



Waterford Institute *of* Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

Anti-Plagiarism Policy

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Policy Owner	Academic Council

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1. Anti-Plagiarism Policy, Procedures and Guidelines

Scope: This policy applies to all students of Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). A student is defined as a person taking a course for credit. Allegations of plagiarism against staff members should be reported to their Head of Department and shall be dealt with under either the research misconduct policy or the staff grievance and disciplinary policy. Elements of this plagiarism policy may also be used, if deemed appropriate by the relevant Head of Department or School.

2. Section 1: Policy, Definitions, Causes, Solutions

2.1 Policy

Waterford Institute of Technology aims to foster academic integrity. A key principle is that appropriate acknowledgements 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 (eg Harvard, American Psychological Association, Vancouver, footnotes, end-notes). 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.

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 occurs¹. 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.

¹ There is a separate policy for cheating in examinations, so this policy deals exclusively with cheating in the form of plagiarism. The policy on examination fraud is in WIT's 'Exam Regulations' document, which provides for any incidence of cheating in a formal exam setting to be referred to the Panel of Enquiry.

2.2 Definition and Causes of Plagiarism

2.2.1 Plagiarism

Plagiarism 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 course credit (in the case of all students) or to publication (in the case of postgraduates and staff), an attempted academic fraud has been committed ².

Definition:

'To plagiarise is when you use the **ideas** or **words** of another person without giving them **explicit** credit. That 'other person' can be a published author, a person who completes assignments for others, or an internet source.

Examples:

- using a choice phrase or sentence that you have come across elsewhere
- copying word-for-word directly from a text
- paraphrasing the words from a text
- using text downloaded from the Internet

(The Open University, 2003)

All of the above examples must be properly referenced. The only exceptions to this general principle of referencing any words or ideas which are not your own are cases of 'common knowledge' (eg 'There's many a good tune played on an old fiddle' or 'John F Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas in 1963')

In addition to examples involving the written word, the copying and submission of other types of information, without attribution, is also classed as plagiarism. This includes, but is not limited to: diagrams, graphics, photographs, music and video files, experimental data.

2.3 Causes

It is easier to copy and paste from a website than it is to engage with the ideas on a course and painstakingly construct one's own interpretation. If a student is facing looming deadlines and sees the course only as a means to an end, the temptation to take the most convenient option and plagiarise is considerable. Moreover, if the course stresses products and outcomes rather than processes and understanding, the student may oblige by delivering these standard outcomes with little personal engagement, other than that required to find someone else's version of them.

Furthermore, many students are not even fully aware that they are cheating. Professor Sally Brown of Leeds Metropolitan University says that "Many of the new generation of students raised on the internet see nothing wrong with copying other people's work ... They are post-modern, eclectic,

² Were any cases of staff plagiarising in their published works to occur, these would represent a failure to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and would bring WIT into disrepute. These matters are dealt with in the policy on Research Misconduct, which can be found in WIT's 'Research Ethics' document.

Google-generationists, Wikipediasts, who don't necessarily recognise the concepts of authorships/ownerships." (BBC News 2006)

2.4 Solutions

In order to bring our students into line with scholarly norms and traditions, lecturers ought first of all to promote good practice by personal example, by teaching and in the design of assessments.

2.4.1 Setting a good example

We are part of an international community of scholars and it is good scholarship to acknowledge the work of others which has informed our own work. As Isaac Newton put it: 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants' (Letter to Robert Hooke, February 5, 1675). Course handouts and PowerPoint presentations are not covered by this plagiarism policy, but it sets a good example to reference these meticulously.

Promoting a scholarly culture is in the long run a better solution to plagiarism than elaborate detection methods. Because the problem is largely electronic in origin, it is tempting to use electronic methods to combat it. This, we feel, would be a mistake.

Cole and Kiss (2000) describe cheaters in American universities using surveillance cameras, silent pagers, and tiny video cameras to gain marks, which in turn leads to lecturers using forensic linguistics to catch them. They call this behaviour a "dispiriting arms race ...reminiscent of James Bond" (p. 6). In fact, like any purely "catch-and-punish" approach (only more so), it will simply lead to a never-ending "arms-race" between the students and the university. One UK lecturer commented succinctly, "If you try too hard, all you catch is the clumsy ones and the students will spend more time outwitting you than learning."

