

Case* #13: Lack of in-text citations

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Allegation: In a written assignment worth 20%, a student failed to include in-text citations as required by the APA citation guide. The student did include proper references at the end of her assignment; however, not having citations in an essay constitutes plagiarism. According to 5.16.1 of the university's Academic Calendar: "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 a first-year student in a first year course and this is the first time they have been accused of any offence. Because this is a first time offence and the assignment is worth 20% of the course grade, it is considered a Lesser Academic Offence and the course instructor can handle this situation. The course instructor contacted the student by email and in Blackboard messages to request a meeting to discuss the allegation of academic misconduct. At the meeting, the instructor explained the allegation. The student said she did not know that both in-text citations and references were required; she assumed that she could choose between the two. The course instructor believes that the student is sincere in her apology and that she had made an honest mistake. The instructor is confident that the student did not fully understand how to use APA citations.

Decision: The course instructor determined that the student was guilty of plagiarism, but that it was "accidental plagiarism". The sanction was a warning letter and a requirement that the student resubmit the essay with all the necessary citations added. The essay would be graded with a 10% deduction.

Rationale: Given that this is the student's first offence and she was still taking the first-year writing course, a relatively minor sanction was imposed. However, the instructor believed that because she had clearly explained the necessity of using APA style in-text citations and references, a sanction greater than a warning letter was appropriate. The instructor also recommended that the student seek help at the Student Academic Success Centre. The student was reminded that any subsequent offences would result in a more severe penalty.

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