

## Discussion Case\*: Understanding Plagiarism

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**Allegation:** There is evidence that in summarizing the arguments of two leading studies of the effects of intimate partner violence on children, the student copied word-from-word the synopses of the articles posted by the professor on Blackboard. Although the essay is only worth 20% of the course grade, the professor verified with Academic Advising that this was the student's second lesser academic offence, and referred it to the Faculty Academic Integrity Committee.

**Background:** The student is in second-year. The professor had asked that students "not use any quotations" and to write everything "in their own words," making citations where appropriate. The student says s/he was "shocked" when the professor asked to see him/her regarding the paper and that the case was being referred to the Academic Integrity Committee. S/he does not understand how this constitutes plagiarism; moreover, s/he considers her/himself a "good student", since s/he has a "B" average. This is only the second essay the student has been assigned at UOIT. In the course of her/his discussion with the committee, s/he notes how difficult s/he finds it to write essays. S/he says s/he struggled with this in High School but thanks to hard work, managed to get a 70% and get admitted to UOIT.

His/her previous academic offence was also for plagiarism on an essay worth 20% of the course grade. In the first case, s/he admitted to the plagiarism, said s/he would not do it again, and was assigned a zero on the assignment. Thanks to the "B" s/he had going in to the final paper (which was based on multiple choice exams during the term), s/he received a "C" in the course.

### Questions for discussion:

1. To determine whether the student has committed an academic offence, which facts are relevant?
2. To determine the appropriate consequences, what further questions would you ask?
3. What kinds of measures do you think would be best adopted here?
4. What would you hope the student would take away from his/her meeting with the committee and this experience as a whole?
5. What steps could s/he, the professor, or the Faculty have taken to prevent this situation from arising in the first place?
6. What decision(s) would you make (i.e., guilt/innocence, sanction, etc.)?

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