



Prevention, detection and treatment of
plagiarism in education
Guidelines for students

July 2017

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Plagiarism is not a new phenomenon in university education. However, the digital revolution has made it easier to access and reproduce information and led to a considerable increase in the number of plagiarism cases detected in assignments at all levels of university education. Since plagiarism directly violates the rights of authorship, it can be prosecuted and legally sanctioned. Moreover, it is an ethically reprehensible act that tarnishes the professional reputation of the offender, damages the reputation of the institution, and undermines the quality of education the institution provides.

The Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) therefore deems it necessary to raise awareness among students and faculty about the importance of not engaging in voluntary or involuntary acts of plagiarism and to establish mechanisms to prevent, detect and treat it. These actions are fundamental elements of the nuclear curriculum for all URV students. Specifically, the prevention and treatment of plagiarism is currently described in core competence C3 (on managing information and knowledge) and new transversal competence CT2 (on managing information and knowledge through the efficient use of ICT), depending on the student's curriculum.

To accomplish its objectives in this area, during the 2017-18 academic year the URV is launching its Plan for the Prevention, Detection and Treatment of Plagiarism in Education. One of the actions contained in this plan is to provide a series of guidelines for students, lecturers, deans and directors of the URV's departments, schools and faculties on how to prevent, detect and treat plagiarism. These specific guidelines addressed to students describe what plagiarism is, what the URV considers plagiarism to be, how to detect it, and what the academic consequences of plagiarism are.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is considered a form of academic dishonesty. However, its definition, particularly in terms of the types of behaviour that may constitute it, is open to discussion (O'Dwyer et al., 2010).

In the context of university education, plagiarism is a lack of academic ethics (Sutherland-Smith, 2010) that is often described using terms such as "lack of honesty", "misdemeanour", "intellectual theft" or "cheating" (Sutherland-Smith, 2010).

According to Williams & Carroll (2009), plagiarism occurs when "students copy other people's work and presents it as their own."

"Plagiarism is the use of another's ideas and/or words without a clear acknowledgement of the source of the information" (Glucksman Library, University of Limerick, 2007). In university education, this behaviour is considered a very serious academic offence.

At the URV plagiarism is considered to be any action carried out by a student in which he or she passes off as their own work ideas, concepts, data, information or arguments, etc. from other sources or passes off as original any works or parts of works that have been presented previously.

Behaviours that are considered plagiarism

- ✓ **"Copying** text [or data] [from any source] and inserting it into a document without proper citation" (O'Dwyer et al., 2010). This is also known as **word-for-word or verbatim plagiarism**. It includes copying and translating a text before inserting it into one's own document.
- ✓ **Summarising** or **paraphrasing** someone else's work without properly referencing the original author. Paraphrasing means "expressing the author's work in your own words" (Glucksman Library, University of Limerick, 2007).
- ✓ **Submitting someone else's work as one's own**. "Taking someone else's work and presenting it if it were your own" (University of Huddersfield). Submitting as one's own work an exercise one has bought, found (on the Internet, for example), or asked another person to complete.
- ✓ **Basing one's work on someone else's ideas** without properly referencing the original author. This includes using the same or a similar structure or arguments. It involves making the same points, using the same data or stating the same conclusions as someone else without clearly identifying the full extent of the original author's contribution.
- ✓ **Mosaic** involves copying texts from various sources before combining them, slightly modifying them, or changing a few words or sentences in order to link them together without clearly acknowledging all the sources used. Mosaic is "pick-n-mix" type behaviour.
- ✓ **Self-plagiarism** involves re-submitting an exercise (or part of an exercise) one has prepared for one university course for a different course without making this clear and without obtaining the consent of the lecturer involved. One cannot receive two grades for the same assignment (O'Rourke & Booth, University of Sheffield, 2010).
- ✓ **Collusion** occurs when two or more students jointly prepare an individual assignment (or part of an assignment) and then each student submits the same (or a slightly modified) exercise as the fruit of their own individual effort. This is not at odds with the idea of collaboration between students since work presented by any student should be the fruit of their own reflections.

What is considered plagiarism at the URV?

