

# 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

Reproducing someone else's work without acknowledging it is committing plagiarism. Plagiarism can take many forms, and can be both intentional and unintentional.

Linked below are two news articles about individuals, one of whom was plagiarised and the other who was guilty of plagiarism.

Read the articles and consider:

- how the person who was plagiarised felt
- the consequences for the person caught plagiarising

[BBC accused of 'plagiarising' Slay in Your Lane slogan](#) (BBC News, 2019)

[Hungary President Schmitt quits in plagiarism scandal](#) (BBC News, 2012)

Make a note of your observations if you wish, and then read our feedback below.

### Feedback

In the case of the authors who were plagiarised, they felt angry and cheated. They felt their efforts and use of their trademarked name was not acknowledged, and that BBC Sport had benefited from their work. Consequently, BBC Sport received

negative media attention. In many cases, this could also result in damaged reputation.

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.

### 3. Plagiarism in academic work

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

But what about plagiarism in a University context?

Regardless of whether it was accidental or deliberate, plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct and taken very seriously. You can read more about how the Open University deals with this in their [Plagiarism Policy](#).

Now read below about how plagiarism feels for three of the key people involved.

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

#### 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."

#### 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."

#### 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

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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."

## 4. Summary

### 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.

### Next Steps

For more information on improving your academic skills, visit the Open University's guidance on [Developing good academic practice](#).

For support with referencing, visit the Open University Library's page on [Referencing and Plagiarism](#).

### References

BBC News (2012) *Hungary President Schmitt quits in plagiarism scandal*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17586128> (Accessed: 27 April 2020)

BBC News (2019) *BBC accused of 'plagiarising' Slay in Your Lane slogan*. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48435772> (Accessed: 27 April 2020)