



Notes on Plagiarism and Referencing

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USQ Regulations

The following is an excerpt from the USQ Academic Regulations (Regulation 5.10):

The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement. Plagiarism is the action or attempt to take and use or present another person’s thoughts, writing, ideas or work as their own to gain or produce unfair advantage. A common example of plagiarism is knowingly using the whole or part of another work without appropriate citation. While it is recognised that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

The literal copying of material from another source and presenting it as your own is plagiarism – it is not acceptable under any circumstances and students caught plagiarising material from any source will be penalised consistent with the **University Code of Conduct** under **Regulation 5.10**.

In addition, we do not encourage extensive use of quoted material in assignments. It is expected that essays will be written in the student’s own words and will not consist of paragraphs ‘lifted’ from the literature. Quoting word for word does not necessarily mean that you have understood the material and should be used sparingly.

The following information has been adapted from the Academic Learning Support (*ALS online*) Home Page of the Office of Preparatory and Academic Support (OPACS) (http://www.usq.edu.au/opacs/alsonline/for_students/communication/plagiarism.htm, accessed 02/09/03) to provide clear guidelines as to what is expected with respect to your assignment writing.

Definitions

Plagiarism means using other people's ideas or work as if they were your own. In practice this means that you must acknowledge the use of other people’s work through employing a standard referencing system and should not submit as your own the work of other students or work obtained by you from other sources e.g. internet sites.

Referencing involves acknowledging the sources of information and ideas used in academic work. Correct referencing is essential. Some disciplines (or even courses) may prefer the use of one particular referencing system and you should seek the advice of your lecturers regarding the particular system you are expected to use.

How to avoid plagiarism

Learning at university is a unique experience and differs in significant respects from learning at school, TAFE or work. Three characteristics of universities contribute to the nature of the learning experience they offer. The first is that universities are not only places where students are taught; they are also research institutions responsible for questioning existing knowledge and producing new knowledge. Unlike school and TAFE teachers, university academics are therefore, in most cases, not only teachers but also professional researchers. Secondly, as professional researchers, academics are engaged in a continual process of argument, contest and debate about the findings of their research. Finally what counts as knowledge at university differs in significant ways from everyday knowledge. Academics are interested in what is generally the case and for this reason they base what they write on research rather than personal experience or private opinion.

Students at university are also expected to base what they write on research but at the undergraduate level they are not expected to create new knowledge or generate original thought. The most common form of research for undergraduates at university is reading what academics have said about the issue or problem under consideration. Undergraduate study typically involves showing an understanding of current research by writing about existing ideas published in books and journals by professional researchers.

Most of the ideas, on which your assignments at the undergraduate level are based, will not be your own ideas and it is an important part of university culture that you acknowledge the use of other people's work through employing a standard referencing system. Because most of what you write consists of other people's thoughts and research output you will find, particularly at first year level, that you have to reference extensively. Your lecturers understand and expect this. The fact that you use other people's ideas extensively does not mean that your work is not your own. What makes your response to a task unique is, firstly, the particular ideas you select from the literature to use in your answer and secondly, how you put these ideas together in response to the question.

If you do not provide references to the source of the ideas you have used then you are presenting someone else's work as if it is your own. This is called plagiarism and is regarded by university academics as a form of cheating.

At the beginning of your undergraduate career you may be unsure of when you need to include a reference. Remember that as an undergraduate you are commenting on or using other people's research so you will need to reference extensively. You may find using the following paragraph structure will help you to avoid using other people's ideas without acknowledging them.

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| <p style="text-align: center;">MAIN POINT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The main idea of the paragraph is expressed as a generalisation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXPLANATION, AMPLIFICATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The main idea is elaborated and its meaning explained</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ILLUSTRATION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The main idea is illustrated or supported by example, data or quote</p> |
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The main point must relate directly to your position in response to the task. It should reflect your individual response and be written in your own words. You should not need to reference the idea in this sentence because it should always be your idea. Avoid beginning a

paragraph with a direct quote. This is a common cause of losing the thread of the argument you are trying to build up. When you explain, analyse or elaborate on the main idea you will probably need to paraphrase material you have found in books and journals. Paraphrase is using other people's ideas but writing them in your own words. If you paraphrase you must provide a reference. When you illustrate your main point with examples or data taken from the research literature you will also need to give a reference. Direct quotes are also a way of providing support for your point and because you are using both someone else's ideas and words, must be acknowledged with a reference. Try to restrict your use of direct quotes to the function of providing support for your main point.

The following paragraph illustrates the structure suggested above. It also illustrates the use of paraphrase to explain and elaborate the main point and the use of direct quote to support the point. The sentence in italics which uses the work of Cremin is a paraphrase. The sentence underlined includes a direct quote.

