

The Little Book of Academic Integrity



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Academic integrity

Academic Integrity means intellectual honesty and is strongly linked to good academic practice. Our University wants to give you credit for your learning and for work which you have done yourself. Academic misconduct occurs when you have not done the work yourself and have not acknowledged this. This can take many forms and may be intentional or unintentional. It does not matter if you intend to commit an offence or not. The different forms of academic misconduct may include plagiarism (including a lack of in-text citation), self-plagiarism, collusion, ghost-writing, unfair practice and cheating.

This booklet is intended to help you understand more fully what these offences are and more importantly, how to avoid them.

Types of offence

Plagiarism

Our University's Academic Principles and Regulations (section 2.9.3.2) state that:

“Plagiarism is the substantial, unacknowledged, incorporation in a student's work of material derived from the work (published or unpublished) of another. “Work” includes, but is not limited to, materials in all formats and sources including print, electronic, online, audio visual, etc.”

Examples of plagiarism include:

- The inclusion in a student's work of substantial extracts from another person's work without the use of quotation marks
- The substantial summarising of another person's work without acknowledgement
- The substantial and unauthorised use of the ideas of another person without acknowledgement
- Lack of in-text citation

Lack of in-text citation occurs when a student writes long sections of work (normally a whole paragraph and sometimes even a whole page) and does not attribute the work to the original source until the end of the paragraph or the end of the page. There have even been cases where students have written an entire piece of work and have not attributed the work back to the source at all. They have only listed the sources in the reference section/bibliography at the end. The person marking the work needs to know which parts of the work are your own words and which parts are from another source. It is impossible to tell this when marking a piece of work if there is a lack of in-text citation.

Self-plagiarism

Our University's Academic Principles and Regulations (section 2.9.3.3) state that:

“Self-plagiarism occurs when a student submits work which has been submitted elsewhere. This may be part of a piece of work or the entire piece of work. It may have been submitted to this University or another institution and may or may not have been awarded credit.”

It does not help to cite and reference the earlier piece of work as, in effect, you are attempting to gain credit twice for the same piece of work and this is the actual offence.

Here are two examples of where this has happened in the past.

Example 1

A student got a very high mark for an essay in a Marketing module. She submitted exactly the same piece of work as part of another module hoping to get the same high mark. This was seen as self-plagiarism by the University as the student had already gained credit for the work in the Marketing module.

Example 2

A student got a good mark for a piece of work in a Human Resource Management module. He included this work as part of his dissertation. This was seen as self-plagiarism because the student had already received credit for this work in the first module.

The word “elsewhere” in the above definition should be interpreted as ‘external to the module in question’. Therefore, work submitted within the same module is not classed as self-plagiarism, even when the work is for re-assessment or when the student is repeating the module. There is one exception to this, and this is where two pieces of work are linked (and exist in different modules). An example of this could be a research proposal and a research project. Even though these two pieces of work are in different modules, because they are directly linked, this should not be classed as self-plagiarism.

Collusion

Our University’s Academic Principles and Regulations (section 2.9.3.4) state that:

“Collusion occurs when a student collaborates with another student in the completion of work which is then submitted as unaided work by either student.”

Avoiding collusion

If you want to avoid an allegation of collusion:

DON’T ask to see another student’s work – even in the early stages as notes, a draft, a structure or an outline, unless this is permitted in the assignment brief. You may be placing both yourself and your friend in jeopardy.

DON’T let another student see any of your work by any means, including email, USB stick or paper copy.

DON’T work together unless the assignment brief permits it. If this is not clear to you, check with your module tutor.

In our University, you have committed an offence if you share/give your work to another student, even if you have agreement from the other student that they will not use your work.

Keeping your work secure

You have a responsibility to keep your work in secure places. Make sure that you lock away all drafts and paper copies. Keep electronic versions in password-protected locations on a computer, whether it is shared with other people or not. Back up your files so that you can safely retrieve them.

Cases have arisen where work has apparently been copied from an unattended computer or data stick without the owner's knowledge. On the face of it this would seem to be theft, but it would be difficult for you to show that there was no collusion if you cannot show that security measures were in place.

If you allow a fellow student to copy your work you will be considered as guilty of collusion as the actual copyist and will be subject to the same penalties under our University's regulations.

Ghost-writing

This is the term used when a student solicits a third party to do some or all of a piece of work (paid or unpaid). There is just one simple piece of advice here – do not do this.

Students who have been found to have committed an offence of ghost-writing will normally be subjected to harsher penalties than other students who have been found to have committed plagiarism.

