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பலகலைக்கழக மானியங்கள் ஆணைக்குழு  
UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

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எனது இலக்கம்  
My Number } UGC/AC/QA/GEN

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அஞ்சல் பெட்டி  
Post Office Box } 1406

ඔබේ අංකය  
உமது இலக்கம்  
Your Number }

① chairperson  
Higher Degrees -

20, වෝඩ් පෙදෙස, කොළඹ 07, ශ්‍රී ලංකාව.  
20, வாட்டு இடம், கொழும்பு 7, இலங்கை.  
20, Ward Place, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka.

10<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Vice Chancellors of Universities

Dear Vice Chancellor,

② Prof R. Kumbakonam  
inform the research  
students - (UGs)  
③ All academic staff - inform your  
research students  
21/2

Requirement of a Policy on Plagiarism

The University Grants Commission (UGC) considered the policy document submitted by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors on plagiarism and decided to adopt the same in the university system. It was also decided to include 'Plagiarism' in the Establishments Code of the University Grants Commission and Higher Educational Institutions, under the offences and the disciplinary procedure.

These decisions of the Commission are conveyed to you for your information and necessary action.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. (Mrs.) Kshhanika Hirimburegama  
Chairperson

Copy: Senior Assistant Secretary, Legal & Documentation, UGC

H/ Deans  
Circulate pls

Vice - Chancellor  
University of Peradeniya  
Peradeniya  
Sri Lanka

26.06.2012

The Chairman,  
University Grants Commission,  
No. 20, Ward place,  
Colombo-07



*For Secy (Ac & Adm.)  
M. Mace for before  
the Commission for  
consideration  
Ch. M.  
27.01.*

Dear Sir,

### POLICY OF PLAGIARISM

On the request of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors, M.N.Selvakumaran, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo prepared a document on policy of plagiarism which was discussed at several CVCD meetings and was finalized at the last CVCD meeting held on 02.06.2012.

Further, the CVCD decided to send this policy document to the University Grants Commission for adoption by the Universities subject to the condition that the plagiarism will be included in the establishment code under the offences and the disciplinary inquiries would be held under normal disciplinary procedure.

A copy of the final document on policy of plagiarism recommended by the CVCD is hereby send to you. On behalf of the CVCD I kindly request you to take appropriate actions to adopt the above policy by the university system.

Thank you,

You Sincerely,

Prof. Susirith Mendis,  
Chairman/ CVCD

CC: Secretary/ CVCD

## Policy Paper on Plagiarism

### 1. Introduction

1.1 One of the critical and recurring problems in higher educational institutions relates to academic integrity and honesty of the academics and students who resort to unacceptable academic practice of copying others' works and produce them as their original creations. The rapid development of information and communication technology, coupled with the phenomenal reservoir of knowledge and information that is the Internet and easy and speedy access to such a storehouse of information, makes the problem of ensuring that the academic works presented by the staff and students of these institutions are of original scholarly nature, very acute and widespread. It has become increasingly necessary for academic institutions to have a set of clear cut policy statements and implementation tools to ensure that their academic members and students do not act in a manner which brings disrepute to the institution. It is immaterial whether those purported acts of academic misconduct have been committed intentionally or otherwise.

### 2. What is Plagiarism?

2.1 Plagiarism is an act of producing and presenting a 'work' as if it is one's own when it is actually the work of someone else. Plagiarism is an act of passing off the 'work' of some else as that of one's own. The term 'work' referred to incorporates and means not only the other person's 'expressions of ideas' but also the other person's 'ideas' themselves.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>To "Plagiarize" means

- 1) To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own,
- 2) to use (another's production) without crediting the source,
- 3) to commit literary theft,
- 4) to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of *fraud*. It involves both **stealing** someone else's work and **lying** about it afterward.

[SOURCE: Merriam-Webster On-Line Dictionary as reported in the Document provided by Turnitin.com and Research Resources Refer to [www.plagiarism.org/research\\_site/e\\_what\\_is\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/research_site/e_what_is_plagiarism.html).]



