

**Academic and Research Integrity at the Graduate Level:
Proposed Policy Additions to the Graduate Catalog**

I. Rationale:

Academic work often occurs under pressure and at the intersection of project outcomes, deadlines, career goals, and finances. Yet academic integrity is foundational. Academic integrity and research ethics are the responsibility of each student. Their research mentors and committees are also obligated to ensure sound and ethical procedures in research and writing are followed.

Graduate students must abide by the policies outlined in two sections of the Handbook for Operating Procedures and in the Graduate Catalog and may be unclear to students or mentors. In reviewing student **theses/dissertations** and applications for funding, the Graduate School staff and dean have found instances of **materials or notions that were not cited**, almost exact copies of the same proposal **texts** without acknowledgment or citation of **those** submitted by different students, and research mentor oversights.

To clarify how academic integrity applies to graduate student work, two additions to the UTEP Graduate Catalog are proposed:

- A. A new section on academic integrity at the graduate level to be added under [General Degree Requirements](#) between the sections Coursework Requirements and Thesis Requirements. This addition **entails** definitions of academic dishonesty and research misconduct across policy documents in the Handbook of Operating Procedures and what they mean at the graduate level. The text in this section is organized as follows: definitions, examples, recommendations, consequences.
- B. Specific mention of academic integrity **on** theses and dissertations to be added to the Dissertation Requirements and Thesis Requirements sections under [General Degree Requirements](#). This addition requires that students submit a plagiarism check report with their formatted thesis or dissertation to the Graduate School.

II. Proposed Additions.

A. Academic Integrity section (between Coursework Requirements and Thesis Requirements)

All Students

All graduate students must understand and abide by UTEP's academic integrity policies outlined in the Student Conduct and Discipline section of the [Handbook for Operating Procedures \(section 1.2.3\(a\)\)](#). This policy accounts for the following:

- Cheating: copying or seeking help from another person during a test, assignment, or assessment; using unauthorized materials during test, assignment, or assessment; substituting for another person or permitting another person to substitute for oneself; or submitting work from one class that is the same or substantially similar to that used for another class without citation or acknowledgment.

- Plagiarism: presenting another person's work as one's own.
- Collusion: unauthorized collaboration with another person on an academic assignment.
- Misrepresentation of facts for academic advantage: providing false or misleading information for academic or financial benefit of oneself or another individual, or conversely, providing false or misleading information to **undermine or damage** another person academically or financially.

Students Engaged in Research

Students doing research must also understand and abide by [the UTEP's Research Integrity Policy](#). This policy defines research misconduct, **with** particular emphasis on fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. **The** UTEP Research Integrity Policy (section 6.2) specifies the following actions as research misconduct:

- Fabrication: making up data or results and recording or reporting them. For example,
 - Generating data that **are** not based on any observations
 - Adding **false** observations to existing data
 - Reporting findings of studies that were not conducted
- Falsification: manipulating research materials, equipment or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
 - Misrepresenting or omitting procedures in a research study
 - Removing data from a study without reporting **them to be** removed and **providing** the reasons for **removing them**
 - Using false or misleading statements when describing the findings of a study
- Plagiarism: the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.
 - Paraphrasing and failing to acknowledge the source of information
 - Using images, graphs, or data generated by others without acknowledging them
 - Not acknowledging contributions of co-authors or research collaborators

Consequences and Prevention

Academic honesty and research integrity **are** important in all academic work including but not limited to class assignments, **exams**, publications, presentations, grant **or thesis/dissertation** proposals, theses, and dissertations. A student may be found guilty of academic dishonesty or research misconduct even if they did not act with the intention to deceive.

Research misconduct can result in serious consequences such as receiving a failing grade on an assignment, revoking a thesis or dissertation, or expulsion from the University. It also damages the reputation of the person(s) involved and of the research/university community at large.

Research misconduct and academic dishonesty cases at UTEP follow a due process. Student cases are reported to the Dean of Students but may also qualify for review by the Vice President for Research and the Provost who may then refer the cases to the appropriate deans or responsible parties.

Graduate students and their research mentors can prevent academic dishonesty and research misconduct by taking the following steps:

- Complete the [Responsible Conduct in Research](#) (RCR) training relevant to their discipline. RCR training is required for sponsored research but useful for all researchers;
- Take a course or participate in a professional development activity that covers academic integrity;
- Communicate clearly and often about intellectual property, collaboration and authorship, and carefully review the [UTEP's Policy on Research Integrity](#) in the Handbook of Operating Procedures;
- Be well-versed in discipline's reference and style guidelines—while conventions differ across disciplines, all rely on attribution and formal citation practices; and
- Review work for unattributed text (or images) that can mislead readers regarding the author's contributions. Free or university supported software that screens for plagiarism shall or can be used to assist with review. Plagiarism detection software, however, does not detect everything (e.g., images, data, etc.) thus careful review by all authors is essential.

B. Text addition proposed for Dissertation Requirements and Thesis Requirements sections: Preventing Academic Dishonesty and Research Misconduct

The following are required for final thesis/dissertation approval:

- Prior to their defense, students must run their thesis/dissertation through the plagiarism detection software approved by UTEP, and the report must be reviewed by their committee chair and members. By signing the defense form, committee members acknowledge that they have reviewed the plagiarism report.
- A copy of the plagiarism report must be submitted to the Graduate School with the thesis/dissertation. The report will be archived separately from the thesis/dissertation.

The chair of a thesis/dissertation committee may petition the Dean of the Graduate School for an exception to this requirement; the petition must provide justifications for why an exception is necessary and the steps the committee will take to help ensure academic integrity of the thesis/dissertation.

Sources Consulted

Cambridge University Graduate-level Plagiarism Statement:

<https://www.ch.cam.ac.uk/gradstudents/plagiarism>

Office of Research Integrity, Department of Health & Human Services: <https://ori.hhs.gov/handling-misconduct>

University of Southern Mississippi: <https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/internalportal/turnitin-instructions.php>

University of South Florida, Turnitin: <https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/students/electronic-thesis-dissertation/etd-process-requirements/etd-plagiarism-check.aspx>

UTEP <https://www.utep.edu/hoop/section-4/research-integrity-policy.html>

Virginia Tech, use of Ithenticate: <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/what-you-need-to-graduate/ithenticate-for-students.html>