

A Briefing for Students on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

INTRODUCTION

Students at UCD are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. The work you submit to the University for assessment must be your own work. You will complete a wide variety of assignments during your time in University. This short guide has been developed to help you understand the importance of academic integrity in the preparation of your assignments. It is in two parts:

- A question and answer section which explains: academic integrity; plagiarism and how to ensure that your work meets the University's standards;
- A section with the University's formal statement, policy and procedures for plagiarism.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is academic integrity?

As part of your learning experience you will have a number of assignments to complete¹. Assignments are designed to help your learning and understanding of your subject by requiring you to demonstrate, through the completion of an assessment task, how well you have engaged with and understood the material you have studied. Assessment tasks will vary from subject to subject and can range from problem-solving to reporting on experimental data to the development and presentation of coherent and cogent arguments.

It is expected that in producing an assignment, you may need to read and gather information from a range of sources including books, journals, official reports, newspapers or material from the Internet as well as ideas generated in discussion with colleagues and other students. When presenting your assignment on a topic it is really important to do two things:

- Be explicit about any material or ideas presented by other people that you have included in your assignment;
- Acknowledge the information that you have used to inform your assignment by including a complete list of references.

These actions are the basis of good practice in the presentation of your assignment and they show academic integrity on your part. It means that you are being honest about showing how the work of others has helped you to form your own understanding and explanation of a topic.

Why is academic integrity important?

The sort of knowledge you are dealing with in University doesn't just happen and it is not simply a set of facts! Knowledge is created progressively by the work of academics and students in analysing, evaluating and interpreting existing theories and data presented by

¹ The term assignment covers all forms of assessment required as part of a module, course or programme and its range includes, essays, papers, presentations, laboratory reports, theses and examinations.

others. Academics and students work and rely heavily on established sources of knowledge to generate new ideas, but in doing so they observe academic integrity by giving credit formally, to the ideas they have used. You will probably notice your lecturers doing something similar, by quoting the ideas of another writer and then giving their interpretation of that information, during the course of a lecture, seminar or tutorial.

When you present any assignment, you must ensure that you acknowledge any ideas, which are not your original thoughts, ideas or words. If you are careless about doing this, you could be accused of plagiarism.

What is plagiarism?

The University understands plagiarism to be the inclusion of another person's writings or ideas or works, in any formally presented work (including essays, theses, examinations, projects, laboratory reports, oral, poster or slide presentations) which form part of the assessment requirements for a module or programme of study, without due acknowledgement either wholly or in part of the original source of the material through appropriate citation.

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. In any assignment, plagiarism means that you have presented information or ideas belonging to someone else falsely as being your own original thoughts on a subject. This may happen in a number of ways, and these are explained further below, but in general there are two main ways in which you could potentially plagiarise:

- By incorporating ideas, phrases, or whole sections of text in your assignment which have been written by somebody else; or
- By failing to use proper citation methods which show all of the material you consulted in researching your assignment

What constitutes plagiarism?

Plagiarism can take many forms and the University deems it to include any of the following:

- **Presenting work authored by another person: including other students, friends, family, or work purchased through internet services;**

This could include getting someone else to write part or all of your assignment, using an assignment written by another student, including work by students from previous years of your programme, copying the work of another student or buying an essay from the internet. Getting your parents or anyone else to write your assignment is not allowed.

Tip: essays bought from the internet are poor value as they are not customised, can be badly written and are often inaccurate.

- **Presenting work copied extensively with only minor textual changes from the internet, books, journals or any other source;**

It is absolutely acceptable to use somebody else's arguments or points of view to support your presentation of a topic in an assignment. In fact, it is expected that you will wish to

incorporate the ideas of others into your work but in doing so you must be explicit that the information included is not your own original thought.

Tip: If you use any text directly from another source, it must be in quotation marks with appropriate citation. .

- **Improper paraphrasing, where a passage or idea is summarised without due acknowledgement of the original source;**

If you want to use somebody else's idea indirectly as an illustration of the argument you are making, be careful that you express it as a short summary or paraphrase of their argument and acknowledge that it is not your own original idea, but, by citation or reference, indicate the original source.

