

# Procedures for Preventing Plagiarism

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## 1 Introduction

This document describes the a systematic approach for handling plagiarism in academic work at the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka (WUSL). The policy of plagiarism is covered by the *Academic Honesty Policy* of the University. For the preparation of this document, some ideas were adopted from the sources listed in *Reference*.

## 2 What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the act of cheating with producing someone else's published or unpublished ideas or words se as your own. In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud that involves both *stealing* someone else's work and *lying* about it afterward. That is, without proper acknowledgment of the source(s).

The WUSL considers the plagiarism as a sever offense. Therefore, the University community must avoid plagiarism when they produce any kind of work.

## 3 Examples of Plagiarism

Some examples of plagiarism are given below where appropriate acknowledgment or referencing of the sources does not occur.

- Copying a significant part of a sentence, several sentences, paragraph(s) constitute plagiarism.
- Copying ideas, concepts, research results, computer programs, images, sound tracks, or any combination of these.

- Paraphrasing another's work closely, with minor changes but with essential meaning.
- Cutting and pasting statements from multiple sources and presenting them as original work.
- Presenting as independent work that is done with collaboration of others people.
- Submitting as one's own, all or part of another student assignment.

## 4 Avoiding Plagiarism

There are a number of measures the University community can take to minimize plagiarism at WUSL. Taking those measures to avoid all kind of plagiarism makes the life easy.

1. Provide training/awareness to staff on how to avoid plagiarism and accepted practices of referencing and acknowledgments.
2. Include topics on *plagiarism* and *proper referencing* in the Intensive English Program conducted for the freshers by each Faculty.
3. Support and educate staff in the development and implementation of innovative approaches to assessments that may reduce the opportunities for students to plagiarize.
4. Provide information to students on acceptable referencing practice including the required referencing styles.
5. Provide information to students about referencing requirements that are relevant to the discipline, area or assessment task.
6. Include a description about the plagiarism in each *Course Information Plan* and explain it at the beginning of the course module.
7. Be vigilant and consistent in the identification of possible plagiarism.
8. Provide transparent and consistent feedback to students about issues to plagiarism.
9. Design assessment tasks that lessen the opportunities for plagiarism. For example.

- Use topics that rely on analysis and evaluation rather than collection and description.
- Do not set the same assignment topic semester after semester.
- Use alternatives or variations to standard assignments, like requesting students *progress* or *non-final report* on their assessment, request students to make a brief presentation.
- Where possible, make use of oral assessments.

## 5 Detecting Plagiarism

If it is suspected that plagiarism has occurred, there are a number of ways for checking assessable work.

- Use a plagiarism detection software. At the moment University community can use the **URKUND**, a fully-automated system for detecting plagiarism<sup>1</sup>
- Use text, image, or other media searching software.
- Conduct a *keyword* or *phrase* search on a search engine like *Google*
- The Format Editor of respective faculty will be given the soft-copies of the MPhil and PhD thesis for checking plagiarism. He/She may include a statement of plagiarism in his/her report.

## 6 Dealing with Plagiarism

When a plagiarism activity is identified, it is required to decide whether the plagiarism should be dealt with formal or informal method.

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<sup>1</sup>**URKUND** is a web-based plagiarism detecting system, no software installation is required. It has the capability of detecting plagiarism automatically when a document is submitted. It matches submitted texts against materials from Internet, Previously submitted contents, and Publishers' content. The analysis report it provides lists the external links where the suspected plagiarism has occurred with the percentages and links. It is straightforward to determine the degree of plagiarism with the URKUND system.

The URKUND system was introduced to the University community by the Main Library as a pilot project initiated by the Ministry. The service is still available for the University Community who has created accounts through the Main Library.

## 6.1 Informal Level

The following steps are suggested for lecturer-in-charge when instance of plagiarism is detected in an assessment of a course module.

1. Plagiarized work should be given zero marks.
2. Instruct such students clearly to avoid plagiarism by showing their misconduct.

## 6.2 Formal Level

When plagiarism activities are detected in undergraduate dissertations, post-graduate thesis, and publications, they should be dealt with formal way.

1. A panel of academics nominated by the Dean of respective Faculty will inquire the degree of plagiarism conducted in undergraduate dissertations/publications and recommend punishments.
2. A panel nominated by *Senate Research & Higher Degrees Committee* (SRHDC) will inquire the degree of plagiarism conducted in MPhil or PhD thesis and recommend punishments.
3. Include statements about *dealing with plagiarism* to the University Examination bylaws.

## References

- [1] Best Practices for Preventing Plagiarism <https://www.webster.edu/faculty/ppp/best-practices-for-preventing-plagiarism.html>  
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- [2] Marchia Devlin, *Avoiding Plagiarism and Cheating: A guide for students at Swinburne University of Technology*, Second Edition, 2005.  
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