

Ethics in Academics and Research

Plagiarism: The dictionary meaning of 'plagiarism' is "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own" or "to commit literary theft and use (another's production) without crediting the source". As to how serious this offense is considered can be seen from the fact that the Latin root of 'plagiarism' comes from a word which means 'kidnapper' (plagiarius) to equate those who steal words of others with those who steal others' children (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online).

In the present day context, it means an act of academic dishonesty and a breach of ethics, whereby others' research material including ideas, text, figures, code or data is passed off as one's own, without citing or acknowledging the appropriate source. Plagiarism involves not only copying or reproducing the entire document (such as parts of reports, books, articles, theses or articles on the internet), but also paraphrasing (changing a few words of a sentence or paragraph) without citing the source. Additionally, copying verbatim from whatever one has already published earlier without proper citation is classified as 'self-plagiarism'.

To avoid these pitfalls, students are encouraged to write in their own words, whether for a class assignment, a publication or for their PhD or MSc theses and avoid copying and pasting from different sources. Further, it is extremely important to cite the original source where material has been taken from, which applies not only to published reports but also to computer programs and software used in your research. Citations should also include your own previously published work.

Cheating: Cheating includes copying from others' answer books during exams and/or homework or assignments. Letting others cheat from one's own answer books or allowing others to copy their homework/assignments is also classified as cheating. Manipulating and/or making up data and reporting these in manuscripts and theses is also considered cheating and is completely unacceptable. To avoid these pitfalls, it is important to use correct methodologies for your experiments and ensure that these are correctly compiled. An excellent practice is to make careful records of all experiments in your lab notebooks, whether they are successful or not. Every small change in your protocol (which you may need to tweak occasionally) must be recorded with the date in your notebook. All data including images, readouts from instruments and analyses performed on them later should be stored with the date of the experiments on computers in the lab. Original images should be stored in each case and any digital manipulation (which should be minor) should be noted carefully for future reference.

Penalties: An Academic Misconduct Panel will investigate allegations of plagiarism and cheating and submit a report to the Plagiarism Disciplinary Authority and recommend penalties according to "Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Education Institutions" drafted by the University of Grants Commission (UGC), September, 2017.

- 1) In case of plagiarism, the penalties will be imposed as per UGC guidelines.
- 2) If students are caught cheating during their examinations, they may be expelled from the examination room and barred from completing the exam. Further, their papers will be cancelled if they are found to be cheating from a book/notes/mobile during the examination or if they speak or communicate with other candidates. The same penalties are also applicable if the examiner notices the use of unfair means while correcting the answer sheets.