

# ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PREVENTING PLAGIARISM POLICY FAQ'S

Prepared by the Student Advocacy Service, 2014

Source: Academic Honesty & Preventing Plagiarism Policy  
<http://wcf.vu.edu.au/GovernancePolicy>

## 1. What is the University's Academic Honesty & Preventing Plagiarism Policy?

This is an official policy of the University developed for the purpose of ensuring a consistent approach to academic fairness and honesty.

All members of the academic community, students and staff alike are responsible for the integrity and originality of their work. The policy aims to establish an educative and culturally informed framework for the shared responsibility of staff and students to prevent plagiarism and academic misconduct. A strong motivation behind this policy is to have incidents of alleged plagiarism addressed locally and initially in an educative - as opposed to punitive - manner.

## 2. Why is academic "misconduct" such a big deal?

The University community and future employers need to have confidence that students holding qualifications have the knowledge and skills matching their credentials.

**Academic misconduct** is dishonesty with the intention of gaining an unjust academic advantage therefore bringing the University into disrepute (section 2.3 p 2).

Such dishonesty can take the form of ghost writing, which is writing under the name of someone else. An example is when a sports star has a publicist ghost write a book or newspaper article for them. This practice is unacceptable in academic writing.

Recycling of your own work for a new unit of study - or when repeating a unit - is also considered academic dishonesty.

## 3. What is plagiarism?

The Policy defines plagiarism as the practice of using another person's intellectual output and presenting it as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement (s. 2.10 p 3).

## 4. Can you give me some examples of plagiarism?

- **Word for word copying** of sentences/paragraphs in an assignment without acknowledgement
- **Downloading ('ripping') portions of essays or assignments** from the web and presenting these for assessment as your own work
- **Presenting other students' work** or research data as your work
- **Copying without acknowledging the source** (from any written or spoken text)
- **Paraphrasing** putting someone else's ideas in your own words can still be plagiarism if you don't reference appropriately.

## 5. What are my rights when accused of plagiarism or academic misconduct?

The policy is built on the principles of **procedural fairness**. An investigation into your conduct/work must occur before any allegation of plagiarism is levelled and consequences imposed. The policy states that any evidence of plagiarism or academic misconduct must be shown to you prior to the hearing so that students "are able to have full knowledge of the nature and substance of all allegations" (s. 2.11 p 3).

## 6. I've heard about different levels of plagiarism. What are they and what do they mean?

The policy recognizes that breaches of plagiarism are not identical and that there are various degrees of severity and premeditation in each case. Thus there is a framework for classifying incidents of plagiarism according to their seriousness. These categories of plagiarism are: **Levels 1, 2 and 3.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** Students in the first year of study of their course are considered to be in an “**academic apprenticeship**” period so a plagiarism panel will take into consideration that they are transitioning to tertiary study. Plagiarism breaches during this period may be considered at Level 1 and remedial rather than punitive sanctions imposed. (s .2.1 p 1-2)

**7. What are the penalties and remedies I could face if found to have plagiarised?**

| What is Level 1 Plagiarism?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | What will happen?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate or misleading: citing, referencing or paraphrasing arising <b>from a student’s limited knowledge about plagiarism</b> or how to conform to academic conventions.</li> <li>• At this level, it is considered that plagiarism is more a result of carelessness or neglect rather than the intention to deceive. This may include a lack of learning about plagiarism.</li> </ul> <p>(s.3.4 p 5)</p> | <p>The University’s response to Level 1 Plagiarism is educative. The following remedies apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compulsory resubmission of the assessment after being rewritten so that it meets the required academic standards.</li> </ol> |

| What is Level 2 Plagiarism?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | What will happen?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This plagiarism is more serious than Level 1. It is plagiarism that includes fraudulent acts or works arising from a student’s ignorance of academic conventions (<b>where adequate knowledge would have been expected</b>) and where the intention to deceive an assessor...or (to) cheat is apparent”.</li> <li>• Level 2 is often applied to students who have passed their “academic apprenticeship” period (refer Question 6 above for definition). The student’s level of support during their academic apprenticeship is relevant.</li> <li>• It is also often a charge when more than 10% of material/content has been reportedly plagiarised.</li> </ul> <p>(s.3.4 p 5 - 6)</p> | <p>Level 2 plagiarism constitutes Academic Misconduct. If found guilty, one or more of the following penalties must be imposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resubmit the assessment with a reduced capped mark</li> <li>• Downgrading the mark and/or failing the assessment</li> <li>• Complete a comparable but different assessment task with or without a capped mark</li> <li>• Award no marks for the assessment</li> <li>• Downgrade the final grade in a unit of study</li> <li>• Impose a fail grade in a unit or units</li> <li>• An undertaking to never again breach VU legislation, policy</li> <li>• Formal apology required by the student to any aggrieved party</li> <li>• Suspension</li> <li>• Rewrite any part of thesis that has been plagiarised</li> <li>• Issue a written warning that explains conditions under which no further action will be taken and any penalties.</li> </ul> |

| What is Level 3 Plagiarism?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | What will happen?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p>“This is more serious than Level 2 Plagiarism and includes copied or appropriated work <b>arising from the clear intention to deceive, or premeditated cheating</b> by way of plagiarism.” In this context “the effect of the plagiarism is <b>considered to seriously compromise the assessment process</b>. Level 3 Plagiarism is considered to be academic misconduct.”</p> <p>(s.3.4.p 5 - 6)</p> | <p>Level 3 plagiarism constitutes Academic Misconduct. If found guilty, one or more of the following penalties must be imposed to reflect the seriousness of the VU’s commitment to academic integrity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Award no marks for the assessment</li> <li>• Downgrade the final grade in a unit of study</li> <li>• Impose a fail grade in a unit or units</li> <li>• Formal apology required by the student to any aggrieved party</li> <li>• Suspend the student from the research degree for a period</li> <li>• Rewrite any part of thesis that has been plagiarised</li> <li>• An undertaking to never again breach VU legislation, policy</li> <li>• Issue a written warning that explains conditions under which no further action will be taken and any penalties.</li> </ul> |

