

# School of Creative Media

## RULES GOVERNING COPYING, PLAGIARISM, COLLUSION AND SUBSTITUTION IN ACADEMIC ASSESSMENTS

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Cheating in any form of academic assessment, is a serious offence.

This document sets out the rules relating to certain key forms of cheating. It first addresses some definitional matters. It then explains some of the consequences of cheating in academic assessments.

These Rules should be read in conjunction with the Code of Student Conduct of the City University of Hong Kong (CityU).

### 2.0 COPYING AND PLAGIARISM

#### 2.1 Definitions

Copying involves Person A making a copy (in part or in whole) of the work of another person whilst pretending – or allowing others to think – that the said work is the work of Person A.

Plagiarism involves Person A stealing the *ideas* or passages of text from the work of another whilst pretending – or allowing others to think – that the said work is the work of Person A.

These two concepts overlap. They each cover any direct reproduction, by Person A, of the work of another, which work is then passed off as the work of Person A.

Plagiarism *also* covers a case where Person A does not copy text or a passage word for word, but Person A does steal the *idea or ideas* involved.

#### 2.2 Examples

In view of the definitions above, particularly the definition of plagiarism, a mere rewriting of Person B's work by Person A still can involve very serious cheating in an academic assessment.

This reasoning applies with exactly the same force where Person A *translates* the work of Person B – say from Chinese into English - and then presents the substance of that work (and not just the translation work) as the work of Person A.

### 2.3 The Correct Way to Rely on the Work of Others

It is, of course, very usual for persons doing academic work, to rely on the work – especially the written work - of other persons. Where Person A relies on, builds on or draws on the work of Person B, Person A *must* acknowledge the relevant passage or idea as being drawn from the work of Person B.

It is quite proper for Person A to quote from the work of Person B – so long as it is made clear that this is the work of Person B.

Immediately following are two examples of the way to acknowledge the work of another person correctly. Let us assume Person A is writing an assignment about public administration in Hong Kong (for clarity the work of Person A is shown in *italics* and the quoted work and footnotes are shown in normal script).

Example 1 – quoting a passage from the work of another person.

*Some claim that Hong Kong's Executive Council (ExCo) has not operated particularly smoothly since the handover in 1997. For example, Professor Lau recently wrote:*

“The relationship between ExCo and the civil servants is uneasy and occasionally combative”

Person A would then insert a footnote at the end of the quotation – and the relevant footnote would read:

Lau Siu-kai, “Tung Chee Hwa’s Governing Strategy: The Shortfall in Politics” in (Lau (ed)) *The First Tung Chee Hwa Administration* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2002) page 12.

Example 2 – citing an argument or idea of another person.

*Thus, as a matter of constitutional theory, it may be that the Basic Law does not expressly prohibit a non-civil service Principal Official in Hong Kong (such as the Director of Audit) from concurrently being a member of the Legislative Council.*

Person A would then insert a footnote at the end of this passage – and the relevant footnote would read:

Ghai, Yash, *Hong Kong's New Constitutional Order* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1999) page 295.

(Note, the exact format of footnotes may vary according to the style guide being followed. What is crucial is that each footnote provides a clear citation of the source of the passage or argument being used by Person A.)

### 2.4 Reusing Your Own Work

Once you have written on a particular topic, it is natural to refer back to your earlier work if you come to write on the same or a related topic at a later time. It is proper to draw on earlier work of your own. But you must be very clear with your citations so that it is apparent in the later work that you are relying on earlier work. That is, just because Person A is relying on his own earlier work and is not copying or relying on the work of Person B does *not* absolve

Person A from making it quite clear that some of the new work relies on or reuses earlier work.<sup>1</sup>

## **2.5 Correct but Incorrect**

An assignment by Person A consisting mainly of quotations from the work of others, will not constitute copying or plagiarism *provided all external sources are given full citations or attribution*. Any such assignment will, however, almost certainly fail because it will not be a substantially original piece of work by Person A.

## **3.0 COLLUSION OR INAPPROPRIATE ACADEMIC COOPERATION**

### **3.1 Definition**

The dictionary tells us that collusion involves some level of secret cooperation for the purpose of fraud or some other criminal activity. Collusion in the context of academic assessment means some level of secret cooperation which is designed to provide some improper advantage to one or more persons in a particular academic assessment exercise.

### **3.2 Appropriate Academic Cooperation**

Some forms of academic assessment deliberately encourage assessment cooperation amongst students, for example, small-group joint-projects. Such projects are designed to build team operating skills at the same time as they assess academic performance.

Also, tertiary education, of its very nature, encourages students to talk about their studies and, through regular exchanges of ideas and views, to develop their knowledge, understanding and explanatory skills.

### **3.3 When Academic Cooperation Becomes Inappropriate**

Some forms of academic cooperation are, however, inappropriate. For example, it is inappropriate for Person A to make his or her work available to Person B for the purposes of enabling Person B to copy Person A's work or ideas. In these circumstances Person B is guilty of copying or plagiarism and Person A is guilty of collusion. However, there are other forms of inappropriate academic cooperation that amount to collusion.

