Policy for handling plagiarism in KTH education

1. Background

The educational work at KTH is driven by the conviction that scientific progress is based on openness and cooperation. Today, KTH is part of the global university system, where increasing competition continually increases the value of a respected name. An institution with a reputation as an educator of knowledgeable and independent scientists and engineers is of significance for the continued development of KTH as a prominent international technical university.

As an integral part of the scientific schooling (education), the students must learn to use, but also to reject, the work of others. By means of clear source references which indicate the way in which the work of others has been used, the students acquire both knowledge and credibility. For the same reasons, students are encouraged to participate in different forms of collaboration projects and to share their knowledge with each other and within the academic community.

With the present-day availability of large amounts of information, not least through the Internet, plagiarism has become a growing problem worldwide. A shared view of, and shared attitude towards, questions concerning plagiarism within education are therefore needed, not least in order to maintain the quality and credibility of degrees awarded at KTH and to make efficient use of resources available at KTH. The aim is to teach the students to use sources, both published and unpublished, correctly and transparently.

2. What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is defined as "submitting someone else's work as one's own". The activities listed below are to be regarded as examples and not as a comprehensive description of what can be defined as plagiarism.

- Copying of text, problem solutions, computer programs, drawings/diagrams and pictures without citing the copied material and without specifying the source. Copying other students' work without acknowledgment is also defined as plagiarism.
- Using ideas, data or other material without specifying the source, for example, if a student reads about someone's discoveries and insights and uses these without specifying the name of the book (publication) or the same of the author of the source. The exception from this rule is what can be regarded as general knowledge in the field in question.
- Summarising or rewriting a text without the writer essentially changing the original. If the source material is rewritten in the student's own words, the student's text must include indications of the original source. The only exception is if the newly written text contains general knowledge in the field in question; however, even in this case,

citation and source referencing may be useful as a way of increasing the student's credibility as a writer.
- Too close cooperation with other students in a piece of work that is meant to be the student's own work, i.e., the student uses another student's discoveries and insights in his/her work without specifying this.
- Translating a piece of work without stating the original source.

3. Handling cases of plagiarism

According to Chapter 10. § 1 of The Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100), disciplinary measures may be taken against students who are trying to deceive during examinations or when academic work is judged.

3.1 Attempts to deceive

All cases of plagiarism must be addressed. If there are grounds for suspecting an attempt to deceive, i.e., that the student has submitted a piece of work in an attempt to deceive the grader, this must always be reported. This obligation to report is primarily a requirement on all employees at KTH.

Such notification shall be promptly submitted to the President. The president / Disciplinary Board may decide that disciplinary action is to be taken. For a disciplinary action to be used, according to the above-listed article, it is enough that a student has deliberately tried to mislead by for example not using quotation marks or by failing to disclose all sources. It is not required that the student actually managed to mislead anyone.

In order for disciplinary action to be decided it must be clearly shown that:

- KTH has seen to it that the rules are available for students,
- The offense constitutes a threat to the integrity of the work,
- It has been proved beyond reasonable doubt that the student intentionally tried to mislead.

3.2 Cases that are not reported for disciplinary measures

Measures should be taken even in cases of incorrect use of citations or referencing where grounds for suspicion of an attempt to deceive are not judged to exist. The decision as to consequences should be made in relation to the student's level of knowledge and the degree of gravity of the offence. If the offence results in a lowered grade, the student is to be informed of the reasons for the reduction. The student should be told that the reduction reflects the seriousness of the act and negatively affects both the quality of the work and the fulfilment of the stated learning outcomes.

4. The aim of the plagiarism policy

KTH's plagiarism policy focuses on plagiarism in education — regardless of whether it is intentional or not. The message is that using other people's work and ideas without giving the

true source of the original is not permitted, even if it is done without intent to deceive. KTH's policy on plagiarism emphasizes education, information and preventive measures rather than sanctions. The more the student knows about plagiarism, the less he or she needs to be anxious. KTH teachers will assist learners if teachers identify possible plagiarism at an early stage, thereby making it easier for the students to complete their work correctly and to achieve the learning outcomes of their education programme.

The KTH plagiarism policy includes all KTH students—at all levels from foundation training, through to basic, advanced and research levels.

