



## Academic Policy

### Plagiarism Policy

Policy on prevention, detection and penalty for plagiarism

**Approved on:** 10 December 2010  
**Approved by:** Academic Board  
**Contact person:** Vice Rector Academic  
**Review date:** 10 December 2012

#### 1. Introduction

Good scholarship necessarily requires building on and incorporating the work of others, however, this use must be acknowledged. Plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data are dishonest practices which contravene academic values of respect for knowledge, scholarship and scholars. These practices devalue the quality of learning, both for the individual and for others enrolled in the course. MCHE imposes strict penalties on students who are found to contravene the plagiarism policy.

Whenever the thoughts, words, drawings, designs, statistical data, computer programs or other creative work of others are used, either by direct quotation, by paraphrasing or by the use of another's ideas, the author and the source must be clearly identified through the use of proper referencing. To avoid plagiarism, it is important to understand how to attribute the work and ideas you use to their proper source.

The purpose of this document is:

- to identify the responsibilities of the MCHE and of individual staff and the rights and responsibilities of students with regard to the prevention and detection of plagiarism in coursework programs;
- to outline procedures that can be applied consistently across the MCHE in the investigation of, and subsequent action in cases of suspected / alleged plagiarism;
- to provide advice for academic staff on the prevention and detection of plagiarism; and
- to provide advice to students on the ways to avoid plagiarism.

## 2. Definitions

**Plagiarism** is the passing off of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Plagiarism involves giving the impression that a person has thought, written or produced something that has, in fact, been taken from another.

**Intentional plagiarism** is plagiarism which arises from intention to deceive.

**Unintentional plagiarism** is plagiarism which arises from lack of knowledge or understanding of the concept of plagiarism, or lack of skill in using the relevant academic conventions. *Note that both intentional and unintentional plagiarism are breaches of the policy.*

**Groupwork** means a formally established project to be conducted by a number of students in common, resulting in a single piece of assessment or a number of associated pieces of assessment.

**Legitimate collaboration** means any constructive educational and intellectual practice that aims to facilitate optimal learning outcomes through interaction between students.

**Collusion** (unauthorised collaboration) involves working with others without permission to produce work which is then presented as work completed independently by the student. Collusion is a form of plagiarism. Students should not knowingly allow their work to be copied.

**Head of Division** means the person in charge of a Faculty or Centre in which the plagiarism has occurred.

## 3. Responsibility of MCHE

MCHE has an obligation to:

- (a) set in place and publicise to all academic staff and students policies and procedures relating to plagiarism;
- (b) inform all parties of their rights and responsibilities;
- (c) ensure that the policies and procedures are implemented consistently across all faculties/centres;
- (d) provide advice to students on how to avoid plagiarism;
- (e) provide advice to staff on how to minimise opportunities for plagiarism, and how to detect instances of plagiarism;
- (f) provide students proper opportunity to answer allegations of plagiarism;
- (g) provide and publicise a process for students to appeal decisions arising from plagiarism;
- (h) maintain a record of cases of plagiarism for which a penalty is imposed on Student Information System (PowerCampus) and Student File with limited access.

#### **4. Responsibility of Staff**

Individual staff has a responsibility to:

- (a) understand the policies and procedures of MCHE, the Faculty/Centre and the Department with respect to academic honesty including plagiarism, co-operation and groupwork, and to apply them consistently;
- (b) explain to students both good scholarly practice and the concept of plagiarism;
- (c) ensure that adequate information is provided to students about referencing requirements and academic conventions for the use of others' work, as appropriate for the discipline;
- (d) inform students of obligations regarding acknowledgement of collaborative work, and give clear guidelines for group work;
- (e) provide students with early notification and fair warning if they believe any individual or group may be at risk of breaching guidelines relating to plagiarism, groupwork, collusion and collaboration;
- (f) give clear feedback about referencing problems;
- (g) refer students to sources of advice on academic writing;
- (h) ensure that allegations of student plagiarism are based on firm evidence.

#### **5. Responsibility and Rights of Students**

Students have a responsibility to:

- (a) read, understand and respect the policy on plagiarism;
- (b) familiarise themselves with the conventions of referencing for their discipline(s);
- (c) avoid all acts which could be considered plagiarism;
- (d) seek assistance from appropriate sources when they are aware they need more knowledge and skills.