A useful framework for the analysis of inequality, which is increasingly applied to indigenous issues, is that of human rights. The concept of rights has its origins in classical Greek thought but it is only relatively recently, since the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, that it has been formally and universally recognised that fundamental to being human is the entitlement to basic rights. *Cremin (1996) argues that universal rights to life, sustenance, health services, education, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and equality before the law are the foundation of social justice.* The argument that social justice is a matter of human rights is increasingly used by indigenous people in Australia and elsewhere to address economic and social disadvantage. According to Mick Dodson, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner for Social Justice "name any issue of concern to Aboriginal people and it relates to human rights" (cited in Miller, 1998:48)

In order to acknowledge the sources you have used in your work you need to use a standard referencing system. There are a number of different referencing systems and you will need to find out from your lecturers which system you are required to use. You are not expected to memorise the details of any particular system so it is important that you obtain a copy of the required referencing guide and refer to it as you are writing your assignments. To do this you will need to determine what category (journal article, book chapter, sole authored book) the source falls into and then look up how to reference that category in the guide. Referencing guides are available from the Library either in hardcopy or electronically via the Library's homepage.

Tips for Assignment Writing

In addition to the guidelines above, the following suggestions are made in view of common mistakes found in assignments:

1. Add diagrams and tables to give factual data wherever this is available. Refer to these as figures and tables, e.g. see Figure 3, see Table 4 etc. The term 'figure' is used for all graphics (graphs, bar charts, photos, models).
2. Show the source of each figure and table in brackets below each, e.g. (Brown 1993, Smith 1981).
3. Avoid emotive language based on unsubstantiated opinion.
4. Check your language, use a dictionary, get a friend to proofread if necessary. Poor spelling and unclear language lose many marks.

5. Be aware of the following when writing your essay:
 - order and sequence (logical sections);
 - accuracy (get facts straight);
 - sound reasoning (use evidence to support your views);
 - simplicity (simple words, no jargon, short sentences);
 - clarity (say exactly what you mean); and
 - brevity (minimum words).
6. Literature sources should be fully documented at the end of the essay and should be indicated in the text as follows:

‘It is suggested by Carter (1981) that ...’ or ‘It will only be 30 years before oil runs out (Carter 1981)’. In the bibliography, sources should be listed in alphabetical order as follows:

Smith, J.M. 1986, *The Population Crisis*, Harper and Row, New York. or

Jones, A.B. 1985, ‘Environmental issues’, *Journal of Soil Science*, vol. 3, pp. 25–36.
7. See course specification for regulations on late assignments.

The following information has been adapted from the Academic Learning Support (*ALS online*) home page of the Office of Preparatory and Academic Support (OPACS) (http://www.usq.edu.au/opacs/alsonline/for_students/communication/academic_style.htm, accessed 02/09/03) to provide further hints on your assignment writing.

One way of thinking about learning at university is to think of it as a process of learning to think, speak and write about ourselves, the society we live in and the physical world in ways that go beyond the personal or particular. University academics are interested in what is generally the case and that is why they base what they write on research rather than common sense or personal experience. It is also the reason why, they do not use the first person ("I", "We" and "Our") or the second person ("You" and "Your").

Outside of the university setting writing often uses time and storytelling as the organising principles. For example:

We went to the shopping centre and while we were there we... and then we...

To replace a carburettor in a combustion engine first you ... when you have done that you.

Time and storytelling are rarely used in academic writing. In many disciplines material is organised in paragraphs, which move from the general to the particular. In order to talk or write at the general level academics use general ideas, called concepts, such as unemployment, democracy, evolution, pollution, and force.

Above we noted that university work is concerned with the general case and for this reason it is based on research. The most common form of research for undergraduates at university is reading what academics and other professional researchers have said about the topic or issue under consideration. Writing at university is almost always writing about what you have read rather than expressing your personal opinion or relating what happened to you.

Finally academic style is formal. Unlike informal letters, notes and personal journals

academic writing is not modelled on everyday speech. Academics write in full grammatical sentences and express ideas in a concise and clear way. They concentrate on relating concepts or main ideas to each other rather than describing things in particular detail.

How to ensure an academic style

Academic writing is formal, researched based and shows evidence of critical thinking. The notes below suggest ways of achieving an academic writing style.

To ensure a formal tone

- Write in full grammatical sentences and do not use contractions such as can't
- Express ideas in a clear and concise way. Use the sentence structure - subject, verb and the rest of the sentence – and try to avoid beginning sentences with “as”, “while”, “although” and “if”. Avoid the use of “...ing” words such as “being” and where possible write in the simple present or past tense.
- Avoid conversational or casual tone, which is more suited to everyday speech – avoid use of first person (“I”, “we” and “our”) and second person (“you” and “your”) pronouns.
- Use non-discriminatory or non-offensive language

To make sure what you write is research based

- Support what you say with relevant, up to date research rather than relying on personal experience
- Use credible sources – be guided by your course reading lists and exercise caution when using open web site
- Employ appropriate referencing to avoid plagiarism use concepts and vocabulary of the course

To show evidence of critical thinking

- Develop arguments based on research
- Concentrate on analysing and explaining rather than simply describing
- Try to relate concepts to each other
- Look for different interpretations of an issue or problem in the research literature and try to explain the differences