



Code of conduct for the prevention and processing of misconduct in studies at University of Oulu¹

This is an unofficial translation of the “Code of conduct for the prevention and processing of misconduct in studies at University of Oulu”. Please note that in the event of any discrepancies between the Finnish and English versions, the original Finnish version “Ohje vilppitapausten ehkäisemiseen ja käsittelemiseen Oulun yliopistossa” shall prevail.

¹ Oulun yliopiston opinnäytetöitä ja opintosuorituksia koskeva plagiointitapausten käsittelyohje.



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1 The instructions' intended use and range of application

The purpose of this instruction is to prevent misconduct (fraud) in studies and provide guidelines for processing cases of misconduct in studies. This instruction applies to all degree students at the University of Oulu and international exchange students and, where appropriate, students completing non-degree studies, Open University studies or studies in continuing education. The instruction applies to the study attainments and theses completed at the University of Oulu.

2 Ethical principles at the university

Academic freedom is the fundamental right of universities and their teacher-researchers and students. The freedom of thought is at the core of all academic activity. The freedom of studying encompasses the students' right to participate in teaching, plan their studies, make choices related to studying, learn new things, seek for information and educate themselves. University students have a lot of freedom, but also responsibility. Academic responsibility means, for instance, the obligation to study actively and take responsibility for one's learning and study progress. Completing qualifications involves earning credit, but the main objective should be learning, understanding and developing into an expert in your own field. A responsible student does not cheat or promote misconduct in others, and gives him/herself and the others a possibility of good learning.

University of Oulu has committed to following the guidelines of Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland,² set by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland. The RCR guidelines apply both to the research and training taking place at the university. The realisation of good scientific practice requires commitment from the entire university community to its principles. Student plagiarism or other misconduct in studies does not only infringe on teachers and instructors, but violates the entire university community and its ethical principles.

See also the ethical principles of the University of Oulu, which examine the ethics of teaching alongside the ethics of studying³.

3 Induction into good scientific practice

Scientific research can be ethically acceptable and reliable, and its results can be reliable only if the study has been carried out in accordance with good scientific practice. Self-regulation of the scientific community is required for applying the guidelines of good scientific practice, and its limits are defined by legislation. Good scientific practice is also part of research organisations' quality system. The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity has defined the principles of responsible conduct of research from the perspective of research integrity in its RCR guidelines⁴.

3.1 The responsibility of the university and degree programme for induction into good scientific practice

The university has the responsibility to ensure that the induction into good scientific practice and research ethics are part of university training⁵. It is important that students are sufficiently versed in correct

² [Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland](#). 2012.

³ [Oulu University Ethical rules](#). 2012. (In Finnish)

⁴ [Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland](#). 2012, 30.

⁵ [Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland](#). 2012, 31.



reference techniques from the beginning of their studies and take into account ethical perspectives in their studies and scientific texts. The person responsible for the degree programme must ensure that:

- the teaching of research integrity is integrated into the curriculum, so that students understand and commit to the principles of good scientific practice.
- new students are introduced to good scientific practice, for example, as part of their orientation.
- the students are familiar with the main points of these guidelines for the prevention and processing of cases of alleged misconduct in studies, and they understand what type of conduct is regarded fraudulent, and which penalties may follow.
- induction into good scientific practice is included in the curriculum, and it outlines instructions for the prevention and handling of cases of misconduct in studies.

3.2 The teacher's responsibility for induction into good scientific practice

The teachers' role is to support students' learning and the development of scientific thinking in accordance with the ethical academic principles, and to intervene in misconduct in studies whenever detected.

Students must be educated on source reference practices relevant to their scientific field from the very beginning of their studies. It is important that the teacher regularly discusses the principles of good scientific practice with the students. The teachers' duty is to acquaint the students with reference practices on their course prior to any written assignments or to supply the students with appropriate guidelines for making references. Special attention shall be given to the guidance of international students, because not all cultures share the same ethical rules as Finland. The students should also be reminded of these instructions⁶ and of the fact that cases of alleged misconduct in studies are investigated without exception.

