Plagiarism – and how to avoid it

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When submitting an assignment you will have to sign a declaration stating that you have not plagiarised. In every school or course handbook you are warned not to plagiarise and informed about the penalties. Most lecturers warn you about plagiarism. But what exactly is PLAGIARISM?

1. **What is plagiarism?**

Plagiarism can be defined as a form of academic misconduct or dishonesty, but to put it bluntly: **Plagiarism is cheating** – passing off somebody else’s efforts as your own. It is a serious academic offence and may lead to failure or even expulsion.

Plagiarism can be:

- Copying another person's work or ideas. This includes copying from other students and from published or unpublished material such as books, journals, internet sources, newspapers, brochures etc.
- Submitting previously submitted or assessed work of your own without attribution
- Submitting work solicited from (or written by) others (friends or a commercial service)
- Failing to adequately reference your sources

While a small number of students plagiarise intentionally in order to get an unfair advantage or cheat, most plagiarism is committed unintentionally when failing to reference sources correctly.

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1 Source: [http://www.kent.ac.uk/ai/students/whatisplagiarism.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/ai/students/whatisplagiarism.html) (with adaptations)
2. **What is referencing?**

Referencing means that you indicate in your text and in your bibliography or list of references at the end of your text the sources you have used or been influenced by. There are **8 different referencing styles** in use at the University of Kent. Check your School’s handbook to find out which style you are supposed to use. The handbook should also give you guidance on how to reference your sources in your assignment and how to compile your bibliography or list of references.

Additionally you can consult the University’s Academic Integrity website at: [http://www.kent.ac.uk/ai/styleguides.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/ai/styleguides.html)

Under *Styles used at Kent* you will find a list of the different styles which link to the recommended online styles guides.

Under *Styles used by School* you can check which style you are supposed to use when producing work for different departments.

**NB:** Students who study across different schools may need to learn how to use different styles. For example: a student studying for a Business and Law joint honours degree will need to master both the *Harvard style* (business) and the OSCOLA style (law).

3. **How can I use my sources?**

As a university student your knowledge and insights are largely based on work produced by others. Your own ideas will be based on, or have developed from, what other people have discovered or suggested. For your assignment you will need to read, consider and extract information from published and unpublished sources. Thus, using other people’s ideas or words is normal standard academic practice. **However,** all sources used must be correctly identified and referenced.

**Using source**

When you read something that you want to use or refer to in your assignment, you can quote, paraphrase or summarise it (e.g. somebody’s idea or theory)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Quote</strong></th>
<th>Repeat word for word (<em>verbatim</em>) a full sentence, a part of a sentence, or a short passage; put it into quotation marks and cite the source.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paraphrase</strong></td>
<td>Repeat in your <em>own words</em> a part of a sentence, a full sentence or a short passage, cite the source. <strong>NB:</strong> Use this the most! Make sure the meaning of what you are paraphrasing stays the same but the structure and wording are different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summarise</strong></td>
<td>Give a shortened version of a sentence or a short passage, cite the source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consult the style guide in your School handbook or on the Academic Integrity Website for more details.

4. **Why is referencing so important?**

Success in Higher Education is based on honesty, hard work and fairness. Universities have the responsibility of educating and training students along these principles (employers expect this from us). As a student you should earn your qualifications and be proud of them. By adhering to the conventions and principles of Academic Integrity you will not only avoid plagiarism but also develop your own academic skills.

Correct referencing means that:

- your arguments will be clearly supported by evidence
- your work will be more convincing
- your reader can find your sources
- your lecturer can see how widely you have read and whether you fully understand the work
- your work will reflect expected academic values and good academic practice
- you can use your own sources for further research in the future

5. **How is plagiarism detected?**

The University of Kent uses the software programme *Turnitin* to assist in the detection of plagiarism which operates via Moodle. Submitted work is matched against a database of previously submitted work from every institution which subscribes to *Turnitin*, (including international institutions), current and archived internet pages and databases of journals and periodicals.

Also, do not underestimate your lecturer’s experience and familiarity with sources as well as with student writing.

6. **Still confused? Want to know more?**

Referencing is very confusing and learning to reference your sources correctly and to your best advantage will take time. The Academic Integrity website also provides information on how to avoid plagiarism and how to achieve good academic practice.

Additionally, you may like to attend one of our workshops on Essay Writing or Avoiding Plagiarism, for more information see:

- [http://www.kent.ac.uk/student/skills/canterbury/index.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/student/skills/canterbury/index.html) (Canterbury)
- [http://www.kent.ac.uk/student/skills/medway/index.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/student/skills/medway/index.html) (Medway)

Should you still be unclear about referencing, when and where to insert references, when to quote and when to cite, get in touch with the Student Learning Advisory Service and ask to see a learning advisor.

Do not submit an assignment if you are unsure about your referencing, ‘hoping for the best’ might be too risky.