

DECISION

By email of 26 January 2018, the *Research Institution* (hereinafter the Research Institution) forwarded a complaint to the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct (hereinafter the Committee) filed by the *Complainant* (hereinafter the Complainant) concerning the *Defendant* (hereinafter the Defendant), alleging that the Defendant has committed research misconduct.

The Complainant alleges that the Defendant has appropriated text without due credit to a large extent in his product:

Product (hereinafter the Product),

Which is a thesis submitted by the Defendant to the research institution to obtain a PhD degree..

The Committee's findings

On 13 June 2019, the Committee decided that the Defendant has committed research misconduct.

The decision was made unanimously by High Court Judge, Professor Jens Hartig Danielsen, LLD (Chair); Professor Hanne Andersen, PhD; Professor Dorte Hammershøj, PhD; Professor Jørn Hounsgaard, MD; Professor Anne-Mette Hvas, PhD; Professor Klemens Kappel, PhD; Director of Research Ole Kirk, PhD; Professor Helle Bødker Madsen, LLD; and Head of Programme Anders Smith, PhD.

The Committee's grounds for the decision are given below.

The complaint on research misconduct and the Defendant's comments

In support of his complaint, the Complainant argues that the Product submitted by the Defendant to the research institution was scanned using the anti-plagiarism system iThenticate as a matter of routine. The analysis showed a significant number of instances of text that is identical or near-identical to other sources, as well as instances of paraphrasing and self-plagiarism. The Complainant has referred to a statement from the Defendant's PhD supervisors describing how the Defendant received guidance on good scientific practice in three separate meetings during the course of his PhD, with particular emphasis on good reference technique and how to avoid plagiarism. This was prompted by the supervisors' discovery of plagiarism in a draft of the introduction to the scientific product. According to the Complainant, the supervisors have also stated that the Defendant on these occasions promised that any and all instances of plagiarism had been removed from

The Danish Committee on Research Misconduct

11 September 2019

The Danish Committee on Research Misconduct can be reached via:

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Case no. 2018-03

Ref. no. 18/025214-03

the Product. The Complainant further argues that the Defendant signed a so-called thesis declaration (a statement of academic integrity) when submitting his Product, stating that the Product lives up to the requirements for good scientific practice at the research institution. The Complainant has stated that the research institution's guidelines for good scientific practice were not accessible to the public when the Defendant signed the declaration because the guidelines were under review, but that they were accessible via the university's website throughout most of the Defendant's PhD programme until June 2017.

The Defendant contends that he has received no instruction in good scientific practice at the research institution and has therefore made use of his prior knowledge of good scientific practice acquired during previous studies at a university abroad. The Defendant acknowledges that he has discussed methods of correct source attribution with his supervisors towards the end of his PhD programme. Furthermore, the Defendant argues that he only references sources he has read in his Product. Lastly, the Defendant argues that some statements are used so extensively in the social sciences, that it is difficult to locate an original author, as the statements take on the form and character of common knowledge.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

Legal basis

This case has been processed under act no. 383 of 26 April 2017 on research misconduct, etc. (hereinafter the Act).

The Committee's authority is described in section 4(1):

The Danish Committee on Research Misconduct shall process cases concerning research misconduct in scientific products.

The definition of a scientific product appears from section 3(1)(vi) of the Act:

A product generated by means of scientific methods applied in research, including applications for research funding.

It appears from the explanatory notes to section 3(1)(vi) of the Act, cf. bill no. L 117 of 25 January 2017 (hereinafter the Notes), concerning the assessment of what constitutes a scientific product that:

The proposed definition is based on DSCD's practices in this area, where a scientific product is characterised by its having been produced in the course of research employing scientific methods, in contrast to, e.g., popular science publications that do not adhere to scientific approaches to the same extent. The assessment of whether a product meets the definition of scientific product rests on an assessment of the scientific character of the product's contents, with scientific articles, PhD theses and the like being paradigmatic examples of products that fit this definition. One part of the assessment of whether a given product meets the definition of a scientific product pursuant to the act is thus whether the product has been submitted for, or is intended for submission for, peer review.

Research misconduct is defined in section 3(1)(i) of the Act:

Fabrication, falsification and plagiarism committed wilfully or with gross negligence when planning, performing or reporting on research.

Under section 3(1)(iv) of the Act, plagiarism is defined as:

Appropriation of other people's ideas, processes, results, texts or specific concepts without giving due credit.