3.3 The student's responsibility for compliance with good scientific practice

According to the Regulations of the University of Oulu⁷, students must comply with the teaching and studying instructions of the University of Oulu. The student has the responsibility to find out what type of conduct is desirable and what is regarded as fraudulent. The student's duty is to familiarise him/herself in great detail with the guidelines of Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct⁸ set by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, Oulu University Ethical rules⁹ and this set of instructions. If a student is uncertain of what is acceptable and what fraudulent, he or she must obtain advice from the teacher or personal tutor.

4 Violation of good scientific practice

Violation of good scientific practice can either be research misconduct or disregard for the responsible conduct of research. The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity divides research misconduct in its RCR guidelines into the following four subcategories¹⁰:

- **Fabrication** refers to reporting invented observations to the research community. The fabricated observations have not been made by using the methods described in the research report. Fabrication also means presenting fabricated results in a research report.

⁶ Ohje vilpittapausten ehkäisemiseen ja käsittelemiseen Oulun yliopistossa. 2018. / Code of conduct for the prevention and processing of misconduct in studies at University of Oulu. 2018.

⁷ [University of Oulu Education Regulations](#), Section 25. 2016.

⁸ [Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland](#). 2012.

⁹ [University of Oulu Ethical rules](#). 2012.

¹⁰ [Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland](#). 2012, 32-33.



- **Falsification** (misrepresentation) refers to modifying and presenting original observations deliberately so that the results based on those observations are distorted. The falsification of results refers to the unfounded modification or selection of research results. Falsification also refers to the omission of results of information that are essential for the conclusions.
- **Plagiarism**, or unacknowledged borrowing, refers to representing another person's material as one's own without appropriate references. This includes research plans, manuscripts, articles, other texts or parts of them, visual materials, or translations. Plagiarism includes direct copying as well as adapted copying.
- **Misappropriation** refers to the unlawful presentation of another person's result, idea, plan, observation or data as one's own research.

In the academic setting, misconduct in studies means any dishonest activity undertaken by the student to give the wrong impression of either their own or another student's knowledge with the intention of influencing the acceptance of a study attainment and its evaluation. Any kind of misconduct in studies is prohibited, and the University of Oulu takes all unethical and fraudulent activity very seriously. Cases of alleged research misconduct or misconduct in studies are investigated without exception.

Misconduct in studies can be, for instance:

- using notes, source literature or other aids in an exam when their use is not agreed upon
- copying another student's answer in an exam
- copying another student's essay or assignment and presenting it as one's own study attainment
- buying a study attainment from another student or from another third party
- completing a study attainment, such as participating in an exam or completing an assignment, on behalf of another student
- using another student's essay, assignment, thesis or similar written work in one's own studies without appropriate reference to the origins of the information, ideas or methods
- inappropriate copying (plagiarism) of text, video, software code or parts of it, visuals, or a translation received or purchased from another student, the internet or elsewhere
- granting another student the right to use one's own assignment or equivalent knowing that the other student will present it as his/her own
- using a previous study attainment of one's own or parts of it as a basis for new work without a proper source reference or without separate agreement with the teacher ("self plagiarism")
- the omission of used sources
- inflating the source list in order to artificially increase the number of references
- inventing or distorting measurement results or other observations
- failing to complete one's own contribution in pair or group work.

The study attainment can be completed as group work only when permissible according to the teacher's guidelines. If the study attainment has been carried out in a group, this has to be clearly identified, as well as reporting what part of the project each student is responsible for.

If, in connection with an alleged case of misconduct in studies, there is reason to believe that more than one student is involved, for instance, a student has presented the work of another student as his/her own with permission from the other student, the matter shall be investigated as a case of alleged misconduct in studies for all parties concerned.

Misconduct in studies may also constitute a criminal offence by law, such as in the case of copyright violation, falsifying a transcript of records, a certificate or any other document, or trading falsified documents. The university may submit the suspected crime to the police for investigation.