Students have a right to:

- (a) be informed of the policies of MCHE, the Faculty/Centre, and the Department with respect to academic honesty including plagiarism, co-operation and groupwork;
- (b) be provided with clear guidelines on academic styles required in each subject;
- (c) receive practical comments which assist them to review their work;
- (d) expect clear guidelines relating to all aspects of groupwork;
- (e) expect early notification or fair warning in the case where an academic believes a student or group of students may be at risk of breaching guidelines relating to plagiarism, collusion and collaboration;
- (f) participate in appropriate learning experiences designed to improve their competency in writing and study skills, understanding of the requirements of groupwork, and development of personal attributes, in particular, ethical behaviour;
- (g) expect a consistent interpretation of plagiarism and consistent application of procedures for dealing with suspected plagiarism across the MCHE.

## **6. Penalties**

If it is determined that plagiarism has occurred, one or more of the following penalties may be imposed

- (a) a written warning given;
- (b) loss of all or part marks for the assessment item;
- (c) downgrading the final grade in the subject;
- (d) imposing a grade of fail in the subject;
- (e) the exclusion of the student from enrolment in a particular subject and/or course(s) permanently or for such lesser period as the Disciplinary Committee may decide;
- (f) the exclusion of the student from the MCHE permanently or for such lesser period as the Disciplinary Committee may decide.
- (g) When determining penalties:
  - (i) Each case will be treated on its merits.
  - (ii) The level of intent to deceive, the extent of the plagiarism and the student's history in regard to plagiarism will be the principle criteria for determining penalties.
  - (iii) In order to maintain consistency in the application of penalties, the attached guidelines may be followed.

## **7. Student Support**

Student Support Services is available to advise students alleged to have breached the policy on plagiarism.

## **8. Appeals**

A student who wishes to appeal against a decision of the Head of Department may appeal to the Head of Division.

A student who wishes to appeal a decision of the Disciplinary Committee should follow the appeal procedure outlined in the Students' General Rules and Discipline Rules.

## **9. Responsibility for implementation of the Policy**

The primary responsibility for implementation of this policy lies with the Head of the Division.