It appears from the Notes to section 3(1)(iv) of the Act concerning plagiarism:

The definition of plagiarism is expected with this act to include instances of misappropriation of research, including copying without due credit to the actual author or improper claims of contribution to the research concerned. It is expected that, in the assessment of possible plagiarism, an important parameter will be whether there has been misrepresentation of a given researcher's contribution to the scientific product. Accordingly, the concept of misconduct will be restricted to the appropriation of other people's ideas, processes, results, texts, or specific concepts without due credit. By contrast, self-plagiarism in the form of e.g. the reuse of own previously used passages and the like, will only be processed as instances of questionable research practice. Moreover, it is expected that disputes of authorship generally will be dealt with as instances of questionable research practice rather than research misconduct in the form of plagiarism.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

It appears from section 3(2)(i) of the Act:

Research misconduct, cf. (1)(i), shall not include:

(i) cases of fabrication, falsification and plagiarism which have only had minor importance when planning, performing or reporting on the research,

The Committee's assessment of the case

The product in question

The Product is a PhD thesis submitted for assessment at the research institution. Consequently, and after an assessment of the content concerning the scientific character of the Product, the Committee finds that the application is a scientific product under section 3(1)(vi) of the Act.

Presentation of the Complaint

It follows from the Committee's practice that the definitions of research misconduct and plagiarism, both under the earlier rules of the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty as well as the rules of the new Danish Committee on Research Misconduct, require an actual unlawful appropriation of specific results etc., which can be attributed to another author without due credit given in the later publication.

Thus, it is necessary to be able to show that a unique research idea or text has been copied and used without due credit, in contrast to situations where researchers publish papers on the same subject through the use of general methods in the field, see most recently the Committee's decision of 7 June 2018 on case no. 2017-01.

Therefore, a complaint alleging plagiarism of a text, should therefore indicate exactly where the plagiarised text is found in the scientific product, as well as indicate exactly which scientific product was plagiarised, and from where the plagiarised text was lifted in the product. If the complaint concerns several instances of plagiarism, it should include specific information about each instance.

The complaint divides the relevant issues into 4 groups:

1. Identical or near-identical text without source reference
2. Identical text with source reference
3. Self-plagiarism
4. Paraphrasing

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

The Committee has based its decision on 16 instances set out by the Complainant in the complaint. In this context, the Complainant states:

In the words/sentences mentioned below, some are marked with red. This represents an attempt to show deviations from the original text and/or the thesis. This means that these words/sentences are not copied. For precise details please refer to the rapport from iThenticate.

The sections of the complaint marked in red have here been marked with bold.

Furthermore, the Committee found cause to consider nine more instances included in the complaint.

The complaint refers to page numbers in the Product that do not correspond exactly to the Product's pagination. It would appear that the complaint does not take into consideration the fact that adding comments in a PDF document adds more pages to the document. This decision refers to the Product's pagination without the pages added because of comments.

General notes on plagiarism

The Committee notes that reasonable suspicion of plagiarism generally refers to instances when a text passage of a certain length is lifted from a different text, typically written by a different author, without due credit, i.e. without clear indication and source reference. Readers should be in no doubt about which text passages

originate with the author and which are quoted or paraphrased. If a verbatim reproduction has a clear source reference and is clearly indicated (e.g. in italics or quotation marks), it is not plagiarism.

Correct paraphrasing requires an author to process other authors' thoughts and ideas, expressing them in his/her own words and sentence structure, and providing source references to the work(s) in which these thoughts and ideas are described. If words and sentences have been altered only slightly, or some words exchanged with synonyms, without giving due credit (source reference), then it is considered plagiarism.

General knowledge may be described without referencing a source, and does not constitute plagiarism. General knowledge can be defined as knowledge possessed by everyone in a particular group or a regional, institutional or academic community within reason, e.g. facts about geography, history, physics, language, literature, etc. Verbatim or near-verbatim reproduction of another author's text describing background knowledge also must provide due credit to the author.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

See in this context the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty's decision of 2 December 2014 in case no. 13/017306-57 in its entirety.

The individual instances

In instance no. 1, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Copied almost directly from this source [...]

Group 1

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 1

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 90)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 91)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 2, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

This section is copied from an external source without use of quotation marks or the like.

Source [...].