In postgraduate studies the following behaviours are also considered plagiarism:

✓ **Not clearly identifying one's sources according to conventions.** It is important to cite information properly in accordance with the conventions of one's discipline (University of Oxford, *What is plagiarism*, 2011). Citations should enable the reader to locate the sources of information the student has used to prepare his or her work.

✓ **Not linking precise points in the text to their corresponding references.** This means not clearly identifying in one's text the sources of information on which individual ideas or points are based. It may also involve adding a list of bibliographical references at the end of the text without linking each reference to the specific part of the text to which they correspond.

✓ **Citing articles one has not read.** For example, a student may have read article X and this article cites a series of other articles (A, B, C) that they have not read but have cited in their work anyway. A cited article implies that one has read it and taken it into account in one's work. Students should not cite articles they have not read.

Also considered plagiarism is any other type of behaviour that is included in the definition given in section (*What is plagiarism?*).

Intentionality

Plagiarism is considered to be independent of **intentionality**. Given that training information is available to all students, students are responsible for informing themselves about what is considered plagiarism and for taking all the necessary steps to avoid it.

Revising

Interpreting and revising the concept of plagiarism at the URV is the competence of the **Teaching, Students and University Community Committee**.

How can you avoid plagiarism?

To prevent and avoid plagiarism, it is essential that you use information correctly, paraphrasing and suitably referencing any sources you consult.

How can you avoid plagiarism?

✓ **Paraphrasing.** Once you have read the information, you should explain it in your own words (you should not include the same words as those of the original author) and reference the original source at the end of the sentence. Paraphrasing does not just mean summarising but explaining what you have understood from reading the original information.

✓ **Quotations.** You should remember that reproducing the text of another author is considered plagiarism even if it has been referenced. However, direct quotations from the text can be inserted provided certain conditions regarding format are adhered to. If you wish to quote the words of the original author literally, you must place them within quotation marks and indicate their source. If the quotation exceeds forty words, it must be separated from the text and indented. Remember that quotations should not be too long (one or several sentences only). They may be included sporadically but not abused.

✓ **Note-taking.** In order to quote or paraphrase properly, you should take notes when reading information. They will help you to explain in your own words what you have read. Remember to indicate appropriately (using quotation marks) any notes you have reproduced literally from the original source.

✓ Always write down the sources of information you have consulted in order not to forget them and to correctly reference them.

What is a reference?

A reference is a recognition in your work that you have used the ideas of another author to help you draft the document. All the sources of information you have used to prepare your work must be referenced, including books, journals, web pages, and scientific articles, etc.

Why is it important to include references?

To ensure that you have not committed plagiarism. To demonstrate that you have support for the ideas you have presented. To show that you have conducted background research. You should therefore always include references.

When should you include references?

"If the information came from outside your own head, cite the source" (Harris, 2002:18). This means that you must cite the original source if you use the theory, ideas or opinions of another person, use a direct quotation from the work of another author, or summarise the work of another author in your own words.

The table below illustrates when you need to include a reference and when you don't:

You must include a reference for somebody else's	You do not need to include a reference for your own
Direct quotations	Words
Summaries	Ideas (interpretations, opinions, conclusions)
Paraphrases	Data
Ideas (interpretations, opinions, conclusions)	Graphics
Data	Images
Graphics	Drawings

How can you avoid plagiarism?

Images	Tables of information
Drawings	Experiments
Tables of information	Examples
Experiments	Concepts
Examples	Expressions
Concepts	Expressions of common knowledge
Expressions	Solutions to problems
Solutions to problems	
Discourse	
Videos	
The structure or sequence of events, ideas or arguments	Font: Harris (2002:18)

Remember that it is not necessary to include references for common knowledge. However, in case of doubt, it is always better to include a reference.

The process you should follow when writing any work or project is:

STAGE 1: SEARCH FOR INFORMATION

Search for information from reliable and relevant sources (books, articles, web pages, etc.)

