

Procedure for Performing Reference Checks on Manuscripts Doctoral dissertations

1. Context and Purpose of the Reference Check

Pursuant to Article 5.1.2 of the current Doctorate Regulations, “a plagiarism scan is performed by the Graduate School concerned under the responsibility of the candidate’s PhD supervisor. The PhD supervisor will then analyse the report resulting from the plagiarism scan and will consider this in their final decision on whether or not to approve the thesis”.

Plagiarism scans/reference checks¹ are a means of detecting instances of plagiarism, but can also be used to teach PhD students how to cite extant literature in a responsible manner.

This memo will mainly deal with the ‘reference check’ included in Erasmus University’s new and revised Doctorate Regulations. This reference check must be performed prior to the PhD supervisor’s granting the PhD student his or her final approval (cf. Article 5.1 of the Doctorate Regulations) and will help the other examiners and the Board of Doctoral Degrees decide on whether or not to allow the PhD candidate to defend his or her thesis.

The procedure is in line with international professional standards that are used by the Council of Science Editors (among other organisations) in the workflows for journal editors.²

Section 2 presents a chart listing the responsibilities of each of the persons involved in the procedure. Section 3 provides a descriptive explanation of how to perform the reference check.

Appendix 1 includes a checklist for the analysis of the reference check report. Appendix 2 provides a sample plagiarism workflow/decision tree. Appendix 3 provides a list of typologies of plagiarism and an explanation of what is and what is not allowed. We have also included a rough, EUR-specific sequence of steps of how to go about a reference check in Appendix 4.

¹ The current Doctorate Regulations (2015 edition) frequently refer to ‘plagiarism scans’. This phrase will no longer be used in this document and will also be removed from the new edition of the Doctorate Regulations. We have chosen here to use the phrase ‘reference check’, which is a better description of what actually happens when we perform a check. After all, a reference check does not necessarily scan for plagiarism, but rather for correct usage of attributions and for overlap between the author’s own text and any reference works s/he may have used. An author cannot be accused of plagiarism until the reference check results have been assessed. Overlap in itself does not constitute a problem. However, it becomes a problem when the overlap cannot be explained by the author’s having quoted from his or her own books or publications, or when the citation method used is incorrect. If an overlap is detected, it does not always mean that the PhD student has questionable academic integrity, but s/he may be advised to revise and improve his or her citations.

² <http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/>

2. Persons involved and their responsibilities

Board of Doctoral Degrees/Rector	Ensures the correct performance and implementation of the procedure.
Director/Dean of Research of the Graduate School	Determines who is to perform the reference check: the PhD supervisor himself/herself or a member of staff appointed by the Graduate School.
Dean	Decides, in consultation with the parties involved, which Graduate School is responsible for PhD students who have not yet been assigned to a Graduate School. Performs an annual meta check to verify whether reference checks are being performed and submits his or her audit report to the Board of Doctorate Degrees.
PhD supervisor	Analyses the reference check report on the basis of the items mentioned in Appendix 1, and depending on his or her findings, s/he will do one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Signs the report and submits it to the registrar (Beadle's office) along with Form No. 2 and his or her assessment (once RIS is operational, s/he will upload the aforementioned forms to the PhD student administration system) b) Hands the thesis back to the PhD student so that s/he can improve his or her references c) Notifies the Dean or EUR's Academic Integrity Adviser in the event that s/he questions the PhD student's integrity.
Inner doctoral committee	Check whether the report and the PhD supervisor's analysis result in objections to the PhD student being awarded his or her doctorate. If not, commence the PhD defence procedure in accordance with Article 6.2.
PhD student	Submits the manuscript to the person actually performing the reference check. Where applicable, follows the PhD supervisor's advice regarding the outcome of the reference check.
Beadle's Office	Verifies that the procedure has been followed as intended: checks whether both the reference check report and the PhD supervisor's assessment are on record.

3. Steps to be followed when performing a reference check

The reference check to be performed must focus on the key parts (i.e., the parts that support the author's hypothesis) of the manuscript. In many cases, these will be an important chapter or an article with many references to the extant literature studied by the PhD student, e.g. the dissertation's literature review. It will be the chapter of the thesis which borrows most heavily from previously published work in the field at hand.

The reference check will help the PhD supervisor determine whether the citation method used in the thesis³ is adequate and precise, and whether it complies with Erasmus University's current integrity code and commonly observed standards of scientific integrity.