Unfair practice

This can take many different forms. Here are a few examples.

Example 1

A student pretended that he had carried out a placement in an organisation as part of his course. He then submitted a written report of the placement which was a requirement of the course. A tutor telephoned the organisation to speak to the student and was told that the student had never been to the organisation.

This is unfair practice and is attempting to gain an unfair advantage over students who have made the effort, gone on placement and acquired the learning. This is also falsification of data.

Example 2

A student wrote in her dissertation that she had completed 50 interviews in a street in Leeds. When the dissertation tutor telephoned a sample of the respondents, none of them had been interviewed by the student.

Example 3

A student pretended that he had asked 100 people to complete a questionnaire. He had not. What he had actually done was to complete 100 questionnaires himself with different coloured pens, but with the same handwriting! This is unfair practice as it is attempting to gain an unfair advantage over the students who had actually made the effort to get their questionnaire completed.

Cheating

Our University's Academic Principles and Regulations (section 2.9.3.1) state that:

Cheating is unfair behaviour relating to an examination. It includes:

- a) Actions within the examination room:
 - Communicating with any other candidate during an examination
 - Copying from any other candidate during an examination
 - Communicating with any other person other than an authorised invigilator or another member of staff during an examination
 - Possession of any written or printed materials in the examination room unless expressly permitted by the examination regulations
 - Possession of any electronically stored information in the examination room unless expressly permitted by the examination regulations
 - Use of a mobile phone or other electronic device during an examination, unless expressly permitted by the examination regulations

- b) Actions outside of the examination room:
 - Gaining access to any unauthorised material relating to the examination during or before the examination
 - Obtaining a copy of a written examination paper in advance of the time and date for its authorised release

Here are some examples where students have attempted to cheat (and have been caught).

Example 1

A student who hid her notes in the cistern of a toilet. She left the examination room in the middle of the examination and tried to retrieve the notes.

Example 2

A student who wrote notes for the examination on his arm.

How to avoid an offence

SUSPECTED OFFENCES WHICH ARE CONSIDERED TO BE SUBSTANTIAL WILL BE INVESTIGATED.

What does 'substantial' mean in this context?

The notion of what 'substantial' means depends on the piece of work. Substantial can mean the actual proportion of the work which is suspected of not being the student's own work. However, the decision of whether or not the suspected proportion of work is substantial does not always have to be based on the number or proportion of words. In fact, it may be images, photographs or tables, etc.

Substantial can also be interpreted as what is important or critical to the piece of work.

Here are three examples of plagiarism where the actual number of words which were plagiarised were not a high proportion of the overall number of words in the student's work, but the cases were upheld because the work which was plagiarised was considered to be 'substantial' to the overall piece of work.

Example 1

In a dissertation, a student copied the aims and objectives from another student's work. Even though the aims and objectives did not form a large proportion of the actual number of words in the dissertation, they were critical to the overall dissertation. Therefore, the university considered this as 'substantial'.

Example 2

A student copied someone else's interview questions and then used them as her own. This is plagiarism as the use of another person's questionnaire or interview questions could be interpreted as 'substantial' if they are an important part of the overall piece of work. If a student copies another person's questions then they have not learnt to write their own questions and they cannot be given credit for this.

Example 3

A student copied the conclusion and recommendations for further research from a research report. This would be considered to be 'substantial' as conclusions and recommendations for further research would be unique to one particular piece of research and cannot be the same for two different pieces of research.

There are many reasons why students commit unfair practice, for example:

- Not being fully aware of what academic integrity is
- When an assignment is due and time is short
- Fear of failure
- Being used to different academic traditions from the UK

Sometimes, of course, unfair practice is a deliberate attempt to gain the credits for the module without doing the work.

Positive reasons for ensuring academic integrity

Pride in your work – you should be able to take pride in your work and achievements. There is considerable satisfaction in knowing that the work you have submitted is your own and the marks obtained reflect your own effort.

Real level of attainment – if you have not done the work yourself, it is likely that you will not have learned anything. The discovery that your apparent attainment does not match your real abilities will become obvious when you find a job. This could lead to dismissal and termination of your career.

How to avoid plagiarism

The key to avoiding plagiarism is to acknowledge all the sources you have used to produce your work by providing accurate details of any words, ideas, thoughts and images which are not your own.

