Department of Chemistry, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

POLICY ON PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the “wrongful appropriation”, copying or theft of another person’s work, ideas, or language, and passing it off as your own. In academic settings, this is considered as dishonest as copying on an examination, and is a very serious offence. In many foreign universities, it would be grounds for a failing grade in a course or a project, if not expulsion from the institution. Academics found guilty of plagiarism may be dismissed from their posts.

The Department of Chemistry at the University of Colombo expects its staff and students to live up to the highest standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism will not be accepted or tolerated by the Department. Whether in laboratory reports, papers, literature seminar summaries, or research projects, plagiarism is considered to be a serious offence, and students found guilty of plagiarizing will be subject to penalties as further described in this policy.

What constitutes plagiarism?

Though the situation is not always clear-cut, any of the following will be considered plagiarism.

- Submitting another person’s work as your own.
- Including another person’s work (language, ideas, results, data, graphics/images, etc.) in your submissions without proper acknowledgement or citation.
- Copying another person’s paragraphs or sentences into your work, with or without minor changes, even if you cite your sources.
- In cases where you consider it necessary to quote (copy word for word) a sentence or two of someone else’s language, failure to put it within quotation marks.

How can you avoid plagiarism?

In general, you should try to understand what your source is saying, and then re-phrase it in your own language. The appearance of plagiarism can be avoided by always citing your sources. However, you need not give references for anything you may reasonably consider to be “common knowledge”. Sometimes you may decide that it is better to directly use your source’s language. In this case, you must always use quotation marks (“ ”) and give the reference. However, this should be done sparingly.

What are the penalties for plagiarism?

In papers and lab reports for individual courses, the course instructor will decide the appropriate penalty for plagiarism, which may include getting a zero for that particular item.

If plagiarism is suspected on a seminar summary or a research thesis, a severe penalty will be imposed.