

Avoiding Coursework Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

Advice for Students

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Both academic misconduct and plagiarism are considered to be serious forms of misbehaviour at universities throughout the world, and students who engage in such misbehaviour run the risk of receiving penalties ranging from a loss of marks to, in severe cases, expulsion from the University. You do not want to find yourself in this position! Fortunately, academic misconduct and plagiarism are easy to avoid if you follow a few simple principles. The Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct self-test module will already have prepared many of you to deal with these issues, and this document can act as a refresher for you and as primary advice for those who have not yet undertaken the self-test module. You should read this document in conjunction with the actual *Coursework Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct Rules*. The *Rules* tell you about what is considered to be academic misconduct and plagiarism at UNE, and they also tell you about the sorts of penalties that may be handed down and the processes and procedures that are to be followed. You are required to be familiar with these *Rules* and to abide by them. The *Rules* are the Official Story, and take precedence over related documents such as the one that you are reading right now. This document simply tries to give you some guidance in plain English about avoiding academic misconduct and plagiarism. It is not intended to provide exhaustive explanations.

There is a simple principle that, if you keep it in mind, will go a long way towards helping you to avoid academic misconduct and plagiarism: the principle of *fairness*.

Fairness means being fair both to yourself and to others. Everybody both gives and receives their proper due, and nobody has anything to complain about. Let us take an example of *unfairness*: if you take someone else's work and pass it off as your own, then you are not being fair to the person you took it from because their work receives no recognition or acknowledgement – and you are not being fair to yourself, because you have not given yourself the chance to see if you can do the work independently. Doing the work yourself with due acknowledgement of the work of others should give you far more self-confidence than simply taking it from another source and pretending it is yours, and you should be able to build on this self-confidence to do bigger and better things with your studies and with your life.

Now let us look at some examples of plagiarism and academic misconduct.

Plagiarism

In your academic journey, you will discover that you are often required to do two simple but related things: study the work already done by others, and at the same time show that you are capable of building upon this work in an autonomous way. As the great educator Confucius said, “Anyone who learns but does not think is lost. Anyone who thinks but does not learn is in great danger” (*Lunyu* 2.15¹). You have to show respect both to the original work of those who have come before you (the “learning” to which Confucius refers) and to your own original contribution (the “thinking” of which Confucius speaks). This means that you have to clearly distinguish between your own contribution and the work, words and ideas of others. If you give the impression that what is actually the work of others is your own work, then you are plagiarising – even if you do this unintentionally. So you need to be very careful about proper referencing in the relevant assessment tasks, because plagiarism will be penalised. Remember: fairness means being fair both to others and to yourself.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- Copying any material from books, journals, study notes or recordings, the web, electronic storage media, the work of other students, or any other source without indicating this in a manner appropriate to the discipline;
- Directly quoting or rephrasing ideas from books, journals, study notes or recordings, the web, electronic storage media, the work of other students, or any other source without acknowledging the source of those ideas by footnotes or citations; or
- Conspiring with others to produce work that is presented misleadingly as your own independent work.

¹ “Confucius”, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/confucius/#ConEdu>, first published Wed Jul 3, 2002; substantive revision Tue Sep 5, 2006; accessed 2 December 2009, with “he” replaced by “anyone” in the translation.

The Appendix to the *Rules* is also reproduced at the end of this document, and provides extensive examples of what is considered to count as plagiarism at UNE.

It may also be useful to note the following advice: you are generally expected to *incorporate* sources into your argument in a manner appropriate to your discipline, not to present them *instead of* your argument.

Academic Misconduct

The *Rules* list many types of academic misconduct, but we will take some examples in order to give you a sense of what this term can cover.

Say you are supposed to interview people for an assignment and analyse what they say. If you do not actually interview them but simply make up what they are supposed to have said, then that is academic misconduct: you have fabricated the data, and that can be considered a serious offence. Even if you do interview them but falsify what they say, then that is again academic misconduct. You should be able to see that the same principle can be applied to experiments, statistical data and other types of information such as historical data. So you must not misrepresent, fabricate or falsify information or data.

Many forms of cheating in an examination setting are also considered to be academic misconduct, and can lead to serious consequences for the perpetrator. For example, talking to another person in an examination without permission is considered to be academic misconduct, as is bringing in an unauthorised electronic device (including even a mobile phone). You cannot bring in any unauthorised books, papers or notes, and you are not allowed to get someone else to sit your examination in your place.

