

# ***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 complete<sup>1</sup>. 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## 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 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 plagiarism<sup>2</sup>

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

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.*

---

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

### **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](http://www.ucd.ie/studentguide) . You should read the University's plagiarism statement and procedures. In addition you should seek the advice of your lecturers.