(Carroll and Appleton, 2001)

- WIT prefers prevention to cure, but reserves the right to use software and other methods to identify plagiarists.
- WIT undertakes to provide training for staff in the prevention of plagiarism and methods of inducting students into good scholarly practice. The staff handbook should contain a section on referencing and plagiarism.

2.5 Teaching

A general induction course for new third-level students should include a consideration of academic integrity and the avoidance of plagiarism.

Explicit teaching of academic referencing ought to occur at various points in a programme (e.g. at the beginning, and reiterated in outline when each assignment is set). This should typically include:

- The use of Athens and other academic databases, in preference to Google and Wikipedia;
- The reasons for referencing;
- An indication that good referencing will be rewarded;
- The main principles of whatever referencing style is used by the School in question: in particular the use of **in-text** citation, as well as bibliographies;
- Good scholarly practice vis-à-vis keeping track of quotations and their sources;
- How to paraphrase and how to reference the source of the ideas.

2.6 Assessment design

Assignments should be designed such that unscrupulous students cannot simply copy and paste from websites in order to complete them. Typically, this involves the student in applying some element of theory to their own practice, or to a scenario set out in the assignment. The key requirement is that students should be putting something of themselves in their assignments, and not be simply appropriating ideas from elsewhere with no intellectual engagement. This also has the advantage of requiring the students to operate at the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy - analysis, synthesis and evaluation - instead of low-level description.

A 'meta-assignment' might be part of the assessment, requiring the student to reflect on the process of writing the assignment proper.

To re-iterate the need to avoid plagiarism, every assignment which leads to course credit should contain a signed Plagiarism Declaration on the title page. Assignments in formats other than the written still 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.

2.7 Plagiarism Declaration

I certify that this assignment is all my own work and contains no Plagiarism. By submitting this assignment, I agree to the following terms:

Any text, diagrams or other material copied from other sources (including, but not limited to, books, journals and the internet) have been clearly acknowledged and referenced as such in the text by the use of 'quotation marks' (or indented *italics* for longer quotations) followed by the author's name and date [eg (Byrne, 2008)] either in the text or in a footnote/endnote. These details are then confirmed by a fuller reference in the bibliography.

I have read the sections on referencing and plagiarism in the handbook or in the WIT Plagiarism policy and I understand that only assignments which are free of plagiarism will be awarded marks. By submitting this assignment I agree to the following terms. I further understand that WIT has a plagiarism policy which can lead to the suspension or permanent expulsion of students in serious cases. (WIT, 2008).

Signed:

Date:

3. Guidelines for Dealing with Plagiarism at Level 1

3.1 Rationale

WIT recognises the importance of informal communication between staff and students, and encourages such communication as a means of resolving concerns over minor plagiarism issues. 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'.

3.2 Definition of a Level 1 Resolution

A Level 1 resolution occurs when both the lecturer and the student, with or without the input of the Head of Department, and without any other intermediary, agree to resolve an allegation of plagiarism with appropriate academic sanctions as outlined in Section 4.1.

3.3 Procedures for a Level 1 Resolution

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

As soon as possible after the discovery of the alleged transgression, taking account of the context and nature of the case, either of the following courses of action may be taken:

A Direct discussion with the student to provide further advice about correct citation protocols and how to avoid plagiarism in the future. The student may be required to re-submit the work with or without any of the sanctions listed in 4.1.

or

B Meeting with the Head of Department, student and lecturer involved to inform the student of the allegations, discuss the lecturer's reasons for believing the student may have plagiarised, and to allow the student to respond. 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 per section 4.1). 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.

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

The Head of Department and Head of School should keep a record of all students found responsible for acts of plagiarism which were dealt with by Level 1 resolution action B, in order to monitor repeat offenders.

If the student denies the allegations and will not agree to sign the report and accept the sanction(s) imposed, or if the allegation cannot be resolved at departmental level, the matter must be referred to the Level 2 process (see Section 3). It is to be hoped that most cases of alleged plagiarism will be resolved without recourse to Level 2 proceedings.

