

Plagiarism and how to avoid it

MSc International Health
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Some important qualifiers

- The distinction between deliberate plagiarism (cheating) and non-deliberate.
- Not as 'black and white' as is sometimes suggested. (Judging what is deliberate/non-deliberate; what is 'common knowledge' etc.)
- We (and most universities) don't spend enough time teaching students how to develop good academic writing skills
- Make use of resources on offer at Queen Mary

Resources

- [One to one academic study skills tutorials](#)
- Familiarise yourself with the suggested resources given with formative assignment guidelines
- Ask your academic supervisor for general advice on study and writing skills
- Northedge A (2005) The Good Study Guide. Milton Keynes, Open University. Chs 10 and 11 on academic writing.
- QM online module on plagiarism and how to avoid it: <http://www.learninginstitute.qmul.ac.uk/elearning/support/turnitin/turnitin-students/>

Short film introducing plagiarism by Jude Carroll
<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/podcast/wheatley/ep6.html>

Key messages from Jude Carroll

- Become an author. Develop your academic voice
- Make notes in your own words
- Make your own meaning from your own understanding
- Develop skills in paraphrasing, summarising and quoting (we will practice these skills in this session)
- Make sure you cite and reference all your sources

[Where do you draw the line?](#)

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing is not easy – practice as much as you can
 - Think carefully about what the author is saying
 - Develop your own academic voice
- You MUST:
- Rewrite the original language, AND
 - Change the original sentence structure, AND
 - Cite the source within your text and include it in your list of references at the end
- If you retain even a short phrase or distinctive word from the author's original, you MUST indicate this by using quotation marks.

Summarising

- Cut text down to its essential or core message
- Shorter than original and doesn't usually include quotations
- Give a general picture of the information (rather than remain specific and precise as in paraphrasing)
- You MUST still cite your source

Example of summarising

Original
It is not uncommon to encounter sentences which, though they contain a great number of words and are constructed in a highly complex way, nonetheless turn out on inspection to convey very little meaning of any kind.

Summary
Some long and complicated sentences mean very little.

Using quotations

- Can range from a single word to a short paragraph
- If the quotation is less than one sentence, keep it in the main text and use quotation marks, followed by author and date.
- For long quotations, quote should be indented from main text. Generally, still use quotation marks
- If you omit any of the original text, indicate by (...)
- Don't overuse quotes. An essay should be largely in your own words. Use them sparingly
- Show that you UNDERSTAND your quotations by commenting on them.
- Make clear WHY you have used a quotation (ask yourself: why is it better to quote than to put something in my own words?)

Common knowledge

Information that is so generally accepted and commonly known that it can't be claimed to be the property of one person or source.

Example:
The sky is blue ✓

The sky is blue due to a process called Rayleigh scattering. Short wavelength light, which is blue in colour, is absorbed by gas molecules in the atmosphere and then scattered across the sky, so the sky looks blue. (Science made simple, 1997) X

Working with others

You are encouraged to work with others to:

- Clarify your understanding of the requirements of an assignment
- Share sources such as books, journal papers etc.
- Explore ideas and critique theories that you are developing
- Reflect on experiences
- Ask someone who has English as their first language to read through a draft to check spelling, grammar etc.
- Approach a tutor to ask for clarification of the task set and GENERAL advice on assignment writing
- Discuss expectations for an assignment as a group with tutors in seminars (public rather than private dialogue)

Working with others

You MUST not:

- Copy any part of another student's work
- Ask anyone to write any part of your assignment for you
- Expect your academic supervisor or module tutor to give detailed feedback on a draft of your assignment

Turnitin

- STAFF, not the system, make judgements about whether or not a student has plagiarised.
- Some exact matches are inevitable – can be an indication of becoming familiar with the terminology of the discipline
- Use Turnitin as a learning tool

Using Turnitin as a learning tool

- Use it to see what you are doing RIGHT, as well as what you are doing wrong.
- Ask yourself questions for each of the quotations that Turnitin has highlighted
- Practice paraphrasing or summarising text that Turnitin has highlighted as 'plagiarised'.
- Are there examples of common words or phrases, or 'common knowledge' that you can defend having used?
- Work in pairs to look at examples of Turnitin reports you have brought along
