



# **Procedure for Investigation and Subsequent Action for Allegations of Plagiarism**

## **Terms of Reference**

---

The objective of this procedure is to operationalize the Plagiarism Policy of the university and ensure that cases of plagiarism are managed, and sanctions are applied in a consistent manner across all faculties.

### **1. Reporting Plagiarism**

- 1.1) If plagiarism is detected by the software or if there is suspicion that work submitted by a student is not that student's work either in part or in its entirety, the staff member who discovered the irregularity must determine whether the incident constitutes plagiarism or reflects inadequate referencing skills. This decision should take into account the following factors:
  - a) The degree of suspected plagiarism (Refer to the guideline at the end).
  - b) The student's tenure at the university (i.e., greater leniency may be applied to first-year students).
  - c) The apparent intent to deceive.
- 1.2) If the incident constitutes plagiarism:
  - a) The staff member should refer the matter to the Head of Department or to the Dean if there is no Head of Department.
  - b) If the Head of Department is the staff member who raised the suspicion of plagiarism or in situations where there is no Head of Department, the Dean may lead the investigation or assign the case to another staff from the Department or a related discipline.

### **2. Investigation by the Head of Department/Appointed Staff Member**

- 2.1) The Head of Department or the staff designated by the Dean must, in writing, and as soon as possible:
  - a) notify the student of the allegation.
  - b) enclose a copy of the Plagiarism Policy.
  - c) draw the attention of the student to the student's rights and to the help available.
  - d) give the student a reasonable period, being a period of not less than seven days, to seek advice about available options; and
  - e) invite the student to respond to the allegation.

- 2.2) To prevent previous records from influencing the judgment of whether the case in question is plagiarism, the Central Student Records should not be accessed during the investigation process until a decision is reached.
- 2.3) In determining whether plagiarism has occurred, the case should be considered based on its merits with regard to the university policies.
- 2.4) If plagiarism has occurred:
  - a) To determine an appropriate penalty, check previous records of plagiarism by the student and the imposed penalties from the Central Student Records.
  - b) Decide on the appropriate penalty or seek the advice of the Dean in determining an appropriate penalty such as:
    - (i) Issue a formal warning
    - (ii) Loss of all or part marks for the assessment task
    - (iii) Downgrade the final grade in the subject
    - (iv) Impose a grade of fail in the subject
  - c) Advise the student in writing of the outcome of the investigation.
  - d) Inform the student of the right to appeal.
  - e) Place a record of the investigation on Central Student Records.
- 2.5) If the case is not proven as plagiarism, inform the student in writing of the outcome of the investigation.

### **3. Case Referred to the Dean**

- 3.1) The case may be referred to the Dean by the student on appeal of the decision of the Head of Department or appointed staff.
- 3.2) All records related to the incident, including notes of meetings, will be provided to the Dean.
- 3.3) The case will be further investigated by the Dean following the steps outlined in Section 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. Alternatively, the Dean may refer the case to the Disciplinary Committee.
- 3.4) If the investigation by the Dean proves that plagiarism has occurred, the steps outlined in Section 2.4 will be followed. The Dean may uphold the decision of the Head of Department or decide on an alternative penalty from Section 2.4 (b) as appropriate.

### **4. Investigation by the Student Disciplinary Committee**

- 4.1) The case may be referred to the Student Disciplinary Committee by the Dean for initial investigation or upon appeal of the student against the decision of the Head of Department.
- 4.2) The rules for the conduct of the Student Disciplinary Committee are division-based and may differ between Faculty/College/School/Centre.

## **Annex 1 – Additional Information**

### **1. Holding meetings with students**

- 1.1) The investigation committee or staff 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.

- 1.2) The student should be provided with the opportunity to 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 in the meeting without the permission of the investigation committee or staff. The support person must not be a lawyer or other legal professional.

## **2. Record Keeping**

- 2.1) At each stage of the investigation, records should be gathered of all relevant documentation including:
  - a) the assignment or other piece of work in which the alleged plagiarism occurred
  - b) records of meetings / phone conversations with the student.
  - c) copies of correspondence, including emails, on the matter

## **3. Timeliness**

Investigations of plagiarism and informing the student of the outcomes must be conducted as promptly as possible.

