

A guide to understanding plagiarism

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is when a student fails to reference work that is not their own. You must reference any sources that you use to inform your work. You must not only reference written text but also other media, such as illustrations, graphs, grids and any other work that you have not created.

It is important to make sure that you clearly reference all of the sources that you have used within any work that you produce, using the correct referencing structure and making sure that all references are full and correct (including all online materials and acknowledging any external sources that have impacted the content of your work). There are

different ways that you can plagiarise work, it is important that you are aware of these ways so that you can learn how to reference work properly and avoid plagiarism.



Quotations

You must always use speech marks to show that you are using someone else's ideas and words. Depending on the length of the quote and the referencing system that you are using, you can use indentation to make it clear to the reader what is your work and what work you are quoting.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is when you re-write someone else's work by changing their sentence structure and wording. Paraphrasing is classed as plagiarism, you are making the idea look like it is your own, as you are not referencing that it is someone else's work. Instead, you should summarise what you have read in your own words, rather than paraphrasing chunks of text. This will also help you understand more clearly as the process of summarising will help you pick out key points and ideas within a section of text.

Cutting and pasting

Information taken from all sources must be properly referenced, this includes information taken from online sources. As information available on the internet could have potentially have been written by anyone (with no particular facts used to form their argument) it is extremely important to reference where you have found your information.

Group-work agreement

When creating work in a group it is important to be clear about which parts of the work you, and other people have created. When the work is submitted to the tutor, it has to be clear to them who has done each section so that the correct individual can be credited correctly.

Inaccurate references

It is very important that your references are correct and accurate, you must only reference books (and other resources) that you have read. If you didn't find the information from its original source, you should try to find the original place where it came from. If you cannot do this, make sure that the text has come from a reliable secondary source.

Outside agencies

There are many companies that will offer to write a piece of work for you. Submitting a piece of work written by anyone but you is plagiarism.

Auto-plagiarism

You must not submit any work that has already been submitted before, particularly if the work has been awarded a grade, this applies to full essays and sections of essays alike. This is often not seen as an obvious form of plagiarism as it is your own work, however it becomes plagiarism when a student tries to submit their own work again without making any significant changes or referencing that it was previously submitted and referencing it.

Unintentional plagiarism

Sometimes a student can plagiarise unintentionally, although the plagiarism is unintentional there could still be serious consequences for the student.

Avoiding plagiarism

The best way to avoid a situation where you have been found to plagiarise work this is to make sure that you have read the plagiarism policy and reference all sources correctly. If you are not sure how to do this contact the tutor who has set you the work.

References

Developed from original works from:

University of Oxford. (2013). *What is plagiarism?*. Available:

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/goodpractice/about/>. Last accessed 14/02/2014.