STAGE 2: ORGANISE

Organise the information
Organise the content

STAGE 3: CREATE

Write up the information, expressing your arguments and adapting them to the specific purpose:

- quotations
- paraphrasing
- theories, arguments or points of view
- statistics, examples, case studies
- others

How to include references

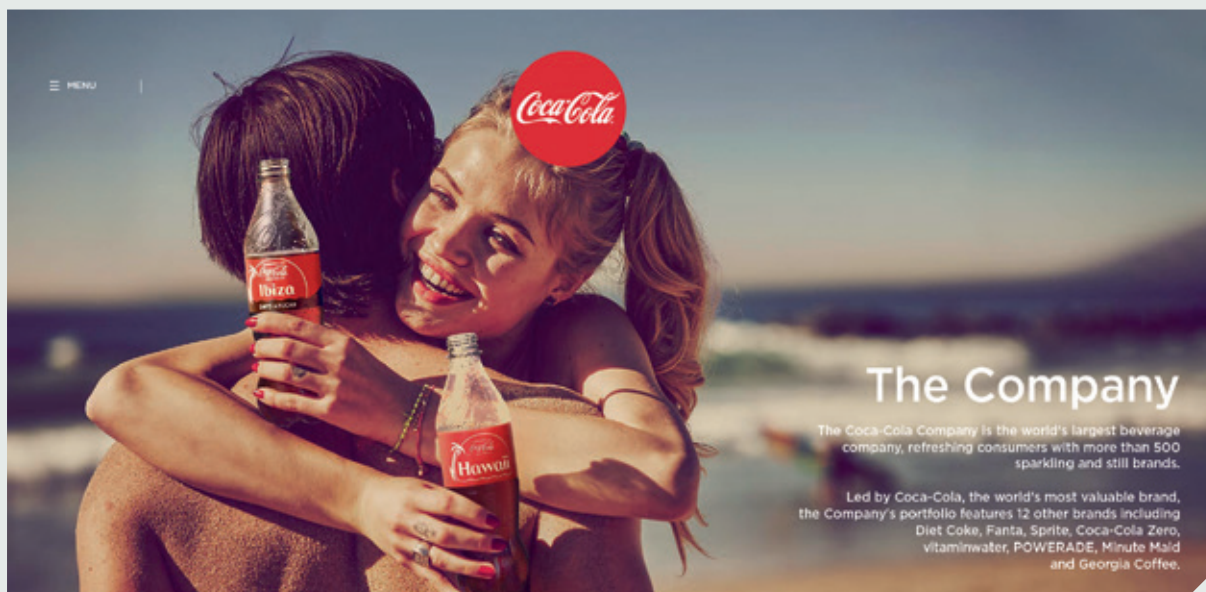
✓ **In the text.** Whenever you express an idea, concept, argument, etc. of another author, you must quote it in the text (at the end of the sentence or paragraph).

✓ **In the bibliography,** which compiles all the duly referenced sources of information you have consulted (author, year, title, journal, etc.) and enables readers to locate the sources of information.

The styles and rules for citations depend on the discipline: APA, UNE, Vancouver, ACS, etc. You can find citation styles or rules for various disciplines on the website of the CRAI (Learning and Research Resource Centre) of the URV (<http://www.urv.cat/crai/que-us-oferim/suport-investigacio/citacio.html>).

Bibliography assistants will help you to properly reference the sources of information you have used. For more information consult the following link: <http://www.urv.cat/crai/que-us-oferim/suport-investigacio/mendeley.html>.

Below are several practical exercises to illustrate what is considered plagiarism and what is not.



Example 1

The Coca-Cola Company is the world's largest beverage company, refreshing consumers with more than 500 sparkling and still brands.

Led by Coca-Cola, the world's most valuable brand, the Company's portfolio features 12 other brands including Diet Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Coca-Cola Zero, vitaminwater, POWERADE, Minute Maid and Georgia Coffee.

Is this plagiarism?

Yes. It is copied directly from Coca-Cola's web page.

Example 2

The Coca-Cola Company is the world's largest beverage company, refreshing consumers with more than 500 sparkling and still brands.

Led by Coca-Cola, the world's most valuable brand, the Company's portfolio features 12 other brands including Diet Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Coca-Cola Zero, vitaminwater, POWERADE, Minute Maid and Georgia Coffee.

Student's explanation: "This is standard introductory information about the company. It is not the most important part of my exercise. The rest of the exercise is all my own work."

Is this plagiarism?

Yes. It is a literal copy-and-paste with no reference to the source. There is no excuse and academic consequences for the student could ensue.

Example 3

"The Coca-Cola Company is the world's largest beverage company, refreshing consumers with more than 500 sparkling and still brands.

