



Postgraduate Research Code of Practice

APPENDIX 4

PGR Policy on Plagiarism and Dishonest Use of Data

1. Introduction

1.1 This Policy forms part of the University's Postgraduate Research (PGR) Code of Practice. In addition to the PGR Code of Practice (PGR CoP) and its other Appendices, other University of Liverpool (UoL) policies, procedures and documents which may be relevant to this Policy are as follows:

- Ordinances governing Postgraduate Research degrees listed in 1.2 below
- Liverpool Doctoral College Handbook
- Student Complaints Procedure.

1.2 This Policy covers the following research programmes:

- Doctor in Philosophy (PhD)
- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)
- Campus-based and Online Professional Doctorates (in relation to the thesis stage only – see section 3.3. below also).

1.3 The value of a UoL research degree award is underpinned by the quality of the research experience provided to candidates studying on the respective degree programme. UoL is responsible for the academic quality and standards of the examinations of its research degree programmes, including those offered under a collaborative agreement with an institutional partner.

1.4 There are conventions of good academic practice, such as established referencing and citation protocols, which both display and ensure academic integrity. For support and advice on the correct referencing to use in individual disciplines, students should visit the UoL Library reference guides at: <http://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/>

1.5 UoL requires students, when submitting written work, to provide either a signed hard-copy declaration, or an equivalent acknowledgement where electronic submission is used, to confirm that they have not:

- plagiarised material
- copied material
- embellished, fabricated nor falsified any of the data
- colluded inappropriately in producing the work
- submitted commissioned or procured work.

This declaration includes a statement permitting use by UoL, in cases of suspected academic malpractice, of source-matching software to ensure that the submitted material is all the student's own work and that the work of others is acknowledged correctly and referenced (see section 4 below). The Declaration of Academic Honesty for the thesis is incorporated into the submission of a soft bound thesis form for campus-based PGR students; however, in instances where a standalone declaration is required Annexe 1 to this Policy may be used. Online Professional Doctorate students should refer to Annexe 2 of Appendix 12 of the PGR Code of Practice: Guidelines on Submission of a Research Degree Thesis for Examination for Online Professional Doctorates for further information about how to submit their Declaration of Academic Honesty.

2. Definitions

Minor Errors (which do not constitute academic malpractice in terms of this Policy)

Minor errors may arise when a student has attempted to adopt academically acceptable practices but has failed to do so accurately or fully. Examples include forgetting to insert quotation marks, minor mistakes in referencing or citation, gaps in the bibliography or reference

list or non-compliance with some aspects of presentation guidelines. In the context of research degree programmes the following definitions of academic malpractice apply:

2.1 Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when a student misrepresents work in the public domain, written or otherwise, of any other person (including another student) or of any institution, as their own work. Examples of forms of plagiarism include:

- the verbatim (word for word) copying of another's work without appropriate and correctly presented acknowledgement and citation of the source;
- the close paraphrasing of another's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without appropriate and correctly presented acknowledgement and citation of the source;
- failure to reference appropriately or to identify adequately the source of material used;
- unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another's work;
- the deliberate and detailed presentation of another's concept as one's own.

2.2 Collusion

Collusion occurs when two or more students consciously collaborate in the preparation and production of work which is ultimately submitted by each in an identical or substantially similar form and/or is represented by each to be the product of their individual efforts. Collusion also occurs where there is unauthorised or inappropriate co-operation between a student and another person in the preparation and production of work which is presented as the student's own.

To avoid allegations of collusion, students working in a research group should be careful to cite correctly the work of other students and shared data.

2.3 Copying

Copying occurs when a student consciously presents as their own work material copied directly from a fellow student or other person without their knowledge. It includes the passing off of another's intellectual property, not in the public domain, as one's own. It differs from collusion in that the originator of the copied work is not aware of or party to the copying. Copying of work from published sources is categorised as plagiarism.

