

Avoiding Academic Misconduct

This document is primarily aimed at students writing and submitting assignments such as essays, projects, reports and dissertation. It is advice designed to help you avoid committing academic misconduct.

Read the University Academic Misconduct Policy.

This document (Avoiding Academic Misconduct) is a guide to help you avoid committing academic misconduct. It is not a re-statement of University Policy. It is important you read the University Policy fully. If you commit academic misconduct, and claim you were not aware of the Academic Misconduct Policy, the University will still find you guilty (ignorance is not seen as a valid excuse). You can find the University Policy [here](#). If you are found guilty of academic misconduct by the University there are likely to be serious consequences.

What is Academic Misconduct

In relation to assignments, the University defines academic misconduct as follows: ‘Academic misconduct includes, *inter alia*, the presentation of material as one’s own when it is not one’s own; the presentation of material whose provenance is academically inappropriate’ (in Section 1.1 of the [policy](#)). All work you submit should be your own and should also not have been submitted (in whole or part) elsewhere. You should also not help someone else to commit academic misconduct – this is also a form of academic misconduct. These issues are expanded on below.

Don’t Plagiarise

Plagiarism may be defined as the *verbatim* copying or imitation of the language, ideas, or thoughts of another author and representing them as one’s own original work. Most of that sentence was an example of plagiarism because it was copied and pasted directly from another source (*The Free Dictionary*) without acknowledgement. The work you present to us should be your own and nobody else’s. If you take words, ideas, findings, etc. from another source, without proper attribution, you are very likely to be committing plagiarism. Below is a list of behaviours which would normally be viewed by the University as plagiarism. It also includes some advice on how to avoid the behaviour. Please note the list is not exhaustive, there may still be behaviour that the University views as plagiarism

that is not outlined below. Please don't read this list and attempt to find 'loop-holes'. If you are found to have committed plagiarism under University Policy, you are still likely to face sanctions even if that behaviour is not included below (again make sure you fully read the University [Academic Misconduct Policy](#)). Please note avoiding academic misconduct doesn't mean you will necessarily write a good assignment or your assignment follows 'best' practice; please see the [advice on essay writing](#) for further information.

1. Direct (*Verbatim*) Copying .

Do not directly copy material from any other source (other student essay, internet, book, journal article, magazine, newspaper, etc.) and try and pass it off as your own work. If you make use of someone else's words *verbatim*, you must put that material in "quotes" (or 'quotes'). You should also cite the source, normally through the use of a footnote or endnote (the [advice on essay writing](#)). As an example read paragraph 1 below:

(Paragraph 1)

Market microstructure is the study of the process and outcomes of exchanging assets under explicit trading rules. While much of economics abstracts from the mechanics of trading, the microstructure literature analyses how specific trading mechanisms affect the price formation process.

If you wrote this statement in an assignment you would be guilty of plagiarism as it comes directly from a textbook on market microstructure written by [Maureen O'Hara](#). The following paragraph is acceptable (including footnote):

(Paragraph 2)

"Market microstructure is the study of the process and outcomes of exchanging assets under explicit trading rules. While much of economics abstracts from the mechanics of trading, the microstructure literature analyses how specific trading mechanisms affect the price formation process."¹

Note however, that the School is aware that there will be some instances when it is almost impossible to use a form of words to describe an issue that is not identical to that already used somewhere else. This most often applies to short definitional material. For example, think about the following sentence:

¹ O'Hara, M.,(1997), *Market Microstructure Theory*, Blackwell: Oxford, p1

The exchange rate is defined as the price of one currency in terms of another.

This has not been copied from any source. However, it is very likely to appear in many different places. The problem in this case is that there is probably no way to define the exchange rate correctly that has not already appeared somewhere else.

The School (and University) is not concerned if some material accidentally is identical to another source, so you do not need to worry about checking material you have already written in your own words. Please note that staff are used to distinguishing between material that has been deliberately plagiarised and material that is co-incidentally the same as someone else's. Also note: the probability that a significant amount of material in a piece of work written by a student being coincidentally the same as existing available material is vanishingly small.

If you wrote the following paragraph it would also be viewed as plagiarism:

(Paragraph 3)

Market microstructure is the study of the process and outcomes of exchanging assets under explicit trading rules. While much of economics abstracts from the mechanics of trading, the microstructure literature analyses how specific trading mechanisms affect the price formation process. (O'Hara, 1997)

Although the source of material has been acknowledged, there is no indication that this is a direct quotation. You can use this form of referencing when you are using your own words to outline the ideas and findings of others. If you want to use the material directly you must quote (also see item 3 below).