Led by Coca-Cola, recognised as the world's most valuable brand, the Company's portfolio features 12 other multimillion-dollar brands including Diet Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Coca-Cola Zero, vitaminwater, POWERADE, Minute Maid and Georgia Coffee" (Coca-Cola, 2011).

Is this plagiarism?

Technically, no, because the text is within quotation marks and there is a clear reference to the source. However, the text has little or **no academic value** since it has been copied and pasted from the Internet when the student could have described the company in his or her own words. Copying and pasting so much text is considered bad practice.

Example 4

The Coca-Cola Company is a world-leading beverage company, refreshing consumers with more than 500 drink brands. The Company's portfolio includes many other multimillion-dollar brands including Diet Coke and Fanta.

Is this plagiarism?

Yes, it is. Although the **text is paraphrased (summarised in the student's own words)**, it is clearly based on the original and there is no reference to the source.

Example 4

The Coca-Cola Company is a world-leading beverage company, refreshing consumers with more than 500 drink brands. The Company's portfolio includes many other multimillion-dollar brands including Diet Coke and Fanta (Coca Cola, 2001)

Is this plagiarism?

The text is paraphrased from the original and referenced. Therefore, it is **not** plagiarism.

Example 5

The Coca-Cola Company is a North American beverage company. It is one of the most famous names in the world and includes brands such as Coca-Cola, Diet Coke and Coke Zero.

This paragraph contains no references. So, is this plagiarism?

No, because it's **common knowledge**. Most students wouldn't need to consult any source to know this information about this company.

You don't need to include references for matters of common knowledge!

However, it's not always easy to know what is 'common knowledge' and what isn't. So, in case of doubt, include a reference.

How is plagiarism detected?

The URV has integrated a software tool into the virtual classroom to detect coincidences in assignments submitted by students.

Any assignment submitted to the virtual classroom may be compared with over 20 million documents owned by this software, all previous assignments submitted by URV students, over 100 million open-access books, articles, journals and newspapers, and over 3,000 databases of external publishers. This software generates a report (available to the lecturer via the virtual classroom) which shows the percentage of text in the assignment that already exists in these comparison sources and identifies each part of the assignment that compares with an original source.

The lecturer may use this report to implement the procedure described in the next section of these guidelines.

This section describes the academic consequences for students involved in a plagiarism situation.

Students will be affected by their plagiarism when their course lecturer assesses its impact on their work and evaluates their work in function of this assessment. The lecturer may award the student a zero grade (see article 6 of the URV's Academic and Registration Regulations).

The lecturer may also propose the commencement of disciplinary proceedings that may lead to disciplinary measures being taken against the student concerned. The penalty incurred will depend on whether the student's behaviour is considered a major or a minor offence.

Minor offences

Minor offences are any actions considered to be plagiarism that do not affect a significant amount of the work or exercises presented as part of a student's studies.

✓ **Disciplinary measure.** The student will lose the right to be evaluated on all or part of the subjects on which he or she is enrolled at all examination sittings scheduled for the academic year and as a consequence will lose his or her matriculation rights or the right to be evaluated at ordinary examination sittings for one or more subjects.

Major offences

Major offences are total plagiarism or plagiarism of a significant part of an intellectual work of any kind. A significant part of a work is deemed to be one that affects the evaluation of the submitted work or exercise. When plagiarism occurs in the context of a subject, the weight the plagiarised part may have in the evaluation of the assignment and in the final grade for that subject will be taken into account.

✓ **Disciplinary measure.** A major plagiarism offence will result in temporary expulsion from the University. This will entail loss of matriculation and course rights for the duration of the sanction and a ban on the transfer of his or her academic transcript for the academic year in which the sanction is issued.

Sanctions involving loss of the right to be evaluated also entail a ban on the transfer of the student's academic transcript during the same academic year.

Disciplinary measures for major and minor offences may also lead to total or partial and to permanent or temporary loss of grants or other benefits awarded by the University (consult the regulations on the disciplinary procedures for URV students and instructions on how these regulations are applied).

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These guides have been produced by the URV's group for preventing and dealing with plagiarism for the academic year 2016-2017.

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We are particularly grateful to **Dr Maria del Mar Pàmies** for leading the group and **Dr Ana Pallarés Serrano** for advice on the legal issues in these guides.

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