

Response to Allegations of Plagiarism in Thesis/Dissertation Form

Policy

Plagiarism in thesis and dissertation work, like plagiarism in other academic work, is unacceptable at Qatar University. Because plagiarism constitutes a serious violation of academic and professional standards, procedures for the review of such allegations must be uniform and systematic in distinguishing actual plagiarism from minor errors in the use of referencing conventions.

Definitions

Plagiarism: A form of academic misconduct involving “the presentation of the ideas or the writing of someone else as one’s own.” Evidence of intent or lack thereof may be considered, however, in the imposition of any sanction.

Extensive plagiarism: Plagiarism that is pervasive throughout the thesis or dissertation (i.e., that is not confined to isolated instances or sections) or plagiarism that relates to the results or conclusions of the thesis or dissertation.

Limited plagiarism: Plagiarism that is confined to isolated instances or sections of the thesis or dissertation and does not relate to the results or conclusions.

Preponderance of the evidence: The greater weight of the evidence; that is, evidence that outweighs or overbalances the evidence opposed to it. “Preponderance” means evidence that is more probable or more persuasive. It is the quality of evidence that is weighed. Quality may or may not be identical with quantity.

Procedure

This policy addresses two situations: (1) when a faculty member reasonably believes that a student has plagiarized a portion of a thesis or dissertation and (2) when a student submits a completed thesis or dissertation.

1. Faculty complaint. When a faculty member reasonably believes that a student has plagiarized a portion of a thesis or dissertation, that faculty member shall have the option of (1) disposing of the matter informally with the student or (2) initiating formal proceedings, as follows:

a. Analysis of document. The complaining faculty member shall present the evidence of plagiarism to the chair of the student’s thesis or dissertation committee. The committee chair shall forward the relevant portion of the work to the administrative staff member designated by the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies to be examined using plagiarism detection software. The college shall maintain a license for such software, and several designated staff members will be trained in its use. The version of plagiarism detection software and the settings for such software shall be the same as those used by the Thesis and Dissertation Services (TAD) staff in the Graduate College.

b. Review of evidence. When the analysis of the student’s work is complete, the committee chair shall convene a meeting of the thesis or dissertation committee and the chair of the relevant department, who shall preside over the proceedings. The complaining faculty member shall present the evidence of plagiarism, which shall consist of the alleged offending document and the alleged source document(s).

c. Findings and determinations. If a majority finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the student has committed plagiarism, the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair shall make a further determination as to whether the plagiarism was limited or extensive. If the plagiarism is determined to be limited, the student shall be required to rewrite the relevant portions of the thesis or dissertation. If the plagiarism is determined to be extensive, the department chair shall refer the matter to University Judiciaries. In the event of a deadlock, the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies shall be called to cast the deciding vote. All findings and determinations shall be in writing.

d. Referral and sanctions. If the department chair refers the case to University Judiciaries, the committee chair and the department chair shall meet to recommend appropriate conditions for reinstatement of the student, if appropriate (following whatever sanctions are imposed). They also shall make a recommendation about appropriate handling of the dissertation or thesis document (e.g., options for rewriting relevant portions, major revisions of relevant portions). The committee chair and department chair shall send their written recommendations to the dean regarding the terms for possible reinstatement.

e. Appeal. If the decision of the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair is unanimous or if no dissenting member of the committee has appealed the decision within three business days, as provided in subsection (3)(a), the committee shall provide written notification of the decision to the student. Within three business days of receipt of notification, the student may appeal any decision regarding plagiarism to the dean of the college, as provided in subsection (3)(c).

2. Completed thesis or dissertation. When a student submits a completed thesis or dissertation in partial satisfaction of the requirements for a master’s or doctoral degree, the chair of the student’s thesis or dissertation committee shall initiate the following procedure:

a. Analysis of document. The chair of the thesis or dissertation committee shall forward the final draft of the document to the administrative staff member designated by the associate dean for research and graduate studies to be examined using plagiarism detection software. The college shall maintain a license for such software, and several administrative staff members will be trained in its use. The version of plagiarism detection software and the settings for such software shall be the same as those used by the Thesis and Dissertation Services (TAD) staff in the Graduate College.

b. Review of evidence. When the analysis of the student’s work is complete, the chair of the relevant department and the associate dean for research and graduate studies shall review the original document and the results of the analysis. If the department chair or the associate dean for research and graduate studies reasonably believes that the student has plagiarized the thesis or dissertation in whole or in part, the associate dean for research and graduate studies shall convene a meeting of the members of the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair, who shall preside over the proceedings. This body shall constitute the department-level hearing committee. The associate dean for research and graduate studies shall present the evidence of plagiarism, which shall consist of the alleged offending document and the alleged source document(s).

c. Findings and determinations. If a majority finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the student has committed plagiarism, the department-level hearing committee shall make a further determination as to whether the plagiarism was limited or extensive. If the plagiarism is determined to be limited, the student shall be required to rewrite the relevant portions of the thesis or dissertation. If the plagiarism is determined to be extensive, the department chair shall refer the matter to University Judiciaries. In the event of a deadlock, the dean shall be called to cast the deciding vote. All findings and determinations shall be in writing.

