
Dealing with Student Plagiarism and Related Academic Misconduct Procedure

Academic Policy

1 Purpose

Academic integrity refers to the overall climate of honesty and ethical behaviour that characterizes a strong learning and teaching community. All members of the Victoria University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity.

These procedures are designed to support and protect academic staff in dealing with students suspected of committing plagiarism, and related forms of academic misconduct and to ensure consistent and transparent responses. They provide for comprehensive record keeping, in line with privacy legislation, for the benefit of all students and the protection of the reputation of the University and its degrees.

2 Organisational Scope

This is a University-wide procedure.

3 Definitions

For purposes of this procedure, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Plagiarism:	The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were ones own, whether intended or not. This includes published and unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students and staff.
Related Academic Misconduct:	As defined at clause 4.2(g) of the Student Conduct Statute and including 'knowingly assisting another to commit academic misconduct' as per clause 4.2(j) (xv) of the Student Conduct Statute.
Student advocacy service:	The person or service provider appointed to independently support and advocate on behalf of students.

4 Procedure

4.1 Introduction – supporting student understanding of plagiarism

- (a) Course coordinators are expected to ensure that in the early stages, all courses receive a clear statement regarding the importance of academic integrity in the learning and teaching process at University level. Students should be specifically directed to the statement in the course outline on academic integrity and plagiarism, and to the website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>. This statement should be reiterated before the first piece of assessed work is submitted.

- (b) The Principal Research Supervisor should ensure that each thesis student receives the appropriate handbook (PhD Handbook or Faculty Master's Handbook) and is made aware of the statement on plagiarism.

Note: Whether or not this process happened will have a bearing on the Course Coordinators' ability to use the cautionary process (refer to clause 4.3).

4.2 Identification of alleged plagiarism

- (a) The academic staff member responsible for assessment is responsible for ascertaining alleged plagiarism, as far as possible, within five working days of suspicion being aroused.

Note: For further assistance with recognition of plagiarism contact the Centre for Academic Development (CAD). It is advisable to consult academic colleagues in reaching a decision on whether plagiarism has occurred.

- (b) If a tutor or staff member other than the course coordinator or thesis supervisor (i.e., the thesis examiner) suspects that plagiarism has occurred, the matter is to be reported to the course coordinator or supervisor to determine the appropriate process.
- (c) Where the student has submitted draft work for feedback, and plagiarised material is found in that draft work, that work should be returned to the student for resubmission with appropriate references. It is not appropriate to apply a penalty for draft work, but students may be directed to Student Learning Support for guidance.
- (d) These procedures may apply, regardless of when plagiarism is detected, even if a grade has been returned in the course for which the plagiarised work was submitted.

4.3 Determination of appropriate process

- (a) If the course coordinator or supervisor is not confident that the work in question should be treated as plagiarism, or if it merely borders on plagiarism, assessment should proceed.
- (b) If the course coordinator or supervisor is confident that plagiarism has occurred, a case file on the Academic Misconduct Register (AMR) is to be opened. Student and course details are entered on the AMR template. The system will respond by assigning a case number and indicating whether or not the student has a prior record. EITHER the cautionary or the disciplinary process should then be followed.
- (c) In determining the appropriate process, the course coordinator or supervisor should remain mindful of the individual student's background. In particular, international students, some of whom are studying at an advanced level may have little experience of plagiarism regulations. All cases should be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Note: The Academic Misconduct Register is accessible through the Academic Integrity and Plagiarism website: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html>. Further details about determining the level of student misconduct can be found in Appendix B to these procedures.

From StaffVUW access is via Teaching Support>Academic Integrity and Plagiarism, or via Related Sites.

4.3.1 Cautionary process

Proceed according to the cautionary process if all of the following apply:

- (a) the course coordinator or supervisor is confident the student has received the course outline or appropriate handbook, and has had her/his attention directed specifically to the statement on academic integrity and plagiarism; and
- (b) the student has no prior record; and
- (c) the plagiarism is minor and appears to be inadvertent.

4.3.2 Disciplinary process

Proceed according to the formal disciplinary process if the current case is considered serious, that is, if either of the following applies:

- (a) the student has a prior record; and/or
- (b) (i) the course coordinator or supervisor is confident the student has received the course outline or appropriate handbook, and has had her/his attention directed specifically to the statement on academic integrity and plagiarism; and
(ii) the student appears to have committed blatant or excessive plagiarism.

4.4 Resolution of the matter

4.4.1 Cautionary process

- (a) Where possible the course coordinator or supervisor will arrange to meet the student, as far as practicable, within seven days of determining the level of plagiarism in accordance with 4.3. At that meeting, the course coordinator or supervisor will:
 - (i) *advise* that the work submitted for assessment appears to contain plagiarised material and invite the student to respond. Consider the response carefully. A decision to proceed may depend on this response;
 - (ii) *ask* the student whether they wish to proceed with the cautionary meeting, or to reconvene at another time and invite the student to bring a support person (for example the student advocacy service).
- (b) Proceed with the meeting (then or at a later time) covering the following:
 - (i) *remind* the student that plagiarism is a serious breach of VUW policy with which all students are required to comply (and that they attested this upon accepting the University's Offer of Study);
 - (ii) *advise* the student to develop skills to avoid plagiarism and direct her/him to Student Learning Support Service, the Student Conduct Statute and the University's plagiarism website:
<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>;
 - (iii) *caution* the student not to commit plagiarism again;
Note 1: Do NOT use the word 'warn' or refer to a 'warning' as this would constitute a disciplinary action.
Note 2: Where it is not possible to meet with the student (e.g., distance students) the process may be carried out through correspondence.
 - (iv) *inform* the student that assessment will proceed, excluding clearly plagiarised content and that a confidential note that they have been reminded of University policy and cautioned not to plagiarise will be made on the Academic Misconduct Register;