2. Paraphrasing / Copying and changing text

The material below would also be regarded as plagiarised:

(Paragraph 4)

Although most economics literature abstracts from how trading takes place, the microstructure literature looks at how specific trading mechanisms influence the price formation process. Therefore market microstructure may be viewed as the study of the outcomes and process of exchanging assets under explicit trading rules.

Although paragraphs 1 and 4 look different, paragraph 4 is plagiarised. In paragraph 4, a) the order of the two sentences from paragraph 1 has been changed; and b) some words have been changed (or re-arranged) in order to alter the appearance of paragraph 1 without significantly influencing its meaning. This is still plagiarism because it is taking the material and ideas of another author and trying to pass them off as your own. Always try and use your own words to convey central ideas and concepts. This is an example of paraphrasing – taking someone else’s ideas and expressing them in slightly different words. If you paraphrase you must fully reference the source (e.g. footnote the precise source as you would if you use quoted material).

Also note that paragraph 4 presented as follows would be viewed as plagiarism:

Although most economics literature abstracts from how trading takes place, the microstructure literature looks at how specific trading mechanisms influence the price formation process. Therefore market microstructure may be viewed as the study of the outcomes and process of exchanging assets under explicit trading rules. (O’Hara, 1997)

So as was the case above, the ideas expressed have been correctly attributed to the original author, but the original author’s (changed and re-arranged) words are still used without proper reference. You must give a full reference if you paraphrase.

3. Using someone else’s ideas and findings

If you make use of existing findings, results, ideas, etc. and claim them as you own this is also a form of plagiarism. For example: if you were writing an essay on market microstructure theory, and you wrote material you claimed to have thought up yourself and/or presented results you claimed to have found yourself, but you actually found them in O’Hara (1997), you are guilty of plagiarism. It is important you properly cite and reference all materials you draw upon in your assignment.

4. Using foreign language material

It is OK to make use of foreign language material in your studies, as long as it is properly referenced. It is not OK to translate that material (or have it translated) and then present it as your own. This applies to direct *verbatim* copying of translated material, copying and re-arranging material as well as taking the ideas and findings of the material without attribution. In other words the exact same criteria apply to translated material as to material already written in English.

5. Multiple submission / autoplagiarism

You cannot submit a piece of work more than once, whether simultaneously or at different points in time. If you submit the same piece of work more than once (e.g. the same essay to different modules) this is seen as a form of plagiarism. This also applies to parts of a piece of work. For example, if you write an essay and then use sections of it elsewhere (e.g. in a dissertation or another essay) this is also viewed as plagiarism. This also applies to work you have submitted at another University, or prepared for an employer, etc.

6. Some simple rules for avoiding plagiarism:

This section summarises the points made above – hopefully this is helpful.

- a. Whenever you quote directly from any source, you **MUST** put the words between inverted commas, and give the precise reference.
- b. Whenever you paraphrase from a source, you **MUST** give the precise reference.
- c. Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should you make use of material from your own work already submitted elsewhere or being submitted elsewhere.
- d. Do not claim as your own the ideas, findings, etc. of anyone else.
- e. The same rules on plagiarism apply to material and sources translated from languages other than English.

False citation

If you refer to work that doesn't exist (or you deliberately misrepresent existing work), for example to lend weight to a point you make, this will be viewed as academic misconduct.

Falsification

The falsification or alteration of data or results is academic misconduct. For example if you falsify your results in an econometric piece of work in order to produce a more interesting conclusion, you are committing academic misconduct.

Contract cheating

If you get someone else to do your work (even a small part of it), this is seen as a very serious form of cheating. Anything you submit to the University must be 100% your work.

Aiding and abetting

If you help another student to commit academic misconduct (in any way), you are also guilty of academic misconduct. This would include writing all or part of an assignment for another student (i.e. contract cheating as defined above). Allowing another student access to materials you have written to facilitate academic misconduct (and so on). Please do not lend assignments to other students, unless you are 100% certain they will not use the material inappropriately (e.g. copy from it).

Turnitin

TurnitinUK is an online piece of plagiarism detection software. All written assignments submitted to the School of Economics and Finance automatically go through *TurnitinUK*. The software works by breaking the assignment down into small overlapping fragments, for example groups of five words (words one to