

Memo academic misconduct policy FSS

*Adopted by the Faculty of Social Sciences' Central Examination Board on 27 October 2016
(minor update by core committee of Examination Board 13 May 2019)*

Introduction

The Examination Board deals with cases of academic misconduct, among other things. More precisely, it investigates cases in which lecturers suspect students of engaging in academic misconduct.

The Examination Board's policy when handling such cases is informed in part by the Academic and Examination Regulations (OER) and, most significantly, by the Rules & Guidelines (R&R) for Examination Boards. The main purpose of this memo is to establish guidelines for penalization.

What is academic misconduct?

The R&R define academic misconduct as follows:

“Any action or act of negligence by a student making it impossible to accurately assess – partially or completely – his/her knowledge, insight and skills, or those of another student.”

In most cases, this will involve some form of cheating on an exam (copying answers from another student, use of external sources) or plagiarism. Plagiarism includes quoting or translating a source without proper citation, as well as directly copying a line of reasoning (sentence by sentence). According to the R&R:

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) using or copying someone else's texts, data or ideas without providing proper citation;*
- b) not (clearly) indicating a direct quotation by using quotation marks or a certain layout, even if the source has been properly cited;*
- c) paraphrasing or translating someone else's texts without proper citation;*
- d) submitting previous work, or a text that is highly similar to previous work, in fulfilment of an assignment for another degree component, without making reference to this fact;*
- e) copying another student's work and trying to pass it off as original work;*
- f) submitting papers acquired from third parties (commercial institutions, freelancers, friends etc.), in exchange for payment or otherwise.*

For a useful overview of the various forms of plagiarism, and how they are weighed when it comes to penalization, see Figure 1 (for English terms, see Table 1), which was taken from “Towards an institution-wide anti-plagiarism policy” (original Dutch title: “Op weg naar een instellingsbreed plagiaatbestrijdingsbeleid”) (Drent et al., 2006). As this figure shows, plagiarism is a sliding scale: stealing a paper is a more severe transgression than forgetting to provide proper citation. An act of plagiarism is classified as exam fraud when it renders the examiner unable to accurately assess a student’s work – in other words, when a student presents someone else’s texts or ideas as his/her own. Depending on the context, this could be the case for all forms of plagiarism listed in Figure 1. This means that “inadequate citation” can also be penalized.

