

PLAGIARISM: GUIDELINES FOR POSTGRADUATE TRAINEES

Introduction

The Postgraduate Institute of Medicine is a prestigious institute in the University of Colombo which maintains high quality academic status and well earned recognition from other centers of excellence around the world. It strives for its trainees to become professionals of exceptional quality, and rates institutional achievements not only through clinical competence of its trainees but also on their professionalism in academic matters and scholarly publications. As such, the institute expects its trainees to maintain a high level of integrity in scholarly writing. The PGIM adopts a 'zero tolerance' for plagiarism.

Definition of terms

Quotation: A sentence or a paragraph which contains the exact words from another source which will be indicated by using the quotation marks.

Summary: An overview of the original idea or the work and will contain less amount of words than the original work.

Paraphrase: Re-statement of the original content using different words which will be of the same length as the original work.

Definition of Plagiarism

"To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source" (Merriam-Webster's dictionary).

Extracting and re-publishing or forwarding such material for examinations, as proposals, assignments, projects, portfolios, case books, log books, online discussions, or in any other form for assessment to the PGIM will be considered as plagiarism.

The PGIM will consider plagiarism even if ideas and words are extracted as mentioned above from abstracts, published or unpublished manuscripts, research grant applications, ethical review committee applications, lecture presentations, online content or any other material which is not recognized as being 'common knowledge'.

Types of plagiarism

There are two types of plagiarism,

1. Intentional plagiarism
2. Unintentional plagiarism

In either event, the PGIM will strictly abide by the rules and regulation dealing with plagiarism and it is the sole responsibility of trainees to avoid such academic irresponsibility at all times.

What can constitute an event of plagiarism?

Plagiarism can take place in many situations and the trainees should be vigilant of such situations. The following are instances where an act of plagiarism can take place.

- Quotations from other intellectual works without due acknowledgement of such work.
- Cutting and pasting from the Internet without due acknowledgement and full reference.
- Citation errors: It is strongly advised to follow accurate citation techniques as misdirected citations or inadequate citations can lead to an event amounting to plagiarism.
- Failure to acknowledge. Any assistance received by a trainee in substantiating and developing the content should be acknowledged.
- Use of professional agencies: Making use of another individual or a professional agency to develop or write student assignments, write-ups and other academic material will be considered an act of plagiarism.
- Auto plagiarism: The PGIM also considers re-submission of past self written content to a different event related to the same course of study or to a different course of study an act of plagiarism unless requested. Therefore, content intended for a particular course or examination should not be re-submitted for assessment at any other examination or event.

(Reference: University of Oxford, Educational Policy and standards, plagiarism,

Originating URL: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/epsc/plagiarism/index.shtml>)

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing may be considered plagiarism in certain forms. Paraphrasing is when you take another piece of writing and rewrite it in your own words while maintaining the same meaning. Paraphrasing is considered as plagiarism if the paraphrased version contains the same words included as in the original piece of writing and/or when the original structure is retained if due acknowledgement is not in place. A paraphrased version of this nature is referred to as “unacceptable paraphrasing”. Acceptable paraphrasing will lead to a complete change in the “words and structure” of the original piece of writing while retaining the meaning of it without distortion. A paraphrased passage will be about the same length as the original passage. It is also essential that due acknowledgement to the author of the original piece of writing is made through in-text citation.

Example of Acceptable & Unacceptable Paraphrasing

Original

Language is the main means of communication between people. But so many different languages have developed that language has often been a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among people. For many years, people have dreamed of setting up an international, universal language which all people could speak and understand.

Unacceptable Paraphrase

Language is the principal means of communication between people. However, because there are numerous languages, language itself has frequently been a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among the world population. For many years, people have envisioned a common universal language that everyone in the world could understand (Smith 2012).

Acceptable Paraphrase

Humans communicate through language. However, because there are so many languages in the world, language is an obstacle instead of an aid to communication. For a long time, people have desired for an international language that speakers all over the world could communicate in (Smith 2012).

OR

According to Smith (2012) humans communicate through language. However, because there are so many languages in the world, language is an obstacle instead of an aid to communication. For a long time, people have desired for an international language that speakers all over the world could communicate in.

Ref: Acceptable and Unacceptable Paraphrasing. Canada College Academic Integrity Committee, 8/30/04 (http://canadacollege.edu/inside/acad_integrity/SampleParaphrases.pdf)

How can you avoid plagiarism?

Trainees undertaking PGIM courses need to take every measure to avoid plagiarism, and will be aided in this regard by trainers in their respective study programmes. Apart from such supervision, students themselves need to take the following measures to avoid even unintentional acts of plagiarism.

Before writing

- Take adequate time in gathering the resource material.
- Read the material pertaining to write-ups in advance, before embarking on incorporating them into your creations.
- Learn and obtain guidance regarding citation requirements and the citation style from your supervisors before starting a research project.
- Keep a record of citations for all resources used in your work.

When writing

- Cite all information which is not common knowledge or not arising from your study or case
- Use quotation marks when you use other author's words
- For longer quotes indent the whole paragraph
- Indicate clearly, at the beginning of the sentence, that it is someone else's idea. e. g. "In 2002, Smith et al reported"
- Place the source for your quotations as close as possible to the quotation in your work.

After writing

- Allow someone else to go through your work and give feedback related to citation errors and other instances of missing references and citations
- Maintain a bibliography of all your references and citation material
(Reference: Duke University's Writing Studio, Avoiding Plagiarism. PowerPoint presentation)

Penalties for acts of plagiarism

Boards of Study will scrutinize all academic material pertaining to each study course and in the event of detecting plagiarism, will decide on further action according to the degree of the violation. The action taken in such events can amount to,

- Instruction to re-submit the work with appropriate changes
- Calling for explanation with regard to the act of plagiarism
- Reporting to the other relevant bodies dealing with disciplinary matters at the PGIM
- **To consider it a non -submission. The date of submission will be the date on which the non plagiarized document is submitted.**
- Failing the assessment for which the plagiarized content was intended

- Suspension from the course of study after a disciplinary inquiry according to PGIM regulations
- Or any other disciplinary action according to PGIM regulations as decided by the relevant authority

Conclusion

This document hopes to educate the PGIM trainees on what is expected from scholarly writing and what constitutes 'plagiarism'. It intends to develop a culture of intellectual respect and better scholarliness among trainees, and hopes to encourage practices to prevent plagiarism, intentional or otherwise, from taking place.