

Case study 2. Oh come on, it's a blog post only...

A hypothetical case about plagiarism

Ivy, an MPhil student, returned home late at night after finishing a busy day at the laboratory. She was exhausted. Before going to bed, she played on her mobile phone as usual and checked her diary. She suddenly realised that a blog post assignment was due today. It was a small task, so Ivy decided to do it at once. After skimming through the discussion thread, she recalled reading a paragraph in the course reference materials that was highly relevant. Ivy began with a few sentences of her thoughts and then copied that paragraph to her post to back up her opinion. She did not add any references or citations as she assumed that people could easily recognise the source of the quote. Ivy knew her work was so-so, but she was just aiming for a passing grade. She then submitted her post on Moodle and quickly went to sleep.

Two weeks later, Ivy received an email from the course teacher informing her that the system identified plagiarism in her assignment and demanded her explanation.

Reflection corner

1. How would you explain yourself if you were Ivy?
2. When should we add citations and references?
3. How can we avoid committing plagiarism?

Analysis: How much plagiarism is plagiarism?

The University's Policy on Research Integrity defines plagiarism as "the use of another person's work (including but not limited to any materials, creations, ideas and data) as if one's own without due acknowledgment, whether or not such work has been published and regardless of the intent to deceive". Plagiarism in any form of assessment is a clear violation of the Regulations Governing Students' Academic Conduct Concerning Assessment and is punishable by disciplinary action. According to the University website on plagiarism, students who have committed plagiarism may be required to rewrite and resubmit the assignment of concern with additional training on academic writing, proper citation, and referencing. Students may also receive a "fail" grade for the work involved. Students should be aware that any form of plagiarism is a serious offence. All suspected instances of plagiarism, regardless of the form of assessment and the portion of plagiarised material, will be thoroughly investigated. When deemed necessary, the Faculty may refer the case to the Disciplinary Committee where disciplinary action, such as reprimand, fine, withdrawal and suspension, may be considered.

See more:

1. HKU Policy on Research Integrity:
<http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/rcr/policy#Research%20Misconduct>
2. HKU website on plagiarism:
<https://tl.hku.hk/plagiarism/>
3. HKU Regulations Governing Students' Academic Conduct Concerning Assessment:
<http://www.rss.hku.hk/integrity/rcr/student-regulations>