5 University's steps for preventing plagiarism in thesis work

Oulu University uses the Urkund programme for preventing cases of plagiarism¹¹. Urkund is a programme designed for comparing texts, and it compares new documents submitted to it with all previously uploaded documents in its archive, material on the internet and the secure databases of Urkund's partners. Urkund is used for checking thesis work on all qualification levels. It is also possible to use Urkund for checking other written work.

The Urkund check of a study attainment document requires the student's consent, as the document will be saved in the programme's database. Allowing the document to be checked on Urkund improves the student's own copyright protection, as it is more difficult for another person to use the work or parts of it in his or her own name. If a student refuses the Urkund check, the instructor conducts a plagiarism inspection without the programme, for example, through the use of search engines and by comparing the thesis with other written sources.

Urkund compares the submitted thesis or other document with its own archive of documents and material in its database. After the automatic check, Urkund sends a report to the inspector, indicating possible similarities between the document and other texts. If Urkund finds similarities between the document submitted by the student and other material, the inspector shall check the Urkund report and assess whether plagiarism is involved. The students have the right to see the Urkund report relating to their own work. The student may request for the Urkund report from the thesis inspector.

The faculty or degree programme can use or obtain access to other tools for making necessary plagiarism checks, such as for investigating software plagiarism. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the faculty or degree programme to draw up guidelines for the students and staff on how the tool is used and how the results are processed.

6 General principles of investigating alleged cases of misconduct in studies

At the University of Oulu, cases of alleged misconduct in studies are always investigated. The investigation complies with the principles of the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003), which lays down provisions on the foundations of good administration and principles of disqualification. The central procedural factors affecting legal protection are:

- fairness and impartiality of the process
- the hearing of all parties
- the expertise and speed of the process.

When investigating alleged misconduct in studies, it is important to ensure that each phase of the procedure is thoroughly documented and that all parties' right of access to data and other procedural rights are respected. All individuals processing cases of alleged misconduct in studies are under contractual liability and responsible for ensuring that the information will be treated confidentially. If a party to proceedings does not have a sufficient grasp of Finnish or Swedish, the working language used with him or her will also be used in the investigation, such as in the hearings and documents.

¹¹ For More information on Urkund and guidelines for Urkund inspections: <http://www oulu.fi/urkundsystem/>.

7 The guidelines for teachers or exam invigilators in cases of alleged misconduct in studies

7.1 The exam invigilator's guidelines for dealing with misconduct in studies during an exam

If an exam invigilator notices a case of misconduct or an attempt to cheat during an exam, such as a discussion, giving assistance to another student, copying another student's answers or handing over one's exam paper to another student, or if the teacher detects the use of technical aids, he or she must intervene immediately. The exam invigilator can choose between two options depending on the situation: 1) giving a verbal warning or 2) discontinuing the exam.

1. A verbal warning can be given, for example, if the exam invigilator notices a student's attempt to discuss with another student. The invigilator may ask the students to end the conversation and indicate that the student must comply with the rules of exam situations. The invigilator may also move the involved students further apart in the exam hall.

2. If the student, despite receiving a verbal notice, does not comply with the exam rules, or if the invigilator notices an obvious case of misconduct or an attempt to cheat, the invigilator may ask the student to leave the exam hall, and his or her exam will not be completed. The student is obliged to return his or her exam papers and prove his or her identity. The invigilator shall inform the student that he or she will be contacted in order to clarify the matter. If there is reason to suspect that several students have committed misconduct in studies together, such as a student showing his/her answers to another student, all students involved will be removed from the exam hall, and the matter will be investigated as a case of alleged misconduct in studies for all parties involved.

3. If the invigilator is a different person than the course teacher, he or she will mark the alleged misconduct in studies on the student's exam paper and the student list. The invigilator shall also write his or her name and contact details on the student list. The exam response shall then be submitted to the teacher / examiner as usual.

