

## PLAGIARISM

Use this sheet to help you:

- understand plagiarism and its consequences
- avoid committing plagiarism

### 5 minute self test

Read the following extract and the versions below. Identify if the versions are plagiarized or not.

"Universities are generally large organizations that run courses at a number of different campuses".  
(De Fazio, 1999, p. 3)

1. Universities are generally large organizations that run courses at a number of different campuses.

**plagiarized / ok**

2. Universities are big institutions. Many are bigger than large companies. They have millions of students and offer many courses. According to one writer, universities are organizations 'that run courses at a number of different campuses'

**plagiarized / ok**

3. Universities are generally large organizations that run courses at a number of different campuses (De Fazio, 1999, p. 3).

**plagiarized / ok**

4. Universities are generally large organizations. They have millions of students and offer many courses. According to one writer, universities are organizations 'that run courses at a number of different campuses' (De Fazio, 1999, p. 3).

**plagiarized / ok**

Check your answers on Page 4

## Introduction

In 2002, the Vice Chancellor of Monash University resigned from his job after he was accused of plagiarism. This instance of plagiarism occurred thirty years ago ('Monash and its VC: The End of the Affair', 2002)!

This illustrates how seriously plagiarism is regarded in western universities. However, sometimes it is hard to say what is or what isn't plagiarism. Below is a description of plagiarism's main dimensions.

## Plagiarism: what is it?

Plagiarism is the intentional use of the words or ideas of someone else. Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional.

### Intentional

- Buying essays
- Not showing exactly where information is from
- Quoting without using quotation marks
- Changing a only few words from another source
- Submitting an assignment produced by or with other people and pretending it's all your own work

### Unintentional

- not paraphrasing, summarising or quoting properly
- not showing where the information is from properly

## What are the consequences?

If a student is found to be guilty of plagiarism, he/she can:

- fail their assignment
- be expelled from the university
- have their degree denied or withheld

For more information, refer to the University of Melbourne plagiarism policy: <http://academichonesty.unimelb.edu.au/policy.html>

Beyond considering these alarming penalties, it is also important to consider the consequences on your learning, as ultimately, plagiarism cheats those who do it. Students who plagiarize lose opportunities to gain understanding, skills in research, writing and critical thinking, and valuable feedback. And committing plagiarism fundamentally goes against the spirit of what being at university is all about.

## How is plagiarism detected?

Plagiarism is usually very easy to detect. It is usually detected as a result of one of the following:

1. Lecturers and tutors are often very familiar with the material that has been plagiarized.
2. Lecturers and tutors can immediately recognize the difference between a student's capabilities and what is submitted, particularly if the student does not have extremely strong English.
3. Lecturers and tutors may make use of plagiarism detection software (notably Turnitin). This software does not determine whether or not plagiarism has occurred. Rather it scans the student's assignment in relation to a database of previous student papers and the internet and alerts the academic if there may be an instance of plagiarism. The lecturer then decides whether or not the student has plagiarised.

## Why do some students plagiarise?

Avoiding plagiarism by paraphrasing and providing a citation can be difficult, especially for overseas students from non-English speaking countries. This is understandable. Nonetheless, all students must learn to paraphrase effectively if they are to avoid plagiarism.

Experience suggests that many students:

- commit plagiarism (they are sometimes caught and fail their assignment).
- think that plagiarism is acceptable (it is not)!
- think that they cannot write as well as a "stolen" text (they often can)!
- think that once an assignment has been graded they are safe from accusations of plagiarism. This is wrong as suspicious submitted work can be rechecked and regraded, and degrees can be withheld or withdrawn.

### Key terms:

A *direct quotation* is a word-for-word transcription of text originally published elsewhere with publication details provided.

A *paraphrase* is an extract from another source re-written by another person with publication details provided.

Direct quotations must appear in inverted commas ('...') and end with a citation or reference. No inverted commas are used with paraphrases, but the citation at the end is still necessary.

(Kimberley, N. and Cotesta, P. 1999)

## Plagiarism: some examples and analysis

To help you to recognise and avoid plagiarism, let's refer to the passage presented on Page 1 and the versions below:

### Original text

Universities are generally large organizations that run courses at a number of different campuses (De Fazio 1999, p.3).

1. *Universities are generally large organizations that run courses at a number of different campuses.*

**plagiarised** / ok

If you were to use this passage like this in an essay, it would be clear plagiarism and could lead you to fail the essay.

2. *Universities are big institutions. Many are bigger than large companies. They have millions of students and offer many courses. According to one writer, universities are organisations 'that run courses at a number of different campuses'.*

**plagiarised** / ok

This passage has been put into the writer's own words, that is, it is a paraphrased version of the text. However, the source of the information is not acknowledged with a citation, and therefore it is plagiarised. As the ex-Vice Chancellor of Monash found in 2002, this may have very serious consequences.