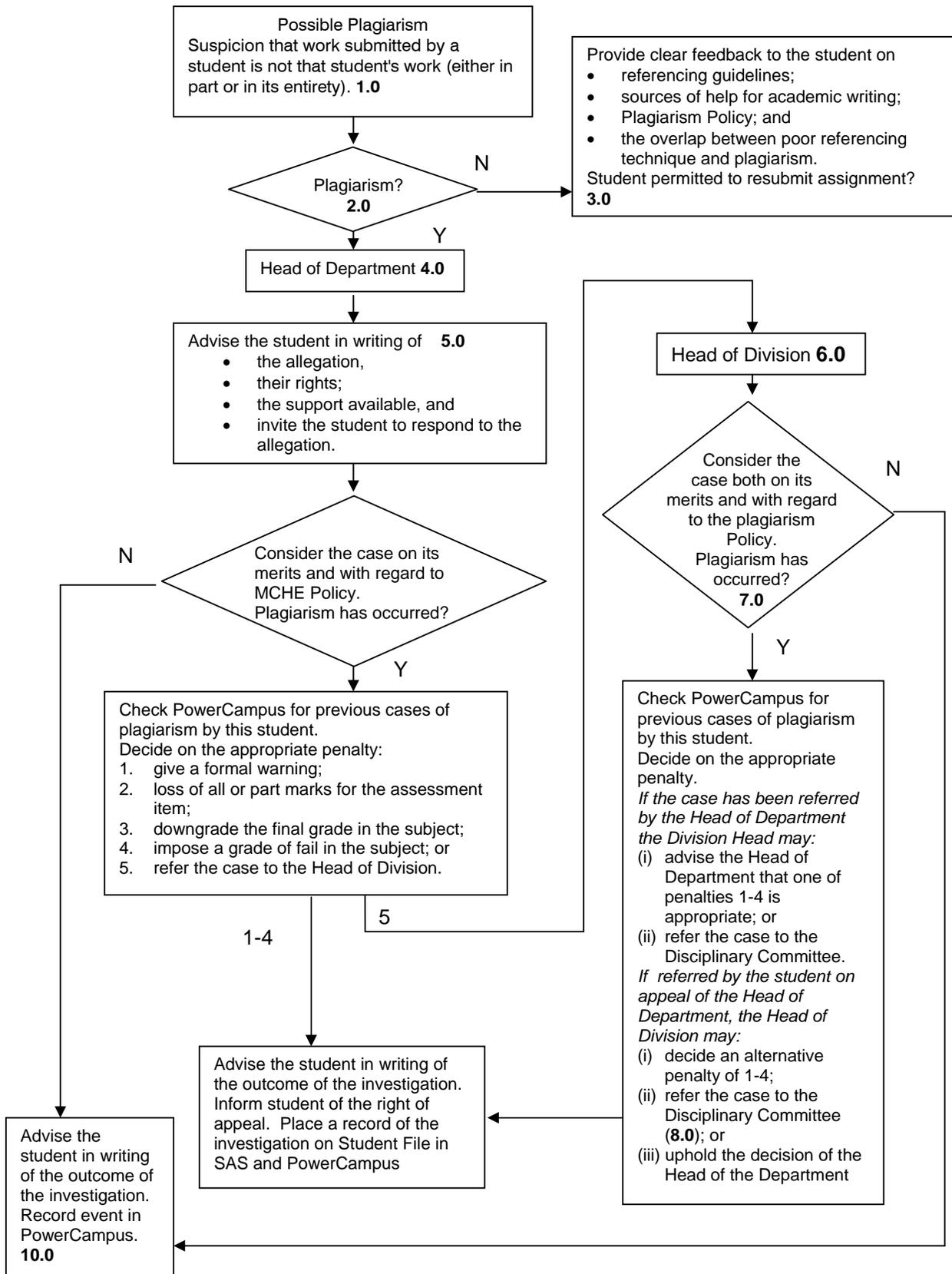
## **10. Date of Implementation**

1st January 2010

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*Note: This policy and accompanying attachments are primary derived from the model plagiarism policy for Australian universities available from the University of New South Wales website. Some parts have been derived from similar policies of the following: Australian National University, Monash University; University of Newcastle, Australia; University of East Anglia, University of the Sunshine Coast, Bond University, Liverpool University, University of Melbourne.*

## PROCEDURE FOR INVESTIGATION & SUBSEQUENT ACTION FOR ALLEGATIONS OF PLAGIARISM



## **NOTES ON THE PROCEDURE FLOW CHART**

### **1.0 Consistency**

It is important that any allegation of plagiarism is dealt with according to the MCHE's Policy and Procedures. All staff need to be aware of the policy and procedures. To facilitate consistency in the application of the procedures, where there is a Head of Department, the staff member should consult with, or refer the matter entirely to, the Head of Department, as appropriate. If the staff member is junior and/or casual and/or there are several markers across the course, then the matter should always be referred to the Head of Department.

### **2.0 Plagiarism?**

The staff member who discovers the irregularity and/or the Head of Department must make a decision on whether the incidence is a case of plagiarism or of poor referencing skills. In making this decision, the following should be taken into account:

- the extent of the suspected plagiarism,
- the experience of the student at MCHE level (i.e. more leniency would be shown in the case of a first year student),
- the apparent intention to deceive.

### **3.0 Opportunity to resubmit**

The assessment task should be marked on its academic merit. If this results in a Fail grade because of poor referencing technique, the decision may be made to allow the student to resubmit the item, provided that this would not result in inequities for other students. The maximum mark available for a resubmit is a Pass mark of 50%.

### **4.0 Conflict of interest**

If the Head of Department is the staff member who raises the suspicion of plagiarism, then another person from the Department should perform the Head of Department role in the investigation and resolution of the plagiarism issue.

### **5.0 The Investigation**

The Head of Department must, in writing, and as soon as possible:

- (i) notify the student of the allegation;
- (ii) enclose a copy of this Policy;
- (iii) draw the attention of the student to the student's rights and to the help available;
- (iv) give the student a reasonable period, being a period of not less than seven days, to seek advice about available options; and
- (v) invite the student to respond to the allegation.

