

University of Lincoln Students' Union

Little Black Book of Plagiarism

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What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a form of cheating, and most commonly occurs within course assessments which are completed independently by students. There are different extents of plagiarism, for example copying an entire assignment, copying sections of someone else's work or a textbook, to as little as paraphrasing a source without referencing it. It is sometimes also referred to as academic dishonesty, using work that is not yours for credit in modules.

Under the University Regulations, plagiarism is classed as:

“ the passing off of another person's thoughts, ideas, writings or images as one's own. A student commits plagiarism when he or she incorporates in his or her own work, substantial unacknowledged portions of another person's material, or attempts to pass off such work as original through its inclusion. ”

*(University Regulations,
Part B1.2 (iii)).*

Why you shouldn't plagiarise...

Plagiarism is commonly caused by being under-prepared for a deadline and panicking, trying to ensure you get a good mark without spending time properly researching, or in some cases not understanding how to research, justify ideas and arguments and produce an academic piece of work.



When you plagiarise, you not only cheat the University, but you are also cheating your fellow students by taking credit for work that you haven't done, whereas they put in the time and effort. But most importantly you are cheating yourself.

You should be able to take pride in your work, knowing that you have achieved something substantial and it is all your hard work. There is little satisfaction to be gained by getting a good mark as a result of cheating, rather than being a good student. You do not learn anything through cheating either, which may cause problems when looking for a career. Knowledge and transferable skills are becoming increasingly important to employers.

If you are in doubt as to whether you may have plagiarised, please speak to your course tutor or your academic tutor who will be able to advise you.

What does plagiarism mean?

Plagiarism comes in several forms;

1. Copying from one or more sources –

This is when work submitted as your own actually includes, without clear acknowledgement, material copied from one or more other sources. This could come from a published book or article, the internet, an essay bank, work previously submitted by another student, or work copied from another student for the same assignment.

This type of plagiarism is easily detectable using modern software such as Turnitin UK, which the University regularly uses. It is also easily spotted by an academic reading an essay as different language/writing style is often used.



2. Paraphrasing –

Paraphrasing is putting someone else's views, ideas or words, into your own without referencing properly. Any essay or assessed piece requires reading other people's work and may also include using some of their ideas to form part of your own.

Important things to remember when using other people's work is to always reference where the idea was found, even if you have completely rewritten it, within the body of the essay. Do not only use one source, use a variety of books/journal articles, and take care when you are making notes from books, it is easy to forget to cite where you found the information.

3. Collusion –

Collusion occurs when students work together on an essay and submit similar pieces of work. It is hard to distinguish sometimes where group work ends and where collusion begins. It is ok in most cases to share resources and to discuss ideas with colleagues on your course, as long as the final submission is all your own work.

How not to plagiarise...

There are several methods which will help you to avoid plagiarising, or incorrectly referencing other work.

Use RefWorks

The University Library offers workshops on a program called RefWorks which will help to create notes, bibliographies and ensure full and accurate referencing in assignments.

Using quotations

If you use the exact words of another source in your essay, these should always appear in quotation marks and be followed by the book, author and page number on which they appear. Try and use direct quotations only when you feel that the author has expressed something in such a way that you could not make better.



RefWorks

Making notes

When you are making notes, try not to directly copy from the book/article you are reading. Try to read the information and then write it down in your own words including full details (author, title, date, publisher and location, and page number) of where you found the information .

Paraphrasing

When you use an idea from a source, without using the exact words, remember to add in a reference of where you found the information. This need only be the authors name, book or article title, year of publication and page number, so it can be easily found in your bibliography for more detail.

Your lecturers

If your lecturer has written a book or articles on the subject of your assignment, use these constructively. Try not to use them just to look good to the marker, and also try to use them in the right way. Trying to flatter a lecturer by repeating their work in your own will not get you a better grade. Using their ideas in conjunction with others, and with correct referencing will see a much better outcome.

Copying or buying an entire essay from the internet

DO NOT DO THIS, simple as that. These essays are often of very poor quality and would not benefit you if you were to use them.

Reference all sources

You should always cite all of the sources you used in the essay, including any websites or other online sources, including Wikipedia (which should not usually be used as a source in an academic piece of work as the information is not always reliable). An absence of sources may be a warning sign that work has been taken from someone or somewhere else without referencing. Lecturers are experts in their field and are very likely to know the subject in detail and recognise where work or ideas have been taken without referencing.

Electronic sources

When quoting from an electronic source, put the reference and quotation marks if needed, as soon as you have inserted the text. Do not risk forgetting this.

Bibliography

Try to keep your bibliography to books, articles or other sources that you actually used. However bear in mind that including a source in your bibliography is not a substitute for direct reference on the relevant page of your assignment. 'Padding out' a bibliography with books that you did not read, in order to look good, does not help. A concise list of the sources you used and referenced within the essay is better than a long list of irrelevant sources.



Consequences of plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a serious offence. The penalties are severe, particularly for final level students where a proven accusation of plagiarism will usually mean that you will not be able to obtain an Honours degree, or even leave University with a degree at all.

The consequences range from receiving a warning about plagiarism but no further action, to a mark of zero for that assignment only, to receiving zero for every assessment that year with no right to re-assessment or re-enrolment.

The penalty given depends largely on five factors:

1. Premeditation – planned plagiarism is more serious than an impulsive action.
2. Continuity – re-offenders may be dealt with more seriously than a single act of plagiarism.
3. Scale and extent – A whole essay which is copied may bring a more serious penalty than a small amount of copying
4. Theft of materials – Using someone else's assessed work is essentially theft and will be dealt with more severely.

5. Other students – If the plagiarism largely impacts on other students (eg. In a group assessment where the copying may reflect badly on other students who were not involved), it may be dealt with more severely.

(Paraphrased from the University Regulations, University of Lincoln, 2009/2010, page 28)



Glossary

Bibliography – A list of all the sources which you have used during the assignment.

Citing – Formally recognising in your assessment that the information was obtained from another place.

For example: The University of Lincoln offers almost 100 undergraduate courses throughout the year (University of Lincoln, 2010).

Citation – A direct quotation taken from a source.

For example: “Allegations of the commission of academic offences may be dealt with either by a summary procedure or by a full investigatory procedure” (University of Lincoln, 2009/10, page 28).

Reference – A detailed description of where you obtained the information, including title, author, date of publication, publishing company and location. This information is held in the bibliography of an article.

References

Written by the University of Lincoln Students' Union, 2010.

With thanks to:

University of Lincoln, University Regulations 2009/10

University of Lincoln, Secretariat resources on the Portal

University of Lincoln, Centre for Educational Research and Development

Leeds Met Students' Union, Little Book of Plagiarism.

University of Lincoln Library workshops around referencing:

Introduction to RefWorks

Finding Journal Articles

Encoding your essay

Please see the Library and Learning Resources page on Blackboard, or contact your Academic Subject Librarian for more information.

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For any queries contact:

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