

A Student Guide to Plagiarism Avoidance

What is plagiarism

How to avoid plagiarism?

The sanctions applicable when students plagiarise

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1. Background to plagiarism and why as a student, you must avoid it

Students are required to use sources that enrich and support the content of their assessments and projects. Without correctly acknowledging the sources you use may result in sections of submitted work being regarded as plagiarised with potentially severe consequences. Plagiarism cannot be excused based on ignorance as the responsibility of recognising plagiarism and developing the skill of avoiding it, lies with you, as the student. Even when the omission of correct referencing of sources is unintentional, it does not mean that plagiarism has not been committed.

Sources are resources used to obtain information that assists you in completing your assessments. These resources include textbooks, academic articles, television, radio and the internet.

An acknowledgment is a description of the sources that were used that will guide others to locate the source.

Plagiarism can be defined as “the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person’s original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing of another form” (Stanford, 2015).

2. Types of plagiarism

The IMM Graduate School groups the sources of plagiarism into three broad categories:

- Plagiarism from textual/internet sources
- Plagiarism from another student, a group of students, or academic staff, also known as syndication
- Plagiarism of your own previous work

2.1 Plagiarism from textual/internet sources

2.1.1 Incorrect Harvard referencing

You acknowledged that you used ideas and/or written material belonging to other authors, but your referencing is not correctly done according to the guidelines in the Student Guide to Harvard Referencing.

2.1.2 Copy-paste plagiarism

You copied and pasted content word for word, without using inverted commas or block quotations and without reference to the source it was obtained from.

2.1.3 Paraphrasing plagiarism

When paraphrasing someone else’s work, plagiarism can be committed in two ways:

2.1.3.1 You altered the content somewhat by replacing some of the words and phrases with your own, without citing the source you obtained it from.

2.1.3.2 You correctly cited the source you obtained the information from, but the core content has not been paraphrased sufficiently.

2.2 Plagiarism from another student, a group of students, or academic staff, also known as syndication

2.2.1 Voluntary syndication

You submitted work that is similar or identical to the submission of another student or a group of students because you have willingly worked together but failed to submit your unique version of the work for assessment.

2.2.2 Involuntary syndication

You appropriated the work from an unsuspecting fellow student for the express use of submitting it as your own.

2.2.3 Teaching source syndication

You copied the outline or content detail suggested by a tutor or lecturer which was made available to all the students in the tutorial session and used it either as-is or without substantively reworking it.

2.3 Plagiarism of your previous work

You repurposed content you have previously submitted and that has already been assessed in the past. Even when an assessment question requires an answer which is similar to an answer you have provided in a previous submission that has already been assessed, you are required to write a whole new submission from scratch. All work previously submitted and assessed – including a failed attempt - may never as a whole or in part, be submitted again for assessment purposes.

3. Avoiding plagiarism

The skill of identifying and avoiding plagiarism requires study and eventual mastery. By paying close attention to the following, you can avoid being involved in unpleasant and potentially damaging plagiarism issues:

3.1 Look for the ‘The Student Guide to Harvard Referencing’ on the IMM Graduate School eLearn system and follow the guidelines on correct and appropriate referencing according to the Harvard referencing style guide.

3.2 Do not copy passages from another source even if you acknowledge the source unless you make use of block quotations or inverted commas.

3.3 Make use of adequate paraphrasing and acknowledge the source from which you paraphrased.

3.4 Refrain from copying the work of other students.

3.5 Protect the integrity of your work by avoiding situations where other students gain access to your work to copy and present as their own.

3.6 Refrain from recycling work that had been previously submitted for assessment. This includes work from failed attempts or work submitted for assessment at other institutions.

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3.7 Do not use model answers used by academic staff to illustrate how to answer a type of question.

3.8 Focus on becoming a confident writer of academic content yourself, having discovered your academic voice.

3.9 Keep the following in mind when using an internet-based plagiarism-detection service such as Turnitin to review similarities to other sources before you submit your work:

3.9.1 The acceptable level of plagiarism is deemed to be zero.

3.9.2 The IMM Graduate School uses internet-based plagiarism-detection services such as Turnitin to compare assessment submissions against an archive of documents, internet sources, previously submitted assessments, and publications to detect if text within an assessment is similar to other sources.

3.9.3 It is important to bear in mind that similarity to other sources as identified by an internet-based plagiarism-detection service such as Turnitin is not automatically an indication of plagiarism: plagiarism will always involve similarity, but not all similarity indicates plagiarism. It is possible that a certain percentage of an assessment can be similar to other sources without being plagiarised.

3.9.4 The comparison of an assessment against the archive of documents and data does not end upon submission. Internet-based plagiarism-detection services such as Turnitin may detect similarities to other sources after an assessment had been submitted for grading, resulting in a similarity index percentage that increased since the time of the submission. To avoid this students need to ensure that all work submitted for assessment purposes is original and correctly referenced.

3.9.5 Similarity to other sources as a result of incorrect referencing, inadequate paraphrasing, copying, or syndication will be treated as plagiarism regardless of the similarity percentage indicated by an internet-based plagiarism-detection service such as Turnitin.

4. Sanctions for plagiarism

The term 'sanctions' refers to actions taken toward a student when a student is found to have plagiarised, whether intentional or unintentional. The matrix of plagiarism sanctions in the Student Guide to Plagiarism Sanctions lists the applicable sanctions for undergraduate and postgraduate students respectively.

5. Refund requests arising from plagiarism sanctions

The guidelines on plagiarism as outlined above and in the Student Guide to Harvard Referencing are extensive. Should any student be found guilty of plagiarism he/she will forfeit all fees paid, except fees in credit for the actual semester during which the student is suspended or disenrolled.

6. Reference

Stanford University. (2015) 'Plagiarism and the Honor Code', Stanford's Key to Information Literacy. Available from: <http://skil.stanford.edu/module6/plagiarism.html>. [Accessed on 09 October 2019]