What happens if I am accused of Academic Misconduct or Plagiarism?

We naturally hope that this will not happen, but if it does you should read the *Rules* carefully. They tell you about the responsibilities of each party involved, the processes and the timelines.

The following guidelines should help you to avoid plagiarism:

- Write the source on any notes or copies you make from any document or electronic sources such as the internet. The habit of copying or ‘cutting-and-pasting’ text directly from a source as you read is very dangerous. It is easy to forget that the notes you make or excerpts you have ‘cut-and-pasted’ are not your own and to later write them into an essay or report as if they were your own words. Keep details of the sources you have relied upon for each assignment throughout the unit. Plagiarism is often the result of lack of care, poor study and/or poor referencing methods;
- Acknowledge all sources containing the concepts, experiments, performances or results from which you have extracted or developed your ideas, even if you put those ideas into your own words;

- Acknowledge the source of all images you include in your assignments;
- Always use quotation marks or some other acceptable indicator of quotation when quoting directly from a work. It is not enough merely to acknowledge the source;
- Avoid excessive paraphrasing and quoting, even where you acknowledge the source. Instead, read your sources then put them out of sight. Think about the meaning that is important and relevant to you and your task, then write this in your own words. This approach will help improve your writing generally;
- Be familiar with the style of acknowledgment that is recommended for use in each of your units, including the referencing techniques required for information sourced from the internet;
- Be aware of the rules regarding group work and collaboration. Collaboration (appropriately acknowledged) is permitted in the case of team or group projects. It is also permitted in the more general case when the collaboration is limited to the discussion of general strategies or help of a general nature. If you have any doubt about what constitutes authorised (legitimate) and unauthorised collaboration (collusion) for specific assessment tasks, seek advice from your Unit Coordinator;
- Understand that the distinction between what needs to be acknowledged and what is common knowledge is not always clear. As you gain experience you will learn the acceptable practices for acknowledgment in the disciplines in which you study, but while you are learning, always play safe and acknowledge;
- Keep a printed (hard) copy and (where possible) an electronic copy of all of your submitted work to assist you in case you ever need to answer an allegation of plagiarism. This is important for your own protection against possible misuse of your submitted assignment by another student and against possible suspicion of plagiarism if you ever have to resubmit an assignment that has 'gone astray'. If your original assignment has been lost, stolen or damaged, you must be able to produce it again as needed, without undue delay;
- Wherever possible, submit your assignment to TurnItIn (or the equivalent text-matching software in your discipline) before you make the final submission, and look at the report produced on your assignment.

Referencing and Research Guidelines:

Students should refer to the following websites or academic units for further advice and assistance regarding referencing styles and rules and as well as advice on avoiding plagiarism and misconduct:

- UNE Referencing Guide
<http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/students/factsheets/#ref>
- eSKILLS UNE
<http://www.une.edu.au/library/eskillsune/>
- The UNE Academic Skills Office
<http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/>

Relevant fact sheets from the Academic Skills Office are all available at <http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso/students/factsheets/>

In addition, individual Schools at UNE may have their own documentation regarding plagiarism and referencing issues and you should approach your Unit Coordinator for information on these specific documents.

Advice on Use of Internet Sites

The Internet contains both useful information and traps for the unwary.

The advantage of academic books and journals is that the material has been reviewed in manuscript form by experts in the field before publication, and has often been subjected to a further review in academic journals after publication. Unfortunately, many websites do not name the author of the textual material included. This means that the text carries little authority. As with a book or journal article, we need to know 'Who wrote this?' and 'Where did they get that piece of information from?'

Questions to ask about any site on the Web:

- Is the author named?
- If so, does the site tell you about the author's credential and experience?
- Can you confirm the information from books, journals or other websites?
- Be aware that the website may be as biased as any other source. Who owns/runs the website and what are they promoting?
- Has the website been updated recently? Is it out of date?

Sometimes, however, information is posted on websites before publication or instead of publication through regular channels. This means that it is not always clear as to whether or not it is appropriate to employ web-based resources in the production of assignments. If in doubt, you should always closely examine the explicit requirements for an assessment task and/or consult your Unit Coordinator before incorporating web-based references in an assignment.

You should also be aware that the Internet now has extensive and very powerful resources, which university teachers can use to detect electronic plagiarism. UNE staff use text-matching software such as TurnItIn, so do not be misled by the ease with which information can be downloaded from the web and incorporated into an assignment - the risk of discovery is VERY high.