The Head of Department should determine the medium for the student's response having regard for the student's circumstances, for example, an on-campus student could be given the option to respond in person or in writing; an off-campus student could be given the opportunity to respond in writing, or if the circumstances warranted it, by telephone. In the case of distance students, to facilitate timeliness, email may be specified as the medium, providing that the student has access to email.

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 nor make direct comment to the meeting without the permission of the Head of Department.

## **6.0 Case referred to The Head of Division**

The case may be referred to the Head of Division by the Head of Department or by the student on appeal of a decision of the Head of Department.

## **7.0 Investigation by The Head of Division**

The Head of Division will be given copies of all paperwork relating to the incident, including notes of meetings. The student should be given the opportunity to further answer the allegation if they choose to do so. (refer to 5.0 above).

## **8.0 Case referred to Student Disciplinary Committee**

The case may be referred to the Student Disciplinary Committee by the Head of Division or by the student on appeal from the decision of the Head of the Department.

The rules for the conduct of the Student Disciplinary Committee are Division-based and may differ from Faculty/Centre to Faculty/Centre.

## **10.0 Record Keeping**

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

- the assignment or other piece of work in which the alleged plagiarism occurs
- records of meetings / phone conversations with the student
- copies of correspondence, including emails, on the matter

The records of each case of plagiarism in which a penalty is imposed are logged on to PowerCampus. At the same time, the paper-based documents should be filed in the Student Administrative Services office in the Student File.

The Student File is not accessed during the investigation of suspected plagiarism. Once it is determined that a penalty should be imposed in a case of plagiarism, the Head of Department, the Head of Division or the Student Disciplinary Committee should consider previous cases of plagiarism for this student in which a penalty was imposed before deciding on the appropriate penalty. Access is only given to the Student File of the student(s) involved in the case, not to other plagiarism records.

If, following an investigation of plagiarism, a penalty is not imposed, the record of the investigation is not kept in the Student Administrative Services office. But the investigation may be recorded in PowerCampus.

## **11.0 Timeliness**

Investigations of plagiarism and advice to the student of the outcomes of the investigation must be dealt with in as timely a manner as possible. The response from the College at each stage should be within seven working days. Students required to respond to allegations of plagiarism should be given at least seven working days to respond to the allegations at each stage.

## **12.0 Appeals**

A student who wishes to appeal a decision of the Head of Department may appeal to the Head of Division.

A student who wishes to appeal a decision of the Head of Division may fill in the Appeals Form and submit it to the Rector in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Students' General Rules and Discipline Rules.

<b>GUIDELINES FOR PENALTIES FOR PLAGIARISM</b>	
<p><b>Unintentional Plagiarism:</b> Cases regarded as poor scholarship or inexperience rather than culpable plagiarism, where the primary need is for education in appropriate practices and where the extent of the plagiarism in the submitted work would be considered small in terms of its contribution to the overall mark for the submitted work. These cases may be handled by the marker or subject coordinator and need not invoke the formal procedure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The marker or subject coordinator will provide the student with advice on avoiding plagiarism.</li> <li>• The mark for the work should not be reduced as a penalty for plagiarism but should reflect the academic quality of the work including any poor practice in referencing, etc. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marks may be reduced for inadequate citation of material (e.g. material copied from online sources without acknowledgment);</li> <li>• Marks for an element of submitted work may be shared between students who have clearly submitted joint work without acknowledgment where this is not allowed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Intentional Plagiarism: Case not proved beyond reasonable doubt.</b> Cases brought under the formal procedure where the Head of Department or Division (or the Decision-maker) considers that the plagiarism case has not been adequately demonstrated against the student.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Decision-maker will provide the student with advice on avoiding plagiarism.</li> <li>• The Decision-maker will write to the student explaining the outcome of the case. This will be copied to the Registrar for filing in student's file. PowerCampus is updated accordingly.</li> <li>• The work should be marked as normal and no penalty applied.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intentional Plagiarism: Minor plagiarism</b> Minor cases, where the suspected plagiarism is a first offence, may include:</p> <p>(a) over-reliance on sources without sufficient evidence of the student's own work;</p> <p>(b) an element in a piece of work which makes a small contribution to the mark for the course;</p> <p>(c) more significant cases where there are mitigating special circumstances;</p> <p>(d) moderately significant cases at an early stage of an undergraduate student's career.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Decision-maker will send the student a written warning including advice on avoiding plagiarism, a copy of which will be forwarded to the Registrar for filing in the student's file.</li> <li>• PowerCampus records to be updated solely for the purpose of detecting second offences.</li> <li>• The mark for the work should not be reduced as a penalty for plagiarism but should reflect the academic quality of the work, recognising, for example, that the referencing may be poor, or that not all the work is the student's own.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intentional Plagiarism: Significant plagiarism.</b> More significant cases, including cases of extensive or concurrent plagiarism by the student.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work where large sections have been copied from online sources without acknowledgment;</li> <li>• cases where plagiarism has been detected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Decision-maker will provide the student with advice on avoiding plagiarism.</li> <li>• The Decision-maker will decide on the appropriate reduction of the student's mark(s) by an amount to reflect her/his assessment of the extent of the seriousness of the matter.</li> <li>• The Decision-maker will send the student a</li> </ul>

