Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

Complete Policy Title:

Research Plagiarism Checking Policy

Policy Number (if applicable):

Approved by:

Senate

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Responsible Executive:

Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Policy Specific Enquiries:

Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

General Enquiries:

Policy (University Secretariat)

DISCLAIMER: *If there is a Discrepancy between this electronic policy and the written copy held by the policy owner, the written copy prevails.*

INTRODUCTION

1. This Policy is meant to be read in conjunction with the *Research Integrity Policy* and the *Academic Integrity Policy*. This document is not intended to supersede them.

2. The *Research Integrity Policy* sets the expectations for the responsible conduct of research at the University. All those conducting research under the auspices of McMaster University are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Research Integrity Policy.

3. The definitions and the roles and responsibilities as defined in the *Research Integrity Policy* apply to this Policy.   For the purposes of interpreting this Policy, readers are specifically directed to review the definitions of Research, Research Documents, Plagiarism, and Self-Plagiarism, and the roles and responsibilities of Researchers, Supervisors (both Academic and Employment), and Graduate Students.

    This policy applies to all members of the McMaster community, including faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, postdoctoral and clinical fellows, and staff. This Policy is intended to provide researchers with a technical solution to check all Research Documents for plagiarism in their work, such as major research papers, thesis documents, scholarly articles, and other research materials as deemed necessary. This policy does not cover coursework.

4. All Research Documents to be seen publicly should normally be checked prior to publication to ensure that they meet the University's standards for research integrity. Furthermore, it is expected that public disclosure will only occur after the Research Documents satisfy the requirements of any intellectual property agreement related to the research.

5. The Office of Academic Integrity is the administrative office responsible for assisting instructors, students and staff with issues of academic integrity and research integrity.

6. The McMaster Industry Liaison Office (MILO) provides assistance in understanding how intellectual issues may be intersect with aspects of academic and research integrity.

PLAGIARISM CHECKING SOFTWARE

7. The plagiarism checking software provided by the University is an online subscription-based tool that compares a submitted research document to other documents in its database for similarities. The software does not determine plagiarized content but rather highlights similarities with other sources.

8. It is the expectation of the University that researchers review any similarities identified by the software with any contributors to the research document, and determine whether changes are necessary before public release.

9. The selected plagiarism checking software used under this Policy will not archive a copy of the submitted research document, which is different from some plagiarism checking software, such as Turnitin. The copyright ownership of the research document will not be affected by its submission to the plagiarism checking software provided by the University.

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PROCEDURES

10.   Each Faculty shall clearly publicize this Policy in their program handbooks and central websites, noting any additional and/ or stricter requirements that may be in place within that Faculty.

Submitting a Research Document (excluding theses)

11.   It is recommended that the submitter be listed as the corresponding author of the research document though any author who identifies the University as their affiliation in that document may check using the plagiarism checking system with the permission of the other authors.

12.   It is recommended that the submitter notify the other authors, preferably early in the preparation of the document, that the University has a policy urging plagiarism checking prior to being sent to the journal or society or other scholarly body accepting the document for public disclosure.

13.   It is the responsibility of the submitting researcher to review the report by the plagiarism checking system.

14.   Reports showing a low similarity score are likely attributed to the software detecting unintended matching content and can normally be corrected before public release. Instances of high similarity scores being reported by the plagiarism checking system do not necessarily mean that plagiarism/self-plagiarism have occurred however, the Office of Academic Integrity should be consulted if there are concerns regarding research misconduct.

Submitting a Graduate Thesis

15.   It is expected that all graduate theses, whether Masters or Doctoral that will ultimately be seen by the public shall be checked for plagiarism in compliance with this Policy.

16.   Theses shall be checked before being submitted to MacSphere or before being sent to an external reviewer. Since the plagiarism checking system does not need to maintain an archived copy of the thesis, copyright ownership is not affected by this academic requirement. Rare exemptions may be granted with the approval of a Faculty's Associate Dean of Graduate Studies where an alternative method of plagiarism checking is necessary.

17.   Normally, the graduate student who owns the thesis shall request access to the plagiarism checking system through the University's subscription. The submission folder created for the student on the plagiarism checking site will allow both the student and Academic Supervisor to see the originality score of the thesis submitted for checking.

18.   The student may make changes to their thesis and re-submit it a second time to ensure no concerning similarities are found. A student may not repeatedly submit revision after revision of their thesis.

19.   The Academic Supervisor bears the responsibility of addressing allegations of academic and/or research misconduct with the Office of Academic Integrity should they believe that misconduct (as defined in the policies regarding academic and research integrity) has occurred.

20. The Academic Supervisor of the student must see the plagiarism checking similarity report and approve the thesis before the thesis may be given to the examining committee or external reviewers.

21. It is recommended that the supervisor retain a copy of the plagiarism checking similarity report should it be needed at a later time; a copy of the report should ideally be retained for at least three years or two years after the date the thesis is finally submitted to MacSphere, whichever is longer. In rare cases, the Departmental Chair or their delegate may approve the thesis based on the plagiarism checking similarity report instead and retain a copy of the report per the time limit mentioned above.

22. A thesis may not be sent to the examining committee until it has been checked by the plagiarism checking system. In rare cases where the software is inaccessible (for example, the subscription has expired or the University has exceeded its allocated number of submissions), a Faculty's Associate Dean of Graduate Studies may approve the thesis to be sent to the examining committee when the issue cannot be corrected in a timely manner.

23. The student understands and approves by following this action that the Associate Dean will submit the thesis to the plagiarism checking system once it is accessible again. The Academic Supervisor of the graduate student may submit the student's thesis to the plagiarism checking system themselves but only with written permission of the student.