The solution for you is simple and automatically safeguards your integrity: when referencing information in work that you submit, always treat information downloaded from the web with the same caution, respect and proper acknowledgment as you would information from any printed source of other media.

Referencing the Internet

Information from the Web should be cited just like any other source. Find out how to reference information from the Internet using the referencing styles and rules recommended for use in each of your units. Instructions and examples are available also from the UNE Referencing Guide (author-date system) and from the Academic Skills Office fact sheets listed above.

Extract from the Student Coursework Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct Rules

Examples of Prohibited Practices

The following practices constitute examples of **Plagiarism** and are infringements of the University's academic values and policies. This list should be considered as representative and not as exhaustive of possible practices.

Table 1 Examples of Plagiarism

Type	Description		Citation of Sources	Intentional / Inadvertent
Straight/verbatim copying	The writer uses the exact words of the source text without quotation marks	and	Sources are not acknowledged	May be Intentional or Inadvertent plagiarism
	The writer uses the exact words of the source text without quotation marks	and	Sources are acknowledged in a footnote/citation and bibliography/list of references	May be Intentional or Inadvertent plagiarism
	The writer presents diagrams charts, maps, flowcharts, photographs, tables, or other creative works originated by others	and	Sources are not acknowledged	May be Intentional or Inadvertent plagiarism
Incorrect paraphrasing	<i>Sham paraphrasing:</i> The writer takes directly from another text, changing very little from the original text, e.g., only selected words or phrases or the order of phrases	and	Sources are acknowledged	May be Intentional or Inadvertent plagiarism
	<i>Illicit paraphrasing:</i> The writer takes directly from another text, changing very little from the original text, e.g., only selected words or phrases or the order of phrases	and	Sources are not acknowledged	May be Intentional or Inadvertent plagiarism
Intellectual theft	The writer presents substantial concepts, arguments, ideas or	and	Sources are not acknowledged	May be Intentional or Inadvertent plagiarism

Type	Description	Citation of Sources	Intentional / Inadvertent
	information from elsewhere (e.g., published work, television programs, material downloaded from an internet site, staff, colleagues, fellow students)		giarism
	The student submits under their own name work written substantially by another	n/a	Intentional
Collusion	Conspiring with others to produce work that is presented misleadingly as the autonomous work of the student	n/a	Intentional

The following practices constitute examples of **Academic Misconduct** and are infringements of the University's academic values and policies. This list should be considered as representative and not as exhaustive of possible practices.

Table 2 Examples of Academic Misconduct

Type	Description	Examples
Cheating	Any form of cheating in an examination setting	
Bullying	The content of an assessment task has been obtained by the student from another using inappropriate social, emotional or physical pressures	
Ghostwriting	The student knowingly and voluntarily produces or contributes content for an assessment task with the intent of assisting another student to plagiarise, that is, acting as a 'ghostwriter'	
	The content of any assessment task has been written by someone other than the student, but the work, which may have been edited, is submitted without acknowledgment, under the stu-	This includes procuring and submitting work that may be available through various Internet websites offering to produce essays and other documents which may be used or purchased with specif-

Type	Description	Examples
	dent's own name.	ic intent of passing the work off as the student's own intellectual work.
Recycling	The student submits, as a new work, an assessment task that was previously produced and assessed for the same or another unit or award, without appropriate acknowledgment of the fact and without the prior permission of the current Unit Coordinator	
Falsification of data	Data falsification may range from the fabrication of data to inappropriately selective reporting of data. Falsification covers the misleading omission of data as well as the modification of data.	
Abuse of confidentiality	This includes the use or release of information given to one under the understanding of confidentiality	Taking ideas from documents to which access was given, under rules of confidentiality, such as in the reviewing of grant proposals, award applications, manuscripts submitted for publication, scholarly prizes or journals
Violations of rules and regulations concerning the conduct of research	See the <u>Code of Conduct for Research Higher Degrees</u> for information that is also useful for any research component of a coursework award	Violations of federal, state or local government regulations, or University regulations dealing with protection of human and animal subjects, use of dangerous or hazardous substances, improper use of recombinant DNA, and careless handling of radioactive materials.
Misrepresentations in publication	This form of Academic Misconduct involves the publishing or public circulation of material intended to mislead the readers	Misrepresenting data (particularly its origins) or adding or deleting the names of other authors without the latter's consent
Violations of Research-related Property Rights		The deliberate taking or destroying the research related property of others, such as data, research papers, notebooks, equipment, or supplies