

# Guideline for misconduct in studies at the University of Turku

Rector's decision 23 March 2023

## Table of contents

Guideline for misconduct in studies at the University of Turku	1
Rector's decision	1
Table of contents	1
1. Background, purpose and scope	2
2. Promoting ethical academic activities at the University of Turku	3
2.1 Plagiarism detection software supports ethical activities	3
3. Violation of ethical guidelines	4
3.1 Misconduct in scientific research	5
3.2 Misconduct in studies	5
4. Procedure and actors in misconduct cases	6
4.1 Student's legal protection	6
4.2 Procedure in handling misconduct	6
4.3 Using plagiarism detection software	8
5. Disciplinary action for misconduct	9
5.1 Failing grade for study attainment	9
5.2 Dean's reprimand	9
5.3 Rector's written warning	9
6. Document preparation, storage, and publicity	10
7. More information	10

# 1. Background, purpose and scope

Ethicality is one of the most central values in the operations of the University of Turku. From the personnel and students, this requires honesty, fairness, objectivity, and following the principles of good scientific practice. Research ethics applies to the entire University community and all the students pursuing a degree as well as those completing other studies. In Finland, the universities follow the definition of [the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity \(TENK\)](#) on research ethics.

The purpose of this guideline is to prevent misconduct as well as give instructions on how to proceed when misconduct occurs. Suspected misconduct in the recognition process of prior studies or learning is handled similar to suspected misconduct with a study attainment where applicable. The guideline is applied to degree education at the University of Turku and to other education where applicable, for example, to Open University education and non-degree studies. The guideline also applies to exchange students where applicable. In this guideline, faculty also refers to the Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CeLCS) and dean to the CeLCS Director. For the students of other higher education institutions, the suspected misconduct is investigated in the University of Turku, but the possible disciplinary action is taken in the student's home institution. The University of Turku decides on the approval and evaluation of the studies completed at the University of Turku.

TENK's guideline on the responsible conduct of research is applied to research conducted during studies. Especially doctoral researchers and students who conduct research during their basic degree studies should familiarise themselves with TENK's guidelines. This internal guideline of the University is applied in handling misconduct with basic degree theses, licentiate theses and doctoral dissertations preceding the preliminary examination. For doctoral dissertations under the preliminary examination or the dissertations that have been completed, the University's [guideline on good scientific practice and handling alleged misconduct](#) is applied.

If it is concluded that a student of the University of Turku has committed misconduct when completing studies in another university belonging to their degree at the University of Turku, the matter will be handled at the University of Turku in accordance with this guideline and on the basis of the notification received from the other higher education institution. To ensure the student's legal protection, the possible disciplinary actions for the student in the other higher education institution are taken into consideration when applying this guideline.

The University of Turku uses a plagiarism detection software as a support in student guidance and to prevent and help detect misconduct.

If misconduct occurs in the student selection phase, the guidelines of the faculty or the joint application process are followed. No other disciplinary action than failing the applicant's application can be given on the basis of misconduct.

## 2. Promoting ethical academic activities at the University of Turku

The faculty must ensure that the good scientific practice and the [University's ethical guideline for learning](#) are discussed with the students at the beginning of their studies. It must be ensured on every course that the students receive instructions on the permitted study methods. Special attention must be paid on the instructions for remote studies so that the permitted methods and limits for co-operation are clear to students. In addition, the faculty must ensure that the essential information on the University's ethical guideline and principles of good scientific practice can be easily found by the students and teachers.

The University students are responsible for following good scientific practice and University's ethical guidelines in their own studies. The students must read the available guidelines and ask for instructions in any unclear situations.

### 2.1 Plagiarism detection software supports ethical activities

Ensuring the originality of study attainments and published research results is part of the quality assurance in education and research. At the University of Turku, this is enhanced with plagiarism detection software that is based on global data retrieval and comparison. In addition to the originality check, the plagiarism detection software is a tool for course guidance and evaluation process.

The originality of all theses completed at the University of Turku are checked with the plagiarism detection software maintained by the University. A note of the completed originality check is included in the thesis. The thesis supervisor is responsible for the check and interpreting the results. Instructions for interpreting the results are available on the University's website.

It is recommended that the plagiarism detection software is used at different stages of studies to the extent that the goal of ethical academic activities require. In addition, plagiarism detection software can be applied to checking teaching materials produced at the University.

In group teaching, the plagiarism detection software cannot be applied only to some of the group members. If the teacher suspects a student in the group of plagiarism, the written assignments of the entire group must be checked with the plagiarism detection software.

### 3. Violation of ethical guidelines

The study attainments must be completed honestly so that the students give a correct impression of their competence. Completing study attainments through misconduct is unethical and does not indicate the student's actual competence.

