

Framework for the Assessment of Undergraduate Plagiarism

Established:	1 September 2017
Revised:	[...]
Supersedes:	N/A
Responsible/Originating Department:	Vice-President, Academic & Provost
Executive Contact:	Associate Vice-President, Academic

Related Policies, Guidelines & Procedures:

Policy 71 – Student Discipline

Policy 73 – Intellectual Property Rights

1. General

Policy 71’s glossary defines *plagiarism*, in part, as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others (whether attributed or anonymous) as one’s own in any work submitted whether or not for grading purposes”. The following principles are articulated in recognition that:

- 1) some instances of plagiarism may be the result of inadequate writing strategies rather than a lapse in academic integrity; and
- 2) a variable penalty is needed to address the range of occurrences of plagiarism.

2. Principles

1. The student’s associate dean has the authority to assess instances of plagiarism and the resultant penalties. An instructor can propose a grade penalty to the associate dean, who will decide whether to accept the penalty or initiate a formal inquiry.
2. Students sometimes make submissions¹ that contain material that is the work of others. When this material is properly cited, initial submissions should not be considered an academic integrity violation. The student’s mark should reflect the amount of the student’s own writing. For example, if the submission contains a disproportionate quantity of cited materials, such that the student has contributed very little original material to the submission, then the student’s mark should reflect that limited level of contribution. Students who make these submissions have the responsibility to address this type of writing error and will be directed to campus resources that support improved writing (see Appendix A – Achieving Academic Success).

¹ “Submissions” refers to any work provided by a student in order to obtain credit in a course and includes (but is not limited to) essays, assignments, reports, proposals, lab reports, and presentations.

3. Repeat instances of writing errors described in Principle 2 may be treated as academic integrity violations and may lead to a penalty that includes disciplinary probation to recognize the failure of the student to address the issue.
4. The severity of the penalty associated with the plagiarism depends on both the quantity of plagiarized content and the extent to which the student failed to attribute the plagiarized materials. (Examples: one sentence of poorly paraphrased material may warrant a significantly lighter penalty than a full essay of unattributed, copied-and-pasted text; two plagiarized sentences in a 10-page essay might receive a lighter penalty than four plagiarized pages in a 10-page essay.)
5. The impact of an academic integrity violation on a student's marks depends on the value of the submission. (Examples: a penalty of a 100% reduction on an assignment worth 2% of a student's final course grade is not particularly impactful; a penalty of a 50% reduction in the earned grade on an assignment worth 40% of the student's final course grade may result in a course failure.) As such, imposed penalties can vary from the Suggested Management of Plagiarism Penalties (see Appendix B) in an effort to ensure that their impact is consistent with their objectives. In the first example described in this principle, the imposed penalty may be a 100% reduction on the assignment grade plus an additional 5% reduction from the final course grade. In the second example described in this principle, the imposed penalty may be a 50% reduction on the assignment earned grade, but may specify that the student's final mark on the assignment should not produce a failure in the course.
6. There may be instances where a student's submission includes multiple components (such as lab reports) with plagiarism confined to a single section. If the marking rubric allows, the imposed penalty may be limited to that section of the submission; in such cases, the section penalty will normally be 100%.
7. For group submissions, students are strongly encouraged to identify the portions of the assignment for which they are responsible. In the absence of this identification, all students will be held responsible for violations of academic integrity in the group submission. A sample form to allocate responsibility in group submissions can be found in Appendix C – Assignment Checklist for Group Submissions.
8. Associate Deans can consider extenuating circumstances in levying penalties that are less severe than the guidelines (see Appendix B – Suggested Management of Plagiarism Penalties). The most common of these circumstances is limited university experience (Example: student's first term at the University) because students are still learning these conventions.
9. Consistent with University policy, repeat offenders shall receive more severe penalties.