



OULUN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY of OULU

**GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THESES AND COURSE-
COMPLETION RELATED PLAGIARISM
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OULU**

September 30th 2009



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Plagiarism or unauthorized citation

The University of Oulu has committed itself to complying with the guidelines of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics for good scientific practice and the treatment of violations of research ethics. The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics lists the following activities as violations of good scientific practice: fabrication, misrepresentation, plagiarism and misappropriation¹. The present guidelines focus **on the management of occasions of plagiarism (= unauthorized citation)**. The guidelines apply to theses and courses or parts of courses completed at the University of Oulu. The guidelines provided by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics highlight **the universities' responsibility in ensuring that introduction to good scientific practice and instruction on research ethics are included as an inherent part in university education**². It is important that students are provided adequate instruction from the beginning of the studies in correct referencing techniques and in the recognition of the ethical aspects of scientific writing.

The University of Oulu strictly condemns all unethical and fraudulent pursuits. One of the significant aims of a research university is to guide its students in adopting high-level principles of scientific practice. Thus it is a fundamental requirement that all written work is produced either by the person submitting it or it is a collaborative outcome of active participation in team work. Ethical conduct in scientific writing includes appropriate referencing and use of previous studies. Unethical conduct such as fabrication, misrepresentation, plagiarism and misappropriation are not accepted practices at the University of Oulu. Unethical conduct at the university violates not only the code of scientific practice but also copyright legislation and social norms. It prevents learning, pursues self-interest and denies the original author his or her rightful rewards or recognition.

Plagiarism means the unpermitted use of another person's ideas, thoughts, writings or inventions etc. in one's own written or pictorial product without appropriate reference to the original author. At the University of Oulu, plagiarism is also considered to include so called self-plagiarism. This means that a person uses exactly the same product of his or her own on two or more occasions. Plagiarism is considered to be **serious** when it occurs in a supervised final thesis (a bachelor's thesis, master's thesis, licentiate thesis, or doctoral dissertation) or if a whole assignment or most of it is copied, or course completion is based on copied work, or appropriate referencing is clearly missing.

¹ National Advisory Board on Research Ethics 2002, 4-5.

² National Advisory Board on Research Ethics 2002,3.



Measures to prevent plagiarism

To prevent the occurrence of plagiarism at the University of Oulu, it is recommended that the Urkund program for the identification of plagiarism be used³. This program checks a given piece of work by comparing it to the materials found on the Internet, in published materials and in work submitted by other students. The Urkund reports are available only for teachers. The plagiarism prevention program facilitates the teacher's work and makes it less time consuming. In addition, the program confirms justified suspicions of plagiarism and provides evidence for it.

Measures to be taken when plagiarism is encountered

At the University of Oulu, cases of suspected plagiarism are always investigated. Suspicions of plagiarism may arise when work submitted as a course-completion performance is checked and assessed by the teachers or after a course-completion performance or related work has been accepted. In case of serious plagiarism that is noticed only after the completion of the work in question, a written notice (form) addressed to the University's registry office shall be served to the Rector. The procedure always starts with a hearing of the suspected person. The sanctions are provided for in the Universities Act and Universities Decree as amended. In addition, the regulations of the University of Oulu regarding instruction and students clarify the meaning of student fraud.

The new Universities Act (558/2009), Section 45, coming into force as of January 1st 2010:

Disciplinary action

1. A student who has committed an offence against teaching or research at the university or has otherwise breached university order, may be cautioned or suspended for a maximum of one year as a disciplinary measure, depending on the seriousness of the offence. The decision in regard to the caution of a student shall be made by the rector of the university and in regard to a suspension by the board of the university. Before the resolution of the matter the student shall be verifiably notified of the offence he or she is accused of and given an opportunity to be heard in the matter.

Universities Act (645/1997), Section 19, in force until December 31st 2009:

Disciplinary action

(1) A student who has committed an offence against teaching or research at the university may, as a disciplinary measure, be given a caution or be suspended for a maximum of one year. Provisions concerning the procedure shall be enacted by decree.

³ For more information see <http://www.orkund.se/fi/>



Universities Decree (115/1998), Section 20, in force until December 31st 2009

Disciplinary action

In the case of an offence against teaching and research under Section 19 of the Universities Act,

a decision in regard to the caution of a student shall be made by the rector of the university and in regard to a suspension by the board of the university. Before the resolution of the matter the student shall be verifiably notified of the offence he or she is accused of and given an opportunity to be heard in the matter.

Regulations of the University of Oulu on instruction and students

An examination or other course-completion performance may be discontinued, if the student commits misconduct in the course of such performance. If the misconduct is detected at a later stage, the performance may be disqualified.

(14§: The term course-completion performance is used in these regulations to refer to doctoral dissertations, licentiate theses, and those oral, written or other performances defined in detail in the respective curricula.)