2.4 Submission of Commissioned or Procured Work

Dishonest practice occurs when a student presents as their own work (or parts thereof) material, which has been intentionally procured (by financial or other inducement means) for this purpose. The definition includes the practice of requesting another party to prepare all or part of the work (with or without payment) on the student's behalf.

If using the services of a proof reader to assist in grammatical presentation of their work, students should ensure that the proof reader does not make their work available to third parties nor should the proof reader edit substantively the material.

2.5 Dishonest Use of Data

Throughout this policy the term "dishonest use of data" is used to cover one or more of the following:

Embellishment or Falsification of Data occurs when a proportion of the total data is altered, enhanced, exaggerated or deliberately misused in order to emphasise data which has been obtained by legitimate means.

Fabrication of Data occurs when a student creates and presents an extensive amount or significant piece of data in order to conceal a paucity of legitimate data; or wholly fabricates a set of data in the absence of legitimate data.

3. Scope of this Policy

This Policy does not cover allegations of academic malpractice in relation to the following:

- 3.1 *Applications:* If a fraudulent application is identified **during** the application process it will be handled in accordance with the [PGR Degrees Admissions Policy and Procedures: Appendix 1 of the PGR CoP, section 11.](#)
- 3.2 *Taught research skills modules or other taught modules* are governed by the [Code of Practice on Assessment.](#)
- 3.3 *Taught modules in Professional Doctorate programmes* are governed by the Code of Practice on Assessment. See web link at section 3.2 above.
- 3.4 *Presentation of data at meetings/conferences or proposed papers for publication* are covered by the [Policy on Misconduct in Research.](#)
- 3.5 *Post-award:* the decision by the University to revoke a degree is permitted by the Ordinance on **Revocation of Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates**, which can be found on the Corporate Governance and Support Office's website at: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/corporate-governance-and-support-office/>

Any decision to revoke a research degree would only be made after an investigation had been conducted under UoL's Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct (see section 3.4 above for the web link to this Policy).

This Policy does cover the following instances where academic malpractice might occur. The Procedures to be adopted in such circumstances are set out in section 5 below:

- 3.6 During the Annual Progress Monitoring (APM) Process¹.
- 3.7 Submission of draft chapters for review and all formal reports e.g. reports to sponsors and collaborators and to an Independent Progress Assessment Panel (IPAP).
- 3.8 (a) In relation to the submitted thesis: prior to the *viva* examination.
(b) In relation to the submitted thesis: discovered during the *viva* examination.
- 3.9 Where academic malpractice is discovered by any other route not outlined in sections 3.6 - 3.8 above.

¹ For the full description of APM see PGR Progress Policy – Appendix 3 of the PGR CoP – web link <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/aqsd/academic-codes-of-practice/pgr-code-of-practice/>

4. Use of Turnitin or Other Source-Matching Software

- 4.1 Schools/Institutes must inform students on registration (e.g. via the generic PGR student handbook or Level 1 or 2 PGR student handbooks) that, in cases of suspected academic malpractice, their submitted material might be submitted through Turnitin or other source-matching software to ensure that the submitted material is all the student's own work and that the work of others is acknowledged correctly and referenced, unless there is any exceptional reason not to do so.
- 4.2 As noted in section 1.5, a student must complete either a signed hard-copy declaration or an equivalent acknowledgement where electronic submission is used, to permit use by UoL, in cases of suspected academic malpractice, of source-matching software to ensure that the submitted material is all the student's own work and that the work of others is acknowledged correctly and referenced.
- 4.3 A Turnitin similarity score is not the basis on which a case of plagiarism is assessed; Turnitin must only be used by academic staff/examiners as an indicator of where text may have come from an already published source. The individual responsible for investigating each case of suspected plagiarism should not review solely the raw Turnitin report but must exercise their academic judgment in reviewing the submitted material.
- 4.4 Students may be required to submit their thesis or draft chapters via Turnitin, in accordance with their School/Institute's policy.