As part of the task of implementing the plagiarism policy, KTH has drawn up the handbook "Guiding students away from plagiarism", hereafter referred to as the Handbook . This deals with student plagiarism, with how to design programmes and courses that prevent plagiarism, methods for formulating examination tasks that do not tempt copying or plagiarizing, methods for detecting suspected cases of plagiarism and finally routines and guidelines for handling cases of plagiarism at KTH. The Handbook is available in English and Swedish.

5. The student's responsibility

All students must carry out their tasks so that their work products truthfully and honestly reflect the student's own work. In order not to lose valuable understanding and experience in their education, KTH students must pursue their studies in accordance with the principles laid out in this policy for the duration of the study period.

The students are responsible for

- finding out what rules apply for solving the task and complying with the teachers' instructions on how the work of others is possible/ permissible to use.
- using the work and words of others as support in the development of their own academic work. When the student uses work that others have done, this must be specified in the piece of work he/she presents.
- being able, in their presented work, to demonstrate personal learning and achieved results. In cases where others have contributed to the final work to a large extent, this must be stated.
- requesting clarification if it is not clear how the work of others is to be used and presented, and how much collaboration with other students is permitted.
- seeking supplementary guidance if he/she lacks the necessary academic or practical skill.

6. The teacher's responsibility

The teacher's responsibility encompasses KTH students at all levels. The students must be made aware of the necessity for independent work, citation, referencing of sources and bibliographies in their studies. Through learning how to gain from correct usage of the ideas and efforts of others, the advantages to the student of cooperation with others within their respective areas of knowledge will become clear. The points listed below are to be applied to the extent the teacher deems necessary in the courses.

A teacher at KTH must:

- provide students with information and advice on all aspects of plagiarism, including how to avoid plagiarizing. This is to be done at the very beginning of the course to allow the students enough time to understand and apply the rules.
- take into account the varying learning backgrounds of the students, since this may affect their attitude to the University's practices and expectations with regard to plagiarism.
- explain what scientific "writing" involves where applicable, e.g. in conjunction with a form of examination.
- ensure that the students use established reference systems.
- inform students that they must be able to show what they themselves have contributed in the final presentation of a task solved by several students together. It must be clear from the instructions that the task requires activity and contribution from everyone in the group. The students must be made aware that even in group work some forms of cooperation are not permissible.
- give clear and detailed instructions on how and when the work is to be carried out by the student on his/her own in cases where a task is assigned to a student as "an individual task".
- regularly update their own knowledge on how plagiarism can be detected and handled.
- inform the students that plagiarism checks are applied, for example, by the use of text matching tools.
- where appropriate, apply the strategies for designing courses given in the Handbook.
- on detecting cases of plagiarism, take action according to the Handbook and the Higher Education Ordinance.

7. The responsibility of the Schools

The Schools' responsibility for the degree programmes also includes, in conjunction with programme planning, taking into consideration the question of plagiarism.

KTH's Schools must:

- appoint a contact person who can give advice and guidance to colleagues and School management on issues which concern plagiarism. The contact persons must work proactively along with others at the School to develop good practices and spread information on how best to help students avoid plagiarising.
- design degree programmes (courses) in such a way that they provide progression in education. The learning outcomes of the course or degree programme (oral and written communication) must determine the level of independence that can be required in the knowledge and skills that the student must demonstrate.
- plan the degree programmes so that information on plagiarism is provided as the students progress through the entire educational programme so that they neither miss information nor receive it too often.

8. Central responsibility

The KTH Board has overarching responsibility for ensuring that KTH has a strategy and a process that create conditions for students to develop the skills and knowledge expected of them and that at the same time prevent plagiarism.

At central level, KTH must:

- implement the plagiarism policy, and follow up and evaluate how the policy is observed. This responsibility is for the Faculty Board.
- provide text-matching tools for the detection of plagiarism and regularly evaluate and check how the system is used. This is the responsibility of the administration manager.
- set up a web page, linked to the Handbook, providing updated guidance and information on plagiarism. This is the responsibility of the administration manager.

Guiding students away from plagiarism. Jude Carroll and Carl-Mikael Zetterling. ISBN 978-91-7415-403-0. © 2009 KTH Learning Lab and the authors.