# Plagiarism Policies: Cross-Cultural Similarities and Differences

**Sasima Charubusp, John N.Sivell**

## Abstract

Certain key concerns regarding the challenge of academic writing often appear to be comparable across cultural settings; thus, similarities in plagiarism policies, as well, might seem unsurprising. Ironically, however, policy statements on university and comparable websites, representing Eastern and Western educational cultures, in Thailand and Canada, are consistent chiefly in terms of their unhelpfulness. They commonly endorse a narrow ethical perspective that oversimplifies the actual situation, and overall they convey the impression of aiming mainly to punish and disown students who use sources inappropriately rather than to guide them towards writing well. University and similar website statements deserve attention because they represent an institution's public face and are obvious first reference points for teachers and students. Above all, their terms become high-stakes criteria when academic dishonesty is alleged, and especially if reputationally crucial compliance with national research funders' regulations is also in question. In this paper, a representative sample of university and comparable websites from Thailand and Ontario (Canada) will be analyzed, encompassing large, prestigious universities and more modest institutions, and – in the case of Thailand – both state, private universities, and two research funding entities. In the general spirit of Price (2002), but adopting a broader framework, we seek evidence for institutional attention to four parts of the plagiarism puzzle: pedagogical viewpoint, rhetorical perspective, ethical standards, and management outlook. It emerges that – across both cultures – there is an urgent need for more enlightened policy leadership that eschews self-serving simplifications in favor of more constructive and better-informed responses.

**Keywords:** plagiarism, academic literacy, institutional policy, academic integrity, culture

**บทคัดย่อ**

การเขียนงานเชิงวิชาการโดยหลีกเลี่ยงการคัดลอกงานกำลังเป็นปัญหาที่ท้าทายของสถาบันการศึกษา ต่างๆ ในระดับอุดมศึกษาทั้งประเทศตะวันตกและตะวันออก แต่ละสถาบันต่างกำหนดนโยบายเกี่ยวกับ การป้องกันการคัดลอกงานที่มีลักษณะคล้ายคลึงกัน อย่างไรก็ตาม นโยบายดังกล่าวมักไม่สามารถช่วยให้ ผู้เขียนงานเชิงวิชาการสามารถหลีกเลี่ยงการคัดลอกงานได้ เนื่องจากนโยบายมักมุ่งเน้นไปที่แนวคิดเชิง จริยธรรมและกำหนดบทลงโทษผู้เขียนที่มีการอ้างอิงข้อมูลอย่างไม่ถูกต้อง โดยไม่ตระหนักถึงความท้าทายของ ทักษะการเขียนเพื่อหลีกเลี่ยงการคัดลอกงาน ตลอดจนไม่มีการให้ข้อเสนอแนะเกี่ยวกับวิธีการเขียนงานที่ ถูกต้อง บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเปรียบเทียบความเหมือนและความแตกต่างข้ามวัฒนธรรมของนโยบาย ของสถาบันการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับการป้องกันการคัดลอกงานเขียนเชิงวิชาการ โดยวิเคราะห์นโยบายที่เผยแพร่บน เว็บไซต์ของสถาบันการศึกษาระดับอุดมศึกษาทั้งของรัฐ เอกชนและองค์กรสนับสนุนทุนวิจัยในประเทศไทย และมหาวิทยาลัยในเขตออนทาริโอ ประเทศแคนาดา เนื่องจากเห็นว่าสื่อดังกล่าวเป็นการแสดงอัตลักษณ์ และภาพลักษณ์ของสถาบัน ตลอดจนเป็นแหล่งข้อมูลที่เชื่อถือได้ที่คณาจารย์และนักศึกษาของสถาบันใช้ อ้างอิง กรอบแนวคิดที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์มีองค์ประกอบ 4 ด้านได้แก่ แนวคิดด้านการเรียนการสอน แนวคิด ด้านสำนวนการเขียนงานเชิงวิชาการ แนวคิดด้านจริยธรรมและแนวคิดด้านการบริหารจัดการ ผลการวิจัย พบว่านโยบายของสถาบันการศึกษาทั้งสองวัฒนธรรมมีความคล้ายกันในด้านการมุ่งเน้นแนวคิดด้านความผิด ทางจริยธรรมของการคัดลอกงานตลอดจนการกำหนดบทลงโทษ โดยมิได้ให้ข้อมูลที่เป็นประโยชน์หรือให้ ข้อเสนอแนะวิธีการเรียนการสอนที่ช่วยให้นักศึกษา คณาจารย์ และนักวิจัยเข้าใจวัตถุประสงค์ที่แท้จริงของ การหลีกเลี่ยงการคัดลอกงานเขียนเชิงวิชาการและหลักการของการเขียนเชิงวิชาการเพื่อให้ได้บทความที่มี คุณภาพ ผลการวิจัยได้ให้ข้อสรุปและข้อเสนอแนะเกี่ยวกับการปรับปรุงนโยบายสถาบันของทั้งสองวัฒนธรรม โดยมุ่งเน้นแนวคิดด้านการเรียนการสอนมากกว่าด้านจริยธรรม

