

## 1. The complaint

On ... 2014 the committee scientific integrity of Wageningen UR received a complaint from [complainant] about plagiarism in the publication '...' (...) written by [defendant 1] and [defendant 2] (case 02). The complainant has found a very considerable similarity between the involved publication (hereafter: 'publication') and his own Masters thesis (hereafter: 'Masters thesis') from... . The complaint was received via the Executive Board who received it from the general director of the ... group.

Soon after the receipt of this message, a related complaint was submitted (case 05). 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 in its meeting of ... 2014 and asked the accused to submit a defense. The defendants ([defendant 2] and [defendant 1]) each submitted a separate defense.

[Defendant 2] submitted his defense as if it was the defense of both defendants. The committee therefore sent this defense to [defendant 1] to verify whether this defense was indeed submitted on behalf of both defendants.

The committee requested two experts in plagiarism-software for an analysis of the two documents. The committee asked the experts whether overlap between the two files is confirmed and what was the source of the overlap(s).

On ... a hearing with the accused [defendant 1] took place. The attendants of these meeting were: [defendant 1] (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. Following this hearing the committee asked the accused for more information about the status of the contract with [defendant 2].

On ... a hearing with the accused [defendant 2] took place. In this hearing both cases 02 and 05 were discussed. The attendants of these meeting were: [defendant 2] (accused, by Skype), ..., ..., ..., 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 on ... for more information about a report from the ... government, the reliability of Viper as anti-plagiarism software and the original first draft of the involved publication.

[Defendant 2] sent the reports on ... and information about Viper on....

Hereafter the investigation was closed.

## 3. Viewpoints of parties

### **3.1 The viewpoint of the complainant**

The complainant doubts whether the publication from [defendant 2] and [defendant 1] (...) is original and he indicated that he believes it is not. The complainant presents a great number of sentences from the publication that show overlap with his own thesis from..., produced at the ... in ... and supervised by....

### **3.2 The viewpoint of the defendants**

The defendants each have their own viewpoint. [Defendant 1] states that he acknowledges the occurrence of plagiarism, but he states that he was not aware of this reprehensible writing method of [defendant 2]. He states that he has taken his responsibility by checking the content of the complaint with plagiarism software and retracting the paper when these results indicated that plagiarism had indeed occurred on....

[Defendant 2] states that he was not familiar with the work of the complainant and as such cannot have used his texts. He also states that political arguments might have played a role in submitting the complaint.

He also states that all papers submitted to ... are checked by him for plagiarism (using iThenticate crosscheck). So by passing this check, plagiarism is impossible according to him. [defendant 2] also states that he is to be seen as the author of the paper, [defendant 1] was only added as co-author because he is [defendant 2]'s PhD supervisor and to show respect to him.

### **3.3 Written comments between complainant and accused**

The committee sent the defense of [defendant 2] to [defendant 1]. The committee asked [defendant 1] whether this defense is submitted on behalf of them both and what his role as coauthor was.

[defendant 1] answered that [defendant 2]'s defense was not submitted on behalf of them both. He also indicated that his role as coauthor was mostly to check whether the analysis was in accordance with the prevailing theory about content matters and improving English. [defendant 1] also sent his own plagiarism analysis of the publication using Turnitin.

## **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 two staff members of the institution (who are not involved in research – administrative staff) 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 scientific, public and teaching text material. These systems might give false negatives when a plagiarized 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*

If a text is entered in Turnitin, a commonly used plagiarism detection program and used by Wageningen UR, this text is directly part of the Turnitin database. Because of this property of the program it was not possible for the second expert to perform the analysis again. Therefore the analysis of the other expert was used. The analyses of the complainant, [defendant 1] and the expert both indicated large portions of overlap between the publication and existing literature. The overlap with the Master's thesis was only indicated by [defendant 1] and showed 41% overlap between the publication and the Master's thesis.

Since the complaint indicated plagiarism of a known document, the committee also conducted a comparison of the two documents, not using plagiarism software but the program WCopyFind<sup>1</sup>. This comparison resulted in a similarity of 45%. The overlap was found in both the introduction, the results and discussion and the conclusion sections.

The committee concludes that such a high amount of similarity cannot be a coincidence, even if the same subject is studied. Taking into account the order in which the manuscripts were produced, the committee has the opinion that copying of parts of the Master's thesis of [complainant] into the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://plagiarism.bloomfieldmedia.com/z-wordpress/software/wcopyfind/>

publication has indeed taken place.

The committee noted that the Master's thesis is not listed in the literature list of the publication or referred to in the text.

#### *4.3.3. Role of both co-authors of the publication*

Both defendants admit that [defendant 1] had a mainly reactive role in the process of writing the publication. The requirements to be included as co-author that are generally accepted are<sup>2</sup>:

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).

[Defendant 1] 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 [defendant 1] did not have an active role in writing and has therefore not copied texts himself. The plagiarism is therefore conducted by [defendant 2] alone.

#### *4.3.4. Role of the promotor as supervisor*

[Defendant 1] 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 [defendant 1] is not just co-author, but also the promotor and hence the supervisor of [defendant 2], 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. [defendant 1] should have asked critical questions to test the scientific method used by his pupil. The committee is of the opinion that [defendant 1] has not scrutinized his pupil enough. This failure does, however, not relate to possible violation of scientific integrity.

#### *4.3.5 Conclusions*

The committee identifies the found overlap between the publication of [defendant 2] and [defendant 1] and the Master's thesis of [complainant] as plagiarism conducted by [defendant 2]. Not finding overlap using other programs, as stated by [defendant 2], does not guarantee the non-existence of

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.britisoc.co.uk/publications/guidelines-reports/authorship-guidelines.aspx#\\_attr](http://www.britisoc.co.uk/publications/guidelines-reports/authorship-guidelines.aspx#_attr)

overlap.

The committee is of the opinion that [defendant 1] has not been accurate in his role as supervisor, but that he cannot be accused of having conducted plagiarism.

## **5. Judgment and advice**

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 [defendant 2] by copying parts of the Master's thesis of [complainant]. The committee is of the opinion that defendant 1 has not fully considered his role and responsibility as supervisor and promotor of [defendant 2], but violation of scientific integrity is not conducted by him.

The committee advises the Executive Board to check other relevant publications from [defendant 2] 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 [defendant 2] well-founded and the complaint against [defendant 1] unfounded.

## **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.