



## Plagiarism

### What constitutes plagiarism or cheating?

If you submit an assignment that contains work that is not your own, *without indicating this to the marker* (acknowledging your sources), you are committing 'plagiarism' and this is an offence. This might occur in an assignment when

- Using a choice phrase or sentence that you have come across.
- Copying word-for-word directly from a text.
- Paraphrasing the words from a text very closely.
- Using text downloaded from the internet.
- Borrowing statistics or assembled facts from another person or source.
- Copying or downloading figures, photographs, pictures or diagrams without acknowledging your sources.
- Copying from the notes or essays of a fellow student.
- Copying from your own notes, on a text, tutorial, video or lecture, that contain direct quotations.

Although you are encouraged to show the results of your reading by referring to and quoting from works on your subject, copying from such sources *without acknowledgement* is deemed to be plagiarism and will not be accepted by the University.

Such poor academic practice may occur due to inexperience. So you should study the 'Developing Good Academic Practices' website <http://learn.open.ac.uk/site/DGAP001>. You should also read carefully all the module specific study advice that you receive in your mailings, especially statements concerning plagiarism and how to reference your sources. Where plagiarised material is included in assignments, tutors are likely to notice the shifts in style and may be aware of the source. Seek their advice on this early on in your study. The University also uses plagiarism detection software which it applies to electronic assignments as well as scanned or retyped assignments.

The temptation to plagiarise may arise from lack of self-confidence or from a lack of understanding about the aims of the assessment and about what is required of you. Assignments provide a vehicle for assessing your performance during your module and contribute to your overall module result. However they also assist you in understanding your subject and aid your learning on the module. When you attempt to use the ideas and terms of the module independently you learn more thoroughly and develop your own writing style. You are likely to perform better in examinations if you have learned how to write your own answers to questions in assignments. By submitting work that is not your own you are denying yourself the benefit of this valuable learning strategy. Copying the work of others would be counter-productive to your goal of understanding the module work and to real achievement. Most students will not wish to take such a negative approach to studying, and the University does not tolerate it.

You are encouraged to collaborate with others in studying, but submitted work copied from or written jointly with others is not acceptable, unless collaboration is required in the particular

assignment. Therefore you will be asked to acknowledge a statement to confirm that all assessment work you have submitted is your own and that you have not cheated.

Submitting work that has been done by someone else and persistent borrowing of other people's work without citation are obvious instances of plagiarism and are regarded as cheating. Copying answers from social networking sites is cheating. Paying for work from other sources and submitting it as your own is also cheating. It is intellectually dishonest to cheat and thus give one student an unfair advantage over others. Passing on your assignments to others, with the knowledge that another student may plagiarise the assignment will also lead to a penalty. If a case of plagiarism is proven, this is a serious offence and the Open University disciplinary procedures will be followed, as described under the Student Regulations SA 1.6 and SD 4.3.

Approved June 2009

*(Editorial amendment 31 January 2012)*