**คำสำคัญ** การคัดลอกงาน ความรู้ทางวิชาการ นโยบายสถาบัน จรรยาบรรณทางวิชาการ วัฒนธรรม

## Introduction

Concern about plagiarism by university students is mounting (Gallant, 2008; Pecorari & Petrić, 2014), and there is little doubt that this issue is receiving more attention now than at any time in the recent past. Given that international contacts and exchanges have grown apace among universities around the world, it can be inferred that plagiarism will be of equal importance to all post-secondary institutions no matter their location. Still, there is also a lingering perception that values and expectations with respect to policies on student plagiarism may vary cross-culturally (see Pennycook, 1996, for a landmark early treatment of this theme, or Donahue, 2008, for

a different and more recent discussion). There are also claims that plagiarism policies derive from Western cultures whereas Eastern cultures, such as in Thailand, view plagiarism – which is generally considered to be a form of cheating – as common and perhaps simply inevitable (Young, 2013). Cultural differences concerning plagiarism between Eastern and Western contexts are also presented in Wise et al. (2013), where there is evidence that students in Eastern and Western countries (Thailand, Taiwan and U.S.) differ in their knowledge, behavior, attitudes, and beliefs concerning academic integrity: this study concludes that U.S. students are better informed and more compliant in all respects. Such findings are important because of their possible suggestion that – in our own Thai/Canadian study – there might be parallel differences in perspectives, although in fact such a view could also be dismissed as a stereotypical oversimplification of the familiar native/non-native distinction.

Against that rather complex backdrop, it will be informative to examine actual similarities and differences in a systematic manner, with attention directed specifically towards the issue of unintentional plagiarism in the form of unsatisfactory paraphrasing (or *patchwriting* in the terminology of Howard, 1993): "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym substitutes" as an at least "entry-level manipulation of new ideas and vocabulary" in an unsuccessful but not dishonest effort to "assimilate the constructs of unfamiliar discourse" (p. 233). Our specific purpose is to address the skill-focused issue of university students' mastery (or not) of appropriate strategies for writing from academic sources, which we see as a primarily educational matter, rather than to focus on the quite different moral (or even legal) issue of calculated duplicity: e.g., deliberately copying from the Internet or other sources, using written material prepared by others, or accessing essay mills. Willful deceit can and indeed does occur, and we support efforts to prevent it. Moreover, we agree that even unintended plagiarism – stemming from inadequate skills – must be combatted, although by appropriately educational means. Our view is that distinguishing between error or incompetence on the one hand, and premeditated dishonesty on the other, is fundamental to concentrating attention on the linguistic, psychological and pedagogical factors that most concern writing instructors.

