

Plagiarism Prevention Policy and Interpretative Guidelines

University of Ruhuna

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1. Introduction

The University of Ruhuna considers plagiarism as an academic offense and breach of academic integrity. Therefore the university strictly adheres to prevent such activities among its communities. Generally, in scientific writing, it is required to ensure the originality, and ethical use of information. On this ground, the university's responsibility is to encourage the students and staff to develop their concern for matters related to academic integrity, plagiarism, and copyright.

Plagiarism cases must be dealt with consistently and fairly. The purpose of this policy document is to establish a framework for detecting and dealing with plagiarism issues related to academic works submitted to the University of Ruhuna.

2. Scope of the policy

This plagiarism prevention policy and the interpreting guidelines apply to the postgraduate theses/dissertations, undergraduate project reports, assignments of students and research works of the staff, of any Department/Faculty/Unit of the University of Ruhuna. This Policy is intended for institutional use only.

3. Objectives of the policy

The objectives of this Policy are to provide a framework for identifying and avoiding plagiarism and managing instances of alleged cases of plagiarism.

4. Definition and description of plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting ideas, artworks, or other creative works of someone else as his/her own, without giving due credit or acknowledgment to the originator of those ideas or works.

The plagiarism in academic writings is the major concern of University of Ruhuna and it could be either a 'direct plagiarism' i.e. copying someone else's text without any changes, or a 'mosaic plagiarism' i.e. paraphrasing some parts of the text while keeping the rest as it is, in a way to result a mixture of changed and unchanged parts in mosaic nature. Submitting any part of previously published own works in either way of the above two, but without referring to the previous publication and pretending as new is

named as 'self-plagiarism'. Submitting or presenting a collaborative work as one's own is also comes under plagiarism. The university also complies with other instances of plagiarism recognized by the University Grants Commission.

5. The Plagiarism Prevention Policy of University of Ruhuna

5.1 University of Ruhuna shall thoroughly examine all instances of plagiarism related to the submissions by postgraduate students/undergraduates/staff in any form of dissertation/theses/undergraduate projects/assignments/articles/chapters/reports etc. as relevant, and apply appropriate corrective measures/ punitive actions recommended by the committee appointed by the university in cases of plagiarism is confirmed to have occurred;

5.2 The University of Ruhuna reserves the right to use a similarity detection mechanism in electronic or any other mode to identify the potential plagiarism instances. However, the decision on plagiarism matters shall be taken with the interpretation of human experts and their justifications;

5.3 The University of Ruhuna complies with the tolerance level of similarity as 25% for postgraduate submissions and 40% for undergraduate submissions. The similarity level shall be decided based on the Similarity Comparison Report (SCR) generated through the Similarity Comparison Platform or/and Plagiarism Verification Report (PVR) provided by the Plagiarism Detection Committee (PDC) of the relevant faculty.

5.4. A Plagiarism Detection Committee (PDC) shall be appointed by the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) to interpret the Similarity Comparison Report (SCR) of alleged cases of plagiarism related to the submissions from all Ph.D., MPhil, and Research-based Master degree programmes. This committee shall issue a Plagiarism Verification Report (PVR) with recommendations as directions provided by the university on plagiarism.

5.5 Other than 5.4 above, Faculty level Plagiarism Detection Committees can be appointed on requirements of other faculties with the approval of the respective

Faculty Boards to deal with disputes of alleged plagiarism cases related to undergraduate submissions and submissions from other postgraduate courses relevant to the Faculty's purview.

5.6 Before imposing any penalty based on the recommendations of the Plagiarism Detection Committees, the alleged candidate/submitter shall be allowed to submit an appeal (if requested) with evidence to consider the mitigation of the penalty;

5.7.1 An Appeal Committee shall be appointed on requirements by the FGS with the approval of the Senate to deal with the appeals from disputed plagiarism cases related to postgraduate submissions viz. Ph.D., MPhil, and Research-based Masters degree. The decision of this Appeal Committee will be the final decision of the case.

