

### **Definition of Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct, using ideas or the work of another person and presenting it as your own work either wholly or in part, without due acknowledgement of the original source of the material through appropriate citation.<sup>1-2</sup> Plagiarism can also include re-using your own work without citation.<sup>3</sup> Whether deliberate or accidental (as in the case of carelessness or poor academic discipline), plagiarism undermines scholarship, is a form of academic misconduct and conflicts with the ethos of Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI).<sup>4</sup>

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards for the conduct of Portfolios that are submitted as part of the Licentiate of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (LFOM) Portfolio examination and/or the Membership of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (MFOM) Portfolio examination, and to provide a framework for effective, fair, confidential, consistent and timely processes in the event of suspected plagiarism being made against a candidate.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- Submitting work copied extensively with only minor textual changes from books, journals, or any other source.<sup>2</sup>
- Paraphrasing or summarising ideas or work of others without due acknowledgement of the original source.<sup>2</sup>
- Failing to cite all original sources. <sup>2</sup>
- Self-plagiarism: presenting a piece of one's own work without reference to the original material.<sup>2</sup>
- Representing collaborative work as one's own, whether intentional or not, is a form of misconduct.<sup>2</sup>
- Plagiarism applies not just to text but also to other formats such as graphics, tables, formulae, or any representation of ideas in print, electronic or any other media, in addition to computer software and algorithms. <sup>4</sup>

- Collusion, where work is permitted to be copied/presented without appropriate attribution, is a form of plagiarism by both parties. Collusion also applies where a joint effort is presented by an individual without due recognition of the input of others.<sup>4</sup>
- In some cases, particularly in the professional academic arena, plagiarism may also be a breach of copyright, which may expose the copier to civil and/or criminal proceedings if within the timeframe of the copyright. Plagiarism may also relate to unpublished material, such as the notes of others, which may not be covered by copyright.<sup>4</sup>

To avoid plagiarism candidates should correctly cite and reference their submissions to RCPI. Referencing acknowledges the books, articles, websites, and any other material used in the writing of Portfolios.

### **Turnitin and Interpreting the Similarity Report**

Turnitin platform is used at RCPI to check for instances of possible plagiarism in candidates' work. All Portfolio submissions will be checked for instances of possible plagiarism.

When a document is submitted to Turnitin, it compares the text in the document against its database of electronic materials and the internet. Turnitin's databases contain vast amounts of web content, previously submitted assignments, periodicals, journals and publications. Turnitin also has an Institution paper repository function, which allows for candidate's submissions to be checked against papers previously submitted to RCPI.

- The Similarity Report generated by Turnitin is examined by the Chief Examiner thoroughly and the RCPI Exams Coordinator to determine if the candidate's submission reveals suspected plagiarism.
- A Similarity Index Score of greater than 50% is cause for concern and will be reviewed as suspected plagiarism. However, it does not always necessarily indicate that plagiarism has occurred.
- The overall similarity score is less of an importance:
  - If the individual score for each highlighted text is >3% from one particular source, this will be a suspected case of plagiarism.



- In order to mitigate the above risk of suspected plagiarism, the 'filter and settings' panel in the Turnitin must be re-set to the following:
  - a) Exclude quotes
  - b) Exclude bibliography
  - c) Exclude sources which are  $\leq 3\%$  words
    - Account of the context and nature of each case will be taken into consideration.
    - Appendices will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

### **Suspected Plagiarism Review Procedure**

Where a suspected instance of plagiarism has been detected, an initial assessment will be undertaken, and if there are grounds for concern, the candidate will be informed in writing by the RCPI Exams Coordinator that their case is under scrutiny as suspected plagiarism. At this point, the RCPI Exams Coordinator will encourage the candidate to link in with their trainer (where applicable) and note the supports available to them including discussion with the National Specialty Director and the Health & Wellbeing Team within the RCPI. The candidate will be invited to reply to the allegation of suspected plagiarism, within five working days from its receipt.

The Chief Examiner of exams will then refer the case to the Plagiarism Review Committee, with a short report outlining the grounds of suspicion, a copy of the Portfolio case/s and any supporting evidence (Similarity Report and a response from the candidate).

The Plagiarism Review Committee will investigate and report on the suspected case of plagiarism to the Chief Examiner within 10 working days from its receipt. The Plagiarism Review Committee may decide any of the following:

- That plagiarism has not occurred, and the candidate's application will be accepted. Candidate is to be informed in writing by the RCPI Exams Coordinator about the outcome.
- That plagiarism has occurred, and the candidate's application will be rejected. Candidate is to be informed in writing by the RCPI Exams Coordinator about the outcome and is directed as to where to receive advice about academic integrity for future submissions. All instances of confirmed plagiarism will be noted at the FOMEC and RCPI Examinations Committee meetings, without naming the candidate.

The Plagiarism Review Committee recognises the importance of maintaining confidentiality when handling cases of suspected plagiarism, and candidate's anonymity will be maintained as far as is possible during any investigation.

### **Sanctions**

Where an allegation of plagiarism has been proven, the penalty imposed by the Plagiarism Review Committee includes rejecting the candidate's application and withdrawing them from the Portfolio Exam. This submission will count as one of their six attempts at the Portfolio examination. Resubmission of portfolio cases at future sittings will be permitted once resubmissions are correctly cited.

### **Appeals**

Details of the appeal procedure can be found in the [Appeals Policy](#).<sup>7</sup>



**Reference List:**

1. University of Cambridge. Good academic practice and avoiding plagiarism [Internet]. Cambridge: University of Cambridge [ (undated); cited 2023 August 2nd]. Available from: <https://libguides.cam.ac.uk/plagiarism/whatisplagiarism>
2. Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. Regulations and Information for Candidates – Membership of the Faculty of Public Health Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland – Part I, II and III [Internet]. Dublin: Royal College of Physicians of Ireland [ updated 2023 May; cited 2023 August 2nd]. Available from: [https://www.rcpi.ie/Portals/0/Document%20Repository/Exams/Faculty%20of%20Public%20Health%20Medicine/MFPHMI%20Amended%20Regulations%20-%20May%202023.pdf?ver=0lfkO9HCva36\\_jlQxxdWvQ%3d%3d](https://www.rcpi.ie/Portals/0/Document%20Repository/Exams/Faculty%20of%20Public%20Health%20Medicine/MFPHMI%20Amended%20Regulations%20-%20May%202023.pdf?ver=0lfkO9HCva36_jlQxxdWvQ%3d%3d)
3. University of Oxford. Plagiarism [Internet]. Oxford: University of Oxford [ (undated); cited 2023 August 2nd]. Available from: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>
4. University College Cork. Plagiarism Policy [Internet]. Cork: University College Cork [ updated 2021 April; cited 2023 August 2nd]. Available from: [PlagiarismPolicy2021v4.pdf \(adobe.com\)](#)
5. Mary Immaculate College. What is Turnitin [Internet]. Limerick: Mary Immaculate College [ updated 2021 October 20<sup>th</sup>; cited 2023 August 2nd]. Available from: <https://lead.mic.ul.ie/gettings-started-with-turnitin/what-is-turnitin>
6. Turnitin. Feedback Studio Student [Internet]. Turnitin [ (undated); cited 2023 August 2nd]. Available from: <https://help.turnitin.com/feedback-studio/turnitin-website/student/student-category.htm>
7. Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. Appeals Policy [Internet]. Dublin: Royal College of Physicians of Ireland [March 2022]. Available from: <https://www.rcpi.ie/Learn-and-Develop/Examinations/Examinations-Policies-and-Procedures>