5. Procedures

The following procedures should be adopted when handling instances of suspected academic malpractice as defined in this Policy (see section 2):

- 5.1 Conduct of any required investigation must include:
- a) Formal written notification to the student of the alleged malpractice (see Annexe 2 for template).
 - b) A right of reply, which must include a face-to-face meeting with the student.² The student will have the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a member of UoL or the Guild of Students. See the web link in section 9 for the Guild's Advice Service. Students cannot be legally represented at a meeting, but may choose to seek legal advice in making any written submission.
 - c) A written report of the findings with a decision or recommendation as appropriate. Where an investigation occurs prior to submission of the thesis for examination, consideration should also be given to whether the investigation is likely to affect the candidate's ability to meet their thesis submission deadline.
- 5.2 During the Annual Progress Monitoring (APM) Process:
- a) If the instance arises before the IPAP meeting then the Supervisor and SDPR/IDPR³ or DDPDR should initially review the allegation and consider the level of seriousness:
 - i. If **considered less serious** and the allegation is found proven then a verbal warning should be issued.
 - ii. If **considered more serious (this would include extensive or repeated occurrences of less serious offences)**, an investigation should occur and, if

² The face-to face meeting may be conducted by use of remote technology in accordance with the PGR Remote Viva Policy (Appendix 9 of the PGR CoP)

³ In cases of conflict of interest, the Dean of School shall nominate an appropriate alternative. For online students the role of SDPR/IDPR will be taken by the Programme Director.

appropriate, the allegation referred to the IPAP for action and the opportunity provided for the student to defend themselves. Where the allegation is found proven the formal warning should be in the form of a written letter (for template letter see Annexe 3) setting out the required remedy, e.g. training/tutorial/library skills etc. This should be recorded also on the Annual Progress Report (APR). In cases where academic malpractice is considered sufficiently serious, a suspension of studies or termination of studies may be recommended even in the case of a first offence in accordance with section 4.1(e)(v) of the PGR Progress Policy (Appendix 3 of the PGR CoP).

- b) If academic malpractice is discovered during the IPAP meeting the IPAP process will be suspended and the matter referred to the SDPR/IDPR or DDPR and the student's Supervisor for investigation in accordance with this Policy. In all instances the outcome of the investigation will be reported back to the IPAP.
 - i. If the investigation finds the alleged malpractice proven but it is **considered less serious**, then a verbal warning should be issued by the SDPR/ IDPR to the student and no further *decision* will be required by the IPAP on this matter when it resumes to continue to consider the student's progress.
 - ii. If the malpractice is found proven by the investigation and is **considered more serious** (in accordance with section 5.2(a)(ii) above) this will be referred back to a new IPAP meeting for a decision to be taken in accordance with section 4.1(e)(v) of the PGR Progress Policy (Appendix 3 of the PGR CoP). In cases where academic malpractice is considered sufficiently serious, a suspension of studies or termination of studies may be applied even in the case of a first offence.
- c) If academic malpractice is discovered independently of the examination process, APM process, or IPAP meeting the Supervisor and SDPR/IDPR or DDPR should review the allegation as per section 5.2 a) above.

5.3 After submission of the thesis for examination but prior to the *viva*:

- a) Where one of the Examiners suspects a candidate of committing plagiarism, dishonest use of or fabrication of data in a thesis, they should consult their co-Examiner at the earliest opportunity. If this occurs less than 20 (twenty) working days prior to the scheduled *viva* then the *viva* may be postponed.
- b) Following their discussion, where the Examiners cannot dismiss the allegations of a suspected case of malpractice, the SDPR/IDPR shall be informed. The SDPR/IDPR shall arrange for an investigation to occur, conducted together with a second person nominated by the Dean of School/Institute, including submission of the thesis through the Turnitin plagiarism detection service.
- c) The candidate shall be informed by the LDC Student Experience Team in advance of the scheduled date of the *viva* of the Examiners' concerns and whether or not the *viva* has been postponed.
- d) The candidate shall be afforded an opportunity to make representations to those carrying out the investigation in a face-to-face meeting⁴. The SDPR/IDPR will contact the candidate to notify them of the investigation and to invite them to a meeting. The student will have the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a member of UoL or the Guild of Students. See the web link in section 9 for the Guild's

