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# **The University of the West Indies**

## **Policy on Graduate Student Plagiarism**

### **School for Graduate Studies and Research\***

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## Introduction

Plagiarism represents the very antithesis of the goals of the academy. It infringes the intellectual property rights of the person whose work is plagiarized and exemplifies sloppiness at least, and intellectual dishonesty at worst, on the part of the perpetrator. This is the context in which the UWI policy outlined in the remainder of this document is set.

## Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the **unacknowledged use** of the words, ideas or creations of another. The principal categories of **unacknowledged use** are *unacknowledged quotation*, which is failure to credit quotations of another person's spoken or written words; and *unattributed borrowing*, which is failure to credit another person's ideas, opinions, theories, graphs or diagrams. Unattributed borrowing also includes the failure to credit another person's work when paraphrasing from that work. *Cosmetic paraphrasing* is also plagiarism. This occurs when, even with acknowledgement, the words are so close to the original that what is deemed to have been paraphrased is, in fact, a modified quote, but is not presented as such. A more technical form of plagiarism is *wrongly attributed borrowing*, where one does not acknowledge the work from which one obtained an idea, but quotes, instead, the original source without having read it. This may well convey a broader research effort than that actually expended and may perpetuate misinterpretation.

Many courses at the UWI encourage teamwork by students. However, if a student, knowing or having reason to know that an assignment, or part thereof, was intended to be the product of the student's individual effort, nonetheless presents as his or her own work, without due acknowledgement, the work of others in a group, this also constitutes plagiarism. The intention is not to prohibit team work by students, but to prohibit students presenting as their own work the work of others without appropriate attribution.

## Categories of Plagiarism and Associated Penalties

For the purposes of this policy, there are two categories of plagiarism: Level One and Level Two.

### Level One

Level One cases are those in which only a small amount of the work is affected, and in which the breaches are minor. They therefore include borderline situations, cosmetic paraphrasing, negligent referencing or a few incorrect or missing citations.

In the case of written papers and project reports, Level One Plagiarism, if substantiated, shall result in a deduction of marks. Resubmission after appropriate correction, as an educational opportunity for the student, may be required.

In the case of theses, Level One Plagiarism, if substantiated, shall result in return of the submitted work to the student for revision and resubmission after a period of suspension deemed to be sufficiently punitive, given the severity of the offence. The period of suspension will be not more than one year. Resubmission in this situation will not be regarded as a failure.

## **Level Two**

Level Two cases are those which involve extensive plagiarism, with clear indication of academic dishonesty. They include situations where a significant amount of material is borrowed or directly quoted or cosmetically paraphrased with no attribution at all, or attribution insufficient to indicate that the borrowed material is not the work of the student. Moreover, even where the unacknowledged use of material appears in only a minority of an assignment, the unacknowledged material may be so central to the assignment that the breach is considered to merit Level Two plagiarism.

For written papers and project reports, a student found guilty of Level Two Plagiarism shall, at a minimum, receive a grade of zero for the assignment in which plagiarism has been identified. Depending on the severity of the offense, such a student could also receive a grade of zero for the course in which that assignment was submitted or could be expelled from the University, with or without the possibility of re-entry. In determining the severity of the penalty, consideration should be taken of the circumstances of the particular case, including the level of seniority of the student and whether this is the student's first or a repeated incidence of substantiated plagiarism.

Theses in which Level Two Plagiarism has been substantiated shall be treated as "inadequate" (see *Regulations for Graduate Diplomas and Degrees*, Section 3, Reg. 26), which permits resubmission of the revised thesis for examination within eighteen months