Library **Advice Sheets**

UNDERSTANDING PLAGIARISM

This advice sheet introduces you the concept of plagiarism, outlines what it is and the different ways you might plagiarise. By understanding the causes and consequences of plagiarism you will learn how to avoid it.

What is plagiarism?

There are many ways of describing plagiarism. These include copying, cheating, stealing or passing off the works or ideas of somebody else as your own. The University's definition is shown below:

> *"submitting work as the candidate's own of which the candidate is not the author. This includes failure to acknowledge clearly and explicitly the ideas, words or work of another person whether these are published or unpublished."*
>
> **Loughborough University, Regulation XVIII, Academic Misconduct**

When creating a piece of work, it is very important that you give credit to anybody whose material or ideas you have included, otherwise you could be guilty of plagiarism.

If you ….

> **Copy / paraphrase / summarise**

> **Words / tables/ graphs / photos / IDEAS**

> **WITHOUT**
> **acknowledging / crediting / citing / referencing**

> **YOU COULD BE GUILTY OF PLAGIARISM**

You can avoid this by referencing correctly.

Why do people plagiarise?

Some people plagiarise deliberately in order to gain an unfair advantage but in many cases plagiarism is accidental and the result of poor academic skills.

Accidental plagiarism	Deliberate plagiarism
Poor academic skills • time management • understanding the question • reading and note-taking • writing skills • lack of confidence in own language skills • referencing skills • careless group work or collaboration	• lazy • wanting to have an unfair advantage

How is plagiarism detected?

There are a number of ways plagiarism may be detected. Your lecturer or tutor will be aware of relevant sources and may recognize the work you have used. If you copy text from another source then there is likely to be a change in the tone of the writing. Copying and pasting text may also change the formatting in your work. The University also submits student work to the Turnitin text matching software tool (see below).

Turnitin text matching software

TurnItIn is an internet-based text matching software tool. Student work can be uploaded to check for originality against a database of stored web pages, student assignments, articles and books. The resulting report highlights all sections of text for which a match has been found, lists the sources and indicates the percentage of the text which has been matched. Your lecturer can use the report to identify examples of plagiarism. Don't forget though that the software will still find a match if you have included a quotation from a source which is cited correctly, so not all matches mean you have plagiarised.

Penalties for plagiarism

If you have committed plagiarism this may result in a range of penalties. These include a formal reprimand, zero marks for a module, removal of reassessment rights in any module, failing the year or having to leave your course.

How might I be guilty of plagiarism?

Purchasing an essay – purchasing coursework from a company and submitting it as your own work is deliberate plagiarism.

Copying text from books, journals or webpages – when copying text, you must put it in quotation marks, put a citation in the text and include the reference in your bibliography.

e.g. "Facebook is more convenient than emails and less intrusive than phone calls" (Lee, 2014, p.27).

LEE, N., 2014. *Facebook Nation: Total Information Awareness.* 2nd ed. New York: Springer.

Paraphrasing or summarising sentences or ideas – rewriting a section of text using some but not all of the original words but keeping the meaning is known as paraphrasing. When paraphrasing or summarising an author's words or ideas you must put a citation in the text and a full reference in your bibliography. Examples of paraphrasing are shown on page 4.

Including a table, image or graph in your work without acknowledgement – it is also plagiarism to copy images, diagrams or tables without providing a reference to the original. When including graphs, tables or illustrations use the minimum amount needed to support your argument.

Re-using your own previous work – you should not resubmit a piece of work which has already been assessed unless the assessment rules allow this. Otherwise this is known as self-plagiarism.

Working with others and producing identical pieces of work – unless you have been assigned a group project you should not collaborate with others when preparing an assignment. When working as a group you should acknowledge others' contributions.

Avoiding plagiarism

Avoid plagiarism by managing your time sensibly so you don't feel under pressure to copy. Make notes in your own words and keep records of your reading. Have confidence in your own ideas and writing skills and observe citation and referencing rules.

> Every source that you use must be acknowledged
> **within the body of the written work AND
> in the list of references and/or bibliography at the end**
>
> Provide enough information for the work to be identified and found
> The order in which the elements are listed depends on the referencing style

Plagiarism examples

Original source:

Cottrell, S. and Morris, N. (2012). Study skills connected: using technology to support your studies. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 108.

There have been a number of suggestions of ways that users could identify the quality of a Wikipedia article by using other measurements beside peer review. One method proposed was using the survival time of each edit of an article. It was assumed that older segments would have been edited more and would be more accurate. Luyt et al. (2007) investigated this proposal but did not find this to be the case. They found there were a high proportion of errors in the first edits and that

these tended to remain. They concluded that the survival rate of edits of earlier segments of an article are not a good indicator of accuracy.

Work cited in the text: LUYT, B., AARON, T. C. H., THAIN, L. H. and HONG, C. K., 2007. Improving Wikipedia's accuracy: is edit age a solution? *Journal of the American Society for Information and Technology*, **59**, p. 318-30.

Example 1 (Poor paraphrasing and no acknowledgement of sources - plagiarism)

Instead of peer review, there have been several suggested approaches to identifying the accuracy of a Wikipedia article. One example is looking at the time the edit of an article survives. When this idea was researched it was found not to be the case. Many errors were found in the first edits which were often left and it was decided that this was not a good way to judge accuracy.

Example 2 (Copied text and only partial acknowledgement of sources - plagiarism)

Various ways have been suggested to determine if a Wikipedia article is reliable. One was to assume that older segments would have been edited more and would be more accurate. According to Luyt et al. (2007) this is not the case as there are a high proportion of errors in the first edits which tend to remain.

A Good Example (Acceptable paraphrasing and correct citation)

Judging Wikipedia content as a source of reliable information is a difficult undertaking and there have been a number of methods proposed apart from simply relying on peer review. One such method suggested that the older the material, the more likely it was that any inaccuracies would have been corrected by editing (Cottrell, 2012). This theory was tested but was disproved, when researchers discovered that there were many errors in the original edits of the articles and that these were not often subsequently corrected. (Luyt et al., 2007 cited in Cottrell, 2012 p.108)

The information provided in this advice sheet is advisory only. The University, its employees or agents cannot be held liable for any loss or detriment suffered as a result of the advice given.

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