Tip: It is not acceptable to change a few words of phrases from someone else's text, and then present the idea with citation. A paraphrase means you express the idea directly in your own words, and you must also include a reference to the original source.

- **Failing to include citation of all original sources;**

If you do not include all information that you have consulted, in researching a written piece of work, in your list of references you could be accused of plagiarism. References should include all books, journals, official reports, newspapers or material from the Internet, which informed the presentation of your assignment.

Tip: If you use information from the Internet, include the URL in your reference list and in [] brackets indicate that date on which you accessed the information.

- **Representing collaborative work as one's own.**

You might be part of a study group, you may spend time discussing an assignment with a fellow student or you may be involved in some form of group work. You need to be really careful that if you are involved in group work you are familiar with the assessment task and the assessment criteria, so that you can show what your individual understanding or effort towards the task is. If you discuss an assignment with a fellow student, you need to be conscious that when you write up your assignment you are expressing your own ideas not the opinions expressed by your fellow student.

Tip: Sometimes when students study together, ideas can be borrowed from one to another quite unconsciously. It is normal (and desirable) to form opinions and critical viewpoints through debate and discussion but be clear about your own opinion!

Some examples of plagiarism²

Read the extract below, which is taken from page 96 of Arnold, J., Cooper, C.L. and Robertson, I. (1995) *Work Psychology*, London: Pitman

² Abridged, examples taken from the University of Essex, <http://www.essex.ac.uk/plagiarism/Test.htm> [accessed 19September 2005]

There are a range of problems faced by minorities in the workplace. First, the selection and recruitment process is biased against them in one form or another. Second, they have very few role models in the work environment, who could mentor them and socialize them towards organizational life. Third, they do not get the feedback they need in terms of performance appraisal to guide them through the turbulent waters of their careers.

Example 1:

There are a range of problems faced by minorities in the workplace. First, the selection and recruitment process is biased against them in one form or another. Second, they have very few role models in the work environment, who could mentor them and socialize them towards organizational life. Third, they do not get the feedback they need in terms of performance appraisal to guide them through the turbulent waters of their careers.

Comment: *This is an instance of plagiarism, as the extract has been copied word for word and has not been acknowledged as the work of another author.*

Example 2:

There are a range of difficulties faced by minorities at work. First, the selection and recruitment process is biased against them in some way. Second, they have few role models in the organisational context, who could mentor and socialise them regarding organisational life. Third, they don't get the feedback they need on their performance to guide them through the choppy waters of their careers.

Comment: *This is an instance of plagiarism, as the extract has been copied almost word for word with only minor changes. The text has not been acknowledged as the work of another author.*

Example 3:

Arnold *et al.* (1995: 96) suggest that: " There are a range of problems faced by minorities in the workplace. First, the selection and recruitment process is biased against them in one form or another. Second, they have very few role models in the work environment, who could mentor them and socialise them towards organisational life. Third, they do not get the feedback they need in terms of performance appraisal to guide them through the turbulent waters of their careers."

Comment: *This is not plagiarism, the extract is presented as a direct quotation and acknowledged as the work of another author.*

Example 4

Minorities of whatever sort are presented with a number of difficulties in the organisational context. For example, performance appraisal often does not meet their needs in terms of providing guidance on career development. The ways in which organisational personnel are selected and recruited are often characterised by racism, sexism, homophobia etc. Finally, the lack of people of colour, women and other members of minorities in senior positions often mean that those lower down the organisation cannot get the mentoring and socialisation they need at work (Arnold *et al.*, 1995: 96).

Comment: *This is not plagiarism, the extract is presented as an indirect quotation and acknowledged as the work of another author*

Can plagiarism be unintentional?

The cause of plagiarism may arise from a range of situations: not having enough time to complete an assignment properly before submission; carelessness in referencing (rather than deliberate attempt to conceal information sources) or a lack of understanding of the correct methods of referencing background material. However none of these are valid excuses.

Plagiarism is defined by the action rather than the intention.

In other words you need to be really careful that when you present any assignment, you distinguish between your own writing, opinions or data and the writing, opinions or data expressed by others. All students are responsible for being familiar with the University's policy statement on plagiarism and are encouraged, if in doubt to seek guidance from an academic member of staff. Plagiarism is a serious academic issue and alleged instances of plagiarism will be investigated thoroughly by the university.