5.7.2 Other faculties also can appoint Appeal Committees if required with the approval of the respective Faculty Board to deal with the appeals from disputed plagiarism cases related to other postgraduate or undergraduate submissions.

5.8 All submissions for postgraduate degree purposes must accompany a 'Plagiarism Declaration' statement by the candidate that the work submitted is in line with this Policy;

5.8 The University shall make awareness of plagiarism and preventive measures by providing plagiarism prevention policies and guidelines to all staff and students.

5.9 As undergraduate assignments can show variations such as limitation of literature, novelty in scope, depending on the nature of subject disciplines and availability of reference sources, all the faculties should prepare and follow a proper framework approved by the respective Faculty Board to control plagiarism in undergraduate assignments. Such framework may consist of tolerance of similarity levels and punitive actions such as deducting marks from assignments according to the extent of plagiarism detected.

5.10 Events such as University Academic Sessions, conferences, symposiums, colloquiums, and research journals may have specific standards on plagiarism prevention. Students and staff of the university must comply with those standards when they submit a work to them.

6. Guidelines

This policy also includes the following guidelines as detection and preventive measures of plagiarism within the University:

6.1 Composition of Committees

6.1.1 As per 5.4 above, the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) shall appoint the following members for the Plagiarism Detection Committee (PDC) of Faculty of Graduate Studies.

- Dean, Faculty of Graduate studies
- Chairman /a representative from the related Board of Studies
- Supervisors of the related projects (one or two as relevant)
- Assistant Registrar/ Senior Assistant Registrar/ Deputy Registrar of the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for documentation)
- Subject experts (one member only as relevant in cases)
- Librarian

The role of the Plagiarism Detection Committee (PDC) is to interpret the Similarity Comparison Report (SCR) with justifications and provide recommendations in alleged cases of plagiarism. The PDC may follow the guidelines provided in Annex A when interpreting the SCR.

6.1.2 As per 5.5 of this document, faculty level Plagiarism Detection Committees can be appointed if required by respective Faculties with the approval of the respective Faculty Board to deal with disputes of alleged plagiarism cases related to submissions from undergraduate and postgraduate submissions under purview of the faculty other than PhD/MPhil and Masters programmes. The Faculty Board may decide the appropriate number of members and the composition of the committee. Such committee may be represented by;

- Head of the Department if relevant to the case
- Two senior academic members of the department as relevant to the case
- Supervisor (as relevant to the case) of the candidate

6.1.3 As per 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 of this document, Appeal Committees shall be appointed by the Board of Graduate Studies/ Faculty Boards for each case of appeal. The committee shall include a minimum of three members of Senior Academics as relevant. If it is FGS, the approval for the committee should be obtained from the Senate of the university. In other faculties, the approval for this committee should be obtained from the respective Faculty Board. The decision of this Appeal Committee will be the final decision of the case.

6.2 Generation of the Similarity Comparison Report (SCR)

6.2.1. Postgraduate submissions

6.2.1.2 In case of submissions related to Ph.D./MPhil/Research-based Masters degrees, the Dean/Course Coordinator/Assistant Registrar (whoever is responsible) of the Faculty of Graduate Studies shall send the Ph.D./MPhil/Masters theses/dissertation to the Librarian of the university for generating the Similarity Comparison Report (SCR) of the document.

6.2.1.3 Librarian of the University or his representative shall generate SCR of the thesis/dissertation through the Similarity Comparison Platform and shall send it to the FGS. The Librarian/representative may follow the additional guidelines treated in Annex B when generating the SCR

6.2.1.4 In case of other postgraduate submissions under the purview of other Faculties, the Coordinator of the course/supervisor (whoever is responsible) shall generate the SCR and shall proceed with the process with a declaration of the similarity level. The Coordinator of the course/supervisor may follow the additional guidelines treated in Annex C and Annex A when generating the SCR.

6.2.2 Undergraduate submissions

6.2.2.1 In the case of undergraduate project submissions, the Supervisor/Coordinator/teacher (as relevant) shall generate the SCR and shall proceed with the process with a declaration of the similarity level. The Supervisor/Coordinator/teacher who generates the SCR may consider the additional guidelines treated in Annex C and Annex A.

