

Being digital

What plagiarism feels like

1: Introduction

In this activity we are going to consider some of the consequences of plagiarism. Cases of deliberate plagiarism may be relatively rare, but whether it is intentional or not, the impact on those concerned can be far-reaching.

Learning outcome

By the end of this activity you should be aware of how plagiarism can affect those involved.

2: Consequences of plagiarism

Have a look at the two news stories below, which both feature individuals who have been involved in plagiarism.

News story 1

This story is about a person who was plagiarised. As you read it, make some notes on how she felt about this.

[BBC News \(2003\) Artist's work plagiarised](#)

News story 2

This story reports on the case of a person who was guilty of plagiarism. As you read it, make some notes on the consequences he has had to face.

[BBC News \(2012\) Hungary president Schmitt resigns in plagiarism scandal](#)

Having read both articles, how far do you think any of this is relevant to academic work?

3: The people involved

In the two scenarios on the previous screen, you looked at how plagiarism can affect people in their working lives.

In the case of the artist who was plagiarised, she felt angry and cheated. Her effort and achievement was not acknowledged, someone else benefitted from her work and her reputation was damaged.

In the case of the Hungarian president, he was stripped of his doctorate, had to resign from his job, and lost credibility both academically and as a leader.

But what about a university context? The three cases below illustrate how plagiarism feels for those who are involved.

(This scenario is loosely based on 'When does poor academic practice become a major problem?' from the Open University's Developing Good Academic Practices guidance. All characters are fictional).

Case 1: The victim

"I have always found collaborative work with others really helpful. I was shocked when I discovered another student had copied word-for-word the comments I posted in an online forum and used them in the end-of-module assignment without acknowledging that the ideas and words were mine. I was gutted, and felt really let down, especially as it was someone I had trusted."

Case 2: The plagiarist

"I was up against a deadline, and didn't have time to research the topic thoroughly for myself. I knew from the module forum that another student had a really good grasp of the subject, and thought it would be OK to use their knowledge. After all, it wasn't an academic source was it, and who would know? I was devastated when my tutor picked it up, and reported me. I feel such an idiot for putting my degree at risk."

Case 3: The tutor

"I had been monitoring the forum discussions closely, and had been pleased by the level of debate and good collaborative working. Unfortunately, when I came to mark the final assignments, it was clear that one student had directly copied the words of another student without naming the source - not just once, but numerous times. I had no choice but to refer this matter on to the relevant university authorities for further action."

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4: Summary

In this activity you have had the opportunity to think about the effect of plagiarism on people's lives, for those both on the giving and receiving end, as well as from the point of view of those who have to deal with it when it occurs.

Developing your academic skills will enable you to avoid any of these scenarios. Aiming for a high standard of academic integrity will also be good preparation for professional working life.

More information and guidance can be found on the Open University [Developing Good Academic Practices](#) website.

References

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