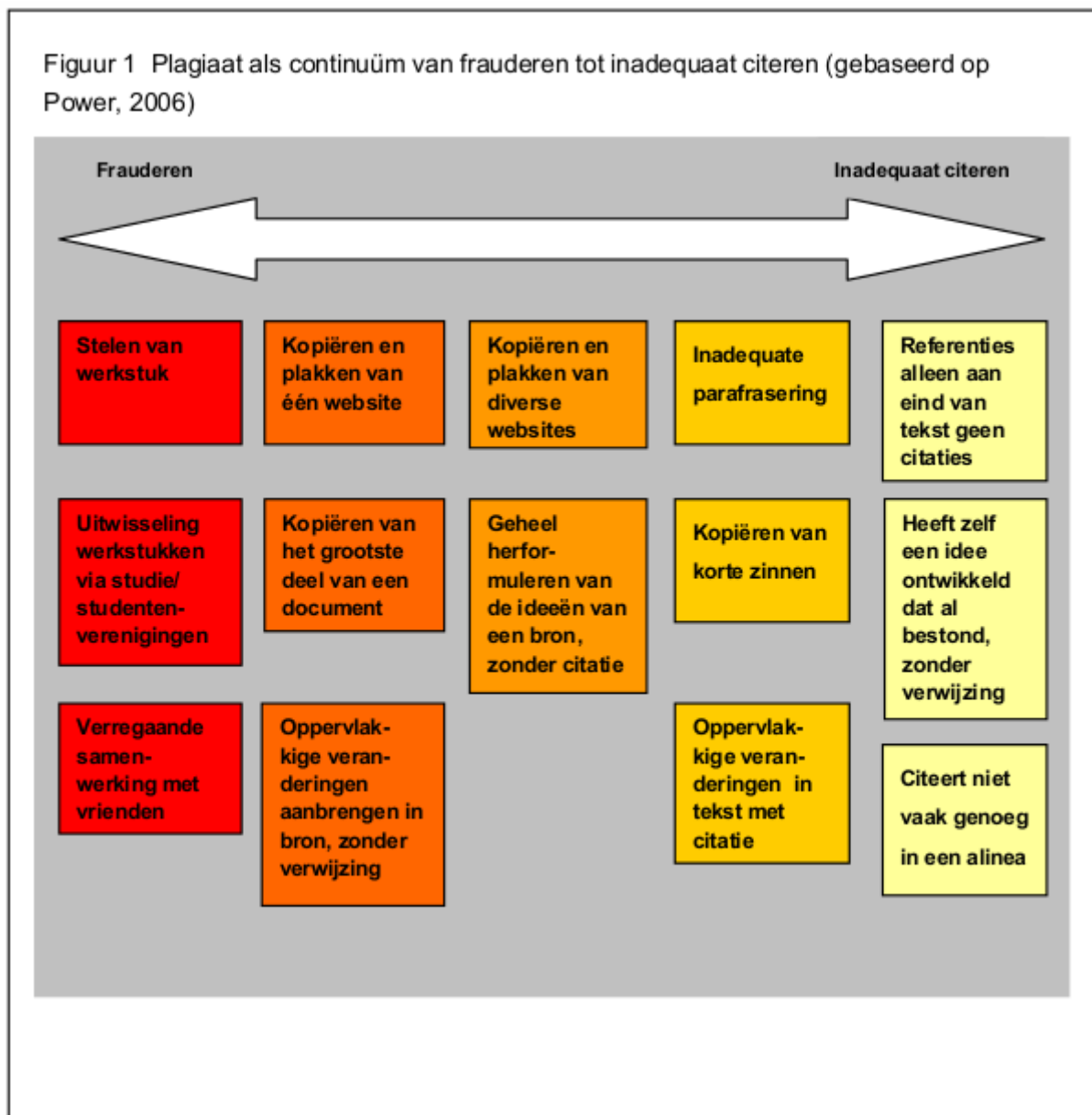


Table 1: Terms from Figure 1 in English

Fraud				Inadequately referencing
<----->				
Stealing a paper	Copy and paste from one website	Copy and paste from various websites	Inadequate paraphrasing	References only at the end of text, no citations
Exchange papers via study / student associations	Copy most of a document	Completely reformulate the ideas of a source, without citation	Copying short sentences	Has developed an idea that already existed, without reference
Extensive collaboration with friends	Make superficial changes in source, without reference		Superficial changes in text with citation	Does not reference often enough in a paragraph

Procedure

The procedure to follow in cases of fraud or suspicion of fraud is outlined the R&R:

1. *If an examiner has proof of plagiarism or another form of academic misconduct, or reasonable grounds for suspicion, he/she will report this in writing to the Examination Board, providing documentary evidence if possible. He/she will also notify the student in question.*
2. *The Exam Board will then invite the student to a hearing about the alleged plagiarism or other form of academic misconduct, and render a decision based on the documentary evidence and, if possible, the information provided by the student during the hearing. The examiner can also be asked to provide further testimony. Such testimony will always be elicited in cases where the Examination Board is planning on acquitting the student in question.*
3. *If the Examination Board is convinced that plagiarism or another form of academic misconduct has in fact taken place, the student is penalized accordingly.*

Penalization

Although each case of academic misconduct is judged on its own terms, the Examination Board does use a general guideline to determine the severity of the penalty. As a basic principle, the penalty must be more severe than the consequences the student would have faced had he/she not handed in the paper or sat the exam.

Possible penalties, in ascending order of severity (in accordance with the R&R), are:

1. The constituent examination is rendered invalid, but the student is permitted to take a resit during the same academic year
2. The examination is rendered invalid, but the student is permitted to take a resit during the same academic year
3. The examination is rendered invalid, and the student is excluded from the first subsequent opportunity
4. The examination is rendered invalid, and the student is excluded from some or all further examinations for a maximum of one year (only in cases of 'recidivism or severe academic misconduct')
5. The Executive Board is asked to permanently terminate the student's registration (only in cases of 'extremely severe academic misconduct')

Students who cheat on a constituent examination that only makes up a small part of the overall assessment will, in principle, receive penalty 2. Students who cheat on an examination or constituent examination that makes up a considerable part of the overall assessment will, in principle, receive penalty 3. In case of mitigating circumstances such as unintentional misconduct or special personal circumstances, lighter penalties may be imposed. In cases of recidivism, severe misconduct or other aggravating circumstances such as intentional deceit and a refusal to admit any wrongdoing, more severe penalties will be imposed.

Decisions and penalties are always rendered by all of the core members of the Examination Board, who are advised by the administrative secretariat.

Appeals

"Students can appeal decisions by the Examination Board with the Examination Appeals Board, within six weeks after the decision is rendered." (R&R FSS)

A student always has the right to appeal a decision by the Examination Board. Examiners, however, do not have this right, as the law does not provide it. The Examination Board, in its turn, cannot appeal decisions rendered by the Examination Appeals Board with the Higher Education Appeals Tribunal. This option, too, is only available to students.