- 3.1) The response from the university at each stage should be within seven working days.
- 3.2) Students required to respond to allegations of plagiarism should be given at least seven working days to respond to the allegations at each stage.

## **4. Appeals**

- 4.1) A student who wishes to appeal a decision of the Head of Department may appeal to the Dean.
- 4.2) A student who wishes to appeal a decision of the Dean may fill in the Appeals Form and submit it to the Vice Chancellor in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Students' General Rules and Discipline Rules.

## **Annex 2 – Guidelines for Penalties for Plagiarism**

<i>Description</i>	Recommended Actions
<b>1. 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	1.1) These cases may be handled by the marker or subject coordinator and need not invoke the formal procedure. 1.2) The marker or subject coordinator will provide the student with advice on avoiding plagiarism. 1.3) The mark for the work should not be reduced as a penalty for

<p>contribution to the overall mark for the submitted work.</p>	<p>plagiarism but should reflect the academic quality of the work including any poor practice in referencing, etc. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Marks may be reduced for inadequate citation of material (e.g. material copied from online sources without acknowledgment);</li> <li>b) 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>
<p><b>2. <i>Intentional Plagiarism: Case not proved beyond reasonable doubt.</i></b></p> <p>Cases brought under the formal procedure where the Head of Department or Dean (or the Decision-maker) considers that plagiarism has not been adequately demonstrated against the student.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1) The Decision-maker will provide the student with advice on avoiding plagiarism.</li> <li>2.2) The work should be marked as normal and no penalty applied.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. <i>Intentional Plagiarism: Minor plagiarism</i></b></p> <p>Minor cases, where suspected plagiarism is a first offence, may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) over-reliance on sources without sufficient evidence of the student's own work.</li> <li>b) an element in a piece of work which makes a small contribution to the mark for the course.</li> <li>c) more significant cases where there are mitigating special circumstances.</li> <li>d) moderately significant cases at an early stage of an undergraduate student's career.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1) 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 student's records.</li> <li>3.2) The mark for the work should not be reduced as a penalty for plagiarism but should reflect the academic quality of the work, recognizing, for example, that the referencing may be poor, or that not all the work is the student's own.</li> </ul>

<p><b>4. Intentional Plagiarism: Significant plagiarism.</b></p> <p>More significant cases, including cases of extensive or concurrent plagiarism by the student.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work where large sections have been copied from online sources without acknowledgment.</li> <li>work where large sections are not student's own work.</li> <li>cases where plagiarism has been detected in more than one piece of work submitted by the student.</li> <li>work where the plagiarized element would contribute significantly to the mark for the course.</li> </ol> <p><b>Significance</b></p> <p>Significance must be judged by the Decision-maker in 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 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 plagiarism.</li> </ul>	<ol 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 his/her assessment of the extent of the seriousness of the matter.</li> <li>The Decision-maker will send the student a letter outlining the outcome of the hearing. A copy of which will be forwarded to the Registrar for student's records</li> <li><b>First offences:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First offences must be handled with particular attention to the level and stage of the student in their academic career.</li> <li>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.</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>Penalties in order of minimum to maximum</b> <ol 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.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>
--	--

	<p>plagiarised sections have been removed.</p> <p>(ii) Any additional attempts or re-submissions of the work, where this is normal practice for the discipline, should be restricted to a pass mark.</p> <p>b) A written warning.</p> <p>c) Reduction of face value marks 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.</p> <p>d) A mark of zero for that assessment where the assessment item has been plagiarised by 50% or more.</p> <p>e) A mark of zero for that subject where the assessment item has been plagiarised by more than 80%.</p> <p>f) Serious cases may be referred for student Disciplinary Committee</p>
<p><b>5. <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 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 repeated offences handled under this policy</p>	<p>5.1) The Decision-maker will make a report in preparation for a disciplinary hearing, which will be arranged as normal under the Faculty/School/Centre Disciplinary Committee Regulations.</p> <p>5.2) The Decision-maker will recommend in this report the appropriate reduction of the student's mark(s) by an amount to reflect his/her assessment of the extent of the seriousness of the matter.</p> <p>5.3) A penalty from the list in the previous section (Section 4) should be applied. Additionally, a decision to exclude a student may be applied.</p> <p>5.4) First offences, where there appears to be a deliberate</p>

