

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is using, without acknowledgement, someone else's words, ideas or work.

Introduction

Academic assessments exist to help you learn and to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding. Grades show how fully you have demonstrated this and give you credit for your learning.

Good academic practice is the process of completing your academic work independently and honestly; using the appropriate academic style and with all sources fully attributed according to academic requirements.

When you submit an assignment you are asked to confirm that the work you are submitting is your own and has not been written by anyone else. Whilst you may collaborate with others in studying, **submitted work copied from or written jointly with others is not acceptable, unless collaboration is required in the particular assignment.**

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using, without acknowledgement, someone else's ideas or work.

If you submit an assignment that contains work that is not your own, **without clearly indicating this to the marker** (fully acknowledging your sources using the rules of the specified academic referencing style), you are committing 'plagiarism' and this is academic misconduct. This might occur in an assignment when:

- using a choice phrase or sentence that you have come across or translated from another source
- copying word-for-word directly from a text or other source
- paraphrasing or translating the words from a text or other source very closely
- using text downloaded from the internet, including that exchanged on social networks
- borrowing statistics or assembled facts from another person or source
- copying or downloading figures, photographs, pictures or diagrams without acknowledging your sources
- copying comments or notes from a tutor
- copying from the notes or essays of a fellow student
- copying from your notes, on a text, tutorial, video or lecture, that contain direct quotations from tutors
- using text obtained from assignment writing sites, organisations or private individuals
- paying for work from other sources and submitting it as your own

It is important to understand that if you do not acknowledge fully the sources that have contributed to and informed your work you are misrepresenting your knowledge and abilities. Since this may give you an unfair academic advantage in assessment it is considered to be academic misconduct.

Plagiarism is an offence under the Code of Practice for Student Discipline SD.1.2(a). Where plagiarism is suspected the Open University disciplinary procedures will be followed, as described in the Code of Practice for Student Assessment SA 1.6 and Code of Practice for Student Discipline SD 5.3

NB: Passing on your assignments to others is also an offence under the Code of Practice for Student Discipline SD.1.2(d) and may lead to a penalty as set out in SD 2 Cautions and Penalties in the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

Appendix 1 attached provides some initial guidance on avoiding plagiarism.

Please note that the University uses text comparison software which it applies to assignments, an explanation of this software and how it is used is provided in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1

Guidance:

Although you are encouraged to show the results of your reading by referring to and quoting from works on your subject, copying from such sources without acknowledgement is considered to be plagiarism and will not be accepted by the University.

You must make it clear which words and ideas are yours and which have come from elsewhere.

- If you are using the words that appear in the source i.e. quoting, you must show these words in **quotation marks** accompanied by an **in-text citation/in-text reference**.
- If you are summarising (sometimes called paraphrasing) ideas in a source you must acknowledge these by including an appropriate **in-text citation/in-text reference**.

If you are new to academic study you may find it difficult to understand these academic conventions and this can lead to poor academic practice. In the same way as you want to learn about your chosen area of study, it is equally important that you learn how to write and present your work so that it meets the requirements of good academic practice.

- You should carefully **read all the module specific** advice, especially statements concerning plagiarism and how to reference your sources.
- Make sure you use your tutor's feedback on your assignments which may include how you are using and referencing sources.

Remember:

- Assignments provide a vehicle for assessing your performance during your module and contribute to your overall module result.
- Assignments assist you in understanding your subject and aid your learning on the module.
- When you attempt to use the ideas and terms of the module independently you learn more thoroughly and develop your own writing style.
- You are likely to perform better in examinations if you have learned how to write your own answers to questions in assignments.

Appendix 2

Text comparison software for eTMAs

Plagiarism primarily takes one of two forms:

- i. students misuse of information from the web or other sources, where they 'cut and past' sections of text from these sources directly into their assignments without acknowledging the original source;

and

- ii. students working too closely with one or more individuals to help solve and/or answer an assessed task or question, resulting in the production of a joint answer or solution (whether intentionally or not) to gain an unfair advantage over others in their assignments. This form of plagiarism is called collusion.

To check students are working in a fair and academically appropriate manner, The Open University uses two types of text comparison software to detect potential cases of plagiarism in work that is submitted for assessment. These are:

- CopyCatch which compares work submitted by one student with assignments submitted by all other students on the module (as well as previous presentations of the module where appropriate). CopyCatch is used to check for cases of collusion and/or the use of an assignment that has been made available in a number of ways. CopyCatch produces 'similarity' reports between matched pairs of scripts.
- Turnitin which carries out the equivalent of an internet search, looks for matches between the text included in a piece of work submitted by a student with all forms of information and resources publicly available on the internet. Turnitin is used to check for cases of direct copying, and/or not properly referencing various types of source materials. It can also be used to compare each student's assignments with the module materials and other commonly used or provided references. For each assignment submitted to Turnitin, an 'originality' report is produced showing the percentage of text that matches specific websites.

What happens:

Depending on the questions being asked and the format of the submitted answer, some level of matching between scripts and with other sources is expected. For example you may have used information obtained from other sites and/or scientific papers as a direct quote to support your answer or illustrate a particular point (making sure that you have referenced this in the appropriate and expected manner). Likewise, you will probably use terms and phrases, which can be described as 'common knowledge' within your particular subject area and level of study, which do not need to be referenced, but are likely to arise in a similar format on a number of sites and other students' answers.

The module team will take all such matters into account when reviewing the reports from Turnitin and CopyCatch and deciding whether a student has plagiarised. If there are concerns:

- the module team may decide that some students need further guidance or support to develop their academic writing skills
- the module team may decide that what the reports are showing is more serious, in which case they will refer the matter to the Academic Conduct Officer for consideration

Data Protection:

When using these systems, The Open University will not submit any personal details about you to either of them, although it is likely your work will have your PI number on it from which you can be identified. Furthermore, your work will not be stored on any external system and so will not be accessible to anyone outside of The Open University.