, unless there are compelling reasons for proceeding directly to Level 2.

10.4 Procedures for a Level 1 Resolution

- 10.4.1 A Level 1 resolution occurs when both the lecturer and the student agree to resolve an allegation of plagiarism with appropriate academic sanctions as outlined above.
- 10.4.2 Procedures for a Level 1 Resolution are as follows: The lecturer should carefully consider the evidence of plagiarism. Indicators and/or proof of plagiarism may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:
- Identification of the source of the materials used by the student without proper attribution, or represented as the student's own work;
 - A demonstrably marked difference in the writing style of the student, as compared to previous work, or variations in font, grammar and spelling from section to section;
 - Testimony from others regarding a student's use of academically dishonest means to complete the assignment;

- d. First-hand observation of the student engaging in plagiarism;
- e. An unusual or suspicious degree of similarity in work submitted by different students;
- f. Admission by the student that s/he plagiarised;

10.4.3 As soon as possible after the discovery of the alleged transgression, a meeting should take place at which the student and lecturer discuss the allegation and at which the lecturer may give further advice about correct citation protocols and how to avoid plagiarism in the future. While it is understood that this level of resolution is the least formal, it is usually appropriate that a meeting between the student and the lecturer to discuss issues related to plagiarism is chaired by a third-party that is agreeable to both student and lecturer. This may be the Head of Department, Course Leader or other. It is also understood that the student may wish to have student representatives—such as a Students' Union officer—in attendance.

10.4.4 Upon agreement that plagiarism occurred and that a Level 1 resolution is acceptable to all parties, the lecturer should fill in a short report detailing the allegation, the evidence and the sanction imposed (as above). This report should be signed by all parties involved in the resolution - student, lecturer and Head of Department - and each party should receive a copy of the report. Finally, a copy of this report should be forwarded to the Head of School within five days of the resolution.

10.4.5 If the semester ends without a Level 1 resolution, the lecturer should assign the grade ('I' Deferral) to the student alleged to have plagiarised.

10.5 Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations Plagiarism Formally (Level 2)

10.5.1 Level 2 plagiarism proceedings may be used when:

- i. The student fails to attend the scheduled meeting to discuss the allegations informally (Level 1);
- ii. The alleged plagiarism is detected at the close of the semester and the lecturer's good-faith effort to contact the student is unsuccessful;
- iii. Level 1 resolution fails;
- iv. The student is a repeat offender;
- v. The lecturer feels that the gravity of the situation merits formal action.

10.5.2 The lecturer submits a Plagiarism Report in order to seek formal academic sanctions and/or administrative sanctions. This report should outline the grounds for suspicion, a copy of the relevant piece of suspect work and any supporting evidence. The formal procedure will involve a Plagiarism Hearing. A lecturer may not take any academic sanction against a student involved in a Plagiarism Hearing until the proceedings have run their course. Furthermore, the lecturer may not usually prohibit a student involved in a hearing from continuing in the class.

10.5.3 Each plagiarism hearing is conducted by a Panel consisting of a minimum of: one member of the relevant Programme Board; the Head of the Department in which the student is registered; one staff member from another Department who is a member of Academic Council; a Student Representative; the Registrar or his nominee (who shall normally be the Head of School) (Chair). If deemed appropriate by the Registrar, a technical or legal expert may be co-opted to assist the panel in their work.

10.5.4 This Panel should be convened as soon as practicable from the date on which the lecturer submits the formal Plagiarism Report. This should normally be within fifteen academic days of the submission of the Plagiarism Report.

10.6 Procedures for Conducting a Plagiarism Hearing:

10.6.1 Convening the Hearing:

- i. The panel is convened by the Registrar and the members notified to the student and lecturer. If there are any conflicts of interest these should be reported to the Registrar.
- ii. The lecturer submits to the Panel Chair materials relating to the plagiarism allegation, as identified in the formal Plagiarism Report. The student shall have the right to receive such information one week in advance, if they so wish, and to submit relevant materials of their own.
- iii. The lecturer and the student shall inform each other and the Panel Chair in written form the names of any individuals and details of any exhibits they plan to present at the hearing. The lecturer and the student shall also inform the Panel Chair, and each other, of their intention to be accompanied by an adviser at the hearing. The adviser can be a legal or union representative, a family member, a friend, or any person whom the lecturer or student wishes to invite.
- iv. The hearing shall be in private.

