

SLU policy and action plan with regard to cheating and plagiarism within higher education, 2010 to 2011

Overall objectives and basic assumptions

The goal of higher education is to give the students an independent and critical approach to the acquisition of knowledge as well as opportunities to develop generic skills in preparation for their working lives. One tool is student-focused teaching, which develops the students' ability to find, evaluate and use information in a critical and scientific way. Both the goals and the working methods require a sound knowledge of rules for academic writing.

In our current information society, copyright issues are always topical. A good deal of information is available on the web, and social media have become part of our everyday lives. The use of text-matching tools has provided greater opportunities to gauge the extent of cheating and plagiarism at universities and colleges all over the world. The increasing incidence of disciplinary cases in Sweden has led the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education to disclose disciplinary cases at colleges and universities in annual reports.

Clear guidelines are needed for the work of both students and teachers, particularly in relation to various forms of examination, for which reason the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) has adopted this policy and action plan against cheating and plagiarism, which applies to students at first-, second- and third-cycle levels.

What is cheating?

In accordance with the Higher Education Ordinance Chapter 10, section 1 (SFS 1993:100), disciplinary action can be taken against students who

"... by prohibited aids or other means attempt to deceive during examinations or when academic work is otherwise assessed."

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education classifies such aids within the following categories (the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, 2009):

1. Cheat sheets and prohibited aids
2. Unauthorized collaboration
3. Plagiarism and fabrication
4. Forgery of documents

Disciplinary action may also be taken under several other circumstances (against students who harass or disrupt activities), but this falls outside the scope of this policy and action plan. Please refer to the regulations relating to courses at undergraduate and graduate level at SLU.

Please also refer to the Swedish Agency for Higher Education (2004) for a summary of decisions and judgments in this field.

Examples of cheating are prohibited aids during a written test, altering a returned paper, unauthorized collaboration between students on individual assignments, copying other students' work, copying without correct attribution of the source, incorrect recording of attendance at mandatory instruction, incorrect information about previous academic performance relevant to the assessment of credits to be awarded, etc.

There must be an element of deception, which requires intent, for something to be regarded as cheating. The student should have deliberately sought to have deceived the teacher. This requires that

- the student has done this with intent (not accidentally or through negligence),
- the student was aware that the procedure in question was not permissible, and
- this is part of a test or other assignment included in the assessment of academic performance (Uppsala University, 2004).

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism means copying other authors' texts or reproducing their tables, pictures and other illustrations, without attributing the source. It is also plagiarism when texts are reproduced verbatim without any indication that this is a quotation, even if the source is cited.

Plagiarism is always wrong and can be considered cheating if it is deemed deliberately intended to be misleading in the assessment of academic performance.

There should be a clear indication of what the student has produced and what has been obtained (and possibly reworked) from another source, by using the correct technique for quoting and indicating the source. If someone else's text is used verbatim, this should be done as a quotation, which shall be enclosed by quotation marks and accompanied by a reference or footnote reference. Inadequate reference management may constitute cheating.

References to sources should also cover the student's own material. If a student uses what he or she has written previously, for example in a paper for another course, the student should include a source reference to this work.

Responsibility

The Vice-Chancellor is ultimately responsible for SLU making preventive and long-term efforts to combat cheating and plagiarism and also *establishes* this policy and action plan.

The Council for Education at basic and advanced level (GUR) is responsible for *drafting* and *updating* the policy and action plan to combat cheating and plagiarism, while the Council for postgraduate studies (FUR) is to participate in these efforts.

The library is responsible, in collaboration with Student Affairs and Learning Development, for placing information on SLU's policy and action plan to combat cheating and plagiarism on the SLU website and including it in information materials for students and teachers. The program director of studies is responsible for disseminating this information within the respective programs. The library is responsible, in collaboration with faculty and Student Affairs and Learning Development, for *follow-up* of the measures set out in the policy and action plan.

All those working at SLU have an obligation to comply with the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance and to further the objectives of the policy and action plan to combat cheating and plagiarism. Course leaders and examiners, especially on introductory courses (or the equivalent) and degree project courses (or the equivalent), have an important *operational responsibility* for the implementation of the SLU policy and action plan to combat cheating and plagiarism. Students are required to take part in examinations in an honest manner in order to allow accurate and fair assessments of their academic performance.

Continuous efforts

To combat cheating and plagiarism at SLU, the following methods are employed:

- Information
- Prevention
- Detection
- Sanctions

Information

Information about cheating and plagiarism shall be communicated in various forms to all those concerned and needs to be accessible on the SLU website, with portals [links] from relevant pages, e.g., faculty pages, course homepages, teacher pages, the SLU Libraries' tutorial pages Search Collect Publish, and preferably also the student unions' websites. This information needs to be communicated in writing and/or orally to the students and teachers on the relevant occasions.

Each program study director is responsible for informing students and teachers about this policy and action plan orally and in writing, and for any subject adaptation within his or her own program. Course coordinators are to remind students about the policy and action plan as well as about special applications for current courses.