6.2.2.2 In the case of undergraduate assignments, the relevant teacher shall check the similarity through the platform and evaluate the plagiarism according to the guidelines of the Faculty (Refer to clause 5.9).

6.3 Responsibilities of students/staff and the university to avoid plagiarism

6.3.1 Responsibility of students to avoid plagiarism

Any student (postgraduate or undergraduate) is responsible for checking the cases liable to plagiarism in his/her projects/dissertations/assignments and to act with integrity to avoid such cases before presenting/submitting them to the University. Students should refer to the plagiarism prevention guidelines, provided by the Department/Faculty/Library or from the website of the Faculty/Library/University for avoiding plagiarism in their works. Unawareness is not an excuse for plagiarism. Students are advised to pre-check the work before submission with the support of the Supervisor/Teacher/Library

6.3.2 Responsibility of staff to avoid plagiarism

All the staff members engaged in teaching and/or supervising students' projects/academic works are responsible for making the students aware of the plagiarism offenses and encourage them to comply with plagiarism prevention policies.

6.3.3 Responsibilities of the university

- 6.3.3.1 Each Faculty/Department/Library shall undertake educative and awareness programs to apprise students of plagiarism prevention and ethical & fair use of information.
- 6.3.3.2 University should provide access to policies, guidelines, handbooks, and reference sources related to plagiarism prevention through the web pages of the University/Faculty/department/Library.
- 6.3.3.3 University should provide easy access to similarity checking platforms to the community of the university and educate and assist them to work with these tools.
- 6.3.3.4 Each Faculty/ Teaching Unit of the university should provide clear information and guidelines regarding the plagiarism policies and required referencing styles to the candidate at the beginning of the course.

7. Maintenance/administration of the Similarity Detection Platform

The overall administration of the similarity detection platform shall be handled by the Library of the University of Ruhuna. All the academic staff members/students interested shall obtain a user account of the platform.

8. Amendments to the policy

Amendments to this policy shall be made from time to time on the requirements of the Faculties. Such amendments shall go through the University's Council for Quality Assurance (CQA), and other relevant bodies of the University of Ruhuna with the approval from the University Senate

9. Interpretation of Terms

Fair use – Use of copyrighted materials for certain types of purposes such as teaching, learning, scholarship, and research criticism, comment, news reporting, etc. for noncommercial purposes

Other postgraduate courses – Courses such as non-research based Masters and Diploma.

Submission- Any form of work submitted to the university

Submitter – Any person who submits such a work

Work – Any written document in the form of a thesis/dissertation/ research report/article/chapter/essay/ assignment submitted to the university by the students/staff for credit/evaluation for a basic or postgraduate degree course.

Sources Referred

Plagiarism.org, <https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism>

Stellenbosch University. Policy on plagiarism (in support of academic integrity).

https://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/ctl/Documents/SU%20Plagiarism%20Policy_2016.pdf

UCD Policy and FAQ.

https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/UCD_Policy_on_Plagiarism_and_FAQ.pdf

University of Leicester (2020). Senate Regulation 11: Regulations governing student conduct and discipline. sr11-student-conduct-September 2020.

<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/documents/sr11-student-conduct-september-2020>.

Annex A – Guidelines for the interpretation of the Similarity Comparison report

The Plagiarism Detection Committee (PDC) of the Faculty may consider the following guidelines when it interprets the Similarity Comparison Report (SCR) provided by the Librarian.