<p>in more than one piece of work submitted by a student;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work where the plagiarised element would contribute significantly to the mark for the course.</li> </ul> <p><b>Significance</b></p> <p>Significance must be judged by the Decision-maker on a combination of the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level and stage in the academic career. Honours and postgraduate offences are more significant than those committed by new students. This should also include consideration of the type of assessment in which the plagiarism was committed.</li> <li>Advice given to students on the course about avoiding plagiarism.</li> <li>The marking conventions of the discipline.</li> <li>The opportunities for re-submission.</li> <li>The impact of failure in that assessment.</li> <li>The extent of the plagiarism.</li> </ul>	<p>letter outlining the outcome of the hearing. A copy of the letter is to be kept on the student's file in Student Administrative Services office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PowerCampus records are updated accordingly.</li> </ul> <p><b>First offences</b></p> <p>First offences must be handled with particular attention to the level and stage of the student in their academic career. A mark of zero can be allocated as a penalty to first offence cases of significant and extensive plagiarism, even where the student is in their first year of study.</p> <p><b>Penalties in order of minimum to maximum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-marking of the original work with the plagiarized section removed. Marks allocated as a reflection of the academic quality of the remaining work. [Care should be taken in applying this penalty. The 'volume' of plagiarised work should not be used as the sole indicator of the significance of the case. Consideration should also be given to the validity of the remaining work and the ability for it to be marked in an edited form when plagiarised sections have been removed]. Any additional attempts or re-submissions of the work, where this is normal practice for the discipline, should be restricted to a pass mark.</li> <li>A written warning.</li> <li>Reduction of face value mark in bands of 10%, to reflect the significance of the plagiarism e.g. a mark of 57% might be reduced to 47% where the assessment item has been plagiarised by 30% or less.</li> <li>A mark of zero for that assessment where the assessment item has been plagiarised by 50% or more.</li> <li>A mark of zero for that subject where the assessment item has been plagiarised by more than 80%.</li> <li>Serious cases may be referred for student discipline</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Intentional Plagiarism: Significant and/or repeat cases handled through Disciplinary Committee</i></b></p> <p>(a) Significant cases where the Decision-maker considers there is a need for</p>	<p>The Decision-maker will make a report in preparation for a disciplinary hearing, which will be arranged as normal under the Faculty/Centre Disciplinary Committee Regulations.</p>

<p>referral, for example, where a penalty of 0% for the subject is being recommended.</p> <p>(b) First offence cases where there appears to be a deliberate attempt to deceive the examiners.</p> <p>(c) All cases that are second offences handled under this policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Decision-maker will recommend in this report the appropriate reduction of the student's mark(s) by an amount to reflect her/his assessment of the extent of the seriousness of the matter.</li> <li>• A penalty from the list in the previous section should be applied. Additionally, a decision to exclude a student may be applied.</li> <li>• First offences, where there appears to be a deliberate attempt to deceive the examiners should receive a minimum penalty of 0% for the subject where the assessment item has been plagiarised.</li> <li>• All repeat offences should be awarded a minimum penalty of a mark of zero for the subject unless there are exceptional circumstances.</li> </ul>
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