Interestingly, we found that a comparison between public documents in Thailand and in Ontario (Canada) revealed many features of policies on plagiarism that were in fact remarkably similar, although some differences also existed. As a framework for comparison, four parameters were identified:

- pedagogical viewpoint
- rhetorical perspective
- ethical standards
- management outlook

Our research focus was on university and comparable website statements of anti-plagiarism policies because they may be seen as publically reflecting an affirmation of values. Additionally, they may plausibly be identified as foundational to professors'

and students' conceptualization of their responsibilities. Certainly, the principles and criteria that they announce are liable to be central to decision-making whenever charges of plagiarism are in question. Moreover, for the general public they embody the institution's commitment to academic quality and, for national research funders, its trustworthy insistence on scholarly integrity. Consequently, such openly announced policies will attract scrutiny from multiple perspectives. They must, therefore, embody a principled position that is resilient enough to withstand critical inspection but, as well, is able realistically to address the pedagogical, rhetorical and practical landscape of academic literacy as an element of student's and professors' day-to-day academic experience. This broad purpose justifies the similarly wide-ranging investigative framework that we employed: public statements of policies for encouraging acceptable academic writing and for dealing with cases of alleged plagiarism are unquestionably multi-faceted.

## Objectives

The purpose of this study was to highlight tendencies and trends, and certainly not to set institutions in unproductive competition with each other or, even less, to subject particular institutions to criticisms to which they would have little opportunity to respond. Rather, the goal was to present an illustrative view of the range of publicly announced policies that seemed to be present, with two objectives in mind:

1. To facilitate reflection on policy options, with an eye to encouraging opinion leaders to ponder the best possible policy positions for their own institutions, which could well include a combination of retaining certain current elements alongside altering others.
2. To document policies and recommended practices that illustrate cross-cultural similarities and differences in a way that realistically captures contrasts where they do appear to exist, but that mitigates against the type of naïve over-generalization that is rightly discredited for unhelpfully reifying cultural differences (e.g., Mendoza, 2010, p. 100).

## Methodology

A representative sample of university and comparable websites from Thailand and Ontario (Canada) was analyzed as of 2014 and 2015, encompassing both large, prestigious universities and more modest institutions, and – in the case of Thailand – both private, state and research funding entities. Apart from the broadly Eastern/Western comparison already noted above, Thailand and Ontario are logical foci because authorities in both jurisdictions have recently highlighted rising concern for maintaining the quality of university-level academic writing: for instance, in Thailand we see the academic collaboration on plagiarism detection led by a leading

university in Thailand and other institutions in higher education, and in Ontario the Higher Education Quality Council's report on university-level writing instruction (Garabati et al., 2013), where "lack of time, TAs and resources" are implicated in the perceived "limited writing and academic skills" of undergraduate students (p. 26, & ff). Thus, in the general spirit of Price (2002) – who examined U.S. policies – but adopting a broader framework, we sought evidence for institutional attention to four parts of the plagiarism puzzle:

1. *Pedagogical viewpoint:* Does the policy recognize the inherent difficulty of paraphrasing as a style of source referencing, such that patchwriting (aka unintended "plagiarism") may be cautiously accepted as an insufficient but potentially constructive stage in the learning process (e.g., Howard, Serviss, & Rodrigue, 2010)? Evidence supporting this viewpoint has been found in a study which revealed that Thai students were aware that they would be able to avoid plagiarism effectively if they were properly taught (Charubusp, 2015). As potential evidence for integrating elements of this outlook, does the policy accommodate the possibility that, as noted above, students may in some cases simply not know how to produce an ideally purpose-adapted paraphrase? While of course legislating appropriate penalties for students who deliberately cheat, an effective anti-plagiarism policy must surely also recognize cases where the most appropriate remedy would be education rather than punishment.

2. *Rhetorical perspective:* Does the policy situate paraphrasing and related forms of reference to academic sources (e.g., summarizing) as crucial knowledge-creation opportunities through resourceful essay writing (e.g., the "knowledge-transforming" process, involving "a two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text", described by Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. 12, p. 11), rather than merely as a set of perfunctory tactics for local, verbal-level alternations designed merely to avoid being reproached for plagiarism (e.g., Hirvela & Du, 2013), and does it therefore either include or point to instructional advice of a more than mechanical nature? This is important because, as Hirvela and Du note, without explicit guidance in the constructive use of academic source references, apprentice writers may legitimately ask the rather apposite question, "Why am I paraphrasing?" (p. 87).