How is plagiarism detected?

All of your lecturers will be familiar with the references in your subject area, they are quite likely to recognise particular phrases, sentence constructions and even paragraphs as parts of well known published works, particularly where they are not referenced properly. In addition it is routine practice in the University to use electronic detection sources to identify instances of plagiarism, which includes similarities between work authored by different students as well as information derived from the Internet. You also have to remember that a lecturer or tutor will correct a whole range of assignments and that their familiarity with the range of work presented will allow them easily to detect similarities in students' work.

What happens if I plagiarise?

The University has formal disciplinary procedures for dealing with instances of plagiarism, which may result in penalties being applied, as outlined in sections 7-10 of The Student Code, available at www.ucd.ie/studentguide . You should read the University's plagiarism statement and procedures. In addition you should seek the advice of your lecturers.

UCD PLAGIARISM STATEMENT, PLAGIARISM POLICY AND PROCEDURES

UCD PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

The creation of knowledge and wider understanding in all academic disciplines depends on building from existing sources of knowledge. The University upholds the principle of academic integrity, whereby appropriate acknowledgement is given to the contributions of others in any work, through appropriate internal citations and references. Students should be aware that good referencing is integral to the study of any subject and part of good academic practice.

The University understands plagiarism to be the inclusion of another person's writings or ideas or works, in any formally presented work (including essays, theses, projects, laboratory reports, examinations, oral, poster or slide presentations) which form part of the assessment requirements for a module or programme of study, without due acknowledgement either wholly or in part of the original source of the material through appropriate citation. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty, where ideas are presented falsely, either implicitly or explicitly, as being the original thought of the author's. The presentation of work, which contains the ideas, or work of others without appropriate attribution and citation, (other than information that can be generally accepted to be common knowledge³) is an act of plagiarism. It can include the following:

1. Presenting work authored by a third party, including other students, friends, family, or work purchased through internet services;
2. Presenting work copied extensively with only minor textual changes from the internet, books, journals or any other source;
3. Improper paraphrasing, where a passage or idea is summarised without due acknowledgement of the original source;
4. Failing to include citation of all original sources;
5. Representing collaborative work as one's own;

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. While plagiarism may be easy to commit unintentionally, it is defined by the act not the intention. All students are responsible for being familiar with the University's policy statement on plagiarism and are encouraged, if in doubt, to seek guidance from an academic member of staff. The University advocates a developmental approach to plagiarism and encourages students to adopt good academic practice by maintaining academic integrity in the presentation of all academic work.

³ Common knowledge refers to information, which is generally known and does not require to be formally cited in a written piece of work. Each subject area will have its own set of common knowledge.

UNIVERSITY PLAGIARISM POLICY

1. Plagiarism is a serious academic issue and the University will examine all alleged instances of plagiarism thoroughly and apply such penalties as it considers appropriate where plagiarism is confirmed to have taken place;
2. Alleged cases of plagiarism should be examined carefully to establish the facts and relative context of the alleged offence taking into account the nature and extent of plagiarism as well as the experience and seniority of the student;
3. The University statement on plagiarism and associated procedures will be published, available widely and accessible to all staff and students;
4. Prior to the submission of assessments, students will be briefed on plagiarism by academic staff and will be provided with information about the accepted citation methods for all assessed work in their subject area;
5. All assignments will have a plagiarism declaration which indicates that the work presented is that of the students’;
6. Each Head of School will ensure that appropriate advisory arrangements are in place to promote academic integrity in the subject area and to provide guidance on instances of plagiarism. This responsibility may be vested in a nominated individual;
7. Each School will periodically evaluate its arrangements for dealing with plagiarism to ensure that where any recurrent patterns of plagiarism emerge, either in the case of individual students, or groups of students, its overall approach is appropriate and capable of ensuring that any further recurrences are addressed;
8. Suspected instances of plagiarism should be assessed within the School and a determination made as to whether the matter may be resolved at a local level or whether a referral to the Registrar under the University’s disciplinary procedures is required;
9. The University reserves the right to use electronic and other detection mechanisms to identify instances of potential plagiarism and any work submitted for assessment may be subject to electronic or other detection procedures;
10. Records will be retained of all instances of plagiarism and will be held on a student’s record on the University Student Information System.

