

PLAGIARISM

The issue of plagiarism is important to good writing, especially at University. Thus, this Communications book begins by defining and explaining the common ways people fall into the problem of plagiarism. Avoiding plagiarism is, however, also a matter of being a careful writer: so take special note of the last part of this section.

You might have noticed that in both the School of Commerce Handbook and in the Adelaide University Handbook of Academic Programs Part 1 there are sections devoted to plagiarism. You can see that the University has stated “Plagiarism is a serious act of academic misconduct.” Plagiarism is also defined for you in the Commerce Handbook.

1. PLAGIARISM DEFINED

What does it really mean for you? The following sections (to be read in conjunction with pages 18-19 of the 2001 Handbook) consider the definitions more closely.

Subsection (i) What this section means is that if you “present substantial extracts... without clearly indicating their origin” you have *copied directly* phrases and passages without using quotation marks and without a reference. These phrases and passages might have been copied directly from your text books, books borrowed from the library, journals, articles, or working papers, seminar or conference papers, lecture notes, information stored on computers or other students’ work.

Subsection (ii) If you use “very close paraphrasing... without due acknowledgement” it means that you have used someone else’s words, phrases and passages in a way which is very similar to their original form and have presented it as your own without a reference.

Subsection (iii) Similar to subsection (i) in that if you “quote directly from a source and fail to insert quotation marks” you have *copied* some other piece of work. Note that in this situation giving just a reference to the author is not sufficient acknowledgement.

These forms of plagiarism can arise in two ways. Firstly, through not making an effort and secondly, through a lack of care when you are doing your reading and research for your assignment.

If you copy down phrases and passages straight out of your source material, you might think that it is easier than the more difficult task of writing things in your own words. After all, composition is hard work. Or you might think that the author has said it so much better than you ever can, so why waste time trying?

If you take notes from your reading in the form of copying down phrases, sentences or paragraphs, and don’t properly record that these were in fact someone else’s (with quotation marks and a reference), then you might forget where they come from when you write up your assignment and you will use them as your own ideas.

Later in this chapter you will find some guidance on how to avoid these forms of plagiarism. In the meantime, consider this. You might be tempted to use phrases, sentences and paragraphs from a source without acknowledging that they were someone else's ideas. Students often think "I'm sure that the lecturer won't have read that or won't remember where that idea came from". Wrong! Lecturers know their subjects inside out and are extremely well read and up to date. They know who said what about such and such, and they will recognise the source. They are also well practised in discerning sudden changes in the style of writing where you have switched from using your own words to using someone else's words.

Section 4. Related forms of cheating

These are explained in a straightforward manner in **subsections i, ii, and iii**. First, you must not hand in any work that is written for you by another student. Second, you must not submit work that you have copied from another student. Third, two students must not hand in the same piece of work.

Copying the work of another student can occur deliberately or inadvertently. Do not get involved under any circumstances with deliberate copying. It is nothing more than cheating. Both the student who does the copying and the student who permits his or her work to be copied may be given zero for the assignment.

Inadvertent copying can occur if you ask someone to hand in your assignment for you because you can't make it to the Commerce office that day. You might be the innocent victim of someone who hasn't done the assignment. Avoid giving the final copy of your assignment to anyone else to hand in. Nor should you give your computer disk to anyone else and ask him or her to print your assignment.

Please be careful with your assignments written on the computers in the Computing Lab. It's best not to leave your computer unattended with your assignment up on the screen. Make sure that when you have copied your latest version onto your floppy disk, you remember to delete it from d: drive (formerly v: drive). Take the discarded printouts of your work home with you, rather than leaving them in the rubbish bin.

Students must not hand in the same piece of work that someone else is also handing in, for separate assessment. (This does not include group work that is assessable as a group). This includes assignments that you might have worked on together. It is quite acceptable for you to work together discussing assignments - for example interpretation of the question, problems, possible solutions and so on. But, you must not prepare your spreadsheets or your written work together and hand it up as independent work. Make sure your writing is your own. Students who hand in the same piece of work may both be given zero for their assignments.

Subsections iv, v and vi are explained in a straightforward manner. They deal with the same work handed in for two different subjects and cheating in the exams.

In sum, we now know that plagiarism is considered to be cheating. But students (and others) usually do it because they do not know what is expected for the assignment, there

are no models, nor instructions provided. *If you are in doubt about what your tutors expect for the assignment, please ask them. They are nice people and that is what they are there for.*

The penalties for plagiarism can be severe. You can fail an assignment, which might cause you to fail the whole subject. Further disciplinary action may be taken by the Board of Conduct under Chapter XVII and XII of the University Statutes

2. AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

The following material has been prepared by Carol Johnson, Head of the Politics Department. It is reproduced here with her permission.

The following examples of how to use your own words when writing assignments are designed to assist students who are having difficulty putting material into their own words.

The original passages are from a policy speech by Paul Keating, Leader of the Australian Labor Party, during the 1993 Federal Election. These passages have been reproduced at the end of this chapter so that you may compare the examples of good writing with the original quotations.

WHAT NOT TO DO!

This paragraph just strings together quotations and does not use the student's own words sufficiently.

Keating (1993) argues that unemployment is “overwhelmingly, the principal concern of the Government.” While they’ve been able “to achieve more economic growth than most other comparable countries”, it hasn’t been enough to generate sufficient employment. (Keating, 1993). Consequently, the Government’s “strategy is designed to assist recovery in business. Under Labor, business will pay a tax of 33 per cent on profits compared with 42 percent promised by the Opposition” (Keating, 1993). There will also be a business allowance of up to 20 percent covering investment over the future two years (Keating, 1993).

This paragraph includes examples of plagiarism because it does not use quotation marks - see above for where they should be.

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GOOD EXAMPLES

This paragraph uses a good combination of quoting and putting things in the student's words.

Keating acknowledges that unemployment is still “the greatest problem we face” and the government’s “principal concern”, despite his government’s success at achieving high levels of economic growth by international standards (Keating, 1993, p 6). However, he argues that an ALP government would be able to increase employment by providing greater incentives for business to invest. In order to achieve this aim, an ALP government would provide generous investment allowances for business and substantially reduce the business tax rate. Indeed, Keating claims that the tax on profit under a Labor government would be 11% lower than under a Coalition government (Keating, 1993, p 6)

This paragraph make good use of the student’s own words.

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