
Department of Biology Policy on Plagiarism

Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves an attempt to use an element of another person's work, without appropriate acknowledgement in order to gain academic credit. It may include the unacknowledged verbatim reproduction of material, unsanctioned collusion, but is not limited to these matters; it may also include the unacknowledged adoption of an argumentative structure, or the unacknowledged use of a source or of research materials, including computer code or elements of mathematical formulae in an inappropriate manner.

The policies of the University apply within the Department of Biology, as contained on the Maynooth University website (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies/rules-regulations-students>). Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty and will be treated with the utmost seriousness wherever discovered.

This policy will be implemented in the following manner:

1. Dealing with Suspected Cases of Plagiarism: Assignment markers will refer suspected cases of plagiarism to the Module Coordinator (or in the case of practical assignments, in first instance to the Academic in charge of practical module); Any student submitting written work for continuous assessment can be asked by the marker or the department to take a further test. This may take the form of an oral examination on the assignment in question and related issues, or the writing of a test paper in controlled conditions. Requiring a student to take such a test does not necessarily imply that plagiarism is suspected.

2. Dealing with Proven Cases of Plagiarism: If there is evidence of plagiarism, the matter will be turned over to the Course Coordinator, who will determine the disciplinary consequences following the guidelines outlined below. **In each case the student may be invited to explain in person** to the Course Coordinator the origin of the material contained in the piece in question.

"Procedures

- i. Where a marker (**or course coordinator**) believes that a case of plagiarism has been identified, the matter shall be referred to the Head of Department with a written report outlining the reasons for suspecting that the work has been plagiarised.
- ii. The Head of Department shall then make an initial finding as to whether or not plagiarism has occurred, taking account of factors including, but not confined to, the extent of the plagiarism, indications of intent to deceive, the student's prior history in this regard, practice within the discipline, and the level at which the student has submitted the work. The Head of Department will not take account of extenuating medical or personal circumstances in making a decision.
- iii. If the Head of Department is the marker who suspects plagiarism has occurred, he or she shall delegate responsibility to a nominee in that department to follow the procedures laid down in this policy
- iv. Where the Head of Department determines that plagiarism has not occurred but there are indications of incorrect citation, the work shall be awarded a grade that takes account of the failure to cite sources correctly, within the overall context of the work as a whole.
- v. Where it is considered right to do so, the Head of Department shall confirm the determination that plagiarism has occurred by making a record of the decision setting out the reasons. At this point, the Head of Department shall consult the Registrar's Office, informing the Registrar of the finding, and requesting any information on previous findings in relation to the student. Should prior findings exist, the procedures in xi and xii shall apply.

- vi. Where the Head of Department determines that plagiarism has occurred, a meeting with the student shall be convened to inform the student of the finding.
- vii. The student shall be advised of the determination by the Head of Department and of the consequences that may unfold and that a response should be received by the Head of Department from the student within ten working days from the date the determination was confirmed.
- viii. The student shall be advised that failure or refusal to respond within the designated period of time, or failure or refusal to attend for any meeting requested by the Head of Department, will result in the matter being referred to the **Academic Discipline Board of Maynooth University** in like manner as if the student had chosen not to accept the findings of the report.
- ix. Where the student chooses not to accept the findings of the report, the matter shall be referred to the **Academic Discipline Board of Maynooth University** together with all relevant documentation and reports.
- x. Where the student accepts the findings of the report, the student shall be asked to sign the report. The Head of Department shall then countersign the report. The Head of Department will then give the work a mark of 0. The student will be allowed to redo the assignment before a designated deadline prior to the next Examination Board meeting, if it is practical to do so. The mark for the resubmitted work will be capped at 40%. A record shall be kept in the Department of the incident, and this shall be forwarded to the Registrar's Office.
- xi. In the case of a second finding of plagiarism in relation to a student, the matter is automatically referred to the Academic Discipline Board, who shall notify the student that the matter has been brought to its attention.
- xii. A "second finding" in this regard may refer to findings made in the current academic year or in previous academic years, and it may refer to findings made by more than one Department." **-(Maynooth University Policy on Plagiarism)**

2a. Minor Plagiarism: In cases of minor plagiarism, the following will apply:

In instances where an element forming part of an assignment (from a phrase or sentence up to a paragraph or two) is found to be plagiarised, marks will be deducted for that assignment, there will be no possibility of submitting a 'make-up' assignment, and previous and subsequent work submitted in connection with the course may be subject to particular scrutiny. While the amount of marks deducted will be proportionate to the extent of the plagiarised material, the deduction may be severe.

2b. Major Plagiarism: In cases of major plagiarism, the following University statutes will apply:

In instances where a significant part or all of an assignment is found to be plagiarised, the Department will "award a mark of zero in the assignment, with no chance to resubmit in the current academic year" (**Maynooth University Policy on Plagiarism**), and previous and subsequent work submitted in connection with the course may be subject to particular scrutiny. In serious cases the plagiarism will be referred to the **Academic Discipline Board**.

2c. Postgraduate Students: Instances of postgraduate plagiarism will be referred directly to the project supervisor or member of faculty responsible for the relevant postgraduate programme. "Instances of plagiarism among postgraduate research students will be treated as being particularly serious. The Board will not take into account extenuating medical or personal circumstances in making its decision.." (**Maynooth University Policy on Plagiarism**).

3. Recording: All cases of plagiarism will be recorded by the Course Coordinator on the student's permanent record card. All members of the Department providing a reference for a student **may be obliged to mention an instance of major plagiarism**, or two or more instances of minor plagiarism, when providing a reference for the student.