



COPYRIGHT AND STUDY HELP SITES

This document describes the copyright implications of using study help sites.

Study Help Sites

There is a proliferation of online websites that offer a range of services to support students in their studies. Services include on-demand tutors, the sharing of course notes, re-selling of textbooks, and assignment writing services. Examples of these sites include [Chegg](#), [Course Hero](#), [StuDocu](#), and [StudentVIP Notes](#). Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a sharp rise in the use of these sites, making them quite profitable. StuDocu has 15 million users across 2,000 universities in over 60 countries¹. Chegg is valued at more than \$12 billion².

Copyright implications

The main concern with respect to copyright is when students upload Curtin copyright materials to these sites, sometimes for free and sometimes to sell to other students. We are unable to prevent students selling their notes as they own the copyright in their own works, however the notes would need to be their paraphrasing of the course materials, lecture notes, readings, etc.

If the notes are a substantial copy of the Curtin unit materials and unit readings, then the student is infringing copyright. It is not uncommon for these sites to host hundreds of files of Curtin material. Examples we have come across include presentation slides, handouts, lecture notes, and examination papers/answers. This is not a problem unique to Curtin, as most universities have their content shared on these sites.

Takedown Notices

There is a mechanism for removing this content under copyright law called a 'takedown notice'. However, these sites do not all operate in the Australian jurisdiction, so Australian legislation is not applicable to them. This means we have little control over whether or not the site administrators comply with our takedown request.

In order to submit a takedown request:

- We must be the copyright holder. Therefore we can only submit a request for Curtin copyright material, we cannot submit a request on behalf of another copyright holder (for example if a student was infringing unit materials provided by a publisher).
- We must be certain that the file infringes our copyright. If the student is only re-using short excerpts and not making a substantial reproduction we cannot submit a takedown request.

¹ <https://techcrunch.com/2021/05/09/studocu-raises-50m-as-its-note-sharing-network-for-college-students-passes-15m-users/>

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2021/01/28/this-12-billion-company-is-getting-rich-off-students-cheating-their-way-through-covid/?sh=1203f121363f>

- We have to provide the site administrators with each individual URL link per file and a description of the file. Some sites require we submit these takedown requests via a webform that only permits us to submit one URL link per webform submission.

It is extremely resource intensive to follow up on these sites. For example the Library Copyright team started investigating StuDocu in late 2016. In January 2017 it took staff at least three working days to list out all of the infringing file URL links, which numbered in excess of 400 files/links. It took until December 2018 for the takedown request to be responded to, after many months of corresponding with the StuDocu site administrators. In 2021, StuDocu has more Curtin files than the last time we checked, and it is possible all of these removed files have now gone back up.

What can I do if I find out my study materials are on these sites?

We cannot be proactive in this space due to limited resourcing. Therefore the Library Copyright team can only follow up these potentially infringing files on a case-by-case basis. We cannot do takedowns of all Curtin material on these sites.

If you have a small number of files you want removed, use our [web form](#) to provide the following information:

- The unit code and name which relates to the infringing file(s);
- The name(s) of the infringing file(s);
- The URL(s) for the page with the infringing file(s).

The Library Copyright team will investigate and update you on the progress of the takedown request. If you are submitting this notification as a result of a possible academic integrity issue, please ensure that you have a screenshot of the page before it is taken down.

Amanda Bellenger
Compliance Officer for the Australian Copyright Act 1968
2 June 2021