How to Deal with Plagiarism

Ethics Course 2017
What is Plagiarism

Plagiarism in research entails a researcher using material (texts, ideas, hypotheses, “designs”, methods, data, results or conclusions) – consciously or through carelessness – in such a way that it presents a misleading picture of the researcher’s contribution to the project at hand.

Good Research Practice - Swedish Research Council
Problem Statement

A doctoral student, Eric, sends his thesis to fellow postgraduate Nicole at another university to get her feedback. They work in the same field and have previously met at a seminar, at which they got on well. Nicole uses some of the data and ideas from Eric’s work in her own thesis, which she presents before Eric completes his. Eric is accused of plagiarism.

What should the doctoral students, their supervisors, heads of department, vice-chancellors and their colleagues do?
Proposed Solution

Eric needs to report the issue (suspicion of research misconduct) to Nichole’s organization (University). With his submission, he would need to include proof that he conducted the work, e.g., his supervisor should be able to testify that the work is Eric’s. If Nichole is found guilty of plagiarism, she probably already knew that she “stole” the data and ideas, and should, therefore, be punished adequately.

- Doctoral students: report the misconduct
- Supervisors: Aid the doctorals students in proofing the students work.
- Heads of department: report to vice-chancellors.
- Vice-chancellors: submit to ethics board. 3rd-party decision.
OLE 1 and 2

Will there be any ethical problems or conflicts in the context, in the organisation or in the group where your decision will be applied or your solution will be used (e.g. your research findings)?

Will your decision or solution cause any ethical problems or conflicts?

- Yes
- One party will be found guilty of research misconduct
Are there any alternatives to your solution?

- Yes, probably not take any action
- However, it would not be fair for Eric
OLE 4

What groups, individuals, organisations, etc, will in any way be affected by or have a stake in the development, use, application or mere existence of your decision and solution? (Including society at large and the environment.)

- PhD student: damaged reputation, and academic career possibly ruined.
- Department: academic reputation, e.g., articles, funding, and collaborations.
- University: bad in the eye of the society.
OLE 5

What values, interests, duties, standpoints and attitudes are involved in the use of your solution and of the possible alternatives?

- Values: justice, fairness
- Interests: academic reputation
- Duties: good research practice
- Attitudes: diplomacy
OLE 6

What effects will your solution (and the alternatives) have on each of these values? What are the strengths/possibilities and the weaknesses/risks of each solution to each value? Will these solutions fit certain values and conflict with others? What values and how?

- Values: justice, fairness
- Strength: diplomatic, fair, rational and under control
- Weakness: time consuming
OLE 7

What will you do to make sure that the use of the solution will be optimal with regards to ethical aspects? For instance, adapt the design of the product, use of research methods, cooperation with industry, information to stakeholders, etc? How exactly are you going to succeed with this?

- Get advice from ethical board, supervisor etc.
- Involve all of the parties