2.2 In effect, it is 'stealing' the work of somebody else and showing off as if it is one's own work. This involves two acts of unacceptable conduct in a higher educational institution: i) stealing the work of someone else; and ii) presenting the work as one's own when it is not the case. Hence, plagiarism is an act of cheating; in fact it amounts to double cheating in that the plagiarizer cheats the owner of a work, and then cheats the third party or the world at large by passing off that it was his/her own work. This is academic dishonesty and misconduct, whether done with design or negligently.

2.3 Plagiarism should be distinguished from copyright infringement. While copyright infringement means the unauthorized use of 'expressions of ideas' which enjoy copyright protection under the law governing intellectual property rights in the country. The copyright law does not make it an offence if someone copies ideas of others though the ideas are subsumed in copyright protected work. It is the form or presentation of expression of ideas which is protected under the copyright law; not the idea itself. However, the act of plagiarism covers not only the expression of ideas of others but also the very ideas themselves. There could be instances where the work from which the act of plagiarism takes place might not enjoy copyright protection as it might have failed to satisfy the requirements for copyright protection under the governing law. However, it would amount to an act of plagiarism if somebody copies either an idea and/or an expression of idea from that work, even though the work in question does not enjoy copyright protection. Hence, the concept of plagiarism is wider in its scope and sweep than the concept of copyright.

### 3. Why is plagiarism unacceptable in an academic institution?

3.1 Plagiarism represents academic dishonesty and cheating, a conduct unbecoming of any higher educational institution worthy of its name. It is a conduct ethically and morally unacceptable as it involves academic theft of other's ideas and/or expressions of ideas as well as academic misrepresentation and cheating. Higher educational institutions are the

4

places where academics and students involve in, amongst others, scholarly search for truth, objective & critical inquiry, creative thinking, unbiased analysis, deepening & broadening knowledge & learning, disseminating findings in an objective manner while scrupulously respecting intellectual integrity and ethics of scholarship. One of the hallmarks, amongst others, of an academic is to be objective in his/her search for truth along with being truthful in putting out his/her findings. Where an academic engages in stealing others' ideas and puts out the stolen-product as if it is his/her own work, he/she is engages in deceitful conduct - a dishonest and fraudulent behaviour unbecoming of an academic.

3.2 Acts of plagiarism undermine scholarship, compromise on the requirement of originality, tarnish the stature, name & reputation of other academics and students as well as bring the institution where the acts of plagiarism take place into disrepute and disgrace. They also cause harm and injury to his/her economic and moral rights of the person whose work the alleged plagiarism is based on. It has the possibility of exposing the higher educational institution wherein the alleged plagiarism took place to a potential law suit, if the institution does not take appropriate action to prevent such actions. The higher educational institutions which do not take effective and prompt steps to stamp out pseudo academics from their midst will be ruing their inaction or ineffective action sooner than later; it will cause indelible and irreparable damage to the name of the institution.

#### 4. Understanding acts of plagiarism

4.1 Broadly stated, the following represent acts of plagiarism:

- a) Copying 'the expression of ideas' of somebody else;
- b) Copying 'ideas' of somebody else.

4.2 With regard to the first (a) category, copying chapters, paragraphs, sentences, even phrases -word to word - from the work of somebody else without due acknowledgement and proper referencing is considered to be plagiarizing. A few changes of words or

phrases or a few deletions of clauses or phrases will not absolve a person from the allegation of plagiarism.

4.3 With regard to the second (b) category, although the issue, at first sight, seems very plain, it is not the case. As academics and researchers are involved in searching for truth, interpreting existing findings and building on existing knowledge, they are bound to deal with the ideas which have already been in the public domain. Some of the existing knowledge and findings (ideas) are so common and so universally known, it may not be necessary to acknowledge and give reference to those commonly known ideas repeatedly in one's work. Learning and researching are on-going processes; they build on the existing state of knowledge; they may question the validity and truthfulness of the existing knowledge and findings; or they may add to the existing level of knowledge or interpret it differently. However, there is in the public domain a large volume of knowledge representing ideas which have been the result of creative work of others; but this body of knowledge may have been in the public domain for so long, that the people know very well who the author is and that the work may have been used a countless number of times by all and sundry.

