

Guidelines for handling misconduct

Approved by the vice rector for education on 19 November 2021, updated on 30 January 2024

Background, objectives and application

LUT University is committed in all of its activity to ethical and responsible conduct¹. In research and education, it observes the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK for the responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland (RCR guidelines)². These guidelines describe the difference between violations of responsible conduct and misconduct.

The purpose of these guidelines is to describe concepts and processes involving good scientific practice and related misconduct at LUT. The guidelines apply to all studies and alleged misconduct at LUT. They apply when alleged misconduct is not investigated following the RCR guidelines of the Finnish National Board on 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 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 National Board on Research Integrity².

In these 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 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 ethical guidelines for academic studies. The subject is also discussed on many courses related to information retrieval, research methods, writing and final theses.

What to do after misconduct is discovered

When a teacher discovers misconduct, the matter should be addressed with the student without delay. It must be established whether 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

LUT Code of Conduct (approved 1.4.2022)

² Finnish National Board on Research Integrity. 2012. Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland. Finnish National Board on Research Integrity guidelines 2012. Available online at: <https://tenk.fi/fi/ohjeet-ja-aineistot> [Accessed 21.9.2024]

constitute 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 a mistake. Instead, the teacher should require students to correct their poor practices before their study attainments are assessed.

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 in examinations:** breaking rules 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; prohibited collaboration or use of outside help in the completion of an assignment; having others do the work in a group assignment.
 - 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 when the student has submitted a 1 B form or equivalent information.
- **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.

Intentional misconduct

Following good scientific practice when preparing assignments is part of the assessment process. If the suspected misconduct is the student's first, the teacher may fail the assignment or other study attainment in question if he or she considers it as a sufficient consequence for the case overall. Before grading, the teacher informs misconduct@lut.fi of the matter. The person who manages the email then reviews the student's records to see if a history of misconduct exists. However, teachers are always entitled to initiate an inquiry into alleged misconduct if they consider it necessary. If the violation is not the student's first, an inquiry is always started. Students have the right to demand a misconduct inquiry if a teacher has failed their assignment or other study attainment because of misconduct.

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.

The inquiry process is described below from the discovery of the misconduct to the final decision.

Discovering and reporting misconduct

1. A teacher, thesis supervisor or invigilator discovers an alleged violation.
2. Misconduct@lut.fi is notified of the matter. The notification relates the course, time, violation, and events, and the contact information of the person making the notification.

Investigating the matter and preparing a decision

3. The person dealing with misconducts 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. A decision is prepared.
 - Exams, assignments, Bachelor's theses: the person dealing with misconducts seeks legal counsel if needed and prepares a decision for the rector to sign.
 - Master's theses:
 - i. Decision prepared as in the case of Bachelor's theses following the RCR guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity.

Making a decision and notifying those concerned

5. Making a decision and issuing possible disciplinary measures
 - Expulsion, decided by the board
 - Written caution, decided by the rector
 - In addition to disciplinary actions, the assignment in question is failed.
 - No disciplinary action, decided by the rector
 - In addition, the rector may caution the student if the violation is considered minor.
6. The decision is given to the student, and the decision is also documented in the university's case processing system. The LUT employee responsible for preparing the decision sends it to the student.
 - Circulation of the decision within LUT: rector, dean, head of degree programme, teacher/professor in charge of the course, head of Student Services.
 - If the case concerns an international student, the document is also delivered to the director for international affairs. In the case of an exchange or double degree student, the document is sent to the student's home university.