

## Academic Integrity and Graduate Students

### Credit your Sources: Unintentional Plagiarism

As a graduate student you may find yourself in circumstances that could place you at particular risk of unintentional plagiarism. Even when inadvertent or subconscious, plagiarism is still deemed academic misconduct at the University of Waterloo. Expectations at Waterloo may be different from your previous institution. It is in the graduate student's own interest to become informed of the criteria for what counts as plagiarism and make all efforts to guard against unintentionally committing plagiarism.

Particular areas of concern:

- *Submitting a Paper or Content More Than Once*

As a graduate student focusing on a particular area, at times you may find it appropriate to submit the same content to more than one recipient. There may even be times when you would like to submit the same paper twice. More often, you may find it useful to reuse substantial content from a previous submission.

Submitting a paper to more than one recipient is allowed only if all recipients are informed and express explicit approval. Even if the papers are not identical, if content from one paper forms the substantial content of another, all recipients of both versions must be informed about the other paper and express agreement to accept the submission.

Clarification about what is acceptable in this regard is essential for comprehensive examination papers.

Submitting content more than once without acknowledgement is a form of plagiarism. If you are submitting a paper that has already been submitted elsewhere or contains content that has been previously submitted, you must acknowledge that previous work with a citation.

- *Editorial Assistance*

As a graduate student, you take your research very seriously and strive to communicate your research results with optimal clarity. It is a good idea to seek feedback concerning your work. Suggestions from your advisor, as well as peers, can steer you toward producing a more readable paper. You may also consider obtaining assistance from an editor.

However, you must keep in mind that the ideas, as well as the words, in your paper must be your own. Accept only limited assistance; a work heavily edited by someone else is not your own.

- *Effective Note-Taking and Accurate Citing*

As a graduate student you must cover a lot of ground, as you strive to develop expertise in your

area and as you seek out sources that have relevance for your work. Electronic and Web-based information allow the graduate student to access and absorb a vast quantity of information at a rapid rate.

The risk is that you may misplace or neglect to record source information. Accurate source information is essential if you are to cite all of your sources accurately.

The remedy is to become familiar with the requirements of the style you are using and to keep track of the essential elements in your sources from the earliest stages of your research. Find a technique to ensure that your notes differentiate your own thoughts from your quotes, paraphrases, and summaries of the work or ideas of others. (For example, if you copy and paste, you might make a habit of identifying it as a quote by using a red font.) Make a habit of pasting the bibliographic information at the same time as you copy a passage.

Use a bibliographic management tool such as RefWorks. This can be a major time-saver. Complete bibliographic records can quickly be imported from research databases and organized into folders. RefWorks will automatically create a bibliography from the records according to your style of choice.

- *Cryptomnesia (Unconscious Plagiarism)*

The graduate student is at particular risk of unconscious plagiarism because of the amount of information that you use and the speed at which you access it. It can happen that an idea that you came across in the course of your work will become separated from its source. As your own thoughts develop, the idea may mesh with your own and actually appear to you as your own. You believe it to be your own, but in fact you picked it up in your readings.

Conscientious note-taking can reduce this risk of cryptomnesia.