



Worthwhile to rid-off from academic misconduct: Lesson learnt from EUSL

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1.0 Preamble

Academic **dishonesty** or academic **misconduct** is any type of cheating that occurs in relation to a formal academic exercise. It can be categorized into several types depending on the depth of the activities, such as, *cheating* (using or attempting to use materials, or assisting others in using materials that are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question), *bribery* (academic advantage-money, goods or services from students or colleagues), *mis-representation* (lying an attempt to increase grade or vice-versa), *conspiracy* (working as group with one or more person commit academic dishonesty), *fabrication* (use of invented or misrepresentative information and claiming yours), *collusion* (individual assignment but working together), *duplicate submission* (same paper for two different publications), *academic misconduct* (distributing, either for money or for free changing grades, encouraging others to obtain a copy of a test before the test is administered), *disruptive behavior* (any behavior that interfere with the teaching/learning process) and *Plagiarism* (adoption or reproduction of ideas/words/statements of another person without due acknowledgment-literary theft¹).

The WPA (Council of **Writing Program Administrators**²) defines the plagiarism as “in an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses

¹ <https://spcollege.libguides.com/c.php?g=254383&p=1695452>

² www.wpacouncil.org

someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source". There were several incidences highlighted at the EUSL on academic misconducts.

Therefore, it is a high time to explore these issues to the academic environment of our university to aware from it and to avoid such activities in future. This will facilitate the young academics not to involve in those unethical activities.

2.0 Experiences from EUSL

As an academic of this university, we came to understand many such misconducts reported, discussed, directly or and indirectly, at various forums. This is an ethical issue where colleagues may feel uncomfortable to discuss in an open forum where those committed persons are friends, superiors or in the academic/administrative positions. It is important to develop the competence among the academics to discuss those inappropriate correspondences, in an appropriate and constructive way of critical thinking. This will develop a better "academic culture" at the university.

2.1 Publication of students' research/work: *Bribery, Fabrication*

Students' research articles are claimed by the supervisor as the "first author/corresponding author". Sometimes, the students' work not properly acknowledged in the publication and in the extreme case, the name of the students did not appear in the publication. Similarly, proper recognition may not given to the fellow researcher.

2.2 Multiple publications: *Duplicate submissions*

A research has been done at once. But the output of the research has been published many times, with same content or with slight changes of the title of the paper. These types of papers are published in a very short period of time (E.g. one or two week/s time) in the "predatory journals". We can find ample of examples, if we check the publications at the EUSL website. Similar way the same paper published at different conferences/symposiums where the organizers do not know the previous publications.

2.3 Payment of registration fee: *Bribery, Academic misconduct*

Supervisor requesting his/her research students to pay the registration fee on behalf of the supervisor's registration. Unfortunately, the fee may be negligible when comparing the salary of the supervisor. The students will be fallen in an uncomfortable situation, by this request, and may fear about his/her grade for the research work that may affect if the student fails to pay for the said registration.

2.4 Publication of student research before official acceptance: *Academic misconduct, Cheating, Disruptive behavior, Fabrication*

Undergraduate students' research works need to be accepted by the corresponding faculty to award the degree, where the student declared in their research report that the research work is the original and not published or submitted for any form of publication. The supervisor published the research work, with the same title for his/her own benefit before acceptance of the students' work by the faculty, stating that the "students will get recognition". It's true, if this happens, after the awarding of the degree for the undergraduate students. This case is different from the postgraduate studies where it is a mandate for publication before awarding (but the publication shall not the same title of the PG research). This will question the acceptance of the students' research and also contradicts the statement of the declaration by the student.

2.5 Utilizing new recruited staff or temporary staff for own academic work: *Academic misconduct, Disruptive behavior*

Recently recruited academic staff or temporary academic staff are utilized by the senior academic for their own benefits, who is the teacher of them or may be the head of the department, such as conducting lectures, preparing lecture notes, requesting to prepare documents for his/her own works, which may disturb the young staff from their academic activities. It is a kind of threatening and indirectly place the young staff under stress where they are fear of their study leave, promotions, and becomes the voice-less people. Instead of facilitating and promoting them into academic career/progress, they are sometime treated as the "academic slaves".

2.6 Publication in “Predatory and Vanity book Publishers”: *Cheating, Disruptive behavior, Plagiarism*

The UGC published circular 05/2018 (*Transparent research performance scheme to recognize researchers in the university system*) **to recognize** research performance and rank researchers under five tiers in the university system. This indicates the research publications need to be recognized in refereed journals of global or national importance, which takes more than six months or even a year to be published. But the so called “academics” publish their research papers within a month or may less than that, without proper review process. Some times more than five or six papers per year...?

It is also noted that the “academics” published books within a short period of time where they have no significant contributions in the said field. If a person needs to publish a book, he/she is “the expert” in that field with lots of contributions and recognitions nationally and globally. We know that very famous senior professors in the University of Peradeniya did not publish a single book, where they maintain their academic dignity. Nowadays people just passed out from our university publishing books in “predatory and vanity publishers”, which are officially highlighted in many websites and discussion are going on among the famous researchers in various forums including the ResearchGate.

2.7 Fabricating or Cook data: *Academic misconduct, Cheating, Plagiarism*

Research works are not adequately planned in a scientific way and fear to submit for ethical clearance. Similar researches are searched from various sources and already published data are incorporated into the research work. The relevant information is published as their own work by the academics in the journals and other media including newspaper, TV and social media, etc. These types of activities are purely unethical and unaccepted.

2.8 Publishing own Journal/Book: *Academic misconduct, Bribery, Cheating*

Few academics publishing their own journal or books for the purpose of getting ‘points’ for promotions. We cannot see those journal anywhere else..! They print less than ten copiers in their own and submitting them for their own academic benefits.

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

- Most of these “academic thefts” are unethical behavior of the academics and they are not eligible to be called as “the academics” in the university system. All these abnormal behaviors are focusing towards the “point systems”, which are used for promotions and for research allowances.
- Nowadays, when people are recruited into the university, they just observed the professor scheme for gaining the points and working towards it and not involved in any activities for the development of the faculty and or the university. The newly recruited staff followed the present “senior academics” and that will further spoil the university systems for another 65 years, until their retirements. This could be applicable at the EUSL too...?
- Therefore, it is vital to restructure the evaluation process of academic for the purpose of promotion and to consider them for suitable positions at the university rather than considering based on the personal interests.
- A mechanism should be developed to stop the academic cheating, such as develop clear policy on academic cheating, work on plagiarism responsibility, publicizing procedures, providing support services and supporting faculty discussions, use plagiarism detecting services, introduce mandatory course for UG and PG curriculum, take appropriate disciplinary actions, etc.

In the meantime, we respect the “real academics” in our university systems those who are working towards the development of the university, development of the region as well as the country at large.