4. The invigilator shall write a report of the alleged misconduct in studies and the reasons for discontinuing the exam within one week from the alleged misconduct, and submit it to the course teacher/examiner. The invigilator shall write his/her name and contact information on the report. The invigilator shall also mention any other possible witnesses, such as another invigilator or another student participating in the exam.

5. The teacher / examiner shall submit the allegation to the Education Dean for investigation. The teacher shall not analyse the matter further with the student. If the teacher has anything to add to the processing of the case which is not apparent from the invigilator's report, he or she can also provide his/her own report to the Education Dean in addition to the invigilator's report. The teacher shall submit the case of alleged misconduct in studies for investigation within a week from the date when he or she has become aware of the suspicion. The study attainment's assessment is deferred until the Education Dean has investigated the matter.

7.2 Teacher's guidelines for dealing with misconduct in studies in a thesis

If a thesis supervisor suspects misconduct in studies before the completion of the work, he or she can consider two possible options depending on the case 1) giving a verbal warning or 2) documenting the alleged misconduct in studies and submitting it for investigation.



In cases of alleged minor misconduct in studies, for example, when the student has left a source reference unmarked, the instructor can give a verbal warning to the student and guide him/her to work in accordance with the principles of good scientific practice. In such cases, the instructor uses mainly instructive methods.

In allegations of a more serious misconduct in studies, the supervisor documents the proof he or she has relating to the case. For instance, in cases of plagiarism, the teacher clarifies in detail which source the student has used and points out the similarities between the student's text and the source material. The thesis supervisor will submit the case of alleged misconduct in studies as well as the related report to the Education Dean for investigation. The supervisor shall not investigate the matter further with the student. The supervisor shall submit the case of alleged misconduct in studies for investigation within a week from the date when he or she has become aware of the suspicion. The supervisor informs the student that he or she will be contacted in relation with the matter.

If the case of alleged misconduct in studies arises after the thesis evaluation process has started, in other words, after the thesis has been submitted for evaluation via Laturi, the nominated pre-examiners or examiners shall write a statement presenting the case of misconduct in studies. The examiners shall submit their statement to the Education Dean, and the thesis assessment will be discontinued until the case of alleged misconduct in studies has been investigated. The thesis supervisor shall also inform the Chairperson and Secretary of the Degree Programme Committee about the case of alleged misconduct in studies as soon as he or she becomes aware of it, because at this point, the work is already in Laturi, and there is a risk that it will be approved in the next meeting if information regarding the allegation does not arrive on time.

7.3 Teachers dealing with cases of alleged misconduct in studies in other examination situations

If the teacher suspects misconduct in studies in any examination situation, for example, in a written assignment, an aquarium exam or an exam taken in any other manner, the teacher can consider two possible options depending on the case 1) giving a verbal warning or 2) documenting the alleged misconduct in studies and submitting it for investigation.

In cases of alleged minor misconduct, for example, when the student has left a source reference unmarked, the teacher can give a verbal warning to the student and guide him/her to work in accordance with the principles of good scientific practice. In such cases, the teacher uses mainly instructive methods.

In allegations of more serious misconduct in studies, the teacher submits the case to the Education Dean. The teacher documents the proof he or she has of the case of alleged misconduct in studies. For instance, in cases of plagiarism, the teacher clarifies in detail which source the student has used and points out the similarities between the student's text and the source material. The teacher shall also inform the student of the allegation at the latest when the exam results should be published. At the same time, the teacher shall notify the student that he or she will be contacted in order to clarify the situation, and that the decision regarding the passing of the exam is deferred until the Education Dean has examined the matter. The teacher shall not analyse the matter further with the student. The teacher shall submit the case of alleged misconduct in studies for investigation within a week from the date when he or she has become aware of the suspicion.

If the allegation of misconduct in studies arises relating to an exam written in the aquarium, the teacher may request to see the video recording of the exam situation in question. If the teacher detects misconduct in the recording, he or she shall submit the case to the Education Dean as described above.