4.4 Is it necessary that every idea of others is duly acknowledged and properly referenced? Should ideas that are part of 'common knowledge' be acknowledged and referenced if making use of these ideas is not to constitute an act of plagiarism?

4.5 It is in this context the issue of copying somebody's idea without proper acknowledgement and referencing becomes an issue, if the idea has been in the public domain and has become a part of common knowledge. There is no hard and fast rule to stipulate which ideas or knowledge will be regarded as part of common knowledge and do not need any citation; or on the other hand there is no rule to say which ideas and knowledge will need due acknowledgement and proper citation to avoid the allegation of plagiarism. It is difficult to state with certainty where a purported act of copying ends and where a real act of originality commences. The dividing line between plagiarized work and original work may become very blurred in certain doubtful cases. It would be wise and desirable to provide acknowledgement and proper citation, when one is not sure as to

whether he/she is crossing the prohibited line of plagiarism. When in doubt, acknowledge the source!

## **5. What constitute acts of plagiarism?**

5.1 According to Turnitin.com, the following amount to acts of plagiarism

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not.<sup>2</sup>

5.2 It has to be borne in mind that the above is not an exhaustive list of acts which constitute plagiarism. Any act which represents unacceptable conduct of taking ideas from others and presenting them as one's own would amount to an act of plagiarism.

5.3 Steps should be taken to amend the existing bye-laws (both relating to staff and students) to make this conduct a separate and specific ground of misconduct which will warrant, in extreme cases, expulsion from the institution.

## **6. Awareness on Plagiarism and its Consequences**

6.1 The higher educational institutions must take steps to create awareness amongst its academic staff and students on the unethical and unacceptable conduct of plagiarism. The different acts which constitute acts of plagiarism must be explained to them. They should

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to [www.plagiarism.org/research\\_site/e\\_what\\_is\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/research_site/e_what_is_plagiarism.html) and also [www.cecs.csulb.edu/~maples/Dept-docs/Plagiarism.doc](http://www.cecs.csulb.edu/~maples/Dept-docs/Plagiarism.doc)

also be told about the consequences that would result in if they are detected to have indulged in committing the act of plagiarism.

6.2 Training programmes should be undertaken to educate these groups as to how they could avoid falling victims of these allegations. Practical sessions should be conducted to make them train to produce creative works without infringing the rules relating to plagiarism or copyright.

6.3 Programmes must be put in place to check acts of plagiarism when students and staff submit materials for examination or other purposes. The fact that these programmes are available with the University and that they will be used to check the integrity and originality of works submitted must be made known to these groups

## 7. Reporting Process and Disciplinary Action

7.1 Prompt action should be taken against any alleged violators of the rules against plagiarism.

7.2 The existing rules relating to conduct of investigations and inquiries could be used to take disciplinary action on complaints of plagiarism.

7.3 If existing rules relating to conduct of disciplinary or fact-finding investigations and inquiries relating to academic members are not suitable to deal with the allegations or complaints of plagiarism, a University can make its own rule and provide for an effective allegation/complaint handling mechanism which should include a process for making complaints against alleged acts of plagiarism or the institution itself, on its own motion, takes cognizance and commences investigation and inquiry into any allegation of plagiarism.

7.4 The said rules formulated for entertaining complaints and conducting investigations and inquiries by each University should ensure that the process is objective and transparent so that it would be desirable to have a retired professor and a retired judicial officer on the inquiry panel which would observe the rules of natural justice in its conduct of the inquiry.

The University should have authority to impose a range of punishments, from warning to termination of services, on an academic if he or she is found to have committed the offence of plagiarism. The rules should provide for such course of action.