3. *Ethical standards:* Does the policy advocate evaluating the appropriate use of academic sources on the basis of absolute, black-and-white values, or does it more subtly consider actual outcomes and intentions as well (e.g., Sivell, 2015b)? This question is important because, although an absolutist perspective is indeed one potential moral stance, others are also available. It is true that there is longstanding respect for absolute and universally applicable values (as propounded by Kant, 1785), but there is also a cogent argument to be made for the utilitarian view that contextualized outcomes should determine right or wrong (e.g., Bentham, 1789), and – longest established of all – there is the principle that moral responsibility is inconceivable in circumstances where an individual cannot freely choose to do what is right (e.g., Aquinas, 1265–1274). Thus, while aware of such morally absolute recommendations as those

advanced by Chace (2012), we are especially attuned to the potential for a principled but more flexibly pedagogical approach (Sivell, 2015a).

4. *Management outlook*: Does the policy recognize the possible benefit of viewing the inappropriate use of academic sources as an unwelcome but predictable hazard – a kind of impending "accident" (Reason, 1990, p. 199) within the educational context – that, on the basis of what we already know about effective accident prevention in other settings, can typically be averted only through a balance between student and instructor/institutional responsibility (e.g., Dekker, 2006, p. 47)? Or does it concentrate entirely on students' fallibility? In particular, does the policy assign equally strict and specific responsibilities for plagiarism avoidance not only to students but also to faculty? And does it thereby validate the need for system-level measures directed at reducing or eliminating the presence of what Reason (1990, p. 173) terms "latent errors": in our context, this would mean circumstances that are avoidable through concerted effort, but which otherwise may be expected to continue engendering instances of plagiarism?

## Findings

Exhaustive data collection from every single webpage of every institution within the projected sample was clearly beyond reach, not least because webpages are living documents that evolve over time. Summary data[5] will be presented within the four analytical categories outlined above, and according to two broad origins: Thai universities and similar bodies, and Ontario universities. In no case will the name of any institution be reported in connection with the data. In each analytical category, the evidence cited will consist of representative examples drawn from our overall study of 19 institutions (11 state and 2 private universities, and 2 research organization) in Thailand, and 22 universities in Ontario (all state) (See Appendix 1).

## Institutions' pedagogical viewpoint:

| Thai Institutions | Ontario Institutions |
|---|---|
| 1.1 Support for patchwriting as a stage in the development of mature scholarly writing ability | |
| In most cases, Thai institutions cited anti-plagiarism perspectives that seemed to originate from the least open-minded policies espoused in the West, where patchwriting is often characterized as a failure to avoid plagiarism, so that it is simply considered as plagiarism. None of the anti-plagiarism regulations appeared to countenance the possibility that patchwriting could be a developmental stage of L2 writing. | No direct support in any WWW statements was identified for the possibility that patchwriting might be recognized as a good-faith (if inadequate) effort in the direction of satisfactory academic writing. Despite occasional indications of understanding that the use of isolated register-specific expressions (similar or identical to the source) could be acceptable, the developmental aspect itself was not addressed. |

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[5] If actually quoted, the data could not be reported anonymously (i.e., without specific sources) because doing so would in effect verge on plagiarism; thus, summary overviews will be used instead. However, Appendix 1 offers a complete list of the Thai and Ontario entities included in our survey of WWW policies.

| 1.2 Negative reaction to patchwriting as a sign of either carelessness or dishonesty ||
|---|---|
| Most Thai universities provided some EAP courses in which work on paraphrasing, summarizing and quoting was specifically identified as a brief section in a course. However, we located no explicit or even implied recognition that patchwriting could be recognized as an unwitting error caused by lack of skills. Rather, it was consistently associated with either culpable carelessness or downright dishonesty. | Again, attribution to either carelessness or dishonesty was very common. Typical warnings stressed that acceptable paraphrases (or summaries) must express their content in the student's own words, which would be operationalized as displaying vocabulary and grammatical structures clearly different from the source. Recurrently, the basic concept was that careful, honest students could easily avoid plagiarism by effecting simple, surface-level transformations. |

