

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the attempt to pass off someone else's work as your own. The following definition of plagiarism is taken from the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (New York: MLA, 1977), pp.4-5:

'Plagiarism may take the form of repeating another's sentences as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing



someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. In short, to plagiarise is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from another. Although a writer may use other person's

words and thoughts they must be acknowledged as such (by the use of quotation marks and with an endnote).'

Plagiarism is considered to be a serious academic offence. Any work submitted which contains plagiarism will be judged to be a serious breach of University regulations concerning **unfair practice**. It is vitally important that you record the sources of your work in full in footnotes. You **must** put a reference for **all** quotations and also for the ideas contained in your work. This applies for written material found in books, journals, or on the web as well as material used in lectures.

If you are found to be guilty of plagiarism, or guilty of any other form of unfair practice such as cheating in examinations, you may receive 0% for the piece of work and have to submit further work; you may receive 0% for the module and thus have to re-sit the module assessment; you may be excluded from the course. Persistent offenders will be excluded from the University. It is therefore essential that you avoid plagiarism at all costs.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Think about what you want to say in your essay before starting.

When working from other sources: read them, think about them, and then put the journal article, book or web-page to one side before you start writing. Think about what, if anything, you have added to what you have read in the source material. Use the sources to support what you are saying in your work. In this way, you make the argument your own.

When including quotations from other work: think about what point you are making with the quotation. Use the quotation to reinforce your point. Keep the quotation as short as possible. Make sure that the other person's words are in quotation marks. Make sure you include a full reference in a footnote for the quotation.

When you think you have finished: ask yourself 'what decisions did I take? How many of the sentences did I compose? Can I take responsibility for this writing? Can I really take the credit for it?'

If the answers to these questions are not clear, then you may need to rewrite your essay.