



# Plagiarism and Academic Integrity<sup>1</sup>

---

## 1. What is Plagiarism?

- 1.1. Plagiarism is taking material created by someone else and passing it off as one's own original work. Plagiarism can take many different forms, but you must remember that if any passages in a work which you submit as your own contain words or phrases, data or information (other than common knowledge) from somebody else without properly citing your source, you are guilty of plagiarism if the intended reader would, in all the circumstances, assume that those passages articulate your own thoughts or discoveries. You are guilty of plagiarism if you copy an entire essay or problem sheet, if you intersperse your own text with unattributed quotations from published or unpublished primary or secondary sources, or if you paraphrase material without crediting it in the manner customary in your discipline. Copying from a friend or colleague is unacceptable; it is also unacceptable academic practice to copy, without citation, from public sources such as books, journals, or the internet. Unauthorised collaboration with another party (known as 'collusion') is also a form of plagiarism.
- 1.2. It is crucial for you to realize that plagiarism applies not only to work submitted for public examinations, but to any work you do, including Collections and your tutorial assignments. Your weekly or fortnightly essays, problem sheets or other tasks must be your own original work unless collaboration is authorised by your tutor.

## 2. Acquiring Good Working Practices

- 2.1. A key feature of the tutorial system is that you will submit work to your tutor, on a weekly or fortnightly basis. The type of work will differ according to the discipline in which you work. Essays are used almost universally in the arts and social sciences, but are also common in many of the natural sciences. You may, however, also be expected to complete problem sheets, or produce translations, or commentaries. It is very important that the work you produce should be your own, and that you should familiarize yourself from an early stage with the practices and conventions pertinent to your subject.
- 2.2. When you quote or paraphrase material you must always attribute your source. The rules of citation vary from subject to subject. College regulations are not the place to summarize subject-specific rules: it is the responsibility of all graduate and undergraduate students to consult the guidelines and protocols found on faculty or departmental websites, or in the relevant course handbooks or equivalent. If in doubt, subject tutors should be consulted. There are, however, some general rules for safeguarding the academic integrity of your work.
  - i. Always acknowledge the source from which you drew a verbatim quotation (no matter how brief), an idea or insight upon which you rely or with which you engage intellectually, a piece of information or data which you use unless it is a

---

<sup>1</sup> Version 4.4, November 2015.

matter of common knowledge in your discipline and standard publications in your discipline commonly state it without attribution of sources;

- ii. Familiarize yourself with the conventions applying to your discipline; if need be, ask your tutor or supervisor to explain how to quote or attribute;
- iii. Be meticulous in how you attribute; verbatim quotations from primary or secondary sources are obvious forms requiring citation, but the same rules of intellectual honesty apply to paraphrased material, summaries, theories, concepts, calculations, or anything that is not common knowledge in your discipline and publications in your discipline commonly state such matter without attribution of sources.
- iv. Do not think that you can get away with copying the language, data or ideas of somebody else by listing your source in the general bibliography: this will not relieve you from the charge of plagiarism. Proper acknowledgement of quotations, data or information from any source, whether published or unpublished, must be made for each specific use.
- v. Unauthorised collaboration is another form of academic misconduct: never assume you are allowed to hand in a joint piece of work unless you have received specific permission to do so.

### **3. Plagiarism Arising from Poor Working Practices**

3.1. Poor working practices can lead to unintentional plagiarism. All spring, to a greater or less extent, from laziness, poor organisational skills, untidiness, or lack of academic rigour. The most prevalent pitfalls are the following:

- i. *Poor note taking*  
This occurs when you fail to record adequate details of your sources; this can lead to two possible damaging consequences: one is that sometimes copied text can begin to look so familiar to you that you no longer remember that the wording or ideas are not your own; alternatively, you may be unable to recall their provenance; either way, you may fail to acknowledge their source, and will thus have plagiarised. (The third possibility is, of course, that time is wasted revisiting sources already consulted).
- ii. *Cutting and pasting without due care*  
Creating and revising work on your computer is easy and fast, but also dangerous. One version may have included proper citation and attribution; the next one may have lost vital quotation marks and footnotes. Check all versions before you hand in your work, lest you have inadvertently failed to cite your sources, thereby plagiarising.
- iii. *Poor citation practices*  
You may not have intended to deceive anyone, but unless you carefully check your own work to ensure that all quoted words or phrases (or, indeed, longer passages) are placed within quotation marks or indented, and all paraphrases have been clearly signalled and full bibliographical details have been made available to enable your readers to check your sources, you will be guilty of

plagiarism if the intended reader would, in all the circumstances, assume that those passages articulate your own thoughts or discoveries

iv. *Different cultural traditions*<sup>2</sup>

It is not a defence to argue that you were trained in a different cultural context, with different rules and conventions. As a student of Oxford University and University College, you are bound by the rules of your current institution, and it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with them and to comply with them.

#### **4. Why Is Plagiarism Wrong?**

- 4.1. Plagiarism is a form of intellectual dishonesty. By passing off others' work as his or her own, the plagiarist gains an advantage that is not deserved, or at least misleads the intended reader. Plagiarism in the tutorial context is unacceptable because tutors devote their time, in good faith, to furthering students' education by teaching which is tailored to the individual student, and plagiarised work seriously misleads the tutor about that student's level of understanding and competence.

#### **5. The Penalties for Plagiarism**

- 5.1. Plagiarism comes within the scope of the College's rules on academic misconduct. Students need to be aware that the penalties for plagiarism in assignments they submit to their tutors can be as severe as the penalties for plagiarism in work submitted for Public Examinations. Disciplinary measures in respect of plagiarism are aimed at a form of academic misconduct, not merely a failure or default in academic work or performance. Where a serious case of plagiarism is proved, the junior member found guilty of this offence may be subject to severe disciplinary measures, including banning, rustication, sending down or expulsion. Buying essays from a professional organisation or writing for such an agency are instances of gross academic misconduct.
- 5.2. The penalties for misconduct also differ from those for underperformance in that they can be imposed with immediate effect. The detailed disciplinary procedures to be followed in the case of detection of plagiarism are set out in the Academic Disciplinary Procedure (ADP).

---

<sup>2</sup> See in particular the Princeton guidelines on cultural differences in this regard at <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/pages/plagiarism.html>