A seminar paper, essay, study or other written assignment will also be disqualified, if the student is found to be guilty of misconduct after the course-completion performance has been accepted. With regard to doctoral dissertations, licentiate theses, and master's and bachelor's theses such disqualification decisions are made by the administrative body responsible for the matter. The rector of the university shall be informed about disqualification decisions. The law to be applied is the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003)

Chapter 8 — Correction of an error in the decision

Section 50 — Correction of a material error

(1) If a decision is clearly based on erroneous or insufficient information or on an obviously incorrect application of the law, or if a procedural error has occurred in the decision making, the authority may annul its erroneous decision and decide the matter anew.

(2) The decision may be corrected to the benefit or the detriment of a party. The consent of the party shall be required for a correction of the decision to his/her detriment. However, the consent of a party shall not be required if the error is obvious and has arisen from the conduct of that party.

and

Section 52 — Pending effect and consideration of a correction matter



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- (1) An authority shall consider a correction matter on its own initiative or on the demand of a party. The initiative shall be made or the demand submitted within five years of the date of the decision.*
- (2) The correction of a material error shall require a new consideration of the matter and the making of a new decision. A typographical error shall be corrected by replacing the defective instrument by a corrected instrument. The party shall be permitted an opportunity to be heard before the correction of a typographical error, unless this is considered to be unnecessary.*
- (3) The material or typographical correction shall be marked on the archive copy of the decision or into the information system used by the authority. The new or corrected instrument shall be issued free of charge.*

Guidelines of the University of Oulu for the management of misconduct relating to doctoral and licentiate theses, master's and bachelor's theses, and other forms of course completion

The University of Oulu guidelines for the handling of plagiarism apply to all forms of course completion and final theses (doctoral, licentiate, master's, bachelor's). The process of course completion will be either discontinued or the product (e.g. a seminar paper, essay, study) disqualified, if the student is found to be guilty of plagiarism or some other form of misconduct (fraud) while pursuing the respective studies. The teacher or supervisor responsible for the course or assignment shall make the decision on the discontinuation or disqualification of the performance in question. The perpetrator will be notified of the matter and summoned to a hearing by the teachers responsible for the respective course or assignment. It must, however, be kept in mind that in the discussion with the perpetrator, the primary aim shall be to find out about the reason for the occasion of plagiarism and to respond to the situation accordingly, e.g. by giving instructions on appropriate referencing (if such instructions have not been previously given). The teacher then transfers the matter to be dealt with by the dean of the faculty (the faculty council and the head of academic and student affairs may also be involved). The dean conducts a hearing in the presence of the perpetrator and afterwards makes a decision on the sanctions to be enacted (disqualification of the performance of course completion, a waiting period before further course-completion efforts are allowed, etc.). The student shall also be given instructions concerning further completion of the respective course. The event shall always be documented in a memorandum. The perpetrator, the respective faculty council, and, in serious cases, the university's registry office shall be notified of a decision to disqualify a course-completion performance. In this manner, institution-level statistics can be compiled on the occurrence of plagiarism at the University of Oulu.



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If the case of plagiarism is a serious one, the dean will transfer the case so that it can be handled by the rector. The rector may in his or her turn transfer the case to be resolved by the board of the university. The sanctions for a serious case of plagiarism include caution and temporary suspension from the university. The decision on whether or not to caution can be made by the rector. Temporary suspension, on the contrary, is imposed by the board of the university. In the case of serious plagiarism, the copyright owner of the plagiarized intellectual property may be notified of the matter, if necessary. Moreover, care must be taken to inform the perpetrator of serious plagiarism of the initiation of the plagiarism proceedings. This may be accomplished through the acknowledgement of receipt procedure or registered mail services.

Plagiarism proceedings (e.g. the imposition of sanctions) may be initiated even if the suspected person declines to attend the hearing.



