



## Addressing Plagiarism Series

### PART 1: The Dilemma of Academic Integrity in the Information Age

Over the last several decades, increased access to technology and the development of a global internet has had a profound and democratizing effect on education. However, with this increased access to information has come a bevy of legitimate concerns regarding the potential unethical use of sources by students (and faculty), and other serious forms of plagiarism. The [Council of Writing Program Administrators \[CWPA\]](#) (2003), a national academic and professional association for faculty and administrators directing writing programs, argues that the increased focus on investigating suspicions of plagiarism in students' writing may have the unintended consequence of diverting attention away from "developing students' writing, reading, and critical thinking abilities." While the importance of emphasizing and maintaining academic integrity cannot be stressed enough, for the sake of student learning, it is equally important to consider a more nuanced understanding of how and why plagiarism happens, especially for international students and first-generation students that may not be as familiar with the conventions of academic language.

#### Defining Plagiarism & Notifying Students

In the [UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct](#), instances of plagiarism as recognized by the university include the following:

- Taking credit for any work created by another person. Work includes, but is not limited to books, articles, experimental methodology or results, compositions, images, lectures, computer programs, internet postings.
- Copying any work belonging to another person without indicating that the information is copied and properly citing the source of the work.
- If not directly copied, using another person's presentation of ideas without putting it in your own words or form and not giving proper citation.
- Creating false citations that do not correspond to the information you have used.

Although it is essential to uphold the above institutional policies on plagiarism in your classroom, researchers have argued that many of the current conversations around plagiarism fail to distinguish between intentional plagiarism and unintentional misuse of sources (CWPA, 2003; Li & Casanave, 2012, Thomas & Sassi, 2011). With this in mind, the CWPA (2003) define plagiarism in the following way: "In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer *deliberately* [emphasis added] uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source."

Additionally, as of Fall 2018, Academic Senate Regulation 537 requires that "by the end of the first week of instruction, the instructor will provide students with a course outline containing information regarding the anticipated: topical content of the course, amount and kind of work expected, examination and grading procedures, and notice of the [Code of Academic Conduct](#)." Therefore, syllabi should contain a section clearly outlining an academic integrity policy and providing students with a hyperlink and/or the URL address to the Code of Academic Conduct.

#### Reasons students might plagiarize

Pearson (2011) argues that the best way to defend against plagiarism in the classroom is to develop a better understanding of why students plagiarize in the first place. Doing this can help you develop teaching strategies and assignment designs that make it difficult to plagiarize. Additionally, considering the reasoning as well as the intentionality behind a suspected instance of plagiarism can help you to determine how to respond in a way that will both hold the student accountable for their actions and help them learn from the experience. The chart below outlines a few common reasons for plagiarizing, taken from CWPA (2003), Jamieson & Howard (2013), Li & Casanave (2012), and Pearson (2011):



Types	Common Reasons for Plagiarizing
<p><b>Unintentional</b></p>	<p><u>Lack of Knowledge of Ethical Citation Practices</u>: Some students (e.g., international students, first-generation students, etc.) may have received incomplete or inconsistent education on citation in the past, or they may lack knowledge of the more sophisticated requirements for citation in college. They may fail to devote enough attention to the stylistic requirements of citation, or may not understand the importance of those characteristics, which can lead to sloppy or unclear citations.</p>
	<p><u>Tried but Improperly Integrated Sources</u>: Many students have difficulty comprehending the complex scholarly sources they are expected to cite in college and may consequently accidentally misappropriate or misuse sources (e.g., patchwriting, misrepresentation, etc.). They may know to make a references page, but may not understand that in-texts citations are also required (or vice versa). They may know to cite some things (like quotes) but not others (like paraphrases). They may also just make honest mistakes (like forgetting to cite a source).</p>
	<p><u>Cultural Differences in Attribution</u>: The CWPA (2003) notes that differing cultural conceptualizations of ethical attribution practices may mean that “students from other cultures may not be familiar with the conventions governing attribution and plagiarism in American colleges and universities.”</p>
<p><b>Intentional</b></p>	<p><u>Panic Plagiarizing</u>: Students may fear that they will do poorly or even fail the assignment or may fear being turned down if they were to ask for an extension. They might have insecurities about the quality of their writing or may feel hopelessly confused by the project. They may have poor time management skills or may honestly be overwhelmed by too many responsibilities (school, work, family/children, etc.).</p>
	<p><u>Intentional Cheating</u>: Students may have a sense that the class is unimportant or lack the desire to complete the assignment. They may have plagiarized without penalty in the past, or seen others getting away with it. The course assignments may make it seem so easy to plagiarize that a student may feel justified in doing so.</p>