- A1. Similarity index of the SCR is not a verdict of plagiarism because it only shows the matches with the content of the Internet and journals and repositories. Therefore expert involvement is essential to take an accurate decision on the plagiarism level of the submission.
- A2. As an accepted procedure in many similarity detection platforms, the following matches shall be disregarded in similarity checking:
 - A2.1 Similarities arisen from definitions, quoted texts, bibliography, reference list, common phrases, proper nouns, affiliations, standard equations, and common technical terms used in the document.
 - A2.2 Similarities arisen from the repositories of the same student.
- A3. In cases of the SCR does not verify the charts, tables, formulae, music/compositions, diagrams, digital images, designs, models, software, drawings, works of art, photographs, and other pictorial material except for their text, the committee may consider the similarities of such materials with subject knowledge and practical experiences when interpreting the SCR.
- A4. The special cases which are justifiable, such as similarities that have arisen from articles published as a part of one's postgraduate thesis can be disregarded from similarities.
- A5. The upper limit of similarities arisen from a single source should be 15% for postgraduate submissions and 20% for undergraduate submissions. In cases of exceeding the upper limits, the committee may consider justifications.
- A6. The maximum number of words in a sentence in the same position is 05 for postgraduate submissions and 15 for undergraduate submissions.

A7. With overall consideration of the above matters (A1-A6), the plagiarism level of the submission and recommendations can be determined based on the following norms (Table A1):

Table A1- Determination of plagiarism level and potential recommendations

Plagiarism Level	Similarity percentage	Recommendation by the committee		
		Postgraduate submissions	Undergraduate submission	
			Project reports/dissertations	Assignments
Level 0	Similarities up to 25%,	Minor Similarities, no punitive actions.	Considered as no significant issue of plagiarism.	Refer to the Faculty Board approved Framework
Level 1	Similarities above from 25% to 40%	The submitter shall be asked to resubmit a revised version.	Minor Similarities. No penalty	
Level 2	Similarities above 40%	The submitter shall be asked to resubmit a revised version.	The student shall be asked to resubmit the revised version.	

Annex B - Generating and issuing of the Similarity Comparison Report of Postgraduate submissions

- P1. In cases of postgraduate graduate-related submissions, the Dean/Course Coordinator of the Faculty (Faculty of Graduate Studies) shall send the submission to the Librarian for generating the Similarity Comparison Report (SCR) of the document.
- B2. The Librarian shall generate the Similarity Comparison Report of the document through the platform and sends the SCR directly to the Dean/Course Coordinator /AR (whoever is relevant) of the Faculty.
- B3. In the generation of the SCR, the Librarian may consider the exclusion of the following from the similarity check:
- B3.1 All the quoted phrases with correct citation
 - B3.2 References, bibliography, table of content, preface, and acknowledgments (the candidate is required to submit a separate document excluding these sections with the submission of the work).
 - B3.3 All generic terms, institution names, laws, technical terms, standard symbols, and mathematical equations.
 - B3.3.1 Librarian may contact a subject specialist in case of doubt of generic and technical terms.

Annex C - Generating and issuing of the Similarity Comparison Report of Undergraduate submissions

- C.1 In the case of undergraduate work/projects/assignments the Supervisor/Teacher/Coordinator (as relevant) of the dissertation/project or assignment shall generate the Similarity Comparison Report (SCR) through the platform.