⁴ The meeting may be conducted by use of remote technology in accordance with the PGR Remote Viva Policy (Appendix 9 of the PGR CoP).

advice service. Students cannot be legally represented at a meeting, but may choose to seek legal advice in making any written submission.

- e) Following conclusion of the investigation, the SDPR/IDPR will send the investigation report, including its finding as to whether or not malpractice has occurred, to the Examiners, with the following possible judgments:
- i. That no malpractice has occurred and that the *viva* should go ahead as normal or be rescheduled (if it has been postponed).
 - ii. That the malpractice was of a less serious nature, and accordingly the *viva* should go ahead as normal or be rescheduled (if it has been postponed) and that the Examiners should exercise their academic judgment in the examination to determine the appropriate outcome. Where the candidate is required to make revisions to the thesis following the examination, the University's standard timescales for submission will apply.
 - iii. That the malpractice was of sufficient severity to warrant failure and the Examiners be invited to consider this course of action. In these circumstances, the *viva* need not be resumed.
- f) In instances of a rescheduled *viva*, in accordance with section 5.3(e) (i) and (ii) above, an Independent Chair must be appointed, in accordance with the Policy on Research Degree Examinations and Examiners (Appendix 8 of the PGR CoP, section 7) (see web link at section 9 below).

5.4 During the *viva* examination:

Where, during a *viva*, an Examiner suspects a candidate of academic malpractice, the *viva* should be suspended and an investigation carried out by the SDPR/IDPR, together with a second person nominated by the Dean of School/Institute, in which the candidate is given at least 5 (five) working days' notice to make representations (in a face-to-face meeting⁵) concerning the allegation. Following that investigation, the provisions of section 5.3(e) above will apply.

5.5 Following the award of the degree:

Where an allegation of academic malpractice is made after the award of a degree, UoL will conduct an investigation in accordance with section 5.4 above. If the charge is found proven, UoL will consider a range of sanctions including revocation of the degree in accordance with section 3.5 above.

6. Notification of Findings to External Bodies

Where serious academic malpractice is found to have occurred, UoL will report this finding to relevant statutory or regulatory bodies. This might include the relevant professional body, any relevant grant-awarding bodies, book publishers and editors of any journals that have published articles by the student directly associated with the work for which the allegation has been upheld and to any individual who has received references from UoL referring to the award of the degree.

7. Appeals Procedure

⁵ The meeting may be conducted by use of remote technology in accordance with the PGR Remote Viva Policy (Appendix 9 of the PGR CoP).

- 7.1 Appeals regarding decisions of academic malpractice prior to submission of the thesis should be made in accordance with **section one** of the Research Degree Appeals Procedure (Appendix 10 of the PGR CoP: see web link at section 9 below).
- 7.2 Appeals regarding decisions of academic malpractice following submission of the thesis should be made in accordance with **section two** of the Research Degree Appeals Procedure. Students may not appeal against the decision of the Examiners except on the grounds of procedural or material irregularity or administrative error.

8. Responsibilities of Students

Each PGR student should familiarise themselves with the academic integrity requirements of this Policy, the definitions contained therein, their School/Institute/Departmental/discipline specific guidance, and any further guidelines specific to their area of research, taking advantage of training and seeking further guidance from their supervisory team as necessary.

9. Sources of Further Information

- [The PGR Code of Practice](#)
- [LDC Student Experience Team](#)
- [Student Complaints Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Guild of Students Advice Service](#)