Even components of the thesis that have already been published at the time of the reference analysis must be included in the reference check.

It should be noted that the check as to whether the PhD student has cited his or her sources correctly not only concerns the cited texts themselves, but information borrowed from tables and charts.

Articles are considered to have been 'published' once they can be accessed using at least one Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and have their own page on a publisher's website. For reference checks of previously published articles, listing the APA reference (including the DOI of the article concerned and the name of the journal in which it was published) suffices.

All EUR schools have access to the Turnitin reference-check system, through Blackboard or otherwise.⁴ Each faculty or Graduate School has a Blackboard expert. The system is functionally managed for the entire university by ABO, which comes under OOS/USC. The Urkund system (ERIM) is used, as well.

In the event that the PhD supervisor finds any signs indicating that the PhD student has not cited literature correctly, there are several options open to him or her. For one, the PhD supervisor may give the PhD student some directions as to how to improve his or her citations. The PhD supervisor may approve the manuscript once the requested revisions have been made.

If the PhD supervisor has reservations about the PhD student's academic integrity, s/he will notify the Dean, either with or without having heard the PhD student first. They may then decide not to approve the manuscript, citing their reasons for doing so.

Once the new Research Information System has been implemented, the reference check reports and the PhD supervisor's own findings will be able to be uploaded to said system. Until that time, the reports must be submitted to the Beadle's Office by email.

³ The PhD student must use the citation style most commonly used in his or her field of study (e.g. MLA or APA). PhD students learn how to cite others from their Graduate Schools.

⁴ In order to use Blackboard, the user must be registered with Osiris as a PhD student.

Appendix 1. Reference Check Checklist: Report and Analysis

The PhD supervisor's analysis of the reference check/plagiarism scan report must be appended to Form No. 2 as outlined in EUR's Doctorate Regulations.

About the manuscript

Thesis title:	
PhD student's name:	
Date of scheduled PhD defence:	
Language:	

Reference check details

Name of person performing the scan:	
Date of reference check:	
System used to perform the check: Turnitin/Urkund	
Include link to scan output:	

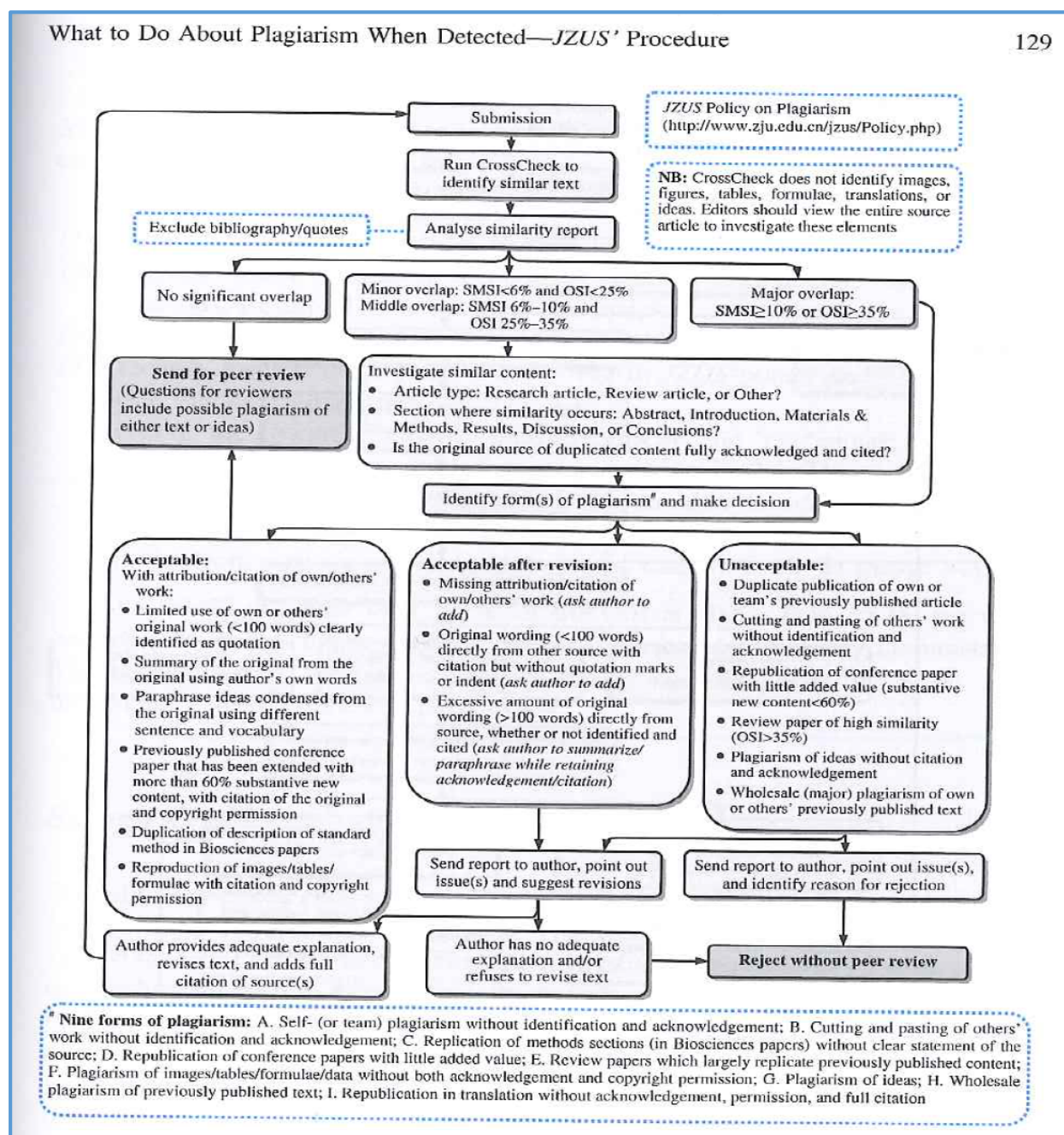
Analysis of reference check report (to be carried out by the PhD supervisor on the basis of the items listed below)