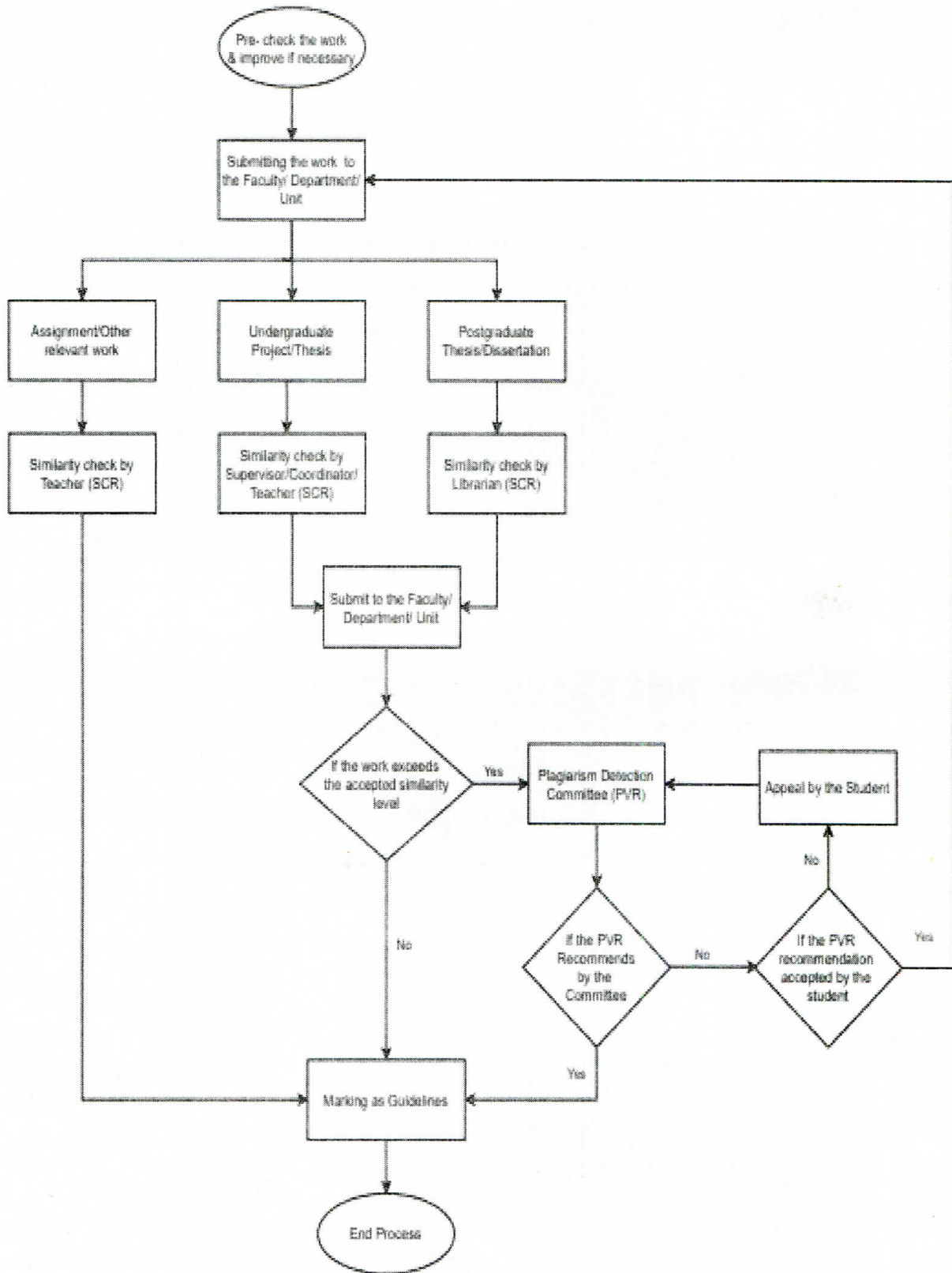
- C.2 If it is a project report/dissertation, and if the SCR is within the accepted level of similarity, proceed with evaluation and send it directly to the Head of the Department/Coordinator with a declaration that the submission is complying with the similarity tolerance level according to the plagiarism prevention policy of the university.

- C.3 If the SCR of the project report/dissertation exceeds the accepted level of similarity, submit the SCR to the Head of the Department/Coordinator to be verified through the Plagiarism Detection Committee of the faculty.

- C4. If it is an assignment, the teacher (relevant) should follow the relevant framework of the Faculty (refer to clauses 5.9 and 6.2.2.2 of this document).

- C5. In generating the SCR through the platform disregard the following elements from the document.
 - C5.1 All the quoted phrases with correct citation
 - C5.2 References, bibliography, table of content, preface, and acknowledgments (the student can be asked to submit a separate document excluding these sections with the submission of the work).
 - C5.3 All generic terms, institution names, laws, technical terms, standard symbols, and mathematical equations.

Annex D - Implementation Process of the Plagiarism Prevention Policy



***Annex E - Committee Members of the Review Team for the final draft of the
Plagiarism Prevention Policy, University of Ruhuna***

Mr. J J G Arachchige, (Library Representative & Convener)

Mr. Nimal Hettiarchchi, (Acting Librarian & Coordinator)

Prof. L.P. Jayathissa, Chairman, Library Committee, Faculty of Graduate Studies (Member)

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