

Addressing Plagiarism: Faculty Guidelines

Preventing Plagiarism

The following approaches can help you familiarize yourself with each student's writing abilities and prevent student procrastination:

- Ask for, and provide feedback on, proposals, outlines, and drafts (or ask for drafts to be submitted with the final version).
- Incorporate low-stakes, in-class writing activities relevant to the assignment.
- Scaffold course assignments so each builds on the previous.

Identifying Plagiarism

Plagiarism comes in many forms and degrees of severity, but can often be identified in the following ways:

- The quality and tone of the student's writing shifts. For example, one paragraph might have numerous grammar errors and lack sophisticated vocabulary, while the next is error-free with complex sentence structure and advanced word choice.
- A dramatic improvement in writing ability is seen in a short amount of time. Note that caution should be taken here, as other factors may have contributed to the improvement (e.g., a student rushed to complete one assignment, but spent significantly more time on the next one).
- If you suspect that a student's writing may be plagiarized, here are some ways to provide documentation. It is suggested that more than one of these strategies are used.
 - Use a search engine, such as Google, putting quotation marks around the string of words you think might have been plagiarized.
 - Submit the paper to a text-matching software (e.g., SafeAssign). Note that SafeAssign, and similar tools like Ithenticate, are imperfect at detecting plagiarism and thus should be supplemented with careful human review.

Talking about Plagiarism

When you suspect a student of plagiarism, approach the conversation with an "innocent until proven guilty" mindset. Even if the paper in question includes passages that match the source and have not been cited and/or are not surrounded by quotation marks, assume that the student might not know they have done something wrong.

Always provide the student with documentation as evidence for your concerns that plagiarism is considered a serious offence by the University (e.g., passages that match student's text; SafeAssign report).

Addressing Plagiarism: Faculty Guidelines (cont'd)

Below are some ideas for talking with a student about plagiarism, including suggested questions to ask.

- When you contact the student, be clear about why you wish to meet. “I have some questions about a [paper, assignment, exam] you recently submitted. When can you meet with me?”
- When you begin the meeting, reiterate the purpose of the conversation. Review the Academic Dishonesty section of the SMUMN student handbook, underscoring that plagiarism is considered a serious offence by the University (be sure to also address plagiarism with students at the beginning of the course).
- Talk with the student about their writing process for this assignment. “What process did you use to research and write the paper? How did you locate your sources?”
- Investigate the student’s understanding of citation requirements. “What do you think are the requirements for giving credit to sources? When do you provide the name of the author(s)? When do you include direct quotes?”
- Ask the student to explain the source in their own words. “What does this part mean to you?”
- Ask questions to assess whether the student thinks they have done something wrong. “Do you think you did anything unethical? Why or why not?”
- Share with the student what you plan to do next, and any next steps they need to take.

Additional Resources

The SGPP Writing Center has developed a number of resources to help students avoid plagiarism and help faculty prevent it. You can access these resources here: <http://tcwrite.smumn.edu/home/writing-resources/avoiding-plagiarism/>

Carroll, J. (2007). *A handbook for deterring plagiarism in higher education*. (2nd ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.