- (v) *advise* the student that if they do not agree with the action taken in this instance, they have the right to request the Head of School to initiate a formal investigation (refer 4.4.2(c)); and to consult the student advocacy service;
 - (vi) *inform* the student that, unless they proceed as per (v) above, the case will be considered closed and that any further instances of plagiarism will not be dealt with by means of the cautionary process.
- (c) The case record on the AMR template should then be updated, to include the meeting date and that a caution has been issued. If the student's response leads to a decision that plagiarism has not occurred, then the AMR should be updated to say that the case has been dismissed. The personal identifiers will disappear from the case record, but an anonymous record will be retained for statistical purposes.

4.4.2 Disciplinary Process

- (a) Action is to begin as far as practicable, within seven working days of plagiarism being identified.
- (b) The course coordinator or supervisor will postpone assessment of the work of any relevant student/s and refer the matter to the Head of School. This course of action is to be recorded on the AMR template by the course coordinator.
- (c) The Head of School will inform the Student Interest & Dispute Resolution Adviser that a formal investigation is required. The AMR case number and any additional information related to the allegation are to be provided.
- (d) The Student Interest & Dispute Resolution Adviser and/or In-house solicitor will decide whether the case constitutes 'misconduct' (in which case the Deciding Manager will be the relevant Head of School) or 'serious misconduct' (in which case the Deciding Manager will be the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor), and refer it to the Deciding Manager.
- (e) The Deciding Manager should proceed in accordance with 4.4.1(e) of the Student Conduct Statute.
- (f) The Deciding Manager, on determining whether a complaint of (serious) misconduct has been established, will advise the student in writing (copied to the complainant and the Student Interest & Dispute Resolution Adviser), using the letter templates provided.
- (g) If the complaint of (serious) misconduct has NOT been established, the course coordinator or supervisor is advised that assessment of the submitted work may proceed.
- (h) If the complaint of (serious) misconduct has been established, the appropriate penalty is to be determined in accordance with the Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Penalties (refer clause 4.5). The student is to be informed in writing of that decision and her/his right of appeal using the template letters provided.
- (i) The Deciding Manager will advise the course coordinator or supervisor of the decision. The course coordinator or supervisor will arrange for the decision and penalty (if any) to be recorded on the AMR template and inform the Student Interest & Dispute Resolution Adviser accordingly.
- (j) In the event of an appeal, the Convener of the Disciplinary Appeals Committee will inform the Student Interest & Dispute Resolution Adviser who will update the record on the AMR template accordingly.

- (k) If, in the case of proven serious misconduct, the Deciding Manager excludes the student for a period of time, the Deciding Manager must ensure that a disciplinary hold is placed on the student's Banner record by advising the faculty office.
- (l) If the case is not established or an appeal is allowed, the Student Interest & Dispute Resolution Adviser will remove the personal identifiers from the case record on the AMR; an anonymous record will be retained for statistical purposes. The case is then closed.

4.5 Penalties for academic misconduct

- (a) The University regards issues of plagiarism and academic integrity as serious matters. The Student Conduct Statute governs breaches of University standards in these matters. Complaints upheld by a Deciding Manager under the Student Conduct Statute can result in a range of penalties that are itemised at clauses 4.6.1 and 4.6.2 of the Statute.
- (b) The penalties laid out in the Student Conduct Statute are available for the whole range of possible student misconduct. To ensure consistency across the wide range of programmes, schools and faculties, the following guidelines for breaches of academic integrity have been developed. They are indicative only and it is still up to the Deciding Manager to consider the most appropriate action in any particular set of circumstances.
- (c) The guidelines cover three general classes of misconduct finding by the Deciding Manager:
 - (i) minor breach
 - (ii) mid-level breach
 - (iii) serious breach
- (d) The tables in Appendix B provide penalty guidelines for these three broad levels of breaches of academic integrity.

5 Legislative Compliance

Though the University is required to manage its policy documentation within a legislative framework; there is no specific legislation directing this procedure.

6 References

Student Conduct Statute, available at: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy

Previous Version: [Dealing with Student Plagiarism and Related Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)

7 Appendices

[Appendix A: Procedures for Dealing with Student Plagiarism Flow Chart](#)

[Appendix B: Disciplinary Penalty Guidelines](#)

[Appendix C: Key Contacts](#)

8 Approval Agency

Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

9 Approval Dates

This procedure was originally approved on: 28 February 2006

This version was approved on: 1 December 2011

This version takes effect from: 1 December 2011

10 Contact Person

The following people may be approached on a routine basis in relation to this procedure:

Martin Boswell
Team Leader, Academic Quality & Policy
Academic Office
Ext: 6830

Yvonne Oldfield
Student Interest & Dispute Resolution Adviser
Ext: 5023

Note: In 2012 the provision of the student advocacy service has been contracted to the Victoria University of Wellington Students' Association (VUWSA). The contact person is:

*Lorraine Guthrie, Student Advocate, VUWSA
Email: advocate@vuwsa.org.nz
Phone: (04) 463 6984*