d. Referral and sanctions. If the department chair refers the case to University Judiciaries, the associate dean for research and graduate studies and the department chair shall meet to recommend appropriate conditions for reinstatement of the student, if appropriate (following whatever sanctions are imposed). They also shall make a recommendation about appropriate handling of the dissertation or thesis document (e.g., options for rewriting relevant portions, major revisions of relevant portions). The department chair and the associate dean for research and graduate studies shall send their written recommendations to the dean regarding the terms for possible reinstatement.

e. Appeal. If the decision of the department-level hearing committee is unanimous or if no dissenting member of the committee has appealed the decision within three business days, as provided in subsection (3)(b), the committee shall provide written notification of the decision to the student. Within three business days of receipt of notification, the student may appeal any decision regarding plagiarism to the dean of the college, as provided in subsection(3)(c).

3. Appellate procedures.

a. Faculty complaint. If the finding of plagiarism or determination of extensiveness pursuant to section (1)(c) is not unanimous, any dissenting member of the thesis or dissertation committee or the chair of the relevant department may appeal such finding or determination to the college's Ethics Committee (This is a committee that can be assembled upon request). The appeal must be made in writing to the dean within three business days of the meeting at which the finding or determination was made. The Ethics Committee shall review the evidence and by majority vote.

- i. Affirm the decision of the thesis or dissertation committee and the chair of the department; or
- ii. Reverse the decision of the thesis or dissertation committee and the chair of the department.

The standard for affirmation or reversal shall be a preponderance of the evidence. If the Ethics Committee affirms the decision, the chair of the committee shall send written notification to the members of the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair, with a copy to the dean. If the Ethics Committee reverses the decision, the chair of the committee shall send written notification to the dean, with copies to the members of the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair.

Any member of the thesis or dissertation committee or the department chair who disagrees with a decision rendered by the Ethics Committee may appeal such decision to the dean. The appeal must be made in writing to the dean within three business days of receipt of notification of the decision of the Ethics Committee. The dean shall review the evidence and

- i. Affirm the decision of the Ethics Committee; or
- ii. Reverse the decision of the Ethics Committee.

The standard for affirmation or reversal shall be a preponderance of the evidence. The decision of the dean shall be final as to the findings and determinations of the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair and as to the decision of the Ethics Committee. The dean shall send written notification of the decision to the members of the Ethics Committee, with a copy to the appellant.

If no dissenting member of the thesis or dissertation committee or the department chair has appealed the decision within three business days, as provided in this subsection, the committee shall provide written notification of the decision to the student. Within three business days of receipt of notification, the student may appeal any decision regarding plagiarism to the dean of the college, as provided in subsection (c) of this section.

b. Completed thesis or dissertation. If the finding of plagiarism or determination of extensiveness pursuant to section (2)(c) is not unanimous, any dissenting member of the department-level hearing committee may appeal such finding or determination to the college's Ethics Committee. The appeal must be made in writing to the dean within three business days of the meeting at which the finding or determination was made. The Ethics Committee shall review the evidence and by majority vote

- i. Affirm the decision of the department-level hearing committee; or
- ii. Reverse the decision of the department-level hearing committee.

The standard for affirmation or reversal shall be a preponderance of the evidence. If the Ethics Committee affirms the decision, the chair of the committee shall send written notification to the members of the department-level hearing committee, with a copy to the dean. If the Ethics Committee reverses the decision, the chair of the committee shall send written notification to the dean, with copies to the members of the department-level hearing committee.

Any member of the department-level hearing committee who disagrees with a decision rendered by the Ethics Committee may appeal such decision to the dean. The appeal must be made in writing within three business days of receipt of notification of the decision of the Ethics Committee. The dean shall review the evidence and

- i. Affirm the majority decision of the Ethics Committee; or
- ii. Reverse the majority decision of the Ethics Committee.

The standard for affirmation or reversal shall be a preponderance of the evidence. The decision of the dean shall be final as to the findings and determinations of the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair and as to the decision of the Ethics Committee. The dean shall send written notification of the decision to the appellant and to the members of the Ethics Committee.

If no dissenting member of the department-level hearing committee has appealed the decision within three business days, as provided in this subsection, the committee shall provide written notification of the decision to the student. Within three business days of receipt of notification, the student may appeal any decision regarding plagiarism to the dean of the college, as provided in subsection (c) of this section.

c. Appeal by student. The student may appeal any decision of the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair or any decision of the department-level hearing committee regarding plagiarism to the dean of the college. The appeal must be made in writing to the dean within three business days of receipt of notification of the decision. The dean shall review the evidence and

- i. Affirm the decision; or
- ii. Reverse the decision.

The standard for affirmation or reversal shall be a preponderance of the evidence. The decision of the dean shall be final as to the findings and determinations of the thesis or dissertation committee and the department chair and as to the decision of the department-level hearing committee. The dean shall send written notification of the decision to the student and to the members of the relevant committee.

I, _____ have read and understood the policy described above and I agree to adhere to the policy.

Student Signature

Date