

Academic Honesty

Starting study at university presents many challenges. These differ depending on your age, educational background, your expectations, and a great deal more. Maintaining your integrity, or honesty, at university is as important as elsewhere in your life. Universities everywhere take academic integrity seriously, and breaching it by cheating or plagiarising can end your study and impact on your work options in the future.

What is plagiarism?

If you use someone else's ideas, information or words without acknowledging them, then you are plagiarising. Most students don't aim to be dishonest in their academic writing, but even accidental plagiarism can trigger academic penalties for improper conduct. Whether it is intentional or unintentional, plagiarism can take different forms, including:

- **Collusion:** working with other students on an assessment and then claiming it as your own.
- **Verbatim copying:** copying material word-for-word, or cutting and pasting it, and presenting it as your own without citing the source.
- **Sham paraphrasing:** copying material word-for-word, or cutting and pasting it, and presenting it as a paraphrase rather than a direct quote.
- **Illicit paraphrasing:** using material that is closely paraphrased or summarised, without using direct quotes or citing the source.
- **Self-plagiarism or recycling:** submitting an old assignment, or parts of it, as new work without acknowledgement or permission from the Course Coordinator.
- **Ghost writing:** using work written by another person and presenting it as your own, including text produced for free or at a cost.
- **Bullying:** taking and using work written by another and, even if edited, presenting it as your own; and where material was obtained inappropriately such as through emotional, social or physical pressure.

(Walker, 1998)

If you are suspected of plagiarising, a lecturer may discuss their concerns with you and suggest ways in which you can improve your writing skills, in particular how to correctly reference information.

A shared responsibility

Acknowledging others' work is more than a matter of honesty. It is an important characteristic of university life, and it is a process in which everyone is involved, from first-year students to senior lecturers, professors and researchers. Correctly referencing work that has already been undertaken in your field provides a network of information that others may follow, learn from, and contribute to, for the benefit of everyone.

Equip yourself

Many students are unfamiliar with the writing conventions of university study when they commence, and most students do not intend to plagiarise in assessments. The persistent deadlines of assessment tasks can make a busy timetable seem impossible, so establishing a routine that provides you with enough time to produce good work will help you to avoid last-minute stress that may cause you to take risks with your writing.

In addition to having effective time management skills, developing good practice in referencing and citation is a key part of becoming successful in your study. Effective paraphrasing is also a valuable skill to acquire, though it takes effort, time and practise.

Fortunately, support is available at Federation University to help you learn the skills to produce your best work, and avoid being charged with plagiarism.

Acknowledge your sources

Using the referencing style specified by your School, identify the source of your information within your written work. This includes where you do any of the following:

- Paraphrase or summarise an idea, argument or analysis
- Quote exact words, factual information, data or results
- Copy or adapt a graph, image, diagram or table
- Copy a procedure or method

Record the identifying details of every resource you use to research your topic so that you could locate it again. This includes who wrote/created it, the title, when it was published or made available, and the URL if an online source. Helpsheets are available on the five most commonly-used referencing or citation styles at Federation University, which are APA, Australian Harvard, IEEE, MLA and Chicago/Turabian. Know which style you are required to use before you start work, as the presentation and use of each varies.

Avoid copying

Even where you are correctly acknowledging the source, express the work of others *in your own words*. Your lecturer is interested to see how you interpret key concepts and incorporate them in your discussion. Expressing the material in your own words also helps you to avoid accidentally plagiarising in your writing. There are three methods of doing this: direct quoting, paraphrasing or summarising. All three methods require you to reference the original source. Support is available on all our campuses and/or online to help you improve your skill in these aspects of academic writing.

Seek help

As adult learners, you are expected to build on your skills. The ability to manage your time and study needs effectively is vital to achieving your study goals. If you are unsure, first ask your lecturer or tutor to clarify any referencing requirements. Student Academic Leaders (SALs), and Learning Skills Advisors can help you to develop effective referencing and writing skills. Drop into the Writing Space or ASK Desk on your campus, get in touch via email at: ask.sal@federation.edu.au or online at: federation.edu.au/sass

Library staff also offer advice, workshops and software to help with referencing. Go to the library or visit:

- federation.edu.au/library/fedcite
- federation.edu.au/library/guides/study-skills-and-writing-guides
- federation.edu.au/current-students/learning-and-study/online-help-with/referencing
- Moodle: select Turnitin in the Study Help menu, then click 'Enrol me'

Other helpsheets available

- APA, Australian Harvard, Chicago/Turabian, IEEE and MLA Quick Guides (In-text and Referencing)
- What is Paraphrasing?
- Paraphrasing: the Basics
- Writing in an Academic Style
- Time Management

References

Walker, J. (1998). Student plagiarism in universities: What are we doing about it? *Higher Education Research and Development*, 17(1), 89-106. doi:10.1080/0729436980170105