- Percentage of overlap with other sources and number of sources with which there is some overlap
- Reasons for the overlap with the most frequently cited sources (including the PhD student's own articles)
- Citation style and consistency, level of precision with regard to quoted text, and level of compliance with citation standards used in the relevant field
- Consistency between the in-text citations and the bibliography appended to the thesis
- References to books
- Amount of text cited without attribution

Appendices 2 and 3 provide more information on the thesis analysis to be performed by the PhD supervisor.

PhD supervisor's name:	
Findings:	

Appendix 2. Sample Cross-Checking Workflow



Source: *Against Plagiarism: A Guide for Editors and Authors. A Concise Guide Useful to All Scientists and Academicians, from Authors to Referees and Editors*, page 129, figure 10.2

Zhang, Y.H., Springer, 2016

<http://www.springer.com/cn/book/9783319241586>

Appendix 3. How to Recognise Different Typologies of Plagiarism

EUR regards the following types of references and citations as problematic, and uses the same definitions and typologies of plagiarism proposed by Weber-Wulff & Wohnsdorf (2006), Weber-Wulff's Plagiarism Detection Software Test 2013 (<http://plagiat.htw-berlin.de/software-en/test2013/report-2013/>) and Weber-Wulff: False Feathers (2014). The main typologies of plagiarism are as follows:

Copy-and-Paste Plagiarism	Easily spotted borrowing of a full passage, or a part thereof, without identification and acknowledgement.
Disguised Plagiarism	Borrowing of a full passage, or a part thereof, in which a few words or aspects of the writing style have been changed, without attribution.
Translations	Borrowing of a full passage, or a part thereof, translated into the target language, without attribution.
Mosaic Plagiarism	Multiple borrowings of brief passages from other works in which the order of the words and the original text structure have been changed, without attribution.
'Marionette' Reference	Reference to a passage from a text, with attribution, which leaves out a part of the text that changes the meaning of the passage or provides more nuance.

EUR adheres to professional standards used by the Council of Science Editors (among other organisations) in their workflows for journal editors (see Appendix 2 for a sample workflow).⁵ Please find below a list of regulations arising from the CSE code:

What is allowed?

1. Quotations of fewer than 100 words from the author's own work or someone else's work
2. Paraphrases
3. Repetition and/or summary of an idea
4. Reproduction of a table or image, unless copyright-protected
5. In biomedical sciences: duplication of standard methods
6. A rewritten or revised version of a conference paper, provided that it has been extended with over 60 percent new or revised content.

What is not allowed?

1. Copying an entire passage from a publication or article
2. Plagiarism scores exceeding 10 percent, which cannot be attributed to faulty referencing
3. Review papers that display more than 35 percent of the literal text in the core text

⁵ <http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/>

Appendix 4. Reference Check: Sequence of Steps

