

## Most Common Mistake Applicants Make That Results in Rejected Applications

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Regina receives thousands of applications each year. An increasing number of these applications contain plagiarism.

Some cultures do not view plagiarism as a problem. Some may even view it as good scholarship. In fact, many international schools have no policy or definition of plagiarism.

However, in Canada, plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Those who commit plagiarism can destroy their academic career at the University of Regina and in Canada.

*The penalty for plagiarism found in an application is immediate rejection. It results in either a one year or six month ban from graduate studies at the University of Regina.* Many Canadian universities share the names of applicants who submitted plagiarized applications. Plagiarism may also result in a lifetime ban from studies at any Canadian university.

### **Defining Plagiarism**

Plagiarism: using words or ideas someone else has written as if you wrote them; not acknowledging where these words or ideas came from; passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own. Wikipedia defines plagiarism well: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism#Academia>.

### **Example of How Applicants Plagiarize**

Sometimes applicants find personal statements online. They choose to use all, a part of, or combine several samples, in their personal statements or resumes. Usually applicants copy a statement from an online source and replace a few details with their own details.

For example: <http://www.i20fever.com/samples/SOP/civil/3.html> shows this statement of purpose:

“After three and half years of undergraduate study in Civil Engineering, I feel completely satisfied with my decision to choose engineering as my career option as it has revealed most pragmatic and down-to-earth approach to tackling human problems to me. My enthusiasm coupled with scope for innovations and opportunities available in the civil engineering has motivated me to opt for higher studies and contribute to the field through meaningful research. I sincerely believe that graduation at West Virginia University will be an ideal step in this direction.”

An applicant might submit the following:

“After **four** years of undergraduate study in **Mechanical** Engineering, I feel **very** satisfied with my decision to choose engineering as my career option as it has **revealed a down-to-earth** approach to tackling human problems to me. My enthusiasm coupled with scope for innovations and opportunities available in **mechanical** engineering has motivated me to opt for higher studies and contribute to the field through meaningful

research. I sincerely believe that graduation at the **University of Regina** will be a **great** step in this direction.”

Although the applicant changed a few details (highlighted in yellow), Canadian universities consider the statement plagiarized. The logical flow and general idea of the statement clearly come from the Internet and not from the applicant’s own creative ideas and expressions.

Another applicant might submit something like this:

“In June 2013, I completed my BSc in mechanical engineering at the University of London. This has provided me with a solid background in mechanical engineering, as this degree combines theoretical aspects with hands-on laboratories. During my last semester, I worked on a research project related to the design of autonomous vehicles. This has inspired me to apply to your research-based MSc in Mechanical Engineering with specialization in Aerospace Engineering. Wikipedia divides aerospace engineering into the branches of aeronautical engineering and astronautical engineering<sup>[1]</sup>. My interest focuses on aeronautical engineering which very much matches recent research of Professor XYZ in your Department of Mechanical Engineering. After an e-mail exchange with Professor XYZ, I became convinced that the University of Regina is the ideal place for me to pursue my research interests.

<sup>[1]</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerospace\\_engineering](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerospace_engineering)

This statement still contains ideas from the Internet (i.e., including the name of degree and the motivation for research). The applicant properly referenced the idea from Wikipedia. The entire paragraph was written from scratch; therefore, this statement is NOT plagiarized.

### **How to Avoid Plagiarism**

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research investigates all applications, personal statements, and resumes for plagiarism. You can avoid plagiarism by:

1. Ensuring your personal statement is exactly that: **your** story, **your** vision, **your** reasons for studying at the University of Regina.
2. Ensuring that you write all words in the personal statement. Use your own ideas and expressions.
3. Refusing to copy and paste ANY words from a website, another application, or any other source into your personal statement.
4. Submitting your statement to online plagiarism checkers, such as <http://www.writecheck.com> for a small fee. Free tools tend to be less accurate. However, even paid services cannot guarantee that your documents are not plagiarized
5. Researching plagiarism. Start with: <http://www.uregina.ca/gradstudies/grad-calendar/policy-univ.html#conduct> or <http://www.uregina.ca/international/current/steps/plagiarism.html>.
6. Referencing any ideas you do use properly.
7. Asking questions of your Admission Clerk if you do not understand plagiarism.