

**ACADEMIC GUIDANCE 4b:**

**PLAGIARISM:  
A Student Guide**

**2011-2012**

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Studying at university involves learning and developing many new skills, most of which will be used for assessment but others may be transferrable skills that you will be able to make use of when you graduate. Because of this, there is an expectation that you will take an 'academic' approach to your learning which means that as you progress through your programme of study you will become increasingly more competent at finding information, reading it and making sense of it in order to use the ideas of others for your assessed work. The ability to undertake independent research aligns with the principles of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK and also demonstrates your personal development to your tutors. Making use of the ideas of others involves certain techniques and procedures including referencing and citing from source materials. Students entering HEIs are not always familiar with these procedures but if they are not correctly applied in assessments it can lead to accusations of plagiarism which is treated very seriously. It is important therefore that you develop good habits while studying at university and avoiding plagiarism is one way to demonstrate that you are conducting your studies with integrity and adopting the principles of good practice that are required in HEIs.

This guide has been prepared by the University's Academic Development Centre to help you begin to understand what plagiarism is and why it is important to avoid it. The guide is principally aimed at undergraduates, however postgraduates should also familiarise themselves with the university's procedures and make sure they understand the penalties that are in place should they be accused of plagiarism. The guide is only a starting point to get you thinking about plagiarism and its related issues.

Further information will be provided by lecturers on your programme of study, information is available in course handbooks and your subject librarian can also provide advice about the specific referencing and citation systems that should be used on your programme of study. It is the university's responsibility to provide plagiarism education, however it your responsibility to apply the correct methods and follow the rules for avoiding plagiarism once you have learnt the appropriate techniques. Therefore, you will be given many opportunities to develop the skills required to avoid plagiarism.

The university recognises that many students entering the UK higher education system may not be aware of what constitutes plagiarism or know about the procedures that are implemented if plagiarism occurs. Therefore, during the initial stage of your programme of study you will be taught about it and any incidences of plagiarism will be treated leniently. However, after the induction period and any incidences of plagiarism will be dealt with according to the university regulations. This is why you need to be aware that the university will not tolerate deliberate attempts to cheat, and it makes no distinction between accidental or deliberate plagiarism which means that all proven cases, whatever the circumstances, will be treated in the same way. So while it is the responsibility of the university to ensure that suitable plagiarism education is offered, once this has taken place you must recognise your responsibilities and ensure that you implement the correct methods for avoiding it. For further information about the university regulations read the "Academic Misconduct procedures document under the link here: [Academic Misconduct Procedures – Taught Courses](#)<sup>11</sup>

## What is Plagiarism?

Kingston University defines plagiarism as:

‘Presenting the work of another person (or people) as one’s own without proper acknowledgement’ (AR6 2011).

This definition applies to the use of written material including direct quotations, summaries and paraphrases. It also applies to the use of other forms of original work, for example, music, art and design works, images, drawings, diagrams, data, computer programmes, ideas and inventions. There are many types of sources that can be used in your assessed work so if you are unsure about whether any material you wish to use needs to be acknowledged it is always best to check with a lecturer on your course.

One of the most common misunderstandings about plagiarism is that it *only* relates to copying without acknowledging the source of ideas. This is not the case and there are many different types of plagiarism that you need to be aware of.

This document provides a brief overview of plagiarism policy, prevention and detection. It has been written as an educational resource to enable you to become more knowledgeable about plagiarism within the Kingston University context. Therefore it is important that you take time to read it because it is your responsibility to learn how to apply the techniques required for avoiding it.

## What are the types of Plagiarism?

### Copying:

This refers to the use of *any* source material without making proper acknowledgement to the author. Any source material includes information from published and unpublished sources such as books, journal articles, websites, other students, in addition to visual and graphic designs and a range of other types of material. If you do plan to *directly* copy from original sources you must acknowledge where it is from by including quotations markers and page numbers.

Plagiarism by copying also occurs when a student copies or reproduces another students’ work, with or without their consent. This means that if you fail to keep your work secure and another student access and uses it by submitting it for credit, without your knowledge or consent you can both be accused of plagiarism. Because of this the university expects all students to take responsibility for the security of their own work by ensuring that other students cannot get access to it.

### Duplication (or self plagiarism):

This refers to the act of presenting part or all of an assignment that has previously been submitted to meet the requirements of a different assessment, except where the nature of assessment makes this permissible for example in group work. Duplication then involves re-use of work that has already received credit elsewhere.

Work that has previously been published in peer reviewed or other academically acceptable contexts can be used (unchanged) by its author in more than one assessment, however it must adhere to the appropriate conventions of citation and referencing. For example, if use of material is word for word it should follow the rules for quotations.

Unpublished work that is not substantially unchanged for second and subsequent usage cannot normally be used for credit unless it part of an Accredited Prior Learning (APL) process.

### **Collusion:**

This concerns collaboration by two or more students presenting a piece of work they have jointly produced without acknowledging the collaboration. Students can be accused of plagiarism by collusion even if they are unaware that their work has been used which is why you should never share your written materials with other students.