Violations of the ethical guidelines, i.e. good practices, include disregard for good scientific practice and, as a more serious violation, misconduct. The descriptions of the violations in this chapter are based on TENK's guideline on the responsible conduct of research and the University's Regulation on Studies.

In addition to the violations of ethical guidelines, other actions that go against the regulations on studies are considered as misconduct. These kind of actions include, for example, not following the rules regarding electronic examinations.

In scientific activities, the typical research misconduct includes:

#### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism, or unacknowledged borrowing, refers to representing another author's article or other text or parts of them as one's own. Plagiarism in academic activities can also include unacknowledged borrowing of a figure or program code.

Earlier studies are utilised in academic writing and a good grasp of the scientific literature in the discipline demonstrates familiarity with the field. Appropriate references to source materials is a basic requirement in academic study attainments. In addition, the author has to make their own input. It is considered as misconduct when the author tries to conceal the extent of the used source material or quote with misleading references or by omitting references.

#### **Autoplagiarism**

Autoplagiarism refers to reusing one's own work in new study attainments. In these cases, the author is not trying to pass someone else's work as their own, but uses their own earlier study attainments without mentioning it. This constitutes as misconduct when autoplagiarism is extensive and done purposefully. If a student reuses their own work (text, pictures, figures etc.), they will have to reference their own previous work in addition to the original sources so that it is not considered as autoplagiarism.

#### **Misappropriation**

Misappropriation refers to the unlawful presentation of another person's work or data as one's own research, and it can occur, for example, in group work or a research group.

#### **Fabrication**

Fabrication refers to reporting invented observations to the research community. In study attainments, fabrication can involve intentionally presenting false observations as correct ones.

#### **Falsification, misrepresentation**

Falsification and misrepresentation refer to modifying and presenting original observations deliberately so that the results based on those observations are distorted. In study attainments, falsification and misrepresentation are violations that can occur in reviews and research that are part of the studies.

### 3.1 Misconduct in scientific research

TENK's guideline defines violations of the responsible conduct of research and describes how the alleged violations of the responsible conduct of research are handled, see <https://tenk.fi/en/research-misconduct/rcr-violations>

### 3.2 Misconduct in studies

Misconduct refers to purposeful fraudulent action or disregard, and, as its result, the student gives a false impression of their own or someone else's competence. It is also considered as misconduct when the student disregards the teacher's instructions while working on the study attainment or uses forbidden means or tools. Using AI is also forbidden if the student aims to give a false impression of their own competence.

Below are examples of misconduct in studies.

#### Cheating in an exam

- Discussion during an exam conducted individually
- Helping another or accepting help
- Cheating, also trying to cheat
- Prepared or repeated cheating
- Taking an exam on behalf of another
- Not following the rules of the examination
- Using forbidden means or tools
- Unauthorised co-operation
- Using forbidden sources

#### Misconduct with assignments, essays and other study attainments

- Using one's own work entirely or in part in two or several study attainments without agreeing on it with the teacher
- Copying or partly copying another's work
- Handing over one's own work to another while aware of the other person's fraudulent intention
- Unauthorised co-operation in completing a study attainment
- Disregarding the instructions given on completing the study attainment, using forbidden means or tools

#### Misconduct with theses

- Direct plagiarism in a part of the thesis (also plagiarism caused by inadequate references)
- Copying the thesis entirely or presenting a thesis written by another as one's own
- Fabrication or falsification in the thesis

## 4. Procedure and actors in misconduct cases

### 4.1 Student's legal protection

When investigating a student's misconduct, practices of good governance must be followed. It is especially important that the matter is handled without undue delay and that the student has a chance to be heard before any disciplinary action is decided. The student must have a chance to bring a support person to the personal hearing, dean's reprimand or other meeting organised by the University for handling the matter. The handling of the alleged misconduct is not public, but the decision documents are mostly public. Document publicity means that anyone can request to see the document or the information it contains. While the investigation is ongoing, the matter is brought only to the attention of the concerned parties and those persons whose work tasks it involves or persons who can provide additional clarification in the matter. The student must be informed about the progress of the investigation.

### 4.2 Procedure in handling misconduct

This chapter describes the responsibilities and tasks of each actor in the investigation process.

#### *Teacher*

In this context, teacher refers to the teacher in charge of the course/thesis supervisor.

The teacher reports the suspected violation to the administrative officer who investigates the matter (investigator) if the teacher cannot exclude misconduct or disregard for good scientific practice. In unclear cases, the teacher will first notify the student about their suspicion and give them an opportunity to give an oral or written explanation. If according to the teacher's estimation the case involves a minor carelessness or ignorance on behalf of the student, the teacher gives instructions on correct practices and returns the work to the student for correction. In these cases, the matter is not forwarded to the investigator, but the teacher can consult them if they wish. The teacher cannot fail the study attainment on the basis of misconduct if the violation has not first been confirmed with the procedure described in this guideline (see the possible exceptional procedure for lecture hall exams below).

