

## Case\* # 4: Plagiarism

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**Allegation:** In a written assignment, a student copied sections from the frontispiece of the textbook and from a website that included a review of the book. Instructor felt that this constituted plagiarism. According to section 5.15.1 of the university's Academic Calendar, this is defined as:

“5. Plagiarism, which is the act of presenting the ideas, words, or other intellectual property of another as one's own, including images, designs, processes, computer software, digital, audio and video files, Internet resources and other works without appropriate attribution or credit. The use of other people's work must be properly acknowledged and referenced in all written material.”

**Background:** The student is in 3<sup>rd</sup> year taking a third-year course. It is the student's third offence. The assignment is worth 20% of the final grade. Because it is a third offence, the case was sent to the Academic Integrity Committee. The instructor provided copies of the text's frontispiece, the book review, and a copy of the essay submitted (with copied sections highlighted). Few citations are used in the essay; at least one of the copied sentences is cited incorrectly (i.e., refers to an incorrect source). The student asked to meet with the Chair of the Academic Integrity Committee prior to the formal hearing, but did not come to the scheduled meeting. The student attended the formal hearing with the sub-committee of the Academic Integrity, but demonstrated little understanding of the severity of a third offence.

**Decision:** The committee decided that the penalty for this offence should be a zero for the course in which the plagiarism occurred and suspension from the university for a period of two semesters (i.e., not allowed to enrol for spring/summer and fall semesters).

**Rationale:** Because it is a third offence and the evidence was clear that plagiarism had occurred, the sub-committee believed that a suspension was the appropriate sanction. The prior offenses had less severe sanctions imposed (i.e., failing grade for the assignment, followed by a failing grade for the course). In spite of the previous misconducts, the student did not seem to understand that plagiarism was a serious offence.

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\* Case studies are based on examples of common problems with academic misconduct. All names and identifying information have been removed.