

1 The complaint

On ... 2014 the committee scientific integrity of Wageningen UR received a complaint from [complainant] against [accused] about plagiarism in the publications '...' (publication1) and '...' (publication2) (case 05). This complaint was submitted after another complaint from an external scientist was received regarding possible plagiarism in another publication written by [accused] and [complainant](case 02). Because of procedural reasons, separate judgments will be made about these complaints, but for practical reasons they were handled in conjunction.

2 The procedure

The committee decided to handle the complaint of [complainant] in its meeting of ... 2014 and asked the accused to submit a defense on ... 2014 and again on ... 2014.

The accused submitted his defense on ... 2014.

The committee requested one expert in plagiarism-software for an analysis of the two publications.

On ... a hearing with the complainant ... took place. The attendants of these meeting were: ...

(complainant), ..., ..., ..., ..., all members of the committee and ..., secretary. The minutes of this hearing were sent to the attendants with the request to check for factual inaccuracies. Following this hearing the committee asked the accused for more information about the status of the contract with [accused].

On ... a hearing with the accused ... took place by Skype. The attendants of these meeting were: ... (accused), ..., ..., ..., ..., all members of the committee and ..., secretary. The minutes of this hearing were sent to the attendants with the request to check for factual inaccuracies.

Hereafter the investigation was closed.

3 Viewpoints of parties

3.1 The viewpoint of the complainant

The complainant used the software-tool Turnitin to check for plagiarism of the publications written by the accused. Since the similarity reported by Turnitin was 67% for publication1 and 21% for publication2, the complainant interpreted that this is plagiarism.

3.2 The viewpoint of the accused

The accused states that all papers submitted to ... are checked by him for plagiarism (using iThenticate crosscheck). So by passing this check, plagiarism is impossible. The accused also states that the research described is empirical and can therefore not have been copied.

4 Considerations of the committee

4.1 General remarks

The committee advises the Executive Board of Wageningen University or DLO about submitted complaints regarding violations of scientific integrity.

The committee bases her judgment about violation of scientific integrity on – but not exclusively - the standards of scientific integrity that are primarily deducted from the Wageningen Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice and the Scientific integrity complaints procedure Wageningen UR.

It is not about new but about well-known and long existing standards from which was – and is- deducted when and under which circumstances violation of scientific integrity occurs.

Violation of these (inter)national standards does not by definition lead to violation of scientific integrity.

There can be (culpable) negligent acting not resulting in violation of scientific integrity.

The committee can consult experts when judging the possible violation of scientific integrity. The committee is however not bound to their advice.

The Commission has no jurisdiction to judge on civil matters nor scientific controversies.

It is therefore important to differentiate violation of scientific integrity from criticized or bad science.

With criticized or bad science the discussion is often about a difference in interpretation or a difference in opinion about a scientific judgement. These matters should be discussed and settled in the appropriate forum of scientific journals, preferably in the journal in which the criticized article has been published.

The Commission is neither equipped nor empowered to act as arbitrator in scientific controversies.

4.2 Expert advice

The committee asked a staff member of the institution (member of the administrative staff and not involved in research) and expert in detecting plagiarism to analyse the complaint using plagiarism software.

4.3 Considerations of the committee

4.3.1 Identifying plagiarism

The statement of the defendant that supposed plagiarism was not detected by the plagiarism software used by him and the journal and plagiarism is therefore not at hand is not shared by the committee. To identify plagiarism, (online) software tools are used. These tools compare an input text against a comparison database consisting of for example scientific, public and educational texts. These systems might give false negatives when a copied text is not included in this database. The outcome of a plagiarism check can therefore vary when using different software tools each with their own databases.

4.3.2 Results of the analyses

The analyses of the complainant and the expert show an overlap of 67%-69% for the publication1 and 21%-24% for the publication2. The overlap in publication1 concerns all parts. The overlap in publication2 is mainly found in the introduction. The found overlap is almost all caused by the similarity with a Master's thesis from ... for both publications.

The committee concludes that such a high amount of similarity cannot be a coincidence, even if the same subject is studied. The committee therefore is of the opinion that copying of texts has indeed taken place.

The committee noted that the Master's thesis from ... is not listed in the literature list of the publications.

4.3.3 Role of both co-authors of the publication

Both authors admit that [complainant] had a mainly reactive role in the process of writing the publication. The requirements to be included as co-author that are generally accepted are¹:

- 1) Everyone who is listed as an author should have made a substantial direct academic contribution (i.e. intellectual responsibility and substantive work) to at least two of the four main components of a typical scientific project or paper:
 - a) Conception or design.
 - b) Data collection and processing.
 - c) Analysis and interpretation of the data.
 - d) Writing substantial sections of the paper (e.g. synthesising findings in the literature review or the findings/results section).
- 2) Everyone who is listed as an author should have critically reviewed successive drafts of the paper and should approve the final version.
- 3) Everyone who is listed as author should be able to defend the paper as a whole (although not necessarily all the technical details)."

[Complainant] has fulfilled the criteria 1a, d and partly c and criteria 2 and 3 and can therefore be considered a coauthor.

The committee recognizes that [complainant] did not have an active role in writing and has therefore not copied texts himself. The plagiarism is therefore conducted by [accused] alone.

4.3.4 Role of the promotor as supervisor

[Complainant] cannot be blamed for the plagiarism since he did not copy the texts himself and trusted his PhD candidate to act correctly in this sense. Since [complainant] is not just co-author, but also the promotor and hence the supervisor of [accused], the committee wants to point out the following: It is part of the job of a promotor to teach a PhD candidate how to critically perform research and to publish it in relevant journals. Graduate schools offer courses for this purpose. The promoter must ensure that this is also well applied. [complainant] should have asked critical questions to test the scientific method used by his pupil. The committee is of the opinion that [complainant] has not scrutinized his pupil enough. This failure does, however, not relate to possible violation of scientific integrity.

4.4 Conclusions

The committee identifies the found overlap between the publication and the Master's thesis as plagiarism conducted by [accused].

The committee is of the opinion that the co-author of the publications, [complainant] has not been accurate in his role as supervisor and co-author, but that he cannot be accused of having conducted plagiarism.

5 Judgment and advice

¹ http://www.britisoc.co.uk/publications/guidelines-reports/authorship-guidelines.aspx#_attr

The committee advises the Executive Board of Wageningen University to declare the complaint from [complainant] founded.

The committee is of the opinion that violation of scientific integrity has occurred by [accused] by copying text from a Master's thesis produced at ... into two publications without citing these sources.

The committee advises the Executive Board to check other relevant publications by [accused] for plagiarism and to take appropriate actions when needed.

6. Preliminary decision of the Executive Board

The Executive Board accepted the advice of the committee and the conclusions contained therein, and therefore declared the complaint from [complainant] against [accused] well-founded.

7 LOWI

The case was not submitted to the LOWI

8. Final decision of the Executive Board

On 19 January 2015 the Executive Board converted its preliminary decision into a final decision.