There are further passages from this source on page [...] of the PDF. See comment below.

Group 2

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 2

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 53)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 45)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 3, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

The section from "[...]" and to the end of the first section of the next page is a copy from the author's own article without use of quotation marks or the like - the words that are not marked are also found in the source.

Source [...]

Group 3

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 3

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 302)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 287)].

The Notes on the Act state that self-plagiarism, i.e. the reuse of own previously used subject matter without due credit is not considered research misconduct. Based on the information available to the Committee, the Committee finds that this instance does not constitute plagiarism, cf. section 3(1)(iv) of the Act.

In instance no. 4, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues i.a.:

From the top of page [...] to here. The sections seem to be copied and paraphrased from an external source without adequate use of quotation marks or the like.

Source [...].

Group 1 and 4.

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 4

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...], page [...], page [...], page [...] and page [...].
<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 539)].</i>	<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 397)].</i>

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 5, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

The sections seem to be copied directly from an external source without referencing through the use of quotation marks or the like. Sections with source [...] and [...] can both be found in source [...].

Source [...] (here is only the section with source [...]).

Group 1.

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 5

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 50)].</i>	<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 50)].</i>

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without proper attribution.

In instance no. 6, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

The section appears to be paraphrased from [...]

Group 4

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 6

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 129)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 82)].

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instances no. 7 and 8, see Product, page [...], and page [...], the complaint argues for instance no. 7:

The section has only been very lightly edited compared to the original source. A few words have been omitted or changed. Source [...].

Group 4

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 7

In instance no. 8, the complaint states the following:

See previous note. Source 7.

Group 4

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 70)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 52)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 9, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

The section has only been very lightly edited without use of quotation marks or the like. Only a few words have been omitted or changed. Almost the entire page as well as page [...].

Group 2

The source which the complaint refers to as an internet address, is a website for:

Source 8

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 205)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 215)].

The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct

The text that, according to the complaint, is located on the stated website, cannot be found on the website, which may have been altered after submission of the complaint. Because of this, and despite the Committee's own use of general search tools, the Committee is unable to determine whether the section appropriates text from the source in question.

In instance no. 10, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Seems to be copied directly from [...] (see link at the end of the document). However, the source is locked. The same text passage is also found in this source: [...]

Group 1

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 9

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 63)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 59)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 11, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Section copied/paraphrased from source [...].

Group 1

The complaint states that source [...] is:

Source 10

The complaint does not indicate where the copied and paraphrased text is located in the relevant source. Because of this, and despite the Committee's own use of general search tools, the Committee is unable to determine whether the section copies or paraphrases text from the source in question.

In instance no. 12, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

The section is composed of two external sources with some or no editing:

Source 11 [...].

Source 12 [...].

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

Group 1

The source, which should be available at the internet address [...] (source 12) is not accessible.

Because of this, and despite the Committee's own use of general search tools, the Committee is unable to determine whether the Defendant has appropriated text from the source at the internet address [...] (source 12).

The source stated in the complaint as an internet address:

[...]

is the source:

Source 11

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 38)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 38)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 13, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Self-plagiarism

Source 13 [...].

But also copied from this source

Source 14 [...].

Group 1 and 3.

The source referred to in the complaint with the internet address [...], is the source:

Source 13

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 322)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 341)].

The source referred to in the complaint with the internet address [...], is the source:

Source 14

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...] and page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 314)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 276)].

Because the source

Source 14

is from 2010, and the source

Source 13

is from 2017, the information above documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the stated source from 2010 without due credit in his above-mentioned text passage.

In instance no. 14, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Seems to be copied from [...] (see link at the end of the document). The original source is locked.

Group 1.

The complaint states that source [...] is:

Source 15

The complaint does not indicate where the copied text is located in the relevant source. Because of this, and despite the Committee's own use of general search tools, the Committee is unable to determine whether the section appropriates text from the source in question.

In instance no. 15, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Section copied from external source
Source [...].

Group 1

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

Source 16

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, [...]
<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 63)].</i>	<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 57)].</i>

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 16, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

15: Copied from this source: [...]

Group 1

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 16

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, [...]
<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 55)].</i>	<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 51)].</i>

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 17, see Product page [...], the complaint argues:

Section copied from external source:

Source [...].

Group 1.

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 17

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 145)].</i>	<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 125)].</i>

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 18, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Paraphrased/copied without referencing from:

Source [...].