Your sources may be published or unpublished, online or in print and may include:

- Books
- Journal or newspaper articles
- Radio or television programmes
- Images or illustrations
- Statistical data
- Webpages or websites
- Films
- Online videos
- Personal communications
- Government or other reports
- Advertisements, and
- Any other sources of information

You will need to develop good information literacy skills to make sure that you can find, evaluate and use information sources properly in your work.

Referencing

Good referencing makes it easy for the reader to trace the sources mentioned in your work. Anyone marking or reading your work can follow up your references and check the authors and the work you have cited.

Referencing your work also shows the reader that you have selected relevant and respected information sources for your research into the topic. It indicates that you have read widely in your subject area and gives authority to your own writing.

There are two stages to referencing sources:

- 1) Refer to the source in your text (the citation)
- 2) Give full and accurate details of the source in your bibliography or list of references (the reference)

Is it always necessary to reference?

Some statements or facts can be regarded as ‘common knowledge’. However, you should be careful about this because there is no general agreement on what is considered common knowledge.

Fact also needs to be distinguished from opinion. Your own opinions, of course, need not be referenced, but the opinions of others need to be referenced.

Extract from assignment text	Comment
‘Although Alexander Fleming is famous for discovering penicillin, other scientists played a vital role in...’	It is reasonable to assume that your reader has heard of Alexander Fleming and his important discovery, but the rest of the statement about other scientists may not be commonly known. In this case you should provide references to your source (s).
‘It could be argued that human beings have always been inclined to overestimate the power of technology to subdue nature. The sinking of the Titanic in April 1912 is one example of this.’	Most people are aware of the sinking of the Titanic and some of the reasons for the disaster. However, if the idea for this example about humans overestimating the power of technology came from a published source, it must be acknowledged.
‘Marks and Spencer is one of the most well-known of the UK’s high street stores. Let us look at how the company has performed during the economic recession...’	Most people in the UK would agree that Marks and Spencer is a well-known high street store and it is not necessary to provide a source for this statement.

If you have knowingly quoted, summarised or paraphrased someone’s work, even if the ideas expressed might be regarded as common knowledge, you should still acknowledge your source. If you are in doubt as to whether you need a source for a piece of information, it is better to provide one.

Direct quotations

If you are directly quoting the exact words from a particular source in your writing, you should enclose these in quotation marks and cite the author, date and page numbers that the quotation was taken from. Full details of the source are then given in the reference list or bibliography at the end of your work.

Paraphrasing and summarising

Paraphrasing is using your own words to express a statement or text by someone else. A paraphrased passage will usually be about the same length as the original source.

Summarising means taking the essential ideas from a piece of text and rewriting them in your own words. It may include giving your own interpretation of what the source says, rather than simply re-phrasing or describing the ideas. A summary is usually much shorter than the original text.

Paraphrasing and summarising are both acceptable practices if you acknowledge your source(s) by correct citation and referencing. However, if you paraphrase or summarise a great deal in your writing without adding your own ideas or analysis, it may be regarded as poor quality work.

Making notes

When you are searching the literature on your chosen subject, whether online or in print, save or note down all the required details of the sources that you find. If you don't do this, you might not be able to accurately describe the sources you have used and you will have additional work when you need to list them in your bibliography or list of references. Use quotation marks in your notes to show where you have copied exact words from the source. Remember to write down the page numbers.

TurnitinUK

Turnitin is an online tool which matches text with a worldwide database. Students should become familiar with using Turnitin to check work BEFORE it is finally submitted. Drafts can be checked before the deadline against the Turnitin worldwide database.

Turnitin can also be used to help tutors to investigate plagiarism. Turnitin can identify if sections of an assignment or the whole assignment has been written elsewhere and it can also identify the source of the writing. In other words, it can clearly tell if the student has written the words themselves or if they have 'cut and pasted' or copied them from elsewhere.

Turnitin cannot decide if the work is plagiarised – only an academic can do this. Students need to be aware that a high match on the Turnitin originality report does not necessarily mean that plagiarism has taken place – there can be a high match, but the work can be correctly referenced. Conversely, a low match does not necessarily indicate that the work has not been plagiarised.

Further resources and guidance

There are a range of resources available to help you avoid unfair practice and you are strongly recommended to use these, which include:

- Student Hub Website - www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/studenthub/academic-integrity/
- Skills for Learning Website – www.skillsforlearning.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/

Leeds Beckett Students' Union Advice Service provides advice and representation (subject to availability) should you be accused of any form of unfair practice.

If you want advice on how best to structure your response to an allegation, contact the Students' Union Advice Service for an appointment well in advance of your meeting.

www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/studenthub/students-union-advice-service/