	<p>attempt to deceive the examiners should receive a minimum penalty of 0% for the subject where the assessment item has been plagiarised.</p> <p>5.5) All repeat offences should be awarded a minimum penalty of a mark of zero for the subject unless there are exceptional circumstances.</p>
--	--

### Annex 3 – Guidelines for Reading the Turnitin score

Similarity Reports provide a summary of matching or highly similar text found in a submitted paper. When a Similarity Report is available for viewing, a similarity score percentage will be made available. Similarity Reports that have not yet finished generating are represented by a grayed-out icon in the Similarity column. Reports that are not available may not have generated yet, or assignment settings may be delaying the generation of the report.

Using Turnitin.com most effectively requires some preparation and planning on the part of the instructor and is most successful when used to teach students correct uses of sources rather than being used surreptitiously for surveillance of students' work.

This guide describes what a similarity report shows and how to interpret matches highlighted on a student's assignment submitted to Turnitin.

#### 1. Understanding the similarity report

While Turnitin is used to spot plagiarism, this is not what you will see in the similarity report.






**The similarity report is an effective way to:**

- **Check that online sources** in an assignment have been properly cited and the text has not simply been copied without appropriate referencing.
- **Help students as a formative learning tool** around referencing.
- **Identify collusion** between students on their course and potentially from other institutions who use Turnitin.
- **Ensure a level of equality and parity** when checking the similarity of students' work against the vast range of possible online sources.
- **Deter students from plagiarising and encourage good academic practice.**

The similarity report is best used in conjunction with other methods to prevent and detect plagiarism and as part of a coordinated approach to maintaining the academic integrity of students' written work.

## 2. The Percentage

The percentage shows the amount of text that matches other material previously uploaded to Turnitin, globally. This may include work that have been previously submitted at MNU as well as assignments from other universities.

	<b>Blue</b> – no matching text.	Blue indicates no text has been matched. This could mean that the work has no references at all and that there is little or no use of direct quotes. Depending on the nature of the assignment this is not necessarily an issue but a Blue score is worth checking just in case the student has simply submitted a paper with text that Turnitin cannot recognise.
	<b>Green</b> – one word to 24% matching text.	Green indicates matches between 1% and 24% and is the most common. While a Green score might suggest the document is OK, it is simply an indication of the amount of matched text, so potentially, up to 24% of the document could still have been copied without referencing.
	<b>Yellow</b> – 25% – 49% matching text.	Yellow, Orange (or amber) and Red denote percentage matches in bands above 24%. Higher percentage matches may indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An over reliance on direct quotation as a result of poor academic writing.</li> <li>• Cutting and pasting from other sources.</li> </ul>
	<b>Orange</b> – 50% – 74% matching text.	
	<b>Red</b> – 75% – 100% matching text.	

There is no perfect number for the percentage values. The subject matter, assignment type and the settings on Turnitin will all impact this. It is possible



to have a very high score with no plagiarism, or a very low score with plagiarism. A good assignment has a mixture of referenced work and individual work.

### 3. What percentages are safe?

There are no clear-cut rules for this as all work will probably contain some words from other sources. As a guide, a returned percentage of below 15% would probably indicate that plagiarism has not occurred. However, if that 15% of matching text is one continuous block, this could still be considered plagiarism. A high percentage would probably be anything over 25% (Yellow, orange or red). **A high percentage score is not “proof” of plagiarism.** Staff must evaluate passages individually to make a more accurate determination that a case of plagiarism may have occurred.

Matches that appear in the originality report are also influenced by the assignment settings. The default assignment setting is to exclude quoted, references/bibliography and small matches up to 5 words to gain a more accurate overall percentage.