Figure 1: Pedagogical viewpoint

## Institutions' rhetorical perspective

| Thai Institutions | Ontario Institutions |
|---|---|
| 2.1 Emphasis on the surface-level mechanics of rewording paraphrased material as a means to avoid criticism for plagiarizing ||
| Generally, we saw evidence that Thai students would indeed receive opportunities to master techniques for paraphrase or summary. However, there was never any clear statement that the main objective for acquiring these skills was their value in helping to establish a convincing and innovative argument. Thus, the implied or even stated goal was simply to learn how to escape blame for having plagiarized. | The most frequent advice – commonly based on superficial suggestions for using synonyms, modifying word order, or changing between active and passive voice, often illustrated by parallel acceptable/ unacceptable examples – was that the chief (or only) challenge was mechanical. Quite rarely, advice also suggested how to safely employ highly conventional register-specific phrases from the source. |
| 2.2 Emphasis on the deeper-level comprehension and integration of paraphrased material as part of convincing and innovative essay writing ||
| In no case was a link established between paraphrasing and summarizing techniques, on the one hand, and the development of broader academic writing skills on the other. Students were told only that they must avoid plagiarism because it was an immoral action, without any appeal to the intellectual rewards of effective academic writing with a potential to present and share scholarly insights. | Although definitely not the norm, occasional very enlightened advice was found, explicitly stressing that correct paraphrasing was not designed merely as a defence against charges of plagiarism, and emphasizing instead the exercise of higher-order thinking skills and the construction of an argument that could position a student's own essay within the wider scholarly context. |

Figure 2: Rhetorical perspective

## Institutions' ethical standards

| Thai Institutions | Ontario Institutions |
|---|---|
| 3.1 Emphasis on an absolutist ethical position ||
| WWW policy statements tended consistently to endorse a very rigid code of conduct for academic honesty, integrity and dignity. Consequently, the uniform penalty for any | Absolutism was the most common view, with many variations on two themes: that ignorance of the required rules and procedures was no defence; and that although complex and/or unfamiliar |

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| plagiarism detected was an automatic F grade either for the assignment or for the entire course. The clear implication was that such an absolute perspective not only was believed to be morally right, but also was perceived as a crucial deterrent to plagiarism. | academic demands might be very difficult for students, such circumstances would not reduce the severity of the offence because plagiarism was always intrinsically wrong. |
| **3.2 Allowance for diminished freedom of choice as a mitigating ethical consideration** | |
| Quite simply, no mitigating circumstances seemed to be contemplated in any of the online policies reviewed. | Occasionally, we saw modest recognition of possible limits on freedom of action, but only with respect to time-management issues, which students themselves were represented as alone being responsible for solving. Suggestions that extenuating circumstances might be grounds for reduced penalties were very rare. |
| **3.3 Focus on damage to the institution as an ethical consideration** | |
| Interestingly, no policies explicitly mentioned potential damage to the institution. In general, however, the researchers sensed a subtext to the effect that institutions perceived a reputational benefit from taking a hard line on plagiarism in any form, as a proxy for endorsement of admirably high ethical and academic standards. | Institutional interests were often very strongly present, in a variety of guises: institutional reputation, ability to attract top-level students or faculty, employability of graduates, and even negative implications for fund raising. Academic dishonesty was at times also associated with poor citizenship qualities, or with defective workplace habits. |
| **3.4. Focus on damage to the learning experience of the individual student as an ethical consideration** | |
| No policies that we reviewed made any reference whatsoever to potentially negative consequences that engaging in patchwriting or outright plagiarism (detected or not) might entail for the quality or rewards of students' learning experience. | Reference to the satisfaction or respect that students could achieve through mastery of admirable academic skills was present but infrequent. More common was expression of the duty to protect fellow students from unfair competition; there were even rare suggestions that wasting time on academic dishonesty cases could distract instructors from the more worthy activity of actually teaching. |