(Academic Honesty & Preventing Plagiarism Policy Attachment 1, p 17-18)

## 8. I have been called to attend a Plagiarism Panel what should I do?

Student Advocacy strongly recommends that you prepare a written submission addressing the allegation/s of plagiarism made against you. For assistance in writing your submission refer to Appendix **Guidelines for Writing a Submission to Your Plagiarism Panel** (p 4). A Student Advocate can also assist you through the process.

## 9. What will happen when I meet the plagiarism panel?

There will be an investigation into the allegation of plagiarism. You will be asked questions and then have a chance to respond. You have the right to bring a support person who you have arranged prior to meeting with the panel. This can be a Student Advocate, a friend or a relative. Questions can also be asked by you or through your support person.

You should have a chance to sum up your case at the end before leaving briefly so the decision makers can confer and make a decision. On returning, you will be informed of the remedial action given and any sanctions imposed. These decisions will be confirmed in writing. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Chair will complete the **Plagiarism Checklist**, which needs to be signed by the student, and the Chair.

## 10. If I am found guilty where is it recorded? Who gets to see the panel's outcome?

A record is kept on your Faculty student file in case there is any other allegation of academic misconduct.

## 11. How can I learn more about avoiding plagiarism?

Contact your Tutor, Lecturer/Unit Coordinator, Course Coordinator or Education Manager and ask to make a time to discuss in more detail.

Contact VU Student Learning Support on 9919 4744.

## 12. Can I appeal a decision?

Appeals can be made to the University **Discipline Committee** against any finding of misconduct or penalty within 20 working days of receipt of notification of the decision. A Student Advocate can assist in preparation of your appeal.

## 13. Am I responsible for plagiarism by a colleague in a group assignment?

Every time you submit an assignment at VU, you are required to sign an **Assessment Declaration** that it is your own work (refer Attachment 2 p34). When submitting a group assignment, this means you are all signing that you are aware of the sources of information of **all** the members of your small group. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that you make clear that it is everyone's responsibility to bring and show original sources before submitting the assignment. This can happen at one of the face-to-face group meetings.

Each student is entitled to an individual investigation into their actions (or inactions) in their group. This may result in varying penalties and remedies for each group member.

## 14. Where can I get help when charged with Plagiarism or Academic Misconduct?

Student Advocacy can assist you in the preparation of a written submission for the plagiarism panel and support you during the hearing. Please refer to the writing guidelines in the Appendix on page 4. For confidential support and advice, email your draft submission to [advocacy@vu.edu.au](mailto:advocacy@vu.edu.au) or phone to make an appointment on 9919 5400.

## Appendix

### GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A SUBMISSION TO YOUR PLAGIARISM PANEL

#### IF YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE NOT PLAGIARISED

- Explain why not and attach any evidence

#### WHERE YOU HAVE PLAGIARISED

- Offer **genuine and substantiated reasons** for making a poor choice
- Explain what you understood about academic honesty before this charge

It is suggested that you refer directly to the policy to determine the criteria for writing your submission. The Plagiarism Panel will need to take into account any relevant considerations prior to imposing any penalty or making a decision on remedial action.

#### Frame your written submission using the following considerations:

##### **Any previous offences**

If this is your first offence, suggest ways you can learn from this experience

##### **Any adverse consequences for you resulting from a finding of guilt or from the imposition of a particular penalty.**

For example, loss of residency, professional/workplace retention, cultural implications. Failing the unit of study may have a major impact on the timeframe for completing your course eg delay by an academic year leading to economic/social costs.

##### **The level of remorse or co-operation exhibited**

Responding to the following key questions can help you show remorse by demonstrating insight into the implications of your academic dishonesty.

**Why are you sorry** (beyond being sorry for having been caught)? Why is it not fair on your fellow students? Can a future employer trust you have the knowledge and skills reflected in your academic transcript? Do your actions potentially undermine the value of your VU degrees in the market place? Who do you feel you owe an apology to (via a hand written letter or e-mail)?

##### **The offender was under duress**

Outline reasons which would have led you to such an action, for example stress or group dynamics in a group assignment – provide evidence where possible.

##### **If the offending work was in final draft thesis material or in a submitted thesis**

##### **Degree of pre-meditation**

Were you stressed and cut corners due to other responsibilities? Substantiate any time constraints with documents such as pay slip/s, a rent agreement or Health Care Card.

**The nature and the extent of plagiarism** (The software program “Turnitin” found at [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com), calculates the percentage sameness between an essay and multiple sources. This tool is used in the identification of plagiarism in universities around the world. You can ask for a copy of any such report prior to making your written submission.