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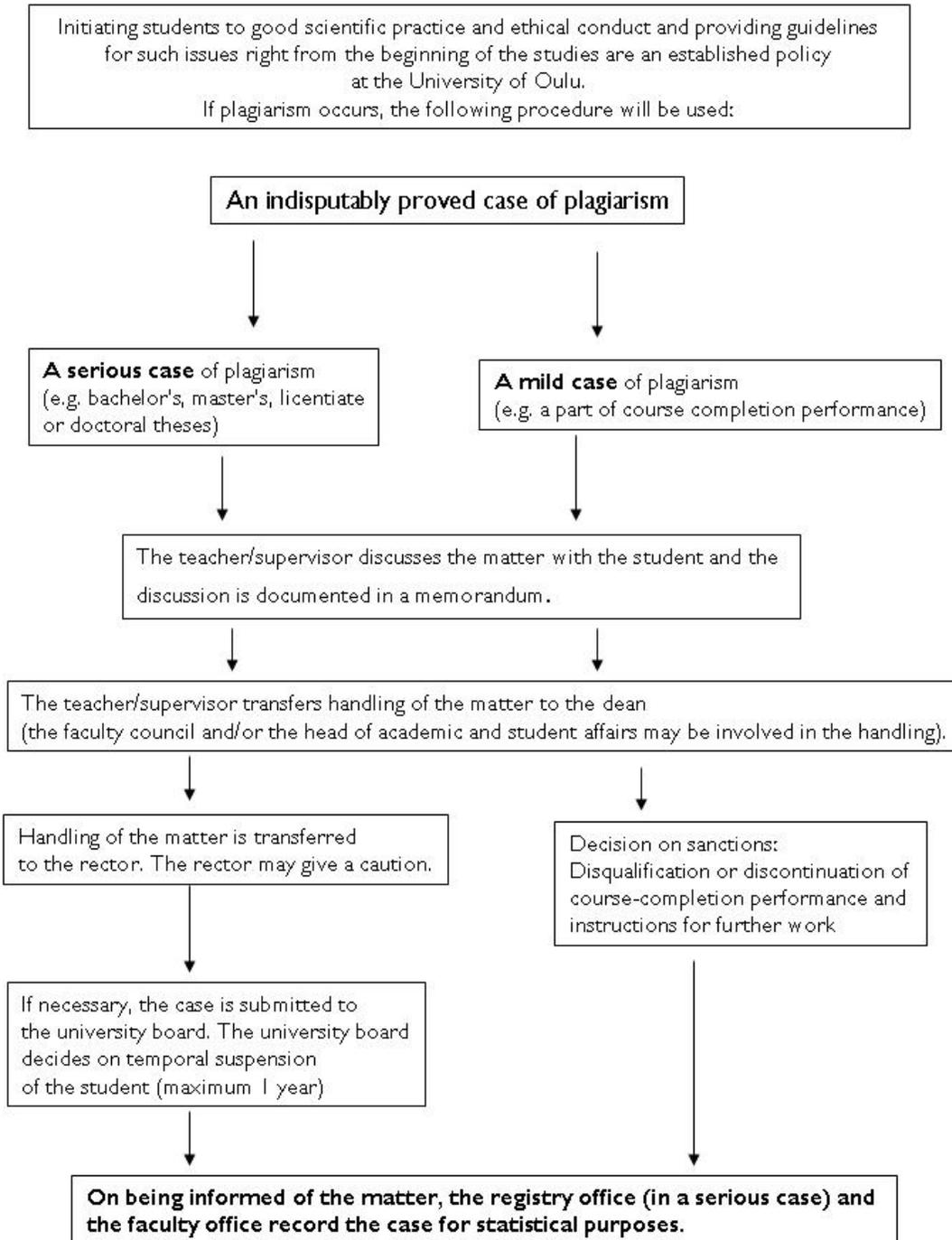


Diagram I: A model procedure for the management of plagiarism related to final theses and course completion.



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What kind of general instructions should be given to students?

From the beginning of the study program, students shall be instructed to use their discipline-specific system of referencing. The student may not be very well aware of what is interpreted as plagiarism or unethical conduct at a research university. Therefore, it is vital that teachers conduct regular discussions with students on the principles of good scientific practice at least in those courses which involve the submission of a written assignment. Thus it is the teacher's duty to introduce the students to referencing practices before they undertake written work. Plagiarism can be prevented by providing the students with clearly-drafted written instructions and guidelines on the matter. This is crucial especially when the students start writing their bachelor's or master's theses. Moreover, it is also advisable to inform the students of the sanctions of plagiarism at the University of Oulu and of what the Universities Act (645/1997) and the regulations of the University of Oulu provide with respect to plagiarism.

Oulu, September 30th, 2009

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http://www.uku.fi/opiskelu/ohjeet_plagiointin_ehkaisemiseksi.pdf

Guidelines for the management of student fraud at Lappeenranta University of Technology”Toimenpideohjeet vilppitapauksissa”:
http://www.lut.fi/fi/lut/studies/instructions/instructions/Documents/kurinpitotoimet_2006.pdf

Guidelines for the management of plagiarism, Department of Computer Sciences, University of Tampere: <http://www.cs.uta.fi/opiskelu/plagiointi.php>

Departmental guidelines for the management of plagiarism at the University of Helsinki
http://www.helsinki.fi/search?site=Kaikki_julkinen&entsp=a__viestinta&sort=date%3AD%3A%3Ad1&client=julkinen&entqr=0&access=p&hl=fi&ip=128.214.205.21&oe=ISO-8859-1&q=plagiointi&ie=iso-8859-1&ud=1&output=xml_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=julkinen&start=0