If, in connection with an alleged case of misconduct in studies, there is reason to believe that more than one student is involved, for instance, a student has presented the work of another student as his/her own with permission from the other student, the matter shall be investigated as a case of alleged misconduct in studies for all parties concerned.

8 Guidelines for students noticing misconduct in studies

If the student discovers or suspects that another student is guilty of misconduct in studies, he or she can report it to the course teacher or exam invigilator, or if the course teacher is not known, to the Education Dean of his or her own faculty or a leading educational specialist. The report cannot be made anonymously, but will always be treated as confidential. Anonymous reports will not be investigated. If necessary, further details will be requested from the student regarding the other student's alleged misconduct in studies.

9 Investigation of misconduct in studies

The investigation of misconduct in studies takes place in the faculty to which the alleged misconduct relates. The alleged misconduct in studies is investigated by the Education Dean. The Education Dean can appoint a team for investigating the case of alleged misconduct in studies. The Education Dean serves as the Chairman of the team.

The Education Dean acquaints him or herself with the written documentation relating to the case of alleged misconduct in studies. At his or her own discretion, the Education Dean organises a hearing of the student in question by 1) requesting a written response from the student or 2) arranging a verbal hearing. The student must be clearly informed of what he or she is suspected of. For example, the Education Dean submits the material supporting the case or a synopsis of it to the student. The request for a written or verbal hearing shall be submitted to the student in writing, such as in an email, within two weeks after the material relating to the allegation has arrived for investigation.

It is recommended that the teacher responsible for the study attainment and a leading education specialist are present at the verbal hearing alongside the Education Dean and the student. A memorandum is drawn up about the hearing, demonstrating whether the student disputes the alleged misconduct in studies or admits to it, as well as listing other points made during the hearing. If a compromise cannot be reached, all parties present at the hearing have a right for their disagreement to be stated in the memorandum. Each of those present shall sign the memorandum, thus confirming that it corresponds to the discussion taking place at the hearing.

The hearing is an opportunity given to the student to provide his/her own response to the issues raised. The matter can be resolved without the student's report, if he or she fails to provide the requested written reply within a reasonable time frame allocated in advance, or does not arrive at the verbal hearing and has not notified of a legitimate and acceptable reason for the transfer of the hearing to another date.

The investigation of misconduct in studies can also be started after the decision of a study attainment has already been made, in case suspicion arises only at this stage. Also in these cases, misconduct may lead to the adjustment of the earlier decision and to disciplinary action. Allegations of misconduct in studies relating to theses of master's, licentiate, or doctoral degrees, shall be investigated according to the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity RCR guidelines¹² when the thesis has already been accepted. According to the Regulations of the University of Oulu, the decision to accept a thesis can be annulled on

¹² [Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland](#). 2012.



the grounds specified in the Administrative Procedure Act¹³. The appropriate procedures for dealing with the matter should be clarified with the university's lawyer before initiating the investigation of misconduct in studies.

10 Penalties of misconduct in studies and decision-making

After examining the case, the Education Dean decides whether misconduct in studies has taken place or whether the allegations will be dropped when it is not possible to prove that misconduct in studies has taken place. A written decision shall specify which factors have contributed to the conclusion. If there is no sufficient evidence of misconduct in studies, the allegation will be dropped, and the Education Dean will inform the student in question as well as the teacher making the claim. In such cases, the original study attainment shall be graded.

Proved misconduct in studies always leads to the rejection of the study attainment. If misconduct in studies has been noticed in a specific part of a study attainment, the Education Dean decides at his/her discretion whether the study attainment will be rejected as a whole or only partially. The rejection of a study attainment is not a disciplinary sanction, but is based on the fact that misconduct in studies has made it impossible to assess the student's skills in the study attainment in which the misconduct has been committed. The Education Dean makes the decision regarding the rejection of a study attainment. After the rejection of a study attainment, the student must agree with the Education Dean on how to earn the missing credit. The Education Dean may also delegate the negotiations about repeating or replacing the failed study attainment to the teacher.