Where cooperation becomes collusion, in an academic assessment sense, is often when that cooperation takes on some level of secretiveness. A fair test - a way to draw the line between normal student interchange and collusion - is for Person A to ask themselves:

- A. Could I reveal the entire extent of my cooperation with Person B to my Lecturer and Tutor;
- B. Would they approve of this level of cooperation; or
- C. Would they be likely to regard this level of cooperation as collusion.

If the answer to C is "yes" - then we likely have collusion.

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<sup>1</sup> In academic publishing, sometimes a publisher may wish to republish most or all of a particular piece of work of Person A which has been previously published. Again, this is permissible, *provided* that the earlier published version is noted in the later version together with the fact that the later work involves a republication of some or all of the prior work.

## **4.0 SUBSTITUTION**

In cases of extreme cheating, Person A will sometimes ask:

- Person B to write an entire assessment or take home exam for Person A;
- Person B actually to impersonate Person A and to replace Person A in an examination room.

It follows from what has been said earlier, that this extreme level of cheating is unacceptable. It may also involve criminal behaviour.

## **5.0 WHAT IS PROHIBITED**

Students must not engage in:

- Copying;
- Plagiarism;
- Collusion or Inappropriate Academic Cooperation;
- Substitution; or
- Any other form of cheating

These prohibitions apply whenever a student is completing any example of academic assessment, whether formative (that is non assessable) or summative (that is, assessable). As a matter of proper civic behaviour, students, as members of the general community, should avoid ever engaging in any such conduct in their wider lives.

## **6.0 SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES**

### **6.1 Written Assignments**

It is normally proper – and sensible - to discuss assignment work with other students and to exchange views and ideas. However, when students are set assignments of any sort, they must ensure that, unless group work is specifically allowed, they complete assignments which ultimately comprise their own original work.

Students must be alert to the need:

- to provide proper citations of the work of others on which they have relied; and
- to resist any temptation to engage in any non-attributed copying; and
- to resist any temptation to seek any outside help in the actual writing of assignments whether from friends, any other persons or commercial services (internet based or otherwise) which specialize in providing such assistance.

At the end of the day, each individual student must complete their own written work.

### **6.2 Exam Room Exams**

Students must at all times observe all the normal protocols and rules applying to the conduct of collective, room based exams, including observing all rules related to:

- Materials allowed in the exam room;
- Time limits applying;

- Avoiding any copying from other students; and
- Avoiding the seeking of improper help from any other person either within the exam room or outside.
- Avoiding giving improper help to any other student taking exams.

### **6.3 Take Home Exams**

Take home exams have become more common in both postgraduate and undergraduate courses. The growth of the Internet has also helped encourage this phenomenon.

Take home exams allow students more time to consider their answers. They also allow students to complete assessments outside of the “hot house” atmosphere which can often apply in the normal exam room setting.

Take home exams can also reduce the burden of providing formal exam room facilities – and can serve as a way of reducing some health risks which can arise within a large exam room setting, when there is danger of contagious illnesses being spread within such a setting.

Take home exams also clearly leave open greater opportunity for cheating. The scope is enhanced for students to copy, plagiarize, collude and engage in substitution.

It is vital for all students to observe the rules against cheating scrupulously, to guard against the very serious consequences which can arise for those caught cheating and to make take home exams work properly and fairly.

At first glance, it seems that it may be quite difficult to monitor cheating very well in take home exams. In fact this is not the case.

First, examiners are always on the “look out” for “similar papers” – especially in take home exams. If they find any such papers, then they are subjected to careful and detailed scrutiny. Next, examiners are also alert to any, sudden or unusual, significant improvement in performance by a student. If Person A has a track record of bare passes and suddenly, in a take home exam, Person A submits a paper which initially merits a distinction level mark, alarm bells immediately ring.

Note, also, that electronic cheat-checking aids are readily at hand. Currently available software can scan papers from the same exam very swiftly and can search out any “similar papers” for close attention by examiners. Similar software can also readily search across papers submitted for different assessments - apparently from the same student - to see if, in fact, it is likely that the papers were written by different people.

## **7.0 THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHEATING**

### **7.1 Overview of University Penalties**

Once any student is found to have engaged in cheating of the sort described above – or any other form of cheating – then they will be immediately subject to the operation of the CityU Code of Student Conduct (the “Code”).

You should read for yourself the detail of the operation of the Code – and the penalties which apply. Briefly, penalties for proved infringement of the Code include:

- A written or oral warning;

- A formal reprimand;
- Additional work;
- Withholding grades;
- Lowering a grade;
- Exclusion from CityU;
- Suspension from CityU;
- Expulsion from CityU;
- Withholding of academic award; and
- Other penalties as determined.

The University also reserves the right to refer any violation of the Criminal Law to the Police.

## 7.2 The Bottom Line

Don't cheat. It is always wrong – and never worth it.

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### UNDERTAKING

**The Programme Leader/Studio Leader will answer any queries you have concerning the above Rules. When you enter a programme of study offered by the School of Creative Media, you will be required to sign the following declaration:**

I have read the above Rules Governing Copying, Plagiarism, Collusion and Substitution in Academic Assessments and I confirm that I understand them. I undertake that I will observe the Rules.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name in Block Letters: \_\_\_\_\_

Student No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Programme: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_