**Additional Resources**

- The [Purdue OWL](#) provides comprehensive guides for citing in APA, MLA, AMA, and Chicago style.
- The [UC Davis Libraries](#) also provide comprehensive [subject guides](#) for a variety of citation styles.
- The following two resources come from the [Writing Commons](#), a peer-reviewed, open-source resource for writers. Both resources are meant for students, and provide information about what counts as plagiarism, as well as strategies for avoiding it:
  - ["Avoiding Plagiarism" \(article\)](#)
  - ["Avoiding Plagiarism: A Checklist for Student Writers"](#)
- There are a number of online plagiarism-checking services that can be helpful in detecting instances of plagiarism. Some of these services are free, while others require a paid licence. It is important, however, to use these services with caution, as they are not always reliably accurate (Straumsheim, 2015), and are fraught with their own ethical conundrums (Marsh, 2004, McKeever, 2006). Here are a few examples of online plagiarism checkers:
  - [Turnitin.com](#)
  - [Glatt Plagiarism Services](#)
  - [Viper](#)
  - [Plagiarismchecker.com](#)
  - [Google](#)

**Citation**

Center for Educational Effectiveness [CEE]. (2018). Addressing Plagiarism Series. *Just-in-Time Teaching Resources*. Retrieved from <https://cee.ucdavis.edu/JITT>



## References

- Council of Writing Program Administrator [CWPA]. (2003). *Defining and avoiding plagiarism: The WPA statement on best practices*. Retrieved from <http://wpacouncil.org/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf>
- Jamieson, S., & Howard, R. M. (2013). Sentence-mining: Uncovering the amount of reading and reading comprehension in college writers' researched writing. In R. McClure & J. P. Purdy (Eds.) *The new digital scholar: Exploring and enriching the research and writing practices of nextgen students*, (pp. 111-133). Medford, NJ: American Society for Information Science and Technology. Retrieved from <http://site.citationproject.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/jamieson-sandra-rebecca-moore-howard-newdigitalscholar-ch5.pdf>
- Marsh, Bill. (2004). Turnitin.com and the Scriptural Enterprise of Plagiarism Detection. *Computers and Composition: An International Journal for Teachers of Writing*, 21(4), 427-38. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2004.08.002>
- McKeever, L. (2006). Online plagiarism detection services—saviour or scourge?. *Assessment & Evaluation In Higher Education*, 31(2), 155-165. doi:10.1080/02602930500262460
- Li, Y., & Casanave, C. P. (2012). Two First-Year Students' Strategies for Writing from Sources: Patchwriting or Plagiarism? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 21(2), 165-180. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2012.03.002>
- Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs. (2016, July). *The University of California, Davis code of academic conduct*. Retrieved from <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf>
- Pearson, N. G. (2011). Classrooms that Discourage Plagiarism and Welcome Technology. *English Journal*, 100(6), 54-59. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/journals/ej/issues/v100-6>
- Straumsheim, C. (2015). What is detected? *Inside HigherEd*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/07/14/turnitin-faces-new-questions-about-efficacy-plagiarism-detection-software>
- Thomas, E. E., & Sassi, K. (2011). An Ethical Dilemma: Talking about Plagiarism and Academic Integrity in the Digital Age. *English Journal*, 100(6), 47-53. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/journals/ej/issues/v100-6>