THE PLAGUE OF PLAGIARISM

Diagnosis, Prevention and Treatment

A Manual for College Faculty

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I. DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the stealing of other people’s work and ideas. Specifically, plagiarism includes:

- Buying a paper from a research paper mill
- Taking an entire paper from an online source
- Turning in another student’s work as your own
- Using other people’s ideas as your own, without giving credit*
- Using direct quotes from sources without giving credit*
- Summarizing or paraphrasing people’s ideas without giving credit*

*As teachers, we understand that the last three instances of plagiarism may be inadvertent on the part of our students, due to an incomplete understanding of the research and citation process. Later we will discuss methods to distinguish whether the student is guilty of deliberate or inadvertent plagiarism.

II. DETECTING PLAGIARISM

How do we know if a student has actually plagiarized a paper? How do we avoid accusing an excellent student of plagiarizing a paper he/she has actually written? The following may help:

“RED FLAGS” THAT MIGHT ALERT YOU TO PLAGIARISM

A. Writing style, vocabulary, tone or grammar are above what the student usually produces. (In-class writing assignments are a good point of reference.)

B. Sections or sentences do not relate to the overall content of the assignment. Students may “personalize” a paper by adding a paragraph in their own words that relates to the assignment.

C. Strange text or web addresses appear at the top or bottom of the paper.

D. Layout is strange or poor. Papers that have been downloaded often have page numbers, headings or spacing that doesn’t look right.

E. References are made to charts or graphs that aren’t there.

F. Quotes in the paper do not have citations.

G. Citations in the paper are not included in the Works Cited page.

H. Old research paper format may be used instead of MLA or APA form.

I. Citations are out of date.

J. The student cannot identify citations or provide copies of cited material.

K. The student cannot discuss the main ideas of the paper intelligently or explain vocabulary used in the paper.

SITES FOR DETECTING PLAGIARISM

While there are many on-line subscriber services to help faculty detect plagiarism in students’ essays, the following are free, easy to use, and work well.

A. Google.com

Most of us are familiar with Google as a general purpose search engine, but when you type a suspect phrase or sentence into the search box in quotation marks, Google acts as detection software checking for matches with millions of pages worth of material on the Internet.
B. **The LRC’s Electronic Databases such as EBSCOHOST, GALE, BIG CHALK E-LIBRARY, NEWSBANK and NEW YORK TIMES**

These databases provide full text articles and key word searching. When you type a suspect phrase or sentence into the search box in quotation marks, the software will check for matches with the article, book, or transcript it came from.

C. **WWW.PLAGIARISM.COM/SELF.DETECT.HTM**

This site is designed primarily for students to self-detect whether they have plagiarized any material, but faculty can use it as well by typing a phrase or sentence into the search box provided and getting a match with articles on the Internet.

III. **PREVENTING PLAGIARISM**

How can we cut down on plagiarism in our courses? Using any one or a combination of the following will help:

A. Include an Academic Honesty and Writing section on your syllabi:

State that ideas of others who have influenced one’s writing must be credited. Remind students that you know the causes of both intentional and unintentional plagiarism but that neither will be excused; both will be punished. Outline your own specific policies, procedures, and penalties for plagiarism.

B. **Speak to your classes** about plagiarism both at the beginning of the course and when a writing project is underway. Make students know they can succeed in your class without resorting to dishonesty.

- Explain how writers should engage thoughtfully and ethically with the ideas of others and how the ideas of others must be credited.
- Let students know you will help them understand and work through the research and go over citation procedures with them.
- Remind students about the causes of plagiarism - frustration, writer’s block, time management problems, interference of personal problems, laziness - but that, regardless of cause, plagiarism is never excused.
- Tell your classes you know about the scores of paper mills* where students can get papers and about the many sites you can use to detect plagiarism.

* Consult the LRC web page under Electronic Plagiarism: Tools for Faculty for a partial list.

C. Use frequent short writing assignments, including in-class writing, to help students improve their skills and to help you determine their writing abilities. Having a sense of a student’s style, vocabulary, tone and grammar will be a good point of comparison for their research papers. Consider assignments such as course journals or logs, summaries of readings, responses to lectures, or study questions.