When the teacher deems it appropriate to report the suspected misconduct to the investigator, the teacher gives their own written account on the matter. The evaluation of the study attainment shall be suspended until the matter is solved. If it is concluded in the investigation that the student has committed misconduct, the teacher must fail the study attainment. The student can appeal the failing grade similar to other evaluation of study attainments.

Even if there is an ongoing misconduct investigation for one student, the teacher has to evaluate other students' study attainments within the regulated time period.

#### *Different examinations and their supervision*

The exam supervisor must interfere in any suspected cheating, other misconduct or disregard of the given instructions at the examination.

Examination in a lecture hall (incl. electronic exams in lecture halls)

In obvious cheating cases, the supervisor notifies the student about their observation immediately, asks the student to leave the exam, and a failing grade is given to the student for the exam. In these exceptional cases, the matter does not require instigating an investigation, as only a notification and a description of the event to the investigator is sufficient. To ensure the student's legal protection, the student has the right also in these cases to make an appeal on the evaluation of the exam after the exam results have been published. Instead, if the matter concerns a suspected cheating, the exam supervisor notifies the student after the exam

and notifies the responsible teacher of the course. In the notification, they describe the observation, the student's possible explanation, and the taken action as well as their own written account on the matter.

#### Electronic exam in the University's facilities

Electronic exams that are conducted in the Exam rooms are supervised with video recordings. The supervisor notifies the administrator of the Exam system about a suspected misconduct, and the administrator in turn informs the investigator of the faculty or Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CeLCS). From this point forwards, see the description of the investigator's role.

#### Remote electronic exam

A remote electronic exam refers to an examination organised at a specific time or time period and conducted in an electronic learning environment at a place of the student's own choosing. In a remote electronic exam, the use of materials or group work cannot be supervised during the exam. This type of examination is best suited for situations where the use of the materials is free and collaboration does not compromise the fairness of the evaluation. The teacher informs the students of the rules of the electronic examination.

### ***Investigator***

The investigator is the Head of Academic and Student Affairs of the faculty or CeLCS or another expert in the Educational Affairs whose tasks include investigating alleged misconduct in the faculty. In Open University education, the investigator is either the Head of Academic and Student Affairs of the faculty or CeLCS, or an academic officer at the Open University and Continuous Learning unit whose tasks include investigating alleged misconduct. The Head of Academic and Student Affairs or other expert in the Educational Affairs is the investigator when the misconduct in Open University education takes place in teaching integrated into degree studies.

The investigation involves instructing the teacher and other parties on the procedures, collection of statements and other documents, student's written hearing, informing the parties, and preparing the matter for the decision of the dean if necessary. The investigation is conducted in the faculty where the course is taught or in CeLCS.

After receiving the notification of suspected misconduct from the responsible teacher or supervisor, the investigator will investigate the matter and gives the student a chance to be heard by requesting a written statement. If the investigator views that no misconduct has taken place, they will return the study attainment to the teacher for evaluation. If the investigator views that it is likely that misconduct has taken place, they prepare the matter for the dean who assesses the matter and decides on possible disciplinary action.

The investigator makes a note of all the procedures in the case report that is updated as the case progresses. The report is a freely drafted description of the process and the decisions. If the conclusion is that no misconduct has taken place, the report will be disposed of.

### ***Dean***

The dean decides on the disciplinary action on the basis of the investigator's preparation.

If the dean views on the basis of the investigation that the suspicion has no grounds, the investigator returns the study attainment to the teacher for evaluation.

If the dean views that the student has committed misconduct, the investigator will inform the teacher that they have to fail the study attainment. In addition, the dean can summon the student to a reprimand according to their discretion. If the dean views that failing the study attainment and the possible reprimand are not a sufficient disciplinary action in comparison to the reprehensibility of the student's misconduct, the dean proposes initiating further disciplinary action to the Rector.

If according to the dean's view the matter constitutes as research misconduct, they propose initiating a preliminary inquiry in accordance with TENK's guideline to the Rector. In these cases, the possible disciplinary action is decided at the earliest only after the preliminary inquiry is completed.

### **Rector**

Disciplinary action/procedure in accordance with TENK's guideline is handled centrally at the University of Turku. The procedure is initiated when the dean proposes taking action to the University's Rector. The Rector and the Director of Educational Affairs are responsible for the practical disciplinary action. The Rector and an expert in the Research Affairs are responsible for the disciplinary action in accordance with TENK's guideline.

The Rector decides whether the procedure according to TENK's guideline is applied to the matter and the preliminary inquiry initiated.

