

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

<http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/records>

What is Plagiarism

Whenever you do written work you must differentiate between your own ideas and those, which you did not think of yourself, but which you have read elsewhere – in particular you must distinguish what you have written from what you are quoting.

You commit plagiarism in written work when you use another person's words, ideas or opinions without acknowledging them as being from that other person. You do this when you copy the work word-by-word (verbatim); or submit someone else's work in a slightly altered form (such as changing a word with one meaning to another word with the same meaning); and you do not acknowledge the borrowing in a way that shows from whom or where you took the words, ideas or reasoning.

You must provide references whenever you quote (use the exact words), paraphrase (use the ideas of another person, in your own words) or summarise (use the main points of another's opinions theories or data.)¹

It does not matter how much of the other person's work you use (whether it is one sentence or a whole section), or whether you do it unintentionally or on purpose; if you present the work as your own without acknowledging that person, you are committing theft. You are taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own. Because of this, plagiarism is regarded as a very serious offence and carries heavy penalties.

If another student gives one of his or her past assignments you may not copy this and hand it in as your own, you are not allowed to do it. It is another form of plagiarism.

While academic staff will teach you about systems of referencing, and how to avoid plagiarising, you too need to take responsibility for your own academic career.

Rules and Senate Policy

The following rules regarding academic conduct and examinations, set out in the University Handbook 3 – General rules for Students cover plagiarism

RULES ON CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS (Student Rules - Academic conduct)

RCS 2.4 In any examination, test or in respect of the completion and/or submission of any other form of academic assessment, a student shall refrain from dishonest conduct. Dishonest conduct includes plagiarism or submission of the work of a person other than the student who is being examined.

RULES FOR DEGREES (Rules relating to examinations - Examination sessions and class tests)

G18.12 Dishonesty, including plagiarism or the submission by a student of other people's work as his/her own, in an examination or any other form of assessment will be dealt with in terms of the disciplinary rules.

SENATE POLICY

The Senate policy (PC11/99 dated 6.12.1999), sets out the following:

- (i) For each course, academic staff must prescribe a referencing convention, or allow a student to choose from a set of referencing conventions prescribed by the academic staff member (and by implication must teach this key academic literacy skill to junior students) when setting assignments; and
- (ii) All undergraduates are required to make and include a declaration each time they submit written work for assessment.

Declaration

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.
2. I have used the convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in, this essay/report/project/..... from the work(s) of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.
3. This essay/report/project/..... is my own work.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

Signature _____

¹ Writing Centre, University of Cape Town, [A guide to different systems of referencing](#).

Declaration

You will be asked to use the declaration (see shaded block), or one like it, for all courses where you write any substantial work, which you do unsupervised. If your lecturer does not inform you about this declaration, you must not assume you do not need to complete it; speak to him or her about it, and to find out when in his or her course it will need to be attached to written work.

This is all the more important if you have not yet been taught about referencing conventions, and you do not understand what you are signing. In this case your lecturer may give you a suitably amended version to submit with your assignment.

You need to sign this (or an amended one given to you by your lecturer) each time work is to be assessed – and not just once at the beginning of the course. Staff members have been asked NOT to mark work unless it is accompanied by a signed declaration.

Referencing Conventions

The responsibility is on your lecturer to ensure that you are (or become) familiar with, and observe, one of the internationally recognised guides to scholarly conventions on presentation, documentation of sources and referencing. It is your responsibility to question any part of this that you do not understand, to apply the rules, and to be aware of the consequences of plagiarism.

There are many ways of referencing, and the University has not set one way as preferable to another. The Writing Centre, however, recommends one of the following three forms: the Harvard system, Modern Language Association (MLA) or Footnoting. They also have a standard for referencing articles in electronic journals.

If you are confused because each lecturer tells you to reference your work in a different way, discuss this with him or her.

Consequences of plagiarising

By committing plagiarism you will get zero for the plagiarised work, and may fail the course. In addition, the matter must be referred to the Vice-Chancellor or nominee for possible disciplinary action in terms of the rules on disciplinary jurisdiction and procedures (DJP1.1) against you.

If this is the case, and the plagiarism is substantial, the Registrar has indicated that, unless there are unusual circumstances, the prosecution will ask for your expulsion. Even if you are not expelled, a conviction for cheating on your academic record is likely to limit your career opportunities. If you are preparing for a profession, you should know that a conviction for cheating in academic work may bar you from professional licensing temporarily or permanently.

Assistance For Staff And Students

The **Library Staff**, the **Writing Centre** and the **Centre for Information Literacy** are willing to assist you, by providing details of referencing conventions, and helping you use them.

Web-based information

There are many web-sites on the internet regarding plagiarism. To help you find an appropriate site, ask your lecturer to assist you.

The Senate policy declaration is accessible at: <http://www.uct.ac.za/uct/policies.php>

HT Amooore
REGISTRAR

3 March 2004