



Postgraduate Research Code of Practice

APPENDIX 4

PGR Academic Integrity Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This Policy forms part of the University's Postgraduate Research (PGR) Code of Practice and should be read in conjunction with the [University Policy on Misconduct in Research](#). 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
- PGR 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 an initial 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.

1.6 It is anticipated that there may be occasions when it is not feasible for a full and thorough academic misconduct investigation to be carried out within normal timescales and when a longer period of time, therefore, is required. These may include, but are not restricted to:

- Periods when UoL is closed (e.g. Bank Holidays and the Christmas/New Year period)

- Periods when key members of staff are absent from UoL due to work commitments, scheduled or unscheduled leave, sickness or other good reason
- Particularly complex issues
- Issues which are related to other on-going procedures (for example, where an allegation is subject to investigation under more than one Policy).

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 Research Misconduct

The definition of Research Misconduct is set out in the University's [Policy on Misconduct in Research](#).

3. Scope of this Policy

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the University Policy on Misconduct in Research. This Policy applies in instances where, following an Initial Assessment in accordance with the University Policy on Misconduct in Research it is determined that an allegation of academic malpractice will be investigated fully or partially under this Policy. The procedures to be adopted in such circumstances are set out in section 5 below.

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 *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 Governance Team'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 on Misconduct in Research](#).

4. Checking originality of content

- 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 equivalent software to ensure that the submitted material does not breach academic integrity requirements, 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 software to ensure that the submitted material does not breach academic integrity requirements.

- 4.3 A similarity report is not the basis on which a case of academic misconduct is assessed and must only be used by academic staff/examiners as an indicator of where text may breach academic integrity requirements. The individual responsible for investigating each case of suspected academic misconduct should not review solely the raw 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 (or equivalent), in accordance with their School/Institute's policy.

5. Procedures

All allegations of academic malpractice must be referred to the University's [Research Integrity Team](#) for Initial Assessment in accordance with the [University Policy on Misconduct in Research](#). As part of the Initial Assessment, it will be determined based on the nature of the allegation:

- Whether the [University Policy on Misconduct in Research](#) is fully or partially applicable to the allegation. Where it is partially applicable details of the specific aspects of the allegation to be investigated in line with the [University Policy on Misconduct in Research](#) will be provided
- Whether this Policy is fully or partially applicable to the allegation. Where it is partially applicable details of the specific aspects of the allegation to be investigated in line with this Policy will be provided

In cases where the Policy on Misconduct in Research and this Policy apply to separate aspects of an allegation, a decision will be made by the University Named Person for Research Integrity as to whether parallel investigations are needed, or whether the allegations can be investigated through a single process. Where it is determined that parallel investigations will occur these will operate independently, each under the requirements of the associated Policy.

Where, following an Initial Assessment, it is determined that this Policy applies to some/ all aspects of the allegation, the following procedures should be adopted for the elements identified for investigation under this Policy following completion of an initial review by the S/IDPR or nominee:

- 5.1 The investigation will be conducted by the SDPR/ IDPR or nominee together with a second person nominated by the Dean of School/Institute. The investigation will examine and evaluate all relevant facts to determine whether misconduct has occurred, and to determine the seriousness of the misconduct. Conduct of any required investigation must include:
- a) Formal written notification to the student of the alleged malpractice (see Annexe 2 for template).
 - b) The investigations will include a right of reply and the candidate shall be afforded an opportunity to make representations to those carrying out the investigation in a face-to-face meeting.¹ 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) Upon completion of the investigation a written report will be produced by the Investigation Panel which will include the following:

¹ 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)

- A summary of the conduct of the investigation
 - A statement about whether the allegations have been upheld, upheld in part or not upheld, giving reasons for these views
 - A decision or recommendation, as appropriate
 - Identification of any procedural issues that need to be addressed by the University
 - 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.
- d) Communication of the report to the student and any other relevant parties will normally occur within 30 working days of notification of the suspected academic malpractice.