Group 1 and 4.

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 18

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 137)].</i>	<i>[Text not included. (Word count: 171)].</i>

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text from the specified source with only a slight change of words and sentences, as well as exchanging some words for synonyms, in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 19, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Copied/paraphrased from source [...].

Group 1 and 4.

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 18

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 49)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 50)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 20, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Copied/paraphrased from source [...] p. [...] (see link at the bottom of the document).

Group 1 and 4.

The complaint states that source [...] is:

Internet address: [...]

The complaint does not indicate where the copied and paraphrased text is located in the relevant source. Because of this, and despite the Committee's own use of general search tools, the Committee is unable to determine whether the section copies or paraphrases text from the source in question.

In instance no. 21, see Product [...], the complaint states:

See previous comment (instance 20)

The complaint does not indicate where the copied and paraphrased text is located in the relevant source. Because of this, and despite the Committee's own use of general search tools, the Committee is unable to determine whether the section copies or paraphrases text from the source in question.

In instance no. 22, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Copied from source [...] (see link at the bottom of the document)

Group 1.

The complaint states that source [...] is:

Internet address: [...]

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

The source referred to at the above internet address in the complaint, is:

Source 19

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source
[Text not included. (Word count: 128)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 171)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

In instance no. 23, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Copied from external source

Source [...]

Group 1.

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 20

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 155)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 143)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

In instance no. 24, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Copied from external source

Source [...].

Same problem and source on page [...]

Group 1.

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 21

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 329)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 311)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

In instance no. 25, see Product, page [...], the complaint argues:

Copied from external source

Source [...].

Same problem and source on page [...]

Group 1.

This source, stated in the complaint as an internet address, is:

Source 21

The complaint quotes both the Defendant's Product and the source text. The two quotes are shown below in two columns for easy comparison.

Quote from the Defendant's Product	Quote from source, page [...]
[Text not included. (Word count: 197)].	[Text not included. (Word count: 193)].

This documents that the Defendant appropriated text verbatim from the specified source in the text passage cited above without due credit.

Summary

In a number of instances, the Defendant has used text passages from various sources, i.a. through paraphrasing, without due credit to these sources. See instances 1-2, 4, 6-8, 10, 12-13, 15-19 and 22-25. Instance no. 5 provides insufficient credit. By appropriating text without due credit to the sources, the Defendant has plagiarised, cf. section 3(1)(iv) of the Act. The fact that the Defendant has added some words and other sources than the plagiarised sources in his text, does not affect the Committee's decision.

The appropriated texts do not originate from the Product's methodology section, and are of such extent and occurrence, that they cannot be said to be of minor significance, cf. section 3(2)(i) of the Act.

According to the information provided by the Defendant's supervisors, and in part by the Defendant himself, the Committee reasons that the Defendant received guidance on good scientific practice on three separate occasions with particular emphasis on good reference technique. The Committee also reasons that the Defendant was informed in no uncertain terms – because of the supervisors' discovery of plagiarism in the draft of the introduction in the Product – that plagiarism is unacceptable, and that the Defendant informed his supervisors that any and all instances of plagiarism had been removed from the Product prior to submission. The Defendant also signed a so-called thesis declaration (statement of academic integrity) when submitting his Product, stating that the Product lives up to the requirements for good scientific practice at the research institution.

**The Danish Committee on
Research Misconduct**

On this basis, the Committee reasons overall that the Defendant was aware of good practice for source references, when he submitted his Product for assessment at the research institution. The fact that the research institution's guidelines for good scientific practice were not publicly accessible when the Defendant signed his thesis declaration does not affect the Committee's decision, as the Defendant had access to information through other means and had received guidance on good scientific practice.

Accordingly, the Committee finds that the Defendant in his Product in the above instances intentionally plagiarised and thereby has committed research misconduct, cf. section 3(1)(i) of the Act, cf. section 3(1)(iv).

The Committee has decided to inform the research institution about this decision, cf. section 16(2)(ii) of the Act.

Appeals procedure

This decision is final and cannot be brought before another administrative authority, cf. section 18 of the Act.

The Committee regrets the case processing time, which is mainly due to technical issues arising in connection with the transition from the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty to the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct as well as a large replacement of staff in the secretariat.



Jens Hartig Danielsen
Chair of the Danish Committee on Research Misconduct