Figure 3: Ethical standards

## Institutions' management outlook

| Thai Institutions | Ontario Institutions |
|---|---|
| **4.1 Focus on individual students as primarily responsible** | |
| WWW advice stressed that writers were individually responsible for following institutional regulations, but in most cases no detailed plagiarism definition was present in institutional mission statements to guide enactment of that responsibility. However, collaboration among multiple institutions to use anti-plagiarism software (programmed by a leading university) was announced as a way to monitor and enforce individual compliance. | Individual responsibility was a universal theme: even when (as in 4.2 or 4.3, below) others were allotted some degree of responsibility, the individual student was invariably identified as principally accountable, often reinforced by an injunction to make use of on-campus resources (cf. 4.4); occasionally, academic integrity pledges or contracts were also announced. |
| **4.2 Allowance for joint student/instructor responsibility** | |
| Commonly, there was a requirement for a | Mutual responsibility typically involved students |

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|---|---|
| plagiarism-avoidance policy to be stated in course syllabuses, generally stressing sole responsibility by students: typically, such wording as *Plagiarism is not tolerated; the penalty is an F grade in the course*. Beyond that, no advice on any aspect of joint student/ instructor responsibility was noted. | being enjoined to follow the regulations, and instructors to enforce them, by formally announcing rules and expecta-tions, or by making plagiarism difficult: e.g., by changing essay or project topics, requiring oral as well as written submissions, or monitoring successive drafts of work. |
| 4.3 Inclusion of responsibility specifically for instruction as part of instructors' duties | |
| Most Thai institutions expressed no policy on professors' instructional responsibility with respect to preventing plagiarism. Although one might infer that such responsibility therefore devolved to institutions' English departments, the potential instructional implications remained vague because of the omnipresent tendency to depict plagiarism in moral rather than educational terms. | Such instructional responsibility was barely discernable. Ironically, the classic strategy of process-writing was sometimes advised not as an instructional strategy to evoke improved writing skills, but simply as a means of increasing the difficulty of plagiarizing. Commonly, access to advice or instruction was represented as depending on student rather than teacher initiative. |
| 4.4 Displacement of anti-plagiarism instructional responsibility to a separate, non-professorial student services unit | |
| Generally, no online policy referred to any institutional support service such as a writing center or academic skills center. Sometimes, reference was made to online resources (usually external to the institution) that students could consult for assistance in learning to write essays without plagiarism. Those resources were mostly posted by Western institutions; typically, when recommending them, no distinction was made between those offering simply mechanical exercises, and those directed towards higher-order thinking skills. | Displacement of instructional responsibility was universally present, often with very prominent foregrounding of an academic integrity office, writing center, or counseling center. In many cases, this was backed up by some provision of actual workshops or individual help, but very often by automated online tutoring instead: produced in-house or accessed via lists of WWW resources across the province, the country, or even the continent, most often indiscriminately mingling many with a more mechanical focus along with a few focusing on higher-order thinking skills. |

Figure 4: Management outlook

## Summary, Critical Issues, Recommendations, and Limitations

It is immediately apparent that, although usefully separable for analytical purposes, the above four foci actually cluster into two pairs. The ethical and managerial standpoints relate to each other because they both center on determining responsibilities, and the pedagogical and rhetorical angles are linked in the sense that they both touch on the issue of whether or not to consider plagiarism avoidance as a skills-development challenge. Thus, it is beneficial to discuss each pair as a group rather than treating the components individually.

