

Suggested Practices for Preventing Plagiarism

The Plagiarism Task Force is a voluntary committee of faculty, students, classified staff, and administrators who are promoting best practices around the issues of academic honesty and plagiarism. The following are recommendations from our committee for how best to deal with the issue of plagiarism on our campus. These are only suggestions and are not meant in any way to be binding or to limit academic freedom. We offer these suggestions to our LPC community in a collaborative spirit and welcome any comments or questions.

Education

Many of our students do not know exactly what constitutes plagiarism. While most syllabi contain some warning about the consequences of plagiarism, students are often confused as to how to correctly incorporate researched materials into their assignments. The following are recommendations for how we can better educate our students on this issue:

- Instruction on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it should be incorporated into all LPC student and faculty orientations
- Students should be encouraged to take their English coursework early in their course of study.
- Any course that includes research or writing assignments should instruct the students on proper citation practices and avoiding plagiarism. Resources on these topics can be found on the Library home page, on Turnitin, and on the upcoming LPC Reading and Writing site.
- Students should attend Library orientations whenever possible before embarking on a research project.
- Instructors should make sure students understand the assignment thoroughly, allowing time for questions in class and office hours.
- The Plagiarism Task Force will create a “Plagiarism Traffic School” for first-time offenders, a self-directed module that will be administered by the Dean of Student Services.

Prevention

In addition to this education, instructors can craft their assignments in a manner that discourages plagiarism. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Structure assignments in steps, such as an annotated bibliography, research proposal, rough draft, and final draft. This guidance prevents students from panicking at the last minute and succumbing to plagiarism. It also allows teachers and fellow students to monitor the students’ progress and catch potential problems before the final draft.
- Require references to texts used in class as well as those found through research, making it less likely that a student could use a stolen paper.
- Require up-to-date sources, since stolen materials would tend to reference older sources.
- Specify the types of sources required (e.g. database articles, books, etc.) to discourage students from using general internet sources, which tend to be plagiarized often.
- Ask students to incorporate primary research, such as interviews or surveys, into their papers.
- Focus assignments on current-events issues for which less material exists to be plagiarized.
- Write assignments in student-friendly language that explains the terminology of research and gives examples.

- Require an oral presentation on the content of the research paper.
- Require students to turn in papers using Turnitin. The new version of Blackboard also features a similar service called SafeAssign.

Consequences

When a student is caught plagiarizing in a paper, it is up to the instructor's discretion what action should be taken. However, we recommend that instructors attempt to educate students, and give chances to correct the error, before taking punitive action. In particular:

- If a student seems to have plagiarized unintentionally, consider meeting with the student to discuss plagiarism and then allowing the student to rewrite the assignment for partial credit.
- Instructors using Turnitin should be careful to read the full report before determining that a paper is plagiarized, since the report may include cases of incorrect citation that do not constitute true plagiarism.

Our recommendation is that students should be referred to the Dean of Student Services in cases where the plagiarism was egregious or intentional. Examples might include:

- The student plagiarizes an entire paper or large sections of one.
- The student plagiarizes (to any degree) after a previous warning from the instructor.

Once again, these are only suggestions, and each instructor should determine his/her own practices regarding plagiarism.

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