10.6.2 Conduct of the Hearing:

- i. The Chair of the Panel shall announce, at the beginning of the hearing, the format for the hearing.
- ii. Attendance shall be limited to the following: The lecturer and his/her adviser if any; the student and his/her adviser if any; individuals while giving evidence; the five members of the Panel; an audio recorder operator.
- iii. The hearing shall not be conducted according to the criminal rules of evidence and witness. The civil standard of 'on the balance of probabilities' will be applied rather than the criminal standard of 'beyond reasonable doubt'. The Panel Chair shall admit the sort of evidence on which reasonable persons are accustomed to rely in the conduct of serious affairs, and shall exclude evidence that is irrelevant, unduly repetitious or cumulative. Evidence relating to past actions shall be admitted if shown to be relevant.

- iv. Members of the Panel shall not discuss the case with persons who are not members of the Panel. However, the Panel may seek legal advice from WIT's solicitors and any barristers instructed to act for WIT in the case.
- v. Members of the Panel may question the lecturer and the student on procedural matters and on matters pertaining to evidence.

10.7 Plagiarism Hearing Panel Decision and Report

- 10.7.1 Members of the Panel shall meet in executive session (with all other persons excluded) following the conclusion of the hearing. In this session, the Panel shall consider the evidence and reach its decision, basing that decision only on the evidence and exhibits received at the hearing, arguments made in accordance with these procedures, and any opinions received from the WIT Solicitor.
- 10.7.2 The Panel Chair shall prepare the Panel's written report.
- 10.7.3 The Report shall state whether the Panel finds for or against the student as to each wrong alleged and shall include:
 - i. A detailed review of the facts presented in the hearing;
 - ii. Any conclusions in respect of those findings;
 - iii. A finding for or against the student;
 - iv. The Panel's decisions for resolving the matter.
 - v. The rationale for its findings, conclusions, and decisions.
- 10.7.4 The Report shall have the concurrence of a simple majority of the Panel. In the event of a tie, the Chair will have the casting vote. A minority position may be expressed either as a section in the Report or as a separate Report.
- 10.7.5 The Panel Chair shall give copies of the written report to the student, the lecturer and the Registrar, within fifteen academic days from the date when the hearing concluded.
- 10.7.6 All documentation and reports should be available for scrutiny by the Head of Department and lecturer involved in the case.
- 10.7.7 If the Panel finds against the student, the Chair of the Panel shall oversee the case until remedy has been fully implemented. Remedies may include any of the sanctions identified up to and including permanent expulsion from WIT. In cases where expulsion is the required action, the expulsion order must be signed by the Institute's President and reported to the Institute's Governing Body.

- 10.7.8 Once the student has been penalised from amongst the list of possible sanctions, the matter is considered closed and should not normally be mentioned in references. The outcome of the Panel hearing should be held by the Registrar for three years or until the student graduates from WIT (whichever is the longer). An exception would be in a reference for certain jobs for a student with a track record of repeated or serious plagiarism. Under these circumstances, WIT would be failing in its duty in not providing this information to potential employers.
- 10.7.9 If the Panel finds for the student the Chair of the Panel shall oversee the case until the remedy has been fully implemented. Remedies may include:
 - i. A change to a specific grade for the student in the module;
 - ii. Request the lecturer to give appropriate credit to the student for the course work in question;
 - iii. Request the lecturer to allow the student to re-do the course work in line with the Panel's recommendations.
- 10.7.10 Appeals may be made to the President within two weeks of the Panel's decision. These must be in writing and set out the basis for the appeal clearly. The grounds for appeal may relate to (i) the decision as to whether plagiarism occurred and (ii) the penalty imposed. The result of the appeal will be conveyed to both parties and will be subject to no further review.
- 10.7.11 The Registrar shall report as the need arises to Academic Council regarding the cases heard and their disposition. The report may include recommended changes in Institute policy in order to protect the rights and privileges of students and staff.