Regarding the pedagogical and rhetorical themes, it was noteworthy that the Thai sites seemed to uncritically accept what might be identified as a rather conservative Western-style viewpoint on plagiarism. They identified patchwriting purely as an academic failure or as a lazy convenience in attempting to avoid being charged with plagiarism, rather than an even potentially valid step in the direction of

developing acceptable L2 writing skills. Consistent with that narrow view, no rhetorical purpose was mentioned in connection with the rather minimal paraphrasing guidance that they provided to students. Turning to the Ontario sites, although they could perhaps be credited as very minimally more satisfactory, it was discouraging to observe their almost total lack of appreciation for the potentially developmental aspects of patchwriting. Even the very elementary concept of learning to use register-specific turns of phrase was far from uniformly present. By contrast, it was gratifying to note that at least a few Ontario statements did address the need to recognize the positive, knowledge-discovery dimension of writing well from sources, although the large majority of institutions did not foreground that perspective. Overall, it seems evident that WWW statements in neither setting offered consistently clear recognition of the developmental role of patchwriting, and they rarely recognized the rhetorical importance of paraphrasing. In particular, although patchwriting has frequently been discussed in the international literature (e.g., the voluminous work of Howard regarding the inherent difficulty of paraphrasing, as reviewed and contextualized in Howard & Watson, 2010), WWW sites in neither sample appeared to have been much influenced by that prominent trend.

Regarding the assignment of responsibilities (ethical standards, management outlook), it is remarkable that the Thai institutional sites placed all responsibility on students, despite the fact that their actual policies provided no clear guidance on specifically what was or was not permitted, simply requiring students to strictly follow the (ill-defined) regulations and then very commonly stressing the penalties for failure to do so. Very little more helpful were the Ontario sites. Despite their willingness to make modest gestures in the direction of taking student needs and expectations into account, they clearly demonstrated a view that responsibility for teaching students to write effectively, without plagiarizing, simply was not part of regular instructors' remit. It seemed to us very tempting to make a link between their pronounced fear of institutional damage resulting from rampant academic dishonesty, and their powerful emphasis on students' – not institutions' – primary if not sole responsibility not only for honest conduct but also for acquiring the necessary writing skills in order to enact that goal. Moreover, it was not reassuring to note the Ontario sites' widespread reliance on anti-plagiarism instructional services provided not by professors in their own courses, but by ancillary staff or even by online media. In that respect, both settings appeared broadly similar. No institutions, despite a fear of negative consequences for their academic reputations, seemed willing to invest in concrete, classroom-based solutions. In both settings, beyond minor variations, we documented what we interpreted as an unprofitable reliance on what Reason (2008) identifies as a "blame culture" for dealing with unwanted outcomes, which he comments has "severe" disadvantages and may be associated with a "failed system" (p. 255, p. 275).

Ironically, the policy statements on institutional websites from Thailand and Canada were consistent chiefly in terms of their unhelpfulness. They commonly endorsed a narrow ethical perspective that oversimplified the actual situation, and overall they gave the impression of aiming mainly to punish and disown students who used sources inappropriately rather than to guide them towards writing well. Thus,

pedagogically and rhetorically, it was striking that – regarding the demonstrated difficulty of the paraphrasing process – in neither cultural context was there much if any awareness of the role of patchwriting as a potentially innocent approximation of acceptable rewording. Accordingly, although surface level, mechanical advice on recasting source material was often indicated, especially on the Ontario sites; Thai and Canadian policies alike very rarely showed awareness of original knowledge creation as a key motivator for students' appropriate use of academic sources.

With respect to ethics and management, in general there was a strong tendency for both Thai and Canadian institutions to characterize plagiarism in black-and-white terms, although a very small minority occasionally made some concession to the mitigating effect of circumstances. And with respect to allocating responsibility, sites from both contexts lamentably often reflected self-protective biases that closely echoed the least enlightened (and most ineffective) accident-prevention policies that not infrequently typify incompetent industrial, medical, and business management practices. Indeed, we observed a reflection of what Sutherland-Smith (2011) decries as the possibility that in many instances the subtleties of plagiarism investigations may be diminished to a dispute between "adversaries positioned to win or lose an academic misconduct case" (p. 136), a perspective surprisingly reflected in recent online advertising for a one-hour academic module trumpeted as offering solid "evidence that your students have received training in how to prevent intentional and unintentional plagiarism" that "may assist in defending legal claims from the consequences of plagiarism, minimise the risk of such claims and therefore minimise any associated reputational damage" (Epigeum, 2014).

