Self-Plagiarism in Reports, Papers, and Theses

We have already talked about fabrication and plagiarism in reports, papers, and theses and pointed out that such acts are regarded as serious misconduct. However, as well as these, there is self-plagiarism in reports and articles, which is also recognized as serious misconduct. Self-plagiarism is the reuse or recycling of one's ideas, sentences, or data from previously published content without specifying clearly their source. For example, in university work, self-plagiarism is the reuse of reports or papers (or parts of such items) that you submitted in a previous class, without proper quotation or citation, arguing simply that "it is content written by me." This is obviously an act of misconduct—it is cheating.

The idea is the same as specifying the sources of quotes and citations when you refer to other people's ideas in reports and articles. If you use reports or articles that you previously wrote (or even just a part of them), you need to re-specify the authorities and sources you used. Omitting them is unacceptable. Note also that if you fail to specify the use of previous material, it is impossible to distinguish between what you are currently thinking and what you thought in the past. If you still think the way you did previously, show that by appropriately giving full information of your source: the date, the title, and the name of the subject to which you submitted your previous work.

Another example of self-plagiarism at university is to submit a report/thesis in one subject that is the same as or significantly overlaps with what was submitted for another subject. This is cheating in two senses. Firstly, regardless of whether the source of your citations or quotations is specified correctly or not, it is important to realize that submitting a report/thesis you write for a certain subject as if it were a newly written report/thesis is an act of deceit. This is because reports and theses require intellectual thought and achievement by those who write them. (For example, if you bought the work of a writer that had been published as "newly written," but it turned out that just the cover and title were new, you would think you had been betrayed.)

Second, even if a task given to you in one subject is similar to one in a previous subject, the assumptions and methods of thinking taught in the current subject may well be different; therefore the content and conclusion of the report/thesis should be different. As a result, submitting reports/theses with identical or significant duplication of the content or conclusion to different subjects just "because it is my idea" is considered a highly improper act. This is an act of "earning" a unit with minimal effort, and also indicates that the writer was not "intellectually challenged," as each course demands. Therefore, even if an assignment given to you is similar to one you have had before, you are required to prepare and submit different reports/theses specifying the full sources of all your information for each subject. Of course, it is far better for you to develop your ideas beyond what you have written in the past, but if you do use previous material, it is essential to make that clear and give appropriate citations.

We deal strictly with all fraudulent acts, including plagiarism and self-plagiarism. Please abandon any thought that "the teacher will not notice fraud." The University has systems in place to ensure that the contents of all papers are automatically searched, including papers you submitted in the past. As a result of such searches, similarities to previous material and the presence or absence of quotations soon become clear. Always bear this in mind and do your utmost to write your reports, papers, and theses with diligence and care.