

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM

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**Abstract:** Detected plagiarism in the global classroom may be treated as ethical breach (dishonesty or theft), lack of skill (in language or writing), ignorance (of cultural definitions or expectations of source usage and acknowledgement), or error in judgment. Many institutions offer or require workshops for newly matriculated students about the standards and consequences of academic integrity violation. These workshops, preventive measures, range in content from provision of penalty lists to exploration of culturally nuanced academic integrity issues. Institutions may provide opportunity for remediation after a detected plagiarism incident. The course instructor, as first responder, often provides detection, prevention and remediation. Quality, consistency, and institutional reputation are at stake. This workshop affords participants the opportunity to discuss various examples of plagiarized material and appropriate (or inappropriate) actions. Workshop participants will be divided into small groups for discussion of a number of cases: an admissions application personal essay; a comprehensive doctoral exam; part of a PhD dissertation; and, essay assignments for undergraduate and graduate level courses. Discussion topics will include severity of the violation, extenuating circumstances and implications for prevention, detection, remediation, and penalty.

### **Workshop: Academic dishonesty and extenuating circumstances in the global classroom**

This workshop affords participants the opportunity to discuss various examples of plagiarized material and appropriate (or inappropriate) actions. Workshop participants will be divided into small groups for discussion of a number of cases: such as, an admissions application personal essay; a comprehensive doctoral exam; part of a PhD dissertation; and, essay assignments for undergraduate and graduate level courses. Discussion topics will include severity of the violation, extenuating circumstances and implications for prevention, detection, remediation, and penalty. The workshop will begin with a brief discussion of a checklist for factors to consider when evaluating a potential academic integrity violation. (See Table 1 and the following discussion.) Then the cases provided in this paper will be discussed. At that time, participants will collectively choose to

- Continue discussion of additional cases (handouts will be provided)
- Explore additional factors that influence academic integrity in the global classroom and the challenges facing international students
- Examine various techniques used to provide training to students and faculty about plagiarism (handouts will be provided)
- Discuss various university plagiarism policies.

The session will conclude with a review of the topics covered an assessment of the levels of consensus reached. The most valuable take-away from this session will

Table 1

*Factors to consider in plagiarism evaluation*

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Writing skill		
Language proficiency		
Cultural differences		
Plagiarism rules awareness		
Program level		
School policy		
Occurrence		
Other		

be hearing the variety of opinions from the other participants. Agreement on all points would not be reached, but the factors considered will be evaluated for range in consideration and weight. Action items may be formulated for participants to take back to home institutions or consortiums.

All plagiarism is not equal. Although universities must be fair, differences in students and other extenuating circumstances dictate that fairness is not identical treatment for all cases. Detected plagiarism in the global classroom may be an ethical breach, as students deliberately take work from another and claim it as their own (Baker, Berry and Thornton 2011). However, some students explain that it is a sign of respect to use, to imitate, the work of another (Pennington 2010). Other students resort to copying work out of frustration with their proficiency in the language of instruction, or their skill in writing that language (Ford and Hughes 2011, Pfannestiel 2010). A number of students, native speakers as well, profess ignorance of cultural definitions or expectations of source usage and acknowledgement (Kwong et al. 2010, Ford and Hughes 2011, Pennington 2010). Students also make errors in judgment by not allowing enough time to do an assignment or copying because an assignment was too hard, or too boring, or not realizing they might get caught (Olafson et al. 2012, Stevens et al. 2010).

Many institutions offer or require workshops for newly matriculated students about the standards and consequences of academic integrity violation to reduce plagiarism (Craig et al. 2010). These workshops and related preventive measures, vary in intent and content. Some explore culturally nuanced academic integrity issues in a broad ethical context (Alcota et al. 2012). Some explain the nature of text matching services (Hariharan ) while others rely on electronic monitoring and surveillance (Kitahura) Institutions may provide opportunity for remediation after a detected plagiarism incident. Materials to discuss these formats will be available in the workshop. There will be a handout identifying various offerings.

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## Cases for workshop discussion

### Case 1

The professor began reading a paper submitted by Zoe, her fourth for the course. Although the course was graduate level, Zoe had struggled throughout with writing in English (not her native language) and following the required APA format. The professor referred Zoe to the university writing center after her first submission. They had painstakingly worked through grammar, punctuation, word choices and other mechanics. The professor gritted her teeth and began to read aloud (that sometimes helped figure out word meanings) and was delighted to find an engaging, well written manuscript. However, the Turnitin report (a requirement for that assignment) showed that the document was copied from another paper, nearly verbatim. What factors should be considered? What action should be taken?

*Case 2*

Simcha was writing her dissertation proposal in the area of women and leadership for the PhD degree. Her chairperson was annoyed because repeated attempts to correct concept issues, grammar and spelling had been ignored, for the most part. This new paper was different. It was conceptually sound and well written, with a new focus on emotional intelligence in female leaders. The professor was delighted until a phrase stuck in his mind. It was an unusual way to refer to emotional intelligence that a former student had developed about a year earlier in his dissertation proposal. The professor searched through old documents and found the paper. A comparison revealed startling similarities in the two documents. It looked like a simple search and replace operation had substituted “female” for the industry group mentioned in the earlier document. Simcha acknowledged the wisdom of this former student in another document and expressed her gratitude for his contribution to her work. What factors should be considered? What action should be taken?

*Case 3*

The professor submitted Maks’ third assignment of the fundamentals course—an introduction to university studies—to a text matching service. The results were returned to Maks: 30% of the material was attributable to several other sources. Some inaccurate citations were provided. A few paragraphs were copied wholesale without acknowledgement. Although paraphrasing was attempted, changes were not sufficient, even when the work was cited. The professor provided the report to the student with a detailed discussion of major violation areas. Part of the next assignment asks Maks to take the university academic integrity tutorial, to reflect on this third assignment, and to sign an honesty pledge. Should further action be taken at this time?

*Cases 4–6*

Will be provided at workshop.

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