Collusion also involves one student presenting work as their own by implying it was independently undertaken when it has been collaboratively produced by a group of students. When undertaking group work all members of the group should ensure the legitimacy of all parts of the work as every member is responsible for the total product. If part of a group assignment is found to contain evidence of plagiarism penalties will be imposed on all members of the group.

### **Purchasing or commissioning:**

This refers to buying an assignment from the internet for example, or by paying another person to produce it, and then submitting it for credit as if it has been self-produced.

It is important to recognise that plagiarism relates to both published and unpublished work, including the work of other students and it is not only failure to indicate when direct quotations are used from books, journal articles and other sources, but also failure to acknowledge the source of summaries, paraphrases or adaptations of the work of others. Therefore, while it is an important part of your academic progress to use the ideas of others in your assignments it must be emphasised that it is failure to acknowledge that constitutes plagiarism.

For further information about the university's academic misconduct procedures read the regulations relating to cheating in examinations or tests, and fabrication or falsification of data, which can be found under the link on page 2 (above).

### **Why is avoiding plagiarism so important?**

The knowledge and ideas that you will encounter in your reading and research have been produced by people. This knowledge is sometimes referred to as intellectual property (IP), which means that the ideas *belong* to the person who created or conceived them. It is important that you understand what IP is in order to make sure that you use it in the correct way for your studies. This is particularly important for postgraduates taking research degrees. Incorrect use of Intellectual property, by not clearly stating that you did not produce it, is regarded as theft in the academic context. Therefore it can be viewed in the same way as taking material possessions without having permission from the person they belong to.

It is important then to think about knowledge and ideas as *belonging* to the author or producer. Kingston University recognises that many students entering higher education have not been exposed to this way of thinking about (and using) ideas. Indeed, it is common practice in some cultures and contexts to use the ideas of others without acknowledging where they came from. This is why students and staff may have different attitudes about how to incorporate ideas into assignments. Therefore, it is important that both students and staff have shared knowledge to ensure that there is consensus about plagiarism rules and regulations and it is important that you comply with them.

### **What actions can I take to avoid plagiarism?**

- **Citations and References:** Citing and referencing from source material is absolutely fundamental for avoiding plagiarism. However there are different methods for doing this so you will be taught the appropriate system for citing and referencing in your discipline. A common rule though is that citations are placed in the main body of the assignment and the references are listed at the end. This means that all citations should match one of the items on the reference list.
- **Different resources:** As you begin to work on your assignments you will be required to select and make use of many different types of resource, for example: books, journals, government documents and online resources. For each type of resource the information you need to include differs. For example, a complete reference for a book includes the name of author, date of publication, title, place of publication and publishers. Whereas for online resources you should always include the URL or web address and the date you accessed the resource in addition to the information you use for books. So it is important that you learn exactly what information is required for different source types.
- **Using online resources:** You will be encouraged to make use of the World Wide Web for accessing materials to include in your assignments. However, some sites are better than others for finding articles, books and so on. Therefore you should work closely with your tutors to identify the online resources that are acceptable and those that are not. It takes time to develop the skills needed to identify good quality materials on the web but your tutors can help you with this. So remember, **if in doubt ask!**
- **Using Quotations:** When using direct quotations from source materials you must always include quotation markers and page numbers so that the reader can locate the quote should they wish to check it. While it is acceptable to use quotes to support your ideas and provide evidence that you have read about those ideas, try to use them sparingly because using too many quotes will impact on how your work is perceived. For this reason, it is better to learn how to paraphrase and summarise the ideas from the sources you use. If you find it difficult to paraphrase or summarise materials, speak to an academic skills advisor in your faculty who can help you to develop the appropriate techniques to improve the way you work with source materials.

- **Summaries and paraphrases:** If you summarise or paraphrase from source materials you do not need to include quotation marks but must always acknowledge where the ideas are from by including a citation.
- **Using secondary sources:** It is important to recognise the distinction between primary and secondary sources. Primary ideas are those that belong to the person who created the ideas in a single author book for example. However, it is likely that the author of that book will use the ideas of others' to support the points they make, these are known as secondary ideas. It is very important that you learn how to cite secondary sources correctly so that the right person is acknowledged. Tutors, subject librarians and academic advisors can help with this.
- **Group Work:** At times in your programme of study you may be asked to produce work as part of a group. While it is sometimes the case that an individual assignment is required for assessment, at other times you may need to produce the assignment as a group. If the assignment is to be individually produced you must make sure that the work is all your own and is not influenced by other members of the group as this can lead to accusations of collusion.
- If the assignment is to be produced as a group, it is very important that you work together to ensure that all source materials that have been used by each member of the group are acknowledged. Remember it has your name on it, so if one member plagiarises all members will be accused of plagiarism and dealt with accordingly.

