

Plagiarism Prevention Policy of University of Ruhuna

1. Introduction:

The wide availability of electronic resources accessible through a variety of means and tools has created a considerable increase in plagiarism and unethical use of information. Especially in higher education, many cases are found regarding copyright infringement and misconduct of research.

University is an entity associated with the interpretation of existing knowledge and creating new knowledge. Generally, in scientific writing, whether it is a research report, journal article, student assignment, or any other product it is required to ensure the originality, free of plagiarism and ethical use of information. In this ground, the university's responsibility is to encourage the students and staff to follow fair and proper procedures when they engage in academic works, especially develop their concern towards matters related to plagiarism and copyright.

The University must ensure that mechanisms are in place that promotes academic integrity and eliminate plagiarism. At the same time plagiarism cases must be dealt with a consistent and fair manner. As a consequence, the University must have a policy and procedures in place to intercept these aspects of misconduct and to create a framework within which it is possible for staff and students to write and publish.

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. The document consists of plagiarism determinant policies as well as related guidelines to interpret the similarity detection report.

2. Scope & the application of the policy

The plagiarism detection and prevention policy and the interpreting guideline apply to all members of the university community. This policy applies to the research works of the staff, postgraduate theses and dissertations, and undergraduate projects and assignments conducted by any department/faculty/unit of the University of Ruhuna.

This Policy is intended for institutional use and does not confer any rights or privileges to a third party.

3. Aims and Objectives:

This policy aims to appraise staff members, postgraduate/undergraduate students, and researchers about plagiarism and how it can be avoided. It is also aimed at discouraging plagiarism by regulating and authorizing punitive actions against those found guilty of the act of plagiarism.

The objective of the policy is to provide a policy framework to be followed by the students, staff and other communities of University of Ruhuna in case of preparing, submitting, publishing or assessing a scholarly work such as a research report, dissertation, research paper, technical report, assignment, journal article or any other type of academic work submitted to the university.

4. Definition of plagiarism

A plagiarism exists when someone describes another's thoughts or wording as though they were one's own[1]. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary[2], Plagiarism is defined as "taking and using the thoughts, writings, and inventions of another person as one's own".

Library of University of Ruhuna accepts plagiarism as follows[3]:

Presenting the work of another person as his/her own. This includes the work of other students, friends, family, or work purchased through the Internet or other services;

Presenting work copied extensively with only minor textual changes from the Internet, books, journals or any other source;

Improper paraphrasing, where a passage or idea is summarized without due acknowledgement of the original source;

Failing to include citation of all original sources;

Representing collaborative work as one's own;

Self-plagiarism, which is submitting the same (or closely similar) body of work for two different assessments in this, or any other, institution, and/or use of one's own previous work in another context without citing.

This policy includes the following guidelines:

- i. Role of student to avoid plagiarism
- ii. Role of staff to avoid plagiarism
- iii. Role of the faculty/university administration
- iv. Role of Plagiarism Prevention Committee
- v. Issuing the Similarity Comparison Report

4.1 Role of student

Plagiarism can occur intentionally or unintentionally. Any student whether postgraduate or undergraduate should be responsible for checking the cases liable to plagiarism or unethical use of others' knowledge in his/her document/thesis/dissertation/academic work before presenting/submitting to the university/publishing agent and act with integrity to avoid such cases. Students should refer to the recommended guidelines provided by the department/faculty and obtain guidance from the teachers/supervisor/subject librarian or from the website of the library/university for avoiding plagiarism in their works.

4.2 Role of staff

The staff member involved in teaching and/or supervising of student's projects/academic works is required to provide students with guidance on how to avoid plagiarism and how to use referencing in their works correctly. The staff can obtain the support of the library staff in this regard by conducting collaborative workshops for plagiarism prevention programs. It is also required to report the plagiarism incidents that occurred under their projects to the Plagiarism Detection Committee of the University for Penalization in cases when students are not abiding the policy guidelines.

4.3 Role of the faculty/library/university administration

The objective of the university is to produce quality graduates and encourage research and inventions. The university endeavors to take preventive measures of plagiarism incidents rather than detecting and penalizing offenders. Therefore, the following activities shall be undertaken:

- 4.3.1 Compulsory Information Literacy contents should be included in the faculty curriculum for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The contents should be included plagiarism and copyright matters, referencing techniques, and referencing styles, academic writing and ethical use of information. The Faculty may collaborate with the library in this regard.
- 4.3.2 Inclusion of basic research methodology contents in the faculty curriculum which gives a basic understanding of the research process, literature review, data collection, preparation of research report/scholarly writing, and research ethics.
- 4.3.3 Library of the university/faculty shall undertake educative and awareness programs to apprise students of plagiarism prevention and ethical use of information.
- 4.3.4 Library/Faculty/University webpage should contain online tutorials to educate students on how to avoid plagiarism.
- 4.3.5 Clear well-documented guidelines of the format/typical contents of an assignment/research report/these/dissertation etc. should be provided to the student by the relevant department of study.
- 4.3.6 Establishing a plagiarism prevention mechanism using an acceptable similarity detection platform.
- 4.3.7 Appointing a faculty level Plagiarism Prevention Committees to deal with cases of plagiarism and recommend penalties to the faculty/university administration (The faculty level Plagiarism Prevention Committee should decide a framework for allegations and penalties).

4.4 Role of Plagiarism Prevention Committee

4.4.1 As par with 4.3.7 above, a Plagiarism Prevention Committee for Faculty of Graduate Studies will be appointed by the senate. The role of the committee is to evaluate the postgraduate research report/thesis/dissertation /document etc. against the plagiarism. The committee should be represented by the following positions of the university:

- Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
- A representative from the related Board of Studies
- Course Coordinator of relevant faculty/department (depending on the course)
- Supervisors of the related projects
- Head of the Department (as relevant)
- Librarian

The Committee shall consider the similarity report provided by the Librarian and determine the exact plagiarism level and make recommendations.

4.4.2 As par with 4.3.7 above, a Faculty Level Plagiarism Prevention Committee will be appointed by the Faculty Board to make recommendations to the faculty regarding the cases of plagiarism of undergraduate thesis/dissertation/project/assignment. Such committee shall be represented by;

- Head of the Department
- Supervisor of the thesis/dissertation/project or teacher of the assignment
- Deputy Librarian/Senior Assistant Librarian/ Assistant Librarian of the faculty.

The Committee shall consider the similarity report provided by the teacher/supervisor and determine the exact plagiarism level and make recommendations.

4.5 Issuing of the Similarity Comparison Report

The university shall establish a plagiarism prevention mechanism using an acceptable similarity detection platform (**The** University of Ruhuna at present subscribes to the similarity detection platform – Turnitin). Overall administration of the similarity detection platform is handled by the Library of the University of Ruhuna. All the teachers/staff interested will obtain a user account of the platform. However, the final similarity report shall be provided as follows:

- 4.5.1 In case of postgraduate theses/research reports/dissertations the final similarity detection report shall be prepared using the similarity detection platform by the Librarian, the University of Ruhuna (in case of his/her absence he/she can assign a senior library professional taking the responsibility of the report).
- 4.5.2 In case of undergraduate thesis/dissertation/project/assignment, the supervisor of the thesis/dissertation/project or teacher of the assignment shall prepare the similarity detection report through the platform.

5. Amendments to the policy

Amendments to this policy will be made from time to time on requirements with the consent of the majority of the University Library Committee and with the approval from the University Senate.

Reference

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