

## 1. Preamble

University of Colombo (UoC), being on par with the global academic community, recognizes and acknowledges academic integrity as an essential component of teaching, learning, assessment, and research. It is the responsibility of the university to maintain the highest level of ethics in knowledge production and dissemination, that would finally serve the local and global communities.

The policy on plagiarism aims to maintain the academic integrity of our university community. This illustrates the commitment of the University of Colombo in maintaining high standards of ethics in the conduct of research and in making assessments of any scholarly work carried out by the university community. While acknowledging a ‘similarity level’ is needed to determine plagiarism, with variation in the level of similarity by each faculty and/or field of study, the guidelines provided in this policy allow and recognize the autonomy of the faculties, units, and centers of the University of Colombo to adopt this policy against plagiarism.

### 1.1 Types of plagiarism

Most common types of plagiarism:

- **Complete Plagiarism** – To submit someone else’s article/assessment in his/her name, equivalent to intellectual theft and stealing
- **Source-based Plagiarism** – The reference source is incorrect or does not exist OR cite the only primary citation of information while referring to the secondary source of information/data
- **Direct Plagiarism** - Copy word to word without acknowledging the primary source
- **Self or Auto Plagiarism** – Author/s, himself / herself / themselves, reuse previously published work without acknowledgement
- **Paraphrasing plagiarism** – Use others' information with some minor changes in the sentences as one’s own work.
- **Inaccurate Authorship** – Inaccurate authorship or misleading attribution refers to inaccuracies in citing authorship
- **Mosaic Plagiarism** – Insert someone else's phrases or text within one’s own research that is intentional and dishonest.
- **Accidental Plagiarism** – Plagiarism may be due to neglect, mistake, unintentional paraphrasing.

### 1.2 Definitions

- **University community** – uundergraduates, postgraduate students, post-doctoral, emeritus professors, academic staff, researchers affiliated to faculties, institutes, centers

and units of the University of Colombo, administrative and nonacademic officers engaged in research.

- **Plagiarism** - Using another person's ideas, designs, words or works without appropriate acknowledgement.
- **Works:** Refers to words, music, computer code, artistic works, designs or ideas published and unpublished.
- **Paraphrasing:** Repeating a text section using different words that retain the original meaning.
- **Collusion** - Another person assisting in the production of an assessment submission without the knowledge of the Assessor
- **Citation** – Crediting the author by referencing another person's directly quoted, synthesized, or paraphrased work.
- **Quotation** - Placing an excerpt from a source into a work/paper using either quotation marks or indentation, with the source cited, using an approved referencing system in order to give credit to the original author.
- **Policy statement** - An organization-level document prescribes acceptable methods or behaviors.
- **Responsibilities** - The university community should perform the duties or tasks assigned by the UoC to maintain academic integrity and ethics.
- **Ghost authorship** - The ghost-writer is a professional writer whose contribution to produce a paper will exclude in the final publication.

### 1.3 Guidelines to avoid plagiarism

- Every Faculty/institute/study program shall introduce the plagiarism policy in each induction course/event.
- Faculties/Centers/Units/Staff development center shall educate and train the university community to avoid plagiarism by introducing ethics and integrity through the relevant course.
- University Main Library and its branches should conduct training sessions for all the undergraduates and postgraduate before commencing the academic course, which is mandatory and to issue a certificate of participation, which will be considered eligible criteria to follow the academic curriculum.
- University Main Library and its branches shall regularly provide training sessions for all academic staff.
- Provision of necessary software, guide manuals by the UoC
- When carrying out research and assessment work, the university community must ensure that proper practices are adopted to:
  1. Cite sources
  2. Insert quotations
  3. Paraphrase
  4. Use a plagiarism checker by using student accounts/ with the assistance of the lecturer / Librarian
  5. Present an original argument
  6. Maintain records of the sources referred to
  7. Avoid ghost authorship

8. Avoid copy-pasting
9. Obtain written permission from the owner when copying images, photos and any other visual and audio material
10. Obtain written permission when copying from audio or visual material from open access journals or the public domain
11. In group or collaborative research or assessments, ensure that all the co-authors or group participants know how to avoid plagiarism.

## **1.4 Procedure for handling acts of plagiarism**

The ‘Similarity Level’ for similarity checks, which determine plagiarism within the university, will be based on the field of study and diverse teaching and assessment methods. The overall process will be the same, but the significance of similarity (copying) for students to be charged shall be determined by each faculty/institute/study course. An act of plagiarism will be determined by each Campus or Faculty Board / Academic Syndicate and approved by the University Senate.

Therefore, the university entrusts the authority of due procedure against plagiarism on each faculty/institute/campus/school and determine the prescribed course of action to ensure that the policy is duly enforced. The methodology that should be adopted to detect acts of plagiarism and the disciplinary action taken against such violations will be recommended to the Examination Committee of the University Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.