3. *Universities are generally large organisations that run courses at a number of different campuses (De Fazio, 1999, p. 3).*

**plagiarised** / ok

In this case, the writer has cited the source of the quotation clearly. (The full reference details would be found in the Bibliography or Reference List). However, it is still plagiarism because the exact words have been used without quotation marks: '...'. To use these words correctly, and to avoid plagiarism, you would have to do this:

*'Universities are generally large organisations that run courses at a number of different campuses' (De Fazio, 1999, p. 3).*

4. Universities are generally large organisations. They have millions of students and offer many courses. According to one writer, universities are organisations 'that run courses at a number of different campuses' (De Fazio, 1999, p. 3).

**plagiarised** / ok

Here, the second part of the passage is used as a quotation correctly, but the first part is used without acknowledgement, along with some paraphrasing. Is this plagiarism? On the one hand, De Fazio's exact words: 'Universities are generally large organizations' have been intentionally stolen and no reference has been made to their source. On the other hand, this information is true and everyone knows it to be true. Therefore, can't one just use it?

The answer is "No"

## A Good Example

What is necessary is to paraphrase the information and provide a citation:

Universities are big institutions. Many are bigger than large companies. They have millions of students and offer many courses. According to one writer, universities are organizations 'that run courses at a number of different campuses' (De Fazio, 1999, p.3).

If you were to write this, it would not be plagiarism because:

- you have used your own words where necessary
- moreover, De Fazio does not own the information about universities being large organisations (therefore there is no need to reference this exact part)
- you have used quotation marks for the direct quotation
- finally, you have identified where you obtained this information after the quotation

The reader can assume that the preceding facts in the paragraph (i.e., before the quoted material) are given by De Fazio as well as the material you did quote, and they can consult that book if they want.

### **In order to avoid plagiarism, you need to:**

1. Know what needs to be referenced
2. Keep detailed records of sources
3. Learn how to use:
  - Direct quotations
  - Paraphrases
  - Summaries
4. Follow the Harvard or APA systems (or the system specified by your lecturer) for:
  - In-text citations
  - Reference lists

This Helpsheet does not discuss all of these points extensively. To build these skills, refer to the **Study and Research Helpsheets: Paraphrasing, the Harvard System and Language for Citing** and **Referencing using the APA System**. However, as it is such an important means to avoid plagiarism, paraphrasing will be mentioned here briefly.

## Paraphrasing

You will need to paraphrase much more than quote directly. However, the skills involved in paraphrasing can be difficult to develop:

Take this example of complex English:

*'The debate about Whorf's ideas has, until now, been mostly conducted in the context of the psycholinguistic empirical research tradition which grew out of anthropological inquiry into the relationships between language and other aspects of culture in the 1940s and 1950s' (Lee, P. 1999, p. 27).*

Where does one begin? In this case, we have to say the same thing in different words. We can use synonyms; we can try breaking down the ideas into simpler sentences; we can reverse the 'voice' of the sentence from active to passive or from passive to active; or we can be able to change the sentence structures in other ways. (For further advice, see **Study and Research Helpsheet: Paraphrasing**).

*Our understanding of Whorf's work developed mainly from studies in other areas. Some of these studies were about the connection between language and culture. These studies were done by anthropologists between 1940 and 1960. Whorf's ideas have been looked at in terms of the scientific work done in psycholinguistics since then.*

Note some of the changes used:

*The debate about Whorf's ideas*  
*... mostly conducted in the context of the psycholinguistic empirical research tradition*  
*... the relationships between language and other aspects of culture*  
*... which grew out of anthropological inquiry*  
*in the 1940s and 1950s*

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*Our understanding of Whorf's work developed mainly from studies in other areas. Some of these studies were about the connection between language and culture*  
*These studies were done by anthropologists*  
*between 1940 and 1960.*

(Note that words like “psycholinguistics”, “anthropology”, etc., are subject areas and therefore do not need to be paraphrased. This is also true of: 1) company names, 2) technical expressions (e.g., IPOs, privatisation, etc), and 3) proper names (places, people) and 4) dates.)

However, different as the paraphrased version might be, if you were to put it into an essay, you might still fail. It is still plagiarism! Why?

You may have put the information into your own words, but have not acknowledged where the ideas came from. Remember: plagiarism is the use of the words or ideas of someone else *without acknowledgement*. Therefore you should add the citation as below.

*Our understanding of Whorf's work developed from studies about the connection between language and culture. These studies were done by anthropologists between 1940 and 1960. Whorf's ideas have been looked at in terms of the scientific work done in psycholinguistics since then (Lee, 1999, p. 27).*

## Remember!

Learning at university involves use of original ideas with acknowledgement to build further ideas for the benefit of those that follow.

## References

*Academic Honesty and Plagiarism* (2003). University of Melbourne, 3/3/01 from:  
Accessed <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/plagiarism/plagiarism.html>

De Fazio, T. (1999). *Studying in Australia: A Guide for International Students*, St Leonards, U.K.: Allen and Unwin, p. 3.

Kimberley, N. and Cotesta, P. (1999) “Referencing”, *Q Manual*. Accessed 12/2/01 from:  
<http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/Faculty/Pubs/QManual/q-referencing.html>

Lee, P. (1999). *The Whorf Theory Complex*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, p. 27.

‘Monash and its VC: the end of the Affair’ (2002) *Business Review Weekly*, July 13th. Rpt in: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/>