5.2 a) If suspected academic misconduct is identified during the Annual Progress Monitoring (APM) Process the Supervisor and SDPR/IDPR² or nominee will refer the case to the [Research Integrity Team](#) for an Initial Assessment. Where the Initial Assessment determines that this Policy applies to some/ all aspects of the allegation, the SDPR/IDPR or nominee should initially review the relevant aspects of the allegation and consider the level of seriousness:

- i. If the allegation is not found proven the SDPR/ IDPR or nominee will advise the relevant individuals of their findings and no further action will be required. The APM process will continue.
- ii. If the allegation is found proven and **considered less serious** then a written warning (for template letter see Annexe 3) outlining the required remedy e.g. training/tutorial/library skills etc. should be issued by the SDPR/ IDPR or nominee to the student. **Less serious misconduct reflects that the candidate has made a clear attempt to correctly attribute written material and that despite a significant failure of academic integrity, the errors are of sufficiently limited scope that they do not undermine the integrity of the overall submission.** The APM process will be paused while the initial review is carried out and will recommence once an outcome has been determined.
- iii. If the allegation is found proven and **considered more serious**, an Investigation Panel will convene and conduct an investigation in line with section 5.1 above. The SDPR / IDPR or nominee will provide the investigation report to the student and any other relevant parties. **More serious misconduct would include extensive failures of academic integrity which call into question the integrity of the entire submission (for example, inclusion of incorrectly attributed material is reflective of the general approach and/or significant concepts or results which are central to the work are misattributed) or repeated occurrences of less serious offences.** If appropriate, the allegation will be 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).

² 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.

- b) If academic malpractice is discovered independently of the examination process or the APM process the Supervisor and SDPR/IDPR or nominee should review the allegation as per section 5.2 a) above.
- 5.3 If suspected academic misconduct is identified after submission of the thesis for examination but prior to the *viva*:
- a) Where one of the Examiners suspects a candidate of committing academic malpractice 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 and the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life) shall be informed. The SDPR/IDPR should refer the case to the [Research Integrity Team](#) for an Initial Assessment. Where the Initial Assessment determines that this Policy applies to some/ all aspects of the allegation, the SDPR/IDPR shall arrange for an investigation of the relevant aspects of the allegation to occur (see section 5.1) including submission of the thesis through Turnitin or other equivalent software.
 - c) The candidate shall be informed by the Research Degree Administration Team (Student Life) in advance of the scheduled date of the *viva* of the Examiners' concerns and whether or not the *viva* has been postponed.
 - d) Following conclusion of the investigation, the SDPR/IDPR or nominee will send the investigation report, including its finding as to whether or not malpractice has occurred, to the candidate, the Examiners and any other relevant parties, 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 found proven and considered less serious , 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. **Less serious misconduct reflects that the candidate has made a clear attempt to correctly attribute written material and that despite a significant failure of academic integrity, the errors are of sufficiently limited scope that they do not undermine the integrity of the overall submission.** 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 found proven and considered more serious, which could warrant failure and the Examiners will be invited to consider this course of action. **More serious misconduct would include extensive failures of academic integrity which call into question the integrity of the entire submission (for example, inclusion of incorrectly attributed material is reflective of the general approach and/or significant concepts or results which are central to the work are misattributed) or repeated occurrences of less serious offences.** In these circumstances, the *viva* need not be resumed.
 - e) In instances of a rescheduled *viva*, in accordance with section 5.3(d) 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 the SDPR/IDPR should refer the case to the [Research Integrity Team](#) for an Initial Assessment. Where the Initial Assessment determines that this Policy applies to some/ all aspects of the allegation, the SDPR/IDPR will carry out an investigation of the relevant aspects of the allegation (see section 5.1), in which the candidate is given at least 5 (five) working days³ notice to make representations (in a face-to-face meeting³) concerning the allegation. Following that investigation, the provisions of section 5.3(d) 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 3.4 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

- 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](#)

³ The meeting may be conducted by use of remote technology in accordance with the PGR Remote Viva Policy (Appendix 9 of the PGR CoP).

- [Research Degree Administration Team \(Student Life\)](#)
- [Student Complaints Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Guild of Students Advice Service](#)
- [Policy on Misconduct in Research](#)