



Guidelines for handling misconduct

Approved by the vice-rector on 18 December 2013, in force as of 1 January 2014, updated on 27 March 2017

Background, objectives and application

Lappeenranta University of Technology is committed in all of its activity to ethical and responsible conduct¹. In research and education, the university observes the guidelines prepared by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity for the responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland (RCR guidelines)². The purpose of these instructions is to describe concepts and processes involving good scientific practice and violations against it at LUT. These guidelines apply to all studies at LUT and the investigation of misconduct when cases are not investigated in accordance with the RCR guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board for Research Integrity.

Responsible conduct of research and research misconduct

The responsible conduct of research refers to good practices which ensure that scientific research is reliable, ethical and produces credible results. The responsible conduct of research involves e.g. integrity, meticulousness and accuracy in conducting research and reporting the results, methods that conform to scientific criteria and that are ethically sustainable, taking due account of the work of other researchers, and refraining from any decisions or measures that might compromise the objectivity of the research. A more detailed description of the responsible conduct of research is available in the RCR guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity².

In the present instructions, research misconduct refers to the disregard of good practices due to either ignorance or neglect. Research misconduct does not refer to means by which a person aims to profit from a situation – such acts or omissions are study-related misconduct.

All students bear the responsibility for conducting research in a responsible manner. The university must see to it that students receive the support they need in learning about the responsible conduct of research and also control that students observe it. Guidelines on the responsible conduct of research can be found e.g. in LUT's final thesis instructions and the Quality Guide for Studying and Learning in LUT. The subject is also discussed in many courses related to information retrieval, research methods, writing and final theses.

¹ LUT Code of Conduct (adopted on 9 September 2011, amended on 23 March 2012)

² Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. 2012. Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland. Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity guidelines 2012. Available online at: http://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK_ohje_2012.pdf [Accessed 18 June 2013]



Misconduct in studying

Misconduct in studying refers here to a deceitful act or means by which a student misleads the evaluator of a study attainment³. A deceitful means may be a deliberate omission or other blatant disregard of the responsible conduct of research. Misconduct in studying may include e.g.⁴:

- **Cheating on examinations:** use of prohibited means or tools in an examination; completing an examination for someone else or having it done for you.
- **Misconduct related to an assignment:** the falsification or misrepresentation of results related to an assignment; unauthorised collaboration or use of outside help in the completion of an assignment; having others do the work in a group assignment.
- **Plagiarism:** deliberate plagiarism; blatant disregard of referencing practices.
- **Lying, falsification and omission of key information:** e.g. misleading peer assessment, falsification of attendance records, asking for an extension under false pretences.
- **Influencing the person assessing a study attainment or an attempt thereof:** e.g. bribery, threats, extortion, pressuring.
- **Obstruction or sabotage:** obstructing the work of other students e.g. by disturbing an examination or destroying or stealing the work of others.

What to do when misconduct is discovered

When a teacher discovers misconduct, the matter should be addressed with the student without delay. It must be established whether or not the act is intentional in order to decide whether guidance or disciplinary measures will be applied. If the student knew or should have known that the act would result in misconduct, the case is investigated as a deliberate violation according to the procedure below.

If the student has acted in good faith, the reason for the act must be investigated (e.g. a misunderstanding or uncertainty about requirements, a poor referencing technique, a background in a different research culture) and provide guidance in the application of good practices. Students acting in good faith should primarily not be punished for their mistake. Instead, the teacher should require that the student's poor practices be corrected before the study attainment is assessed.

³ Definition based on the Master's thesis of Kari Silpiö (2012). Silpiö, K. 2012.

Opiskeluvilppi ja plagiointi korkeakoulujen opintosuorituksissa. Master's thesis, Education. University of Tampere.

⁴ Division based on Silpiö's (2012) Master's thesis.



Intentional misconduct

Intentional misconduct is dealt with in different ways depending on the type of misconduct. The process is described below, from the discovery of the misconduct to the final decision.

Discovering and reporting misconduct

1. The teacher or invigilator discovers an alleged violation.
 - Misconduct in an examination
 - The teacher discovers misconduct in the preparation of an assignment (unauthorised collaboration, submitting an assignment for another person, etc.)
 - An assignment, Bachelor's thesis, etc., has been submitted for assessment but not revised according to LUT guidelines or RCR guidelines regardless of the teacher's requests, or the assignment exhibits blatant or repeated plagiarism.
 - Master's theses: the work has been submitted for a final examination and contains violations of LUT or RCR guidelines. The work has been submitted for a final examination if form 1 b or equivalent information has been submitted.
2. A notification of the matter must be made, indicating the course, time, violation, and events, and the contact information of the person making the notification. The persons making the notification may be the following:
 - Invigilator → first informs the examination secretary, who then conveys the information to the following people⁵.
 - Teacher → informs the head of student services, the teacher or professor responsible, the director of school or someone appointed by the director, and the legal counsel.
 - Thesis supervisor → informs the head of student services, the director of school or someone appointed by the director, and the legal counsel.

Investigating the matter and preparing a decision

3. The head of student services establishes what has taken place and why.
 - The student submits a written statement.
 - The person making the notification and other parties are asked for further details if needed.
4. The decision is prepared.
 - Examination, assignment, Bachelor's thesis: the head of student services writes a draft decision for the legal counsel and rector to sign.
 - Master's theses:
 - i. If the student so requests in writing, a Master's thesis that has not been approved may be investigated according to the RCR guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. Only one thesis by the student can undergo assessment at a time – a student cannot submit a second thesis for assessment.

⁵ Invigilators have been given more detailed instructions on what to do in an alleged case of misconduct.



Making the decision and notifying those concerned

5. Making the decision and issuing possible disciplinary measures
 - Expulsion, decided by the board
 - Caution, decided by the rector
 - Written reprimand, decided by the rector
 - No disciplinary action, decided by the rector
6. The head of student services notifies the student of the decision and submits the original copy to Records Services.
 - The decision is circulated within LUT to the head of student services, school, rector, legal counsel, director of the school, teacher/professor responsible, and doctoral school.
 - If the case concerns an international student, the document is also delivered to the Director for Study and International Affairs. In the case of an exchange or double degree student, the document is sent to the student's home university.