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HRD Ministry Approves Norms Against Plagiarism

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The Ministry of Human Resource Development has approved new regulations on plagiarism drafted by the University Grants Commission (UGC). According to the new norms, student researchers found guilty of plagiarism may lose their registration and teachers could lose their jobs.

- The Ministry had notified the UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2018.
- The UGC had approved the regulations in its meeting held in March, 2018 prescribing graded punishment for plagiarism.

NOTE: Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.

Key Points

- For students, plagiarism of up to 10% would not invite any penalty while that of between 10-40% would mean the students will have to submit a revised research paper within six months.
- In case the similarities are between 40-60% , students will be debarred from submitting a revised paper for one year.
- A student's registration for a programme will be cancelled if the similarities are above 60%.
- Teachers whose academic and research papers have similarities ranging from 10-40% with other papers will be asked to withdraw the manuscript.
- In case the similarities are between 40-60%, they will not be allowed to supervise new masters, M.Phil, PhD students for two years and will also be denied the right to one annual increment, it said.
- In case of repeat plagiarism of over 60% similarity, the faculty members will be suspended, even dismissed.

- The new regulations prescribe that if any member of the academic community suspects plagiarism, he or she shall report it to the Departmental Academic Integrity Panel (DAIP).
- Upon receipt of such a complaint or allegation the DAIP shall investigate the matter and submit its recommendations to the Institutional Academic Integrity Panel (IAIP) of the Higher Education Institutions (HEI).
- The authorities of HEI can also take suo motu notice of an act of plagiarism and initiate proceedings under these regulations. Similarly, proceedings can also be initiated by the HEI on the basis of findings of an examiner. All such cases will be investigated by the IAIP.

Reasons for Plagiarism in India

- From the very beginning, the traditional mode of learning in India has essentially focused on **rote learning**, whereby students are expected to commit to memory and then reproduce volumes of text verbatim in their examinations right from a young age. Students are not taught to think, analyse or check on sources.
- **Lack of awareness** of what plagiarism is, has been another major problem. Few schools go out of their way to inculcate in students the moral integrity that treats plagiarism as a serious.
- **Widespread access to the internet** often leads to the non-acknowledgment of sources by the user.
- There is **no real action against people indulging in the malpractice**. Institutions of higher education, which should push students to strive for originality, actually don't want to punish those who indulge in plagiarism.

Way Forward

- **Counselling** should be provided to students and parents to encourage education based on interest and aptitude. In addition, curriculum design should be aligned with skill building. It should encourage critical thinking among students.
- **Quality teaching should be incentivised** and conversely, a 'no-tolerance policy' towards non-performance should be adopted.
- Overhauling the evaluation system by **focussing more on application of knowledge** and **introducing 'non-traditional' assessment techniques**, such as verbal tests and critical paper reviews, could contribute in reducing the need for and incidence of cheating.