4. Guidelines for Proceeding to Level 2

4.1 Rationale

Level 2 plagiarism proceedings may be used when:

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

4.2 Procedures

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 (Appendix A). 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.

5. Sanctions for Plagiarism

5.1 Academic Sanctions

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 or Assistant Registrar.

5.1.1 Academic sanctions include:

Re-submission of the assignment;

- i. A specified reduction in the grade for the assignment;
- ii. A specified reduction in the grade for the module
- iii. A fail grade for the assignment;
- iv. A fail grade for the module;

Multiple Sanctions: More than one of the sanctions listed above may be imposed for any single transgression.

5.2 Administrative Sanctions.

One or more administrative sanctions may be imposed for plagiarism, including:

5.2.1 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.

5.2.2 Expulsion:

Permanent separation of the student from WIT student status.

5.2.3 Multiple Sanctions:

More than one of the sanctions listed above (under headings 4.1 and 4.2) may be imposed for any single transgression.

6. Appendix A – Formal (Level 2) Plagiarism Hearing

6.1 Pre-Hearing Arrangements

6.2 The Structure and Functions of the Plagiarism Hearing Panel (‘The Panel’)

Each plagiarism hearing is conducted by a Panel consisting of: one member of the relevant Course 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 Head of School (Chair)

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.

6.3 Procedures

The Chair of the Plagiarism Hearing Panel reveals the membership of the Panel to the lecturer and student involved in the case.

The lecturer and student accept or reject members of the Panel. Each is entitled to request the removal and replacement of one member without giving a reason.

The Panel Chair establishes a date for the hearing.

The lecturer submits to the Panel Chair materials relating to the plagiarism allegation, as identified in the formal Plagiarism Report (Section 3.3). 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.

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.

Each party shall have no more than sixty minutes to present its entire case.
The hearing shall be in private.

6.4 The Hearing

The Chair of the Panel shall announce, at the beginning of the hearing, the format for the hearing.

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.

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.

The hearing shall be audio recorded. The Panel Chair shall record the date, time, and place of the hearing and shall require all participants to identify themselves for the audio recording at the beginning of the hearing and when speaking during the hearing.

Members of the Panel shall not discuss the case with persons who are not members of the Panel. Exception: The Panel may seek legal advice from WIT's solicitors and any barristers instructed to act for WIT in the case.

Members of the Panel may question the lecturer and the student on procedural matters and on matters pertaining to evidence.

7. Plagiarism Hearing Panel Decision and Report

7.1 Deliberations

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.

7.2 The Panel Chair shall prepare the Panel's written report.

The Report shall state whether the Panel finds for or against the student as to each wrong alleged and shall include:

- A detailed review of the facts presented in the hearing;
- Any conclusions in respect of those findings;
- A finding for or against the student;

- The Panel's decisions for resolving the matter;
- The *rationale* for its findings, conclusions, and decisions.

The Report shall have the concurrence of a simple majority of the Panel, excluding the Chair (who is a non-voting member). 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.

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.

The Report of the Plagiarism Hearing Panel shall be retained on file by the Registrar for a period of three years or until the student graduates from WIT, whichever is the longer.

All documentation and reports should be available for scrutiny by the Head of Department and lecturer involved in the case.

7.2.1 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 in Section 4.1, up to and including permanent expulsion from WIT.

Once the student has been penalized from amongst the list of possible sanctions in Section 4.1, 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) after which time it is considered 'spent'. 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.

7.2.2 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:

- • Request the Registrar to change or administer a specific grade for the student in the module;
- • Request the lecturer to give appropriate credit to the student for the course work in question;
- • Request the lecturer to allow the student to re-do the course work in line with the Panel's recommendations.

7.2.3 Appeals

Appeals may be made to the Registrar, by the student or the lecturer, 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.

On receiving an appeal, the Registrar will take legal advice and adjudicate on the matter. The result of the appeal will be conveyed to both parties and will be subject to no further review.

The Registrar shall submit an annual report to Academic Council regarding the number of 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.

Authority to establish and revise policies and procedures for Cheating and Plagiarism cases rests with WIT Academic Council.

8. Acknowledgements

Section 2 of this Plagiarism policy in particular is based on that of Sonoma State University (California, USA) with significant amendments for our own context.

9. Bibliography

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