

The University of Newcastle defines plagiarism as “presenting the words or ideas of someone else as your own without giving credit to the original author.”

Plagiarism can take various forms. It can include submitting an assessment task completed in prior studies, submitting other people’s work in part or in full, using other people’s research data or findings without acknowledging them, or simply not citing sources correctly.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why do students plagiarise?

- A: Many students plagiarise due to poor time management practices that leads to procrastination. Students are often juggling readings, assessment tasks and other work from different courses simultaneously. In addition, students may be working part time in order to cover their living and studying expenses. This can lead to increased stress, and when students have a number of deadlines approaching, they may look for shortcuts in order to complete their tasks. Unfortunately, this can result in students incorrectly referencing sources in their assessments or even copying other students’ assessments.
- A: Students are often unable to reference correctly, as this may not have been taught how to properly do so. Students come to university with different abilities and skill sets. They rarely have a good understanding of how to reference different types of sources and effectively organise their sources during research and writing. This can lead to poor referencing techniques or using an incorrect method, causing unintentional plagiarism.

Q: How can I prevent plagiarism?

- A: Spend time discussing academic standards with your students. Clearly defining your expectations at the beginning of the semester is the best way to ensure that students know what plagiarism is and what is unacceptable. Ensure your students are aware that resubmitting previous academic work is unacceptable.
- A: All students must complete the Academic Integrity Module (AIM) in their first semester or trimester of study. This is a formal requirement of the University, and students who do not complete this or do not receive an exemption may be prevented from reenrolling, receiving their results or even graduating. Information about AIM for staff and students is available on the university’s website.
- A: Teach students how to avoid plagiarism. Students may understand they should not plagiarise, however, they may not know how to correctly reference their research. You can help your students by providing them a link to useful resources such as the library’s Information Skills site through your course Blackboard site.
- A: Create a supportive environment in your course. Students need to feel that they can succeed in your course without resorting to plagiarism. Ensure students know that they can talk to you if they are having difficulties and that they are welcome to ask questions at any time.
- A: Recognise signs of stress in students and remind them that there are campus services to help them if they are having problems, such as Learning Development, the Library, the Health Service and the Counselling Service.
- A: Create assessment tasks that prevent plagiarism. By creating tasks with specific topics that require new thoughts or research, you reduce the risk of students copying or paraphrasing a generic response. The Centre for Teaching and Learning can help you to develop robust assessment tasks and marking criteria that can aid in reducing the likelihood of plagiarism.

Q: How can I detect plagiarism?

A: Most written assessments are submitted to Turnitin through the courses' Blackboard site. Turnitin is a textmatching software program that allows staff and students to identify potentially plagiarised material in an assessment task.

A: If you suspect plagiarism in a student's assessment task and the task was not submitted through Turnitin, you can conduct a basic investigation through Google or another search engine.

When conducting your search, let two things guide you:

- The suspected sections of text in the assessment.
- The general topic of the assessment.

This allows you to find directly copied sections of text, as well as areas that have been paraphrased. A simple search engine, such as Google, can be a valuable tool for detecting plagiarism.

Q: What do I do if I find plagiarism?

A: If you believe you have found plagiarism, please contact the Student Academic Conduct Officer (SACO) for your Faculty or School. The SACO list is available from the link below.

INFORMATION AND USEFUL LINKS

Academic integrity	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/academic-integrity/
Academic integrity module	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/academic-integrity/university-aim/
Counselling	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/counselling/index.html
Google	www.google.com
Google Books Search	www.books.google.com
Google Scholar	www.scholar.google.com
Health Service	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/health/index.html
Information skills and referencing	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/Resources/Divisions/Academic/Library/information-skills/foundation-portal/referencing-what-is.html
Learning development	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/unit/centre-for-teaching-and-learning/about-the-centre/learning-development/
Library	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/library/
Student Academic Conduct Officer list	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/academic-integrity/saco.html
Student academic misconduct policy	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policy/000608.html
Turnitin	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/academic-integrity/turnitin/

Ultimately our primary responsibility is to facilitate learning, not police students. The majority of your students will not commit academic integrity infractions, so while you need to be familiar with these institutional policies, your time is better spent educating your students on how to manage their time, teaching them what plagiarism is and supporting their learning throughout the course.

For more ideas or support about leading effective discussions, contact the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

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