Prevention, detection and treatment of plagiarism in education

Guidelines for deans and directors of departments, schools and faculties

July 2017

Index

01. Introduction	3
02. What is considered plagiarism at the URV?	4
03. Academic consequences of plagiarism	6
04. Action protocol	7

PREVENTION, DETECTION AND TREATMENT OF PLAGIARISM IN EDUCATION

Introduction

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 the deans and directors of departments, schools and faculties describe what plagiarism is, what the URV considers plagiarism to be, what the academic consequences of plagiarism are, and what action protocol should be followed when cases of plagiarism are managed.

What is considered plagiarism at the URV?

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**.

Academic consequences of plagiarism

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).

A department may intervene if, when faced with a plagiarism situation, a lecturer chooses to initiate the evaluation procedure and the student appeals against the final grade he or she has been awarded for that subject. In this event, the student must submit to the *registre* a reasoned complaint addressed to the director of the department to which the lecturer is assigned in order to begin the procedure for reviewing final grades established in Article 5 of the Academic Regulations for undergraduate and Master's programmes.

A dean may intervene if, when faced with a plagiarism situation, a lecturer chooses to initiate the disciplinary procedure.

In this event, the dean, at the request of the lecturer, may propose that the rector prepare a disciplinary report that may, after the disciplinary procedures for URV students (approved by the Governing Council on December 18, 2013) have been followed, end with a resolution by the rector for disciplinary action to be taken.

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

The members of the group are:

- **Dr Aranzazu Maria Capdevila Gómez**, Vice-Rector for Teaching, Students and the University Community
- **Dr David Bea Castaño**, Predepartmental Unit of Architecture
- **Mr Javier Legarreta Borao**, Educational Resources Service
- **Ms Carme Montcusí Puig**, Learning and Research Centre
- **Dr Maria Jesús Muinos Villaverde**, Department of Economics
- **Ms Montserrat Olivé Ollé**, Learning and Research Centre
- **Dr Ana Pallarés Serrano**, Department of Public Law
- **Dr Maria del Mar Pàmies Pallisé**, Department of Business Management
- **Dr Paola Rodas Paredes**, Department of Private, Procedural and Financial Law
- **Mr Llatzer Zurano Domingo**, Student of Biotechnology

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.

Universitat Rovira i Virgili
Teaching, Students and University Community

Rectory Building
Carrer de l'Escorxador, s/n
43003 Tarragona
Tel.: 977 558 000
info@urv.cat
www.urv.cat