

RE: Embargoed MSc Thesis

Travis Horton

Sent: Sunday, 18 September 2016 12:22 p.m.

To: Ian Wright; Richard Holdaway; Anne Scott(Library)

Ian,

I have taken a breath - several, in fact - and I am quite frankly shocked by your response and decision to take no further action. There are several reasons for this:

1) your letter clearly communicates that Dr. Rawlence knew Olivia Johnston's thesis was under embargo. Rawlence admits to receiving a 'use of thesis embargo form', thus this is in no way an inadvertent oversight' as Rawlence now claims. As I am sure you are aware, Olivia's thesis is referenced in the QSR article authored by Rawlence and others 9 times. These 9 citations are distributed throughout the article and in several crucial locations with respect to the argument/interpretation being presented. These citations are clearly and unequivocally references to the MSc thesis - not the 'publicly available thesis abstract' (I would like to point out that the abstract is without question a part of a thesis, and if Olivia's thesis was embargoed this embargo must also include the thesis abstract)

2) You are also fully aware that the original manuscript submitted by Rawlence and others was rejected. As both referees reports indicate, the original manuscript was rejected in large part due to the lack of data in support of their primary interpretation. Through the revise and resubmit process, Dr. Rawlence addressed this crucial weakness by adding in the 9 citations to Olivia's thesis, including a numerical presentation of data determined in the UC stable isotope lab that I direct. Our data was clearly embargoed and not publicly available, but this did not stop Dr. Rawlence from using these data in support of his original unpublishable article and weakly argued interpretations. The letter you have passed on, Ian, states:

"[Dr. Rawlence] cited the abstract of Ms Johnson's thesis to provide broad context for his paper's discussion - rather than as a source of any detailed data, analysis, rationale or "central thesis" underpinning his own study. Dr Rawlence further notes that his paper could easily have been published without any reference to Ms Johnson's study."

Reporting the numerical values that are the intellectual property of others and that were clearly under an embargo that Rawlence was definitively aware of is without question providing 'detailed data'. Rawlence quotes the range in stable isotope delta-values reported in Olivia's thesis - how can this not be considered "detailed data"? Rawlence also quotes the 'significant correlation' reported in Olivia's thesis between foliar stable isotope compositions and rainfall - clearly a direct response to one of the key weaknesses of Rawlence's original manuscript raised by reviewer #2. Yet, Dr. Rawlence claims Olivia's thesis was not used as a source of any "rationale or 'central thesis' underpinning his own study." The facts simply do not support Dr. Rawlence's supposed apology (which by the way I still have not received personally from Dr. Rawlence).

I am terribly disappointed in and quite frankly shocked by your decision to take no further action, Ian. There can be no clearer theft of intellectual property than what has transpired in this instance. In response to key criticisms laid by the referees of a rejected manuscript, Dr. Rawlence quoted detailed numerical data that was not his intellectual property. By taking no further action, you send the message that the UC-DVR is willing to accept a weak and factually inaccurate apology in response to the theft of the intellectual property of a UC academic staff member. I urge you to reconsider your position on this matter in the context of the facts presented above.

Associate Professor Travis W. Horton
Geological Sciences

From: Ian Wright
Sent: Sunday, September 18, 2016 11:17 AM
To: Richard Holdaway; Travis Horton; Anne Scott(Library)
Subject: FW: Embargoed MSc Thesis

Kia ora Richard, Travis, and Anne,

I have had further correspondence from UO (as attached), in which Nic Rawlence provides a rebuttal to my letter to Prof Richard Blaikie - Otago DVC.

Given Nic's response I have indicated that UC will not take any further action and I do not now propose to write to the QSR Editors.

I think we all have to draw a breath here, accept Nic's responses, and move on.

Regards

Ian W.

Professor Ian Wright
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
University of Canterbury
Te Whare Wananga o Waitaha
Private Bag 4800
Christchurch 8140
New Zealand
Phone: +64 (3)369 3773
ian.wright@canterbury.ac.nz
<http://www.canterbury.ac.nz>

-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Blaikie [<mailto:richard.blaikie@otago.ac.nz>]
Sent: Saturday, 17 September 2016 4:13 p.m.
To: Ian Wright <ian.wright@canterbury.ac.nz>
Cc: Gerard Closs <gerry.closs@otago.ac.nz>
Subject: [SPAM: 10.411] FW: Embargoed MSc Thesis

Kia ora Ian,

Through the HoD Zoology, Assoc Prof Gerry Closs, Nic Rawlence has provided the attached explanations in relation to the concerns you raised in your recent letter.

As you can see, Nic will be sending an apology directly to Ms Johnson and co-authors, but has also provided explanation and clarification on other matters that were raised.

I trust that this satisfies the concerns about the integrity of Nic's responses to the QSR editor and reviewers, such that any subsequent correspondence with the journal will not be necessary now.

With best regards,

Richard Blaikie

-----Original Message-----

From: Gerard Closs
Sent: Friday, 16 September 2016 12:43 p.m.
To: Richard Blaikie
Cc: Nic Rawlence; Jonathan Waters

Subject: Re: Embargoed MSc Thesis

Dear Richard

Attached is a detailed response to the issue raised in the letter from Professor Ian Wright re the use of an embargoed MSc thesis.

In short, Nic is happy to apologise directly to Ms Johnson and her associated UC colleagues re the citation of the MSc thesis. He acknowledges that this was due to a genuine misunderstanding as to what could or couldn't be cited.

Nic refutes the suggestion that he received a full copy of thesis, but only referred to the information available in the publicly available abstract, as per the link that was provided by the UC library (provided in the attached letter). He has also provided the editor's and reviewers' comments on the paper that confirm the editor and reviewers did not refer directly to the thesis.

I am satisfied with Nic's response, and acknowledge and confirm his regret over this incident.

Please advise as to how you would like us to proceed from here.

All the best

Gerry