This policy aims to ensure and encourage students and staff members to adopt best practices in the academic conduct regarding writing reports, dissertations, journal papers, and other works and in the submission of such material to the university and other entities/institutions, on behalf of the UoC. This policy endeavor to ensure that the academic community is well informed of the consequences of such academic misconduct.

## **2. Policy Statement:**

Students and Staff of the University of Colombo should ensure that all materials presented are their own intellectual property, while work, language and opinion of others are duly acknowledged by adopting proper citation methods/standards by the individual faculties, campus, or institutions of the University. It is the duty and responsibility of every member of the academic community to ensure that one does not engage in any form of cheating or any other activity that affords an unfair personal advantage.

## **3. Scope**

This policy and procedure shall apply to all forms of assessments made on assignments/reports/dissertations/publications submitted to the University by internal and external registered/affiliated students and staff.

## 4. Responsibilities

- a. Every staff member is responsible for being fully aware of the Policy and ensuring their students are made duly aware about it. (What is the policy? /How can it be implemented? / Does every student understand the principles and required practice?)
- b. All students must be made fully aware by the staff about how to cite reference material, reference styles, prepare the reference list, avoid plagiarism, apply reference management, and learning sources used.
- c. Training for students on the use of the similarity checking tool approved by the Senate and Council will form an integral component of the students' induction programme.
- d. In the implementation of this Policy, acts of copying/plagiarism committed by staff/ students will be handled each Campus or Faculty Board / Academic Syndicate and approved by the University Senate, as per the rules and regulations of the UoC. Offences committed by staff and students shall be dealt with, following the due investigation process, as provided in section 5 of the Policy.

## 5. Implementation of the Policy

### **Disciplinary Code for students:**

- 5.1 All individual irregularities and dishonest practices will be vigorously and promptly investigated, and appropriate remedial action shall be taken. It is an academic offence for any member of the University Community to act in a manner whereby he/she/they gain or attempt to gain an unfair advantage through a breach of the Plagiarism Policy. Such acts will be dealt with as per the procedure set out in this policy. The University of Colombo's prescribed disciplinary procedures shall deal with such acts.
- 5.2 All members of the Academic Community of the university must use Senate and Council approved similarity checking tool software to authenticate every student who has correctly completed the work submitted for assessment in a proper manner.
- 5.3 The Examination Board in the UoC will determine whether cheating, plagiarism or other forms of academic irregularities provided in a document have occurred. This policy and procedure on plagiarism will take precedence in such determination.
- 5.4 When dealing with acts of plagiarism committed by a student/s, initially, the lecturer must establish the fact and subsequently, any sanction that can be imposed can impact the student's overall performance.
- 5.5 The fact of the mere allegation of cheating, plagiarism or other unfair advantage is not adequate to establish an act of plagiarism. Therefore, it is necessary to substantiate such allegation/s with the support of credible evidence.

- 5.6 The Director/Coordinator of Examinations will present all suspected actions to the Faculty/Board or its equivalent. In the facts have been established, it is then referred to the Examination Committee of the UoC. The Examinations Committee shall determine the gravity and seriousness of each case and exercise discretion appropriately, giving due regard to the institutional precedent, where applicable. The final recommendation is referred to the Senate for appropriate ruling to make the due recommendation to the Council of the University.
- 5.7 All teachers must report any plagiarism or academic dishonesty concerns within the framework for providing assessment feedback to all students.

## References:

1. University of Colombo (2019). 427<sup>th</sup> Senate: “A draft Plagiarism Policy”, University of Colombo.
2. PGIM, University of Colombo (2021). *The General Regulation & Guidelines for trainees-2021*, PGIM, University of Colombo.
3. UCSC (2021). *Masters Common Plagiarism Policy 2020*, UCSC, University of Colombo.
4. Enago Academy (2021). *8 Most common Types of Plagiarism to stay away from*. Retrieved from <https://www.enago.com/academy/fraud-research-many-types-plagiarism/>
5. University College Oxford. (2021). *Plagiarism and Academic Integrity*. Retrieved from <https://www.univ.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Plagiarism-and-Academic-Integrity.pdf>  
Accessed on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021
6. University of Cambridge (2021). *Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct*. Retrieved from <https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/>  
Accessed on 8th September 2021
7. MIT (2021). *Academic Integrity at MIT: A Handbook for Students*. Retrieved from <https://integrity.mit.edu/>  
Accessed on 8th September 2021

## Annexures

University Ethics Review Committees

<https://med.cmb.ac.lk/erc/>

<https://arts.cmb.ac.lk/ethics-review/>

<https://fgs.cmb.ac.lk/ethics-review-committee-erc/>

<https://pgim.cmb.ac.lk/index.php/erc-new/>

Student Handbooks

Library Services “Plagiarism Prevention Page <https://lib.cmb.ac.lk/plagiarism-checking-service/>