D. Assign writing, especially longer assignments, as a process:

- Set up a series of dates when students will discuss with you or submit to you topics, thesis statements, articles they’re using for research, outlines of rough drafts.
- Include a brief lesson on summarizing, paraphrasing and quoting from sources* as well as the use of in-text citations and works cited page.
- Go over rough drafts of major papers. You can do this in a conference or you can collect the drafts. Give quick comments. Comments are most valuable when students will actually use them for revision. (Also, fewer comments are then needed on the finished draft.)
- Collect outlines, drafts and revisions along with a finished paper.
- Collect copies of all articles and other research material used in a paper.

* See attachments: Make Sure You Are Safe and Choosing When to Credit

E. Use Specific and Varied Writing Topics

- Design topics that require new research and require articles from current newspapers and magazines.
- Assign topics that stress thought and analysis rather than recall of facts. For example, rather than a generic paper on stem cell research, assign an analysis of the ethical questions inherent in various kinds of stem cell research.
- Require a specific number of direct quotations.
- Avoid broad paper topics; assign topics with a narrow focus or a creative angle. Comparisons of characters in stories,
historical figures, scientific processes or philosophical tenets, for example, work well. Try a letter to Freud or a letter to
Sartre rather than a report on one of them.

Give topics that will capture your students’ attention. If they’re interested, they’ll be less likely to cheat.

Change assignments for each offering of a course.

F. Provide for Information Literacy

In class, through a presentation by our LRC staff, or through the LRC’s Information Literacy Quiz*, help students reinforce the
following research skills:

Using key words to search, to narrow a search or to broaden a search
Using NOBLE Catalog to find books
Using EBSCOHOST, NEWSBANK and other electronic databases to find articles
Critically evaluating sources, especially those found through a general search on the Internet
Using what the Library Web Page has to offer, from starting a search to the proper citation of sources

IV. CONFRONTING PLAGIARISM:
CLASSROOM AND COLLEGE POLICIES

Confronting a student about a plagiarized paper or passage is never easy, but it is necessary. Respond quickly. Draw out the
student rather than accuse him/her. Discuss your concerns about the paper or passage in question. Hear what the student
has to say. If a passage or two were plagiarized inadvertently, you might consider a rewrite of the paper. If the plagiarism is
deliberate and verified, implement your policy. You have the right as an instructor to punish plagiarism as you see fit, giving
an F or zero for the assignment or an F for the course.
### Choosing when to give credit
Consider incorporating these useful handouts into your curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need to Document</th>
<th>No Need to Document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- When you are using or referring to somebody else’s words or ideas from a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, Web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium</td>
<td>- When you are writing your own experiences, your own observations, your own insights, your own thoughts, your own conclusions about a subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When you use information gained through interviewing another person</td>
<td>- When you are using “common knowledge” - folklore, common sense observations, shared information within your field of study or cultural group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When you copy the exact words or a “unique phrase” from somewhere</td>
<td>- When you are compiling generally accepted facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, and pictures</td>
<td>- When you are writing up your own experimental results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When you use ideas that others have given you in conversations or over email</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Appendix A
## Making Sure You Are Safe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action during the writing process</th>
<th>Appearance on the finished product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When researching, note-taking and interviewing</strong></td>
<td>Proofread and check with your notes (or photocopies of sources) to make sure that anything taken from your notes is acknowledged in some combination of the ways listed below:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mark everything that is someone else's words with a big Q (for quote) or with big quotation marks</td>
<td>• In-text citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources (S) and which are your own insights (ME)</td>
<td>• Footnotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Record all of the relevant documentation information in your notes</td>
<td>• Quotation marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When paraphrasing and summarizing</strong></td>
<td>• Indirect quotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First, write your paraphrase and summary without looking at the original text, so you rely only on your memory.</td>
<td><strong>When quoting directly</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Next, check your version with the original for content, accuracy, and mistakenly borrowed phrases.</td>
<td>• Keep the person's name near the quote in your notes, and in your paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Begin your summary with a statement giving credit to the source: According to Jonathan Kozol, ...</td>
<td>• Select those direct quotes that make the most impact in your paper -- too many direct quotes may lessen your credibility and interfere with your style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When quoting indirectly</strong></td>
<td>• Mention the person's name either at the beginning of the quote, in the middle, or at the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Put any unique words or phrases that you cannot change, or do not want to change, in quotation marks: ... “savage inequities” exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).</td>
<td>• Put quotation marks around the text that you are quoting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix B</strong></td>
<td>• Indicate added phrases in brackets ([ ]) and omitted text with ellipses (…)</td>
</tr>
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