The Rector decides on issuing a warning in accordance with the Universities Act. If a warning is considered too lenient as a disciplinary action, the Rector proposes a fixed-term suspension to the University Board. The student can make an appeal to the Administrative Court on the decision. However, it has to be stated in the Board's decision whether the decision is implemented while it has not yet gained legal validity.

## **4.3 Using plagiarism detection software**

The originality of all the theses completed at the University of Turku are checked with the plagiarism detection software maintained by the University.

It is recommended that the plagiarism detection software is used at different stages of studies to the extent that the goal of ethical academic activities require.

The figure below presents the use of plagiarism detection software in originality check and the procedure for suspected misconduct.



## 5. Disciplinary action for misconduct

If it is concluded after the investigation that misconduct has taken place, the student receives a failing grade for the study attainment. The failing grade is the only disciplinary action when the student's misconduct is not very serious. Other possible disciplinary actions are dean's reprimand and the disciplinary actions described in Section 45 of the Universities Act, which include Rector's written warning or a temporary suspension issued by the University Board. The disciplinary action also applies to the students who have assisted in the misconduct.

If the suspected misconduct comes to light after the study attainment has been graded or the decision on the credit transfer/recognition of prior learning has been made, the suspected misconduct can lead to the rectification of the decision and disciplinary action.

Confirmed misconduct is always reported to the student's home university. This applies to both national and international mobility. Incoming students must be informed of the reporting procedure.

The University's [guideline on good scientific practice and handling alleged misconduct](#) is applied to doctoral dissertations.

### 5.1 Failing grade for study attainment

If it is concluded after the investigation that misconduct has taken place, the student receives a failing grade for the entire course, unless it causes unreasonable disadvantage, for example, to patients or other external parties.

### 5.2 Dean's reprimand

In addition to a failing grade, the student can be summoned to a dean's reprimand as a disciplinary measure following the seriousness of the misconduct. Dean's reprimand is issued every time the matter is handled on the University level.

### 5.3 Rector's written warning

If it is concluded that the student's misconduct is serious, a Rector's written warning is issued to the student. The dean proposes taking disciplinary action to the Rector.

### 5.4 Temporary suspension issued by University Board

In serious cases or in the case of recurring misconduct in spite of a warning, the Board may suspend the student for a fixed period of time, which is at most one year.

In assessing the seriousness of the misconduct, the following matters are taken into consideration

- Recurrence of the misconduct
- Reprehensibility of the misconduct, e.g. deliberateness
- Significance of the course for the studies
- The reached gain through misconduct
- In cases involving plagiarism, the extent and nature of plagiarism, for example, systematic actions and apparent disregard for instructions

Temporary suspension means that the student's right to study is suspended for a fixed term. During the suspension, the student cannot enrol to the University, complete courses or graduate. The suspended student's UTU user account is also invalid.

## 6. Document preparation, storage, and publicity

The administrative language of the University of Turku is Finnish, so the language used in the administrative decisions and reports drafted on cases of misconduct is Finnish. According to the service principle of the support services, the contents of the decision and reports on the investigation are shared in English with students who do not understand Finnish. In addition, students can deliver their statements in English and they can use English in the meetings.

The procedures are documented in the case report by the investigator as the case proceeds. Attached to the case report are the notification about a suspected misconduct, the student's statement, and other documentation relevant to the matter. The documents are stored in the faculty's archive in accordance with the University's decision on the storage period of documents. The case report and the possible decision on disciplinary actions are delivered to the student as well as the teacher, dean, and other possible parties who have been involved in the investigation. The dean and investigator of the student's home faculty are also informed of the decision if the course is taught in another faculty.

Once a decision has been made in the case, it becomes public unless it exceptionally involves the student's personal matters or verbal assessment of their study attainment. In some cases, the document remains public if the confidential information can be redacted. If the document is public, anyone can request to see it. While the case is ongoing, only the parties involved in the matter can get information on its progress.

For exchange students, the University's International Office handles the reporting on the matter to the student's home university on the basis of the report they receive from the faculty. The disciplinary action issued for a student studying a joint degree can also be reported to the partner university if this procedure has been agreed upon.

## 7. More information

- Handling alleged misconduct in good scientific practice at the University of Turku: <https://www.utu.fi/en/research/ethics/misconduct-in-scientific-practice>
- Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity Responsible conduct of research and handling alleged violations, [http://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK\\_ohje\\_2012.pdf](http://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK_ohje_2012.pdf)
- Ethical guidelines for learning at the University of Turku: [https://intranet.utu.fi/index/ethical\\_guidelines\\_for\\_learning/Pages/default.aspx](https://intranet.utu.fi/index/ethical_guidelines_for_learning/Pages/default.aspx)