Information and joint activities are coordinated by the Library, Learning Resource Centres (LRC) and the Centre for Educational Development (UPC) at Student Affairs and Learning Development.

Prevention

The following tools should be used by both teachers and librarians with teaching duties to prevent cheating and plagiarism:

- Thought-out and intentional teaching methods
- Clear instructions on assignments and independent projects (degree projects/theses)
- Relevant types of examination

Student activities

During year 1

A lecture on cheating, plagiarism and academic writing is given to all students. The students are given an opportunity to use Refero (<http://www.bi.hik.se/Refero/1intro.php>), a self-tuition teaching aid dealing with cheating and plagiarism.

In their first term the students should complete a written assignment that will be sent for checking by the Urkund text matching system and will be subsequently discussed with the teachers.

All students will sign a pledge of responsibility to the effect that they have acquainted themselves with the policy and action plan to combat cheating and plagiarism at the beginning of their course.

During year 3

Feedback and development of generic knowledge is undertaken in year 3 in conjunction with a *degree project course* (or the equivalent) in all programs. Instruction in information literacy and reference management is already provided by the Library and LRC. At present these tuition units usually last between 3.5 and 4 hours. They are to be extended to provide detailed information on the problems of plagiarism and preferably include a drill (lasting about two hours) to enhance understanding. The concept of academic honesty is to be explained and discussed.

Exchange students and Masters students

These two groups are to be informed at the beginning of the term in conjunction with other information. Here, the ERASMUS coordinators and program study directors for advanced-level programs can work together with the Library and LRC. All information must be available in English, including any brochure. Free movers are given information by the course leaders of the relevant course. Please refer to the book by Jude Carroll and Carl-Michael Zetterling (2009), which is available in English.

Research Students

Education at research level comprises both course work and individual research. The course elements are governed by the same legislation as that which applies to the other levels, while the same guidelines are applicable. In cases where a doctoral student engages in scientific dishonesty, the same policy and investigative procedure should apply as in the case of researchers. It may be that such a case is complicated by the manner in which the responsibility of the tutor and that of the student can be delineated. Consequently, it is important that the individual study plan is included as part of the audit undertaken by the faculty in collaboration with a lawyer in cases where plagiarism or cheating is suspected.

Doctoral students must be given information about the area and such information can be suitably included in the non-mandatory, two-credit course *Information Retrieval and Methods for Scientific Communication*, which course is taught in Ultuna, Alnarp and Umeå. Reference should also be made to the policy and action plan in the two-credit course *Research Ethics for PhD students*, which is taught at the same three campuses and is mandatory for doctoral students at the Faculty of Forest Studies. As long as none of these courses are not compulsory at all faculties, some other routine must be established in order to ensure that all doctoral students are informed.

Teacher Activities

- Academic teaching courses
- Lecture /Teachers' lunch /Seminars
- Workshops on the text matching software (Urkund)
- Marking course /Types of examinations/Urkund

The University Teaching Centre (UPC at the Student and Education Services) coordinates and undertakes teaching activities in this area.

Detection

As a means of detecting cheating and plagiarism SLU offers special text-matching software (at present *Urkund*).

With effect from the academic year 2008/09, all independent projects (degree projects) at SLU are audited in Urkund prior to approval being granted; please also refer to the rules and guidelines on education at first and second level, which can be found at:
http://www2.slu.se/utbildning/regelsamling_vt_2010.pdf

All submitted student projects at SLU may be sent for auditing in Urkund and it is the responsibility of the examiner to ensure that this is done.

Sanctions

In the event of suspected cheating/ plagiarism with intent to deceive, consultation with faculty program or program study directors is recommended. If such suspicion proves to be justified, the Vice-Chancellor is to be notified. Consideration should be given to the student's circumstances and course-specific requirements and conditions. SLU has special procedures in cases of suspected cheating ([link](#)).

Follow-up - update

The SLU policy and action plan to combat cheating and plagiarism is to be updated at least every two years, with effect from 2012. Workshops/seminars on cheating and plagiarism are held in conjunction with updating with groups of teachers, where the groups will use their own knowledge and experience to integrate and develop the policy and action plan.

During follow-up in 2012 the following aspects ought to be described and analyzed:

- The percentage of programs that start at the first level that explicitly highlight issues of cheating and plagiarism issues during the first term.
- The percentage of programs that start at the advanced level that explicitly highlight issues of cheating and plagiarism during the first term.
- The proportion of degree project courses (G2E) in which students have received in-depth information about issues of plagiarism.
- Teacher-oriented activities undertaken during the period 2010 to 2011.

References

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Establishment and entry into force

The SLU policy and action plan to combat cheating and plagiarism in higher education, 2010 - 2011, was established by the Vice-Chancellor on 21 June 2010 (dnr SLU.ua.Fe.2010.3.0-1864) and remains in force for two years.