

Translation from Finnish; legally binding only in Finnish

Guidelines for handling misconduct

Approved by the rector on 30 May 2024

Background, objectives and application

LAB University of Applied Sciences is committed in all of its activity to ethical and responsible conduct. In research and education, it observes the guidelines prepared by the Finnish Advisory Board for Research Integrity TENK for the responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland (RCR guidelines)¹. 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 LAB University of Applied Sciences. These guidelines apply to all studies and alleged misconduct at LAB University of Applied Sciences when alleged misconduct is not investigated in accordance with the RCR guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board for Research Integrity. Guidelines apply to alleged misconduct in studies and bachelor's and master's theses.

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 Advisory Board for Research Integrity.

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 of applied sciences 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. Instructions related to good scientific practices (e.g. referencing techniques) are available in the thesis instructions of LAB University of Applied Sciences. The subject is also discussed in many courses related to information retrieval, research methods, writing and final theses.

¹ Finnish National Board on Research Integrity. 2023. Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland. Finnish National Board on Research Integrity guidelines 2023. Available online at: <https://tenk.fi/fi/ohjeet-ja-aineistot> [Accessed 29.1.2024]

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 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 guidance provided in the application of good practices. Students acting in good faith should primarily not be punished for a mistake. Instead, the teacher should require that the student's poor practices be corrected before the study attainment is 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 attainment². 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.³:

- **Cheating on examinations:** breaking rules in examination, 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; 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 or Master's theses has been submitted for final assessment but not revised according to LAB guidelines or/and RCR guidelines regardless of the teacher's requests, or the assignment exhibits blatant or repeated plagiarism.
- **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

² 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.

³ Division based on Silpiö's (2012) Master's thesis.

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.

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.
 - The person dealing with misconducts seeks legal counsel if needed and prepares a decision for the rector to sign.

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 LAB: rector, faculty director, degree manager, teacher in charge of the course, head of Student Services.