### **Using common sense knowledge:**

At times you might use information or ideas that do not need to be acknowledged. This is because they are common sense ideas that anyone might know. For example it is common knowledge that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris. However, it is not always this easy to know what is or is not common knowledge.

### **How do I decide whether or not a piece of information requires acknowledgement?**

Ask yourself the following questions:

*i) Did I know this information before I started my course of study?*

If you did know about it, did you learn it as part of a previous course?

If you learnt it as part of a previous course, you should cite the source.

*ii) Did I learn it as part of my course?*

If you learnt about it as part of the course you are taking then you should acknowledge the source.

**One more thing to consider:**

As you progress through your course of study you will become more familiar with general concepts, theories and ideas. This makes arriving at a decision about whether or not to include a citation even more difficult because you will begin to know the ideas and so it may become more difficult to evaluate whether they constitute common sense knowledge. If you are unsure about whether you need to acknowledge a source speak to a lecturer on your course as they can help you decide what to do.

**Understanding what is required for assessment:**

There are many stages to your academic development and the knowledge you acquire will be assessed at various points of a module or whole course. As you move through your programme of study, whether it is a one year or five year course, your **knowledge, understanding and ability to evaluate, synthesise and analyse** ideas and knowledge will be tested in many ways.

**Using Feedback:**

Your tutors will help you to develop these skills and one way of doing this is by giving you constructive feedback about your progress. It is important that you use this feedback because it is intended to help you become more self-aware about your learning requirements and to help you become more autonomous in the learning process.

**Citing sources is a good thing:**

Being able to find and use knowledge and ideas, to describe them, summarise them, order them and argue around them is a very important part of your education. Your tutors will value the fact that you can find, use and cite knowledge and ideas generated by others.

**Becoming an independent learner:**

It is likely that the knowledge and ideas delivered on your programme of study will become increasingly more complex as you progress through a course. In order to understand and make use of complex ideas it is recommended that you read around a topic by drawing on a wider and wider range of sources as you progress through your course. It is also likely that you will be required to generate your own ideas by developing and writing extended projects or dissertations at the end of your programme of study. If this is the case you will be dealing with lots of material and it can then become difficult to know where the ideas you plan to use have come from.

**Keeping good notes and records:**

The best way to demonstrate that you have not plagiarised all or a part of an assignment is to keep your rough work, notes and copies of any sources you have used. This will help you to locate where ideas are from when you produce your work.

If you plan to use quotations, make sure you include the page numbers in your records as you will need to include them in your work. If you plan to paraphrase or summarise ideas, make sure you keep the complete reference for every source you use. You should also keep your notes on original sources and ideally keep copies of the actual sources.

### **Why is it important to keep good notes?**

Apart from being able to find source materials and develop your ideas about them, it is your responsibility to be able to demonstrate that you have not plagiarised. Rough work and notes might include first versions of any work you have produced. For example, early drafts of written work, art and design work such as sketches, developmental aspects of computer programmes, and so on. These drafts can be used to demonstrate that *you* have developed the ideas you have used in your assignments and if you have a record of where the information you have used is from, you can demonstrate this if you are accused of plagiarism.

### **Detection of Plagiarism:**

It is often easy for tutors to detect plagiarism because they create the reading lists used on your course and may provide additional information about those sources in lectures and tutorials. Therefore, it is likely that they will know about the ideas you use in your assignments and accordingly will be able to identify plagiarised material.

An additional detection tool is Turnitin which helps with text matching. Therefore if a source you have used can be located anywhere on the World Wide Web, Turnitin will be able to identify whether your work matches any of those texts. So your work can be screened using text matching software and if you have not acknowledged the source of *any* of the material in your work it will be identified.

### **An additional point to note:**

It is likely that you will be required to sign a declaration that you have not plagiarised when you submit your work in hard (paper) copy. The university takes plagiarism and cheating very seriously so make sure that when you sign the declaration you are being honest and acting with academic integrity.

### **Things to remember:**

- Plagiarising the work and ideas of others is a very serious form of cheating
- It is an expectation in higher education that you will clearly acknowledge where the ideas and knowledge you use in your assignments has come from
- Plagiarism penalties will be imposed after you have been given an opportunity to develop the skills to avoid it
- Being able to select, evaluate, synthesise and analyse sources is a good thing
- Make sure you understand the procedures that are required for all individual assignments
- When doing group work, make sure you know the rules for the assessment and check that every member can identify where their sources are from
- Keep rough work, notes, copies of sources etc., to be able to demonstrate originality
- It is your responsibility to be able to show you have not plagiarised
- Plagiarism will not be tolerated and all suspected cases of plagiarism will be investigated and if proven will be dealt with according to university rules and regulations
- Plagiarism can be detected

### **Finally:**

- If you have any concerns about plagiarism in your work you can take it to an academic skills centre where the advisors can identify it and advise you about how to correct it **before you submit the work**.
- **Seek Advice:** If you are not sure how to cite the work of others you can get information from: lecturers; academic skills advisors and subject librarians.

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