Proven misconduct in studies will also lead to the rejection of the submitted thesis. The decision to fail a study attainment is made by the Education Dean. If misconduct in studies relating to a dissertation is detected during the pre-examination, the examination shall expire. Before proceeding with the thesis, the student must clarify to the instructor how he or she will correct his/her work in such a way that it no longer relies on misconduct in studies.

If the Education Dean deems the student guilty of misconduct in studies requiring disciplinary action, he or she shall inform the Rector about the misconduct in studies for possible legally defined disciplinary action. The Education Dean shall submit a written decision to the Rector, indicating which factors have influenced the conclusion and including the rest of the written documentation relating to the incident.

The actual disciplinary measures are laid down in Section 45 of the Universities Act (558 / 2009):

The Universities Act, Section 45

Disciplinary action

A student who is guilty of infringement of the university's teaching or research activities or has otherwise violated university order, may be given a written warning or be suspended from the university for a fixed period of one year at most, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. The decision on a warning to be issued to a student is made by the Rector of the University, whereas the decision on a fixed-period suspension shall be made by the University Board of Directors. Before making the decision, the student must be verifiably informed of which offence he or she is being accused of and given an opportunity to be heard in the matter.

¹³ [University of Oulu Education Regulations](#), Section 25. 2016.



Depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, the Rector shall make a decision about giving a warning to the student, or to propose the student's temporary dismissal to the University Board. The decision of temporary suspension is made by the University Board. The student can be suspended for a maximum of one year.

In the case of a doctoral candidate engaging in proven misconduct in studies, it is regarded as a breach of the obligations listed in the Employment Contracts Act, Chapter 3, Section 1. In accordance with the Employment Contracts Act, Chapter 7, Sections 1 and 2, misconduct in studies is regarded as termination grounds related to the employee's person. Alternatively, when the misconduct in studies is regarded as such a serious violation of obligations or non-conformity that the employer cannot be reasonably expected to continue the contractual relationship even for the period of notice, the sanctions shall be decided in accordance with Section 1 of Chapter 8 of the Employment Contracts Act.

11 Notifications between faculties or partner universities

If a student's misconduct in studies is investigated and proven in a faculty other than the faculty in which the student has a right to complete a qualification, the Education Dean of the student's own faculty shall be informed about the decision. The same applies when the student has parallel rights to complete a degree in more than one faculty.

In the case of an international exchange student, his/her home university shall also be informed about the misconduct in studies. All new exchange and joint degree contracts shall acknowledge the obligation of the partner universities to inform each other about proven cases of misconduct in studies or by other means ensure that the incoming exchange students are aware of the agreed procedures. The Education Dean will notify the international services of Oulu University about the decisions regarding exchange students' misconduct in studies. International services notify the partner universities about such cases in a centralised manner, and so it suffices that the Education Dean informs the International Services about the matter.

12 Archiving of decisions

Decisions made by the Rector, the Education Dean or the University Board of Directors as well as other documents relating to cases of misconduct in studies will be archived to the university's central archive. Decisions are to be kept permanently. This is to ensure that decisions regarding misconduct in studies and the arguments leading to such decisions can be found in one place.

13 Appeal and the student's legal protection

The student whose study attainment is rejected on the basis of misconduct in studies can submit a request for rectification within 14 days of receipt of the decision to the University Board of Examiners, if he or she is dissatisfied with the decision.

A written decision regarding a disciplinary issue shall specify what factors have contributed to the conclusion. The student shall be verifiably informed about the decision, and he or she shall have the right to appeal about the disciplinary decision to administrative court. A decision regarding a student's temporary suspension may be enforced regardless of appeal, unless otherwise ordered by the university or administrative court.



14 Effective date

This decision enters into force 24 May 2018.

Jouko Niinimäki
Rector, University of Oulu

Essi Kiuru
Administrative Director, University of Oulu