

# Plagiarism and academic dishonesty

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Plagiarism occurs in many forms. One of them is a situation whereby a student presents a paper that he has not written.

Plagiarism occurs in the form of paraphrasing or quoting a text from some source and failing to acknowledge the source. If one fabricates data and creates references that are not true, he is equally guilty of a plagiarism offense. Additionally, presenting someone else's ideal as yours also amounts to plagiarism. Academic dishonesty is a very difficult concept to define and this is the main reason why many students today do not seem to understand this concept well. Plagiarism is one of the many forms of academic dishonesty that exist. Other forms of academic dishonesty include presenting assignments in multiple courses without the permission to do so as well as cheating during exam time.

In order to understand the concept of academic dishonesty better, it would be important to define academic integrity. In very simple terms, academic integrity is defined in Policy 49-20 of Pennsylvania State University as “.... the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner...”

With the advent of digital technology, the issue of plagiarism has been extended to cover digital media. Use of digital media in your academic work without the permission to do so amounts to plagiarism. According to Aiken, 1991, 40 to 70% of all students have engaged in one form of plagiarism or the other at one time in their academic careers.

Barnett and Dalton, 1981 note that researchers are becoming more and more concerned about the factors that could be responsible for the increase in plagiarism offenses. Becker, and McGregor, 1992 argue that students are

always under pressure to attain good grades while at the same time they perceive instructional settings as not being fair. The unfairness of the learning situations is perceived as such because the workload is too much and the lecturers seem to have an uncarin attitude towards the students' needs. If the faculty shows lax attitudes towards the issue of academic honesty, it is difficult for anyone to expect students be academically honest. Peer pressure from other students cannot help matters. The overall effect of a poor attitude towards academic honesty among faculty staff is a diminishing sense of the value of academic ethics.

However, in some situations, lecturers are not to blame for academic dishonesty among students. This issue of academic dishonesty is no doubt a very complicated one. For instance, many students have different conceptions of that constitutes cheating “ Academic Dishonesty in our Classrooms,” (1990). In this case, students often seem at a loss as to the amount and nature of work they are expected to do with help from fellow classmates and when they ought to do it. Departments often set out to solve this problem by preparing written documents with lengthy details on what constitutes plagiarism, cheating and the penalties that these forms of academic dishonesty attract.

In most cases, students must sign that they have understand everything in these documents. Students who receive or give unauthorized assistance during an academic exercise, says William (1993), are said to have engaged in academic dishonesty. This definition makes it necessary for the term “ academic exercise” to be defined. Conventionally, an academic exercise is defined as any form of evaluation task that contributes to fulfillment of

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requirements for the award of an academic certificate. In almost any university, assignments, continuous assessment tests and main exams are the most common forms of academic exercises. The standards that are maintained by heads of faculties on the issue of academic honesty therefore play an important role in determining whether students in the faculty will be academically honest (Barnett & Dalton, 1981).

Judy, 1998 discusses the chronological, cultural, historical and disciplinary contexts within which academic dishonesty can be defined. This multidisciplinary reflects the wide scope that students are always confronted with whenever they attempt to understand this concept. In the internet age, understanding the concept of plagiarism as one of the manifestations of academic dishonesty is a complicated issue. In the words of Ercegovic and Richardson, 2007, “ the problem is on the rise in scholarly ...scientific communities, politicians and journalists.” One wonders whether this sets a good precedent for fresh college students. The need for strategic approaches in dealing with cheating was identified in a study entitled: “ Cheating and plagiarism: perceptions and practices of first year IT students” conducted by Sheard, 2002.

In this study, as one looked down the seriousness spectrum, more cases of cheating were reported. In the two different institutions where the research was carried out, different cheating behaviors elicited similar responses, proving Ercegovic and Richardson’s argument as right. The strategic approaches adopted in the internet age have to be very revolutionary. A research done on 422 students on assessing the prevalence of 17 different forms of academic misconduct revealed very interesting results. In this <https://assignbuster.com/plagiarism-and-academic-dishonesty/>

research, Roberts, Anderson and Yanish (1997) found out that being younger than 24 being younger than 24 was one of the most important determining factor of involvement in more than one form of academic misconduct.

More research needs to be done on whether this scenario is due to lack of proper understanding of plagiarism or it is merely due to poor attitudes. In conclusion, plagiarism as part of academic misconduct is a difficult concept to define. Definitional subtleties could be the main reason why academic misconduct is rife in today's academic world.