

## What is plagiarism and how to avoid it<sup>1</sup>

Plagiarism is defined as the unacknowledged use of the work of others as if this were your own original work. A student may be found guilty of an act of plagiarism irrespective of intent to deceive.

### The scope of plagiarism

a) Plagiarism may be due to:

- copying (using another person's language and/or ideas as if they are your own);
- collusion (unauthorized collaboration).

b) Methods include:

- quoting directly another person's language, data or illustrations without clear indication that the authorship is not your own and due acknowledgement of the source;
- paraphrasing the critical work of others without due acknowledgement – even if you change some words or the order of the words, this is still plagiarism if you are using someone else's original ideas and are not properly acknowledging it;
- using ideas taken from someone else without reference to the originator;
- cutting and pasting from the Internet to make a 'pastiche' of online sources;
- colluding with another person, including another candidate (other than as might be permitted for joint project work);
- submitting as part of your own report or dissertation someone else's work without identifying clearly who did the work (for example, where research has been contributed by others to a joint project).

c) Plagiarism can occur in respect to all types of sources and all media:

- not just text, but also illustrations, musical quotations, computer code etc;
- not just text published in books and journals, but also downloaded from websites or drawn from other media;
- not just published material but also unpublished works, including lecture handouts and the work of other students.

### Self-plagiarism

If an essay or dissertation builds on previous work, it is essential that this is clearly identified in the text and is appropriately referenced, as if it were written by a different person. The assessors should be in no doubt as to what work the student has completed in their current degree course and it is this that will be assessed.

When submitting coursework, students will be asked to declare that no part of their work has already been submitted, or is being submitted, for any other qualification.

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<sup>1</sup> The text has been published as [Plagiarism Guidelines](#) obliged to students of the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge.

## **How to avoid plagiarism**

The stylistic conventions for different subjects vary and you should consult your supervisor about the conventions pertaining in a particular subject area. However, the main points are:

- When presenting the views and work of others, include in the text an indication of the source of the material (e.g. ...as Sharpe (1993) has shown,...) and give the full details of the work quoted in your bibliography.
- If you quote text verbatim, place the sentence in inverted commas and give the appropriate reference - e.g. 'The elk is of necessity less graceful than the gazelle' (Thompson, 1942, p 46) - and give the full details in your bibliography as above.

If you wish to set out the work of another at length so that you can produce a counter-argument, set the quoted text apart from your own text (e.g. by indenting a paragraph) and identify it by using inverted commas and adding a reference as above.

If you are copying text, keep a note of the author and the reference as you go along, with the copied text, so that you will not mistakenly think the material to be your own work when you come back to it in a few weeks' time.

If you reproduce an illustration or include someone else's data in a graph include the reference to the original work in the legend:

- e.g. (figure redrawn from Webb, 1976),
- or (triangles = data from Webb, 1976).

If you wish to collaborate with another person on your project, you should check with your supervisor whether this might be allowed and then seek permission.

If you have been authorised to work together with another candidate or other researchers, you must acknowledge their contribution fully in your introductory section. If there is likely to be any doubt as to who contributed which parts of the work, you should make this clear in the text wherever necessary.

- e.g. I am grateful to A. Smith for analysing the sodium content of these samples.

Be especially careful if cutting and pasting work from electronic media; do not fail to attribute the work to its source. If authorship of the electronic source is not given, ask yourself whether it is worth copying.

## **The golden rule**

The examiners must be in no doubt as to which parts of your work are your own original work and which are the rightful property of someone else.

If you are not sure if your text is work of plagiarism, consult your paper with your teacher or supervisor.