It is advised to consider the originality report in more detail and look beyond the percentage of the Overall Similarity Index.

### 4. How to interpret the Similarity Report

An overall percentage score (with colour code) is shown next to a student's name under the Similarity column in the Assignment Inbox. This shows the total amount of matched text as a proportion of the assignment.

This guide should not be used as a measure of plagiarism. Even a 1% score could indicate potential plagiarism.

**There is no ideal percentage to look for** as students' work is bound to contain some words from other sources. The percentage will vary depending on the **type and length of assignment** and the **requirements of the work involved**.

Individual matches need to be investigated by examining the student's paper and viewing the match overview and breakdown panel.

### 5. What does the Similarity Index percentage indicate?

A **100% match** means the assignment has **no original work**. It has most probably been **submitted previously to Turnitin**. This can happen if the student is resubmitting their work and the file has already been submitted to the Turnitin database. It could also be due to a student error such as submitting the assignment to the wrong area. It may also **indicate collusion or**

**copying an essay** from another student, either in their class, from a previous year or another institution.

#### 6. **Types of frequently found ‘acceptable’ matched text.**

There are certain types of matched text that Turnitin will find, which can be safely excluded or ignored with discretion. These matches will be included in the overall similarity score for a similarity report and be highlighted as a match on a student’s paper.

These include:

- **Quotations:** Properly referenced quotations can be ignored. These can be excluded using the filter.
- **References and Bibliography:** Other students will have used the same references at some point and these will show up.
- **Matching formats:** e.g. the same essay title.
- **Tables and Charts** showing shared or copied data or statistics.
- **Appendices** may also have a large amount of matching text as other students may well have used the same sources.
- **Small matches** that form common phrases in a sentence or subject terminology will be detected. These can be removed using the small match filter.
- **Paraphrasing** text from a source will be highlighted even where words in the phrase have been changed. If the source has been cited, it remains the academic judgment of the tutor to decide if the text has been suitably paraphrased.

#### 7. **Maximize the Effectiveness of Turnitin**

Lecturers can maximize the effectiveness of Turnitin for both evaluating results of an Originality Report and minimizing occurrences of plagiarism by following these steps:

1. Include a **statement of Academic Integrity in your syllabus** to remind students that the university considers academic integrity to be a serious educational issue.
2. **Announce that Turnitin will be used** to confirm that students have used sources accurately in their assessments.
3. Discuss the use of Turnitin and the **consequences of plagiarism** with students to help prevent cases of “accidental plagiarism” including inappropriate paraphrasing and mistaking information that requires citation for “common knowledge”.
4. Provide clear **instructions to students** on uploading assignments to prevent submission to the wrong area and to enable the student to view the similarity report where permitted by the lecturer.

5. Understand how the **Originality Report** functions and evaluate each paper marked with a high similarity score manually, to accurately determine whether a case of plagiarism has occurred.

## 8. The Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

*A student using any unacknowledged content generated by artificial intelligence within an assessment as though it is their own work constitutes academic misconduct, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the assessment brief.*

*Four basic approaches that instructors can use in their assessments regarding the use of AI*

### *Use prohibited*

*Students are not allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2) on assignments in this course. Each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from others, including automated tools.*

### *Use only with prior permission*

*Students are allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2) on assignments in this course if instructor permission is obtained in advance. Unless given permission to use those tools, each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from others, including automated tools.*

### *Use only with acknowledgement*

*Students are allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2) on assignments in this course if that use is properly documented and credited. For example, text generated using ChatGPT-3 should include a citation such as: "Chat-GPT-3. (YYYY, Month DD of query). "Text of your query." Generated using OpenAI. <https://chat.openai.com/>" Material generated using other tools should follow a similar citation convention.*

### *Use is freely permitted with no acknowledgement*

*Students are allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2) on assignments in this course; no special documentation or citation is required.*

**Approved on:** 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010

**Revised on:** 15<sup>th</sup> June 2025

**Revised by:** Academic Senate