Although some degree of culturally-associable variation could indeed be detected in the data, especially with respect to rare and modest levels of flexibility in a small minority of Ontario policies, far more noticeable was the regrettably substantial consistency across both the Thai and Canadian sites to miss opportunities in all four areas. Research in fact has revealed a great deal about the complexities of the educational, rhetorical, ethical, and broader management environment in which academic writing from sources takes place (powerfully documented quite recently by Pecorari & Petrić, 2014), but it appears that – across cultures – there is an urgent need for more enlightened policy leadership that eschews self-serving simplifications in favor of more constructive and better-informed responses. If policies do not develop towards a broader perspective, universities and comparable entities will be ill-positioned to take full advantage of the best that scholarship can provide in connection with an issue that all institutions seem to agree is crucial to their ethos, reputation, and academic success.

Thus, our analysis suggests that, although a number of potentially culture-specific nuances can be detected, three critical issues emerge for reflection among policy-makers from either location:

1. Developing a more broadly-informed understanding of patchwriting as a developmental component in the writing process.

2. Adopting an increased emphasis on the rhetorical value of paraphrasing, not only as an element in effective pedagogy but also as a more influential motivator for students than punishment or blame.

3. Incorporating and extending both of the above points in order to adjust institutional perceptions of plagiarism avoidance away from the punitive perspective, and towards the rehabilitation of instruction in excellent writing as an endeavour worthy of central attention in educational contexts.

When such further reflection is initiated, limitations of the current study that might be taken into account in the course of the discussion – and also with respect to future research – could include at the least the following two methodological dimensions. First, a focus specifically on a comparison between policies from Thailand and Canada, although highly relevant to the interests of the present researchers, is plainly not the only possibility. For example, a viable alternative model is demonstrated by Sutherland-Smith (2011), who instead examines the online policies of 20 institutions from around the world identified by the Times Higher Education Supplement as the "top five universities" in each of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the U.S. (p. 130). Diverse insights, useful for different purposes, could plainly be derived from wider-ranging samples among institutions. Secondly, instead of a cross-national comparative focus – as in the current study, or that of Sutherland-Smith – it would be feasible to limit the scope to a single setting. An example of such an approach is Griffith (2013), who concentrates on academic integrity WWW sites hosted only by universities in Ontario. We would take issue with Griffith's (to us) vastly over-optimistic trust in what she appears to perceive as the inevitable benefits of "the dynamic medium of the internet" exemplified on those sites (p. 4) and would have preferred to see the putative appeal of interactivity more critically assessed in relation to such challenging criteria as treatment of the phenomenon of patchwriting or provision of activities tapping into higher-order thinking skills. Nonetheless, the possibility of a single-nation design – which among other things would avoid the risk of potentially distracting apples-to-oranges comparisons – is definitely worthy of attention.

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## Appendix 1

*Thai Institutions Surveyed* (15 in total): 11 state universities, Chandrakasem Rajabhat University, Chiang Mai University, Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, Kon Kaen University, Mahidol University, Mae Fah Luang University, Nakorn Rachasima Rajabhat University, Rajabhat University Ban Somdej, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Thammasat University; 2 private universities, Dhurakij Pundit University, The Far Eastern University; and 2 research funding institutions, the Thailand Research Fund and the National Research Council of Thailand.

*Ontario Institutions Surveyed* (22 universities, all state): Algoma University, Brock University, Carleton University, Dominican College, Lakehead University, Laurentian University, McMaster University, Nipissing University, OCAD University, Queen's University, Royal Military College, Ryerson University, Trent University, University of Guelph, University of Ontario Institute of Technology, University of Ottawa, University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, University of Windsor , Western University, Wilfrid Laurier University, York University.