PLAGIARISM PROCEDURES

1. Where an examiner detects a suspected instance of plagiarism in a student’s assignment or examination, taking account of the specific context and nature of the case, any of the following courses of action may be followed:
 - a. Discussion directly with the student to provide advice about correct citation and how to avoid plagiarism in the future. The student may be required to resubmit the work without any further penalty;
 - b. Referral of the alleged instance for review according to the School’s plagiarism advisory arrangements. The student may receive a verbal or written warning, will receive advice about correct citation and may be required to resubmit the work with or without an academic penalty;
 - c. Referral of the alleged instance to the University Registrar for resolution via the University’s disciplinary procedures. In some contexts, a first instance may require referral directly to the Registrar.
2. Where an alleged case is referred to the School or the University, a short report outlining the grounds of suspicion, a copy of the piece of work and any supporting evidence should be provided;

3. In all cases of referral the student should be informed by the School or the Registrar's Office, as appropriate, that their assignment or examination script is under scrutiny as an alleged instance of plagiarism;
4. In all cases of referral students will have the right to support and representation such as that provided by the Students' Union;
5. Where a case of plagiarism referred to the School has been proven, the outcome of the case should be recorded on the student's record by the School;
6. Where a student has been referred previously to the School and found to be in breach of the terms of the University's plagiarism statement, the School will make a judgement as to whether a recurrence can be handled at a local level or whether it merits being handled as a disciplinary matter by the Registrar;
7. Instances of plagiarism referred to the Registrar for resolution under the University's disciplinary procedures, if established, will be subject to the following penalties which may be applied in whole or in part:
 - a. Re-submission, where the maximum grade awardable is D- or equivalent;
 - b. Exclusion from the module;
 - c. Exclusion from the programme;
8. Where a case of plagiarism referred to the Registrar has been proven, the outcome of the case will be detailed on the student's record by the Registrar's Office.

References:

- Carroll, J. (2002) *A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education* (Oxford, Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development).
- Levin, P. (2003) *Beat the Witch-hunt! Peter Levin's Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism and Rebutting Accusations of Plagiarism, for Conscientious Students* (<http://www.study-skills.net/plagiarism.pdf>) [accessed 1st September 2005]
- National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) Code of Practice for Dealing with Plagiarism (http://www.nuigalway.ie/student_life/university_code_conduct/code.html#1.1) [accessed 1st September 2005]
- Park, C. (2004) Rebels without a Clause: towards an institutional framework for dealing with plagiarism by students, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28(3), pp.291-306.
- Stefani, L. & Carroll, J. (2001) A Briefing on Plagiarism, *LTSN Generic Centre Assessment Series No: 10*.
- University of Bath, Library and Learning Centre Plagiarism (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/library/plagiarism/>) [accessed 3 September 2005]
- University College Dublin, (2003) Faculty of Agriculture Guidelines on Plagiarism.
- University of Essex, *Plagiarism at the University of Essex*, <http://www.essex.ac.uk/plagiarism/Test.htm> [accessed 19 September 2005]
- Western Washington University, *The Student's Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism*, Department of Sociology (<http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~soc/plagiarism.PDF>) [accessed 26th August 2005].

UCD School of Politics and International Relations

Plagiarism: Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is *any* form of presenting the work of another person as your own. The most common forms of plagiarism are:

- a. Word-for-word copying from any source unless the words are enclosed in quotation marks and the source is appropriately referenced;
- b. Paraphrasing a source without acknowledging that source in an appropriate reference;
- c. Submitting academic work written in whole or in part by someone else.

2. **Why is plagiarism wrong?**

The main reason plagiarism is wrong in student work is because it undermines the central point of writing as a learning exercise: it prevents you from fully ‘digesting’ the material you have read and establishing a true understanding of the issues. Plagiarism is also unfair to other students who have made a genuine attempt to cope with the demands of the subject. Plagiarism is wrong in assessed work because if undetected it can lead to students getting higher marks than they deserve: it’s cheating. In addition to being lazy and dishonest, plagiarism shows contempt for the authors whose work it fails to acknowledge.

3. **Why do students plagiarize?**

We realise that students often feel driven to plagiarism for ‘innocent’ reasons including poor training at school, a misunderstanding of academic standards, a difficulty in understanding course materials, a difficulty in expressing their thoughts, a failure of time management, an unmanageable work-load or a crisis in their personal lives. The answer to all of these problems, however, is to seek help rather than to engage in a serious breach of academic standards.

4. **How is a plagiarised essay graded?**

An essay, project or examination answer that contains *any* significant plagiarism will normally be given a grade of G. This mark represents our assessment of the *academic merit* of the work in question. In addition, since plagiarism is a *disciplinary offence* that breaches the university’s Student Code, the case may be referred to the Registrar, who may in turn refer it to the Disciplinary Committee (see Student Handbook). Potential penalties include fines, suspension and expulsion. Please note that the grade of G given for plagiarized work is an examination issue that does *not* depend on whether the Disciplinary Committee goes on to find the student guilty of a disciplinary offence.

5. **Is an essay that is only partly plagiarized more acceptable than one that is wholly plagiarized?**

No. The policy of the School is to award a very low grade, normally G, to work containing *any* significant amount of plagiarism. The amount of plagiarized material is irrelevant.

6. **How many words can come from another source before I need to enclose them in quotation marks?**

There is no hard-and-fast rule but as a rule of thumb you should not use a phrase containing more than three significant words (i.e. not counting ‘the’, ‘and’ etc.) without quotation marks.

7. **What if my essay contains some words or ideas that happen to come from a source but I don’t remember that they do or I forget to reference them?**

The School does not operate a mechanical rule but judges each case on its merits. Minor cases of material that has clearly been inadvertently unacknowledged may be returned for proper citation but are not otherwise penalised.

8. **Is it plagiarism to present the work of another person as my own in an examination?**

Yes. An exam answer that is clearly a copy (*either* word-for-word *or* in its substance) of other published or unpublished material, including other students’ essays, counts as plagiarism and is marked accordingly, because it shows the same lack of academic knowledge and understanding as a plagiarized essay.

9. **Is it plagiarism to cooperate with other students in essay-writing and revision?**

No. Cooperation with another student is like reading a book or going to a lecture: it can help you to improve *your* understanding of the subject. What is wrong is presenting the work of others – authors, lecturers or fellow students – as if it were your own.

10. **Will I have to provide an electronic copy of my essay or project when I submit it?**

Please follow the instructions of individual lecturers and tutors on submission of work. You may be required to provide an electronic copy of your work at a later time.

11. **How can I avoid plagiarism?**

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to establish a good understanding of the topic you are writing about

so that you can express this understanding in your own words. If you are having trouble, ask for help from fellow students, tutors and lecturers. Once you feel you have a good enough grasp to write something, be sure to use quotation marks when necessary, to cite your sources as you write and to include them all in your bibliography. If in doubt, ask for advice. If you are really desperate, remember this: even a bad essay written in your own words is unlikely to get G, while plagiarism is not only dishonest but will be marked at G and will make you liable for disciplinary action.

Plagiarism: An Example

Original text:

From James Fitzjames Stephen to the present day, Mill's critics have insisted that a sphere of self-regarding actions that affect only (or even primarily) the agent himself either does not exist, or is small and trivial.

First example of plagiarism (unacknowledged quotation):

One of the most common criticisms of Mill is that the sphere of self-regarding actions that affect only (or even primarily) the agent himself either does not exist, or is too small to matter.

Not plagiarism (source quoted and acknowledged):

One of the most common criticisms of Mill is that the 'sphere of self-regarding actions that affect only (or even primarily) the agent himself either does not exist, or is too small and trivial' (Gray 1991: xvii).

Second example of plagiarism (unacknowledged source of ideas):

One of the most common criticisms of Mill is that either there are no self-regarding actions, i.e. actions that affect only or primarily the agent himself, or there are too few to matter.

Not plagiarism (source cited):

One of the most common criticisms of Mill is that either there are no self-regarding actions, i.e. actions that affect only or primarily the agent himself, or there are too few to matter (Gray 1991: xvii).

entry in bibliography:

Gray, John (1991) 'Introduction', in J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. vii-xxx.