

Don't gamble with your future



Plagiarism *constitutes* misconduct

Acting with integrity

Plagiarism and how to avoid it

All members of the academic community around the world, whatever our subject disciplines, are committed to the creation and discovery of knowledge and the free exchange of ideas. This ideal relies on a common understanding of the notion of **academic honesty**, which, at its simplest, means never falsifying the results of any research and always giving **full credit** to other people's contributions to our own achievements.

Because it is so vital to safeguard academic integrity, a number of conventions need to be observed to avoid unintentionally committing a serious academic offence.

Dishonest academic conduct constitutes serious misconduct, whether it occurs orally, by conduct or in writing, during examinations or in the context of other forms of assessment such as assignments, theses, as well as in reports and publications.

The policy of the University is that **no** form of academic dishonesty shall be tolerated, and if any such conduct is reported or detected, the perpetrator upon being found guilty shall be punishable in terms of the University's disciplinary policies, rules and procedures.

For the NWU link to plagiarism go to:
http://www.nwu.ac.za/export/sites/default/nwu/gov_man/policy/2P-2.4.3.2-academic_dishonesty_e.pdf



A form of academic misconduct

Traditionally, plagiarism is defined as the taking of words, images, ideas, etc. from an author and presenting them as one's own. It is often associated with phrases such as 'kidnapping of words', 'kidnapping of ideas', 'fraud', and 'literary theft'.

Plagiarism can manifest itself in a variety of ways and it is not confined to student papers or published articles or books.

Of course, with the growth of the internet it is not just printed works that can be used. *Cutting and pasting from webpages in itself is regarded as plagiarism in higher education if the webpages are not properly acknowledged and cited.*

"taking over the ideas, methods, or written words of another, without acknowledgment and with the intention that they be taken as the work of the deceiver."

*American Association of University Professors
(September/October, 1989).*

What about copying big chunks of work, using quotation marks and giving all of them accurate references, and joining them up with a student's own views?

At the level of higher education, you are expected to develop your **own** voice and opinions, building on other people's work rather than sheltering behind it. This would therefore be considered to be bad scholarship, but it is not plagiarism.

“But I didn’t mean to...”

Taking responsibility

Whatever the source of the material or the intended outcome, plagiarism is cheating and unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the word given to a particular kind of academic dishonesty – passing off someone else’s work, ideas or words as your own. It can sometimes be unintentional, particularly when your previous educational experience may have actively encouraged an approach to coursework that centred on the compilation of material from outside sources.

It is important to understand that intention does not have a role to play in the definition of plagiarism. Not MEANING to do it, or not KNOWING you are doing it, is therefore NOT an excuse – and now that you have read this, you are aware of what plagiarism is.

“Plagiarism may take the form of repeating another’s [words] as your own... or even presenting someone else’s line of thinking... as though it were your own. In short, to plagiarise is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from another. Although a writer may use other people’s words and thoughts, they must be **acknowledged** as such.”

(Modern Languages Association (1977). Handbook for writers of research papers, theses and dissertations New York: MLA 5)

The author acknowledges with appreciation the work of the UK Centre for legal education, Pauline Ridley, University of Brighton, and the University of Pretoria’s Plagiarism Prevention Policy on the topic of academic plagiarism.

Further guidance and help

These guidelines are intended to give basic general information on the nature of plagiarism and to create awareness. Lecturers can offer further guidance on the proper referencing of published works and websites, and any other subject-specific conventions in their discipline.

There is also a wealth of advice available in the library and on the internet to help you understand the principles of proper referencing and how to apply them.



The key to avoiding plagiarism

Be informed! You do not want to be accused of plagiarism, therefore:

- Learn how to write in the style of your discipline. Your writing needs to be **your** writing.
- Learn to think critically and independently. Readers are interested in **your** understanding of an idea. Writing is a valuable exercise that tests your ability to explain a topic. This is an important part of learning.
- Always give the necessary credit to references used. An ethical writer **always** acknowledges the contributions of others and the source of his/her ideas.
- Any verbatim text taken from another author **must** be enclosed in quotation marks, and must be quoted accurately.
- Always acknowledge every source that you use in your writing; whether you paraphrase it, summarise it, or enclose it in quotation marks.
- When paraphrasing and/or summarising others’ work, reproduce the exact meaning of the other authors’ ideas or facts using your own words and sentence structure.
- Responsible writers have an ethical responsibility to readers and to the authors from whom they are borrowing, to respect others’ ideas and words, to credit those from whom they borrow, and whenever possible, to use their **own** words when paraphrasing.

Be smart!

Ensure that you fully understand the definition of plagiarism and familiarise yourself with policies and regulations regarding plagiarism. Though plagiarism is a serious academic offence, if you are clear, careful and honest, you are on the right track. Don’t let the fear of plagiarism keep you from using the rich resources available to their full extent.

Turnitin.com and Research Resources provide a checklist for avoiding plagiarism.* Look up http://www.plagiarism.org/resources/documentation/plagiarism/learning/preventing_plagiarism_students.doc

Learning how to make proper and responsible use of available work in developing your **own** understanding of a subject is the heart of academic life. Reading good scholarly work should also give you useful examples and models of good practice, and you should actively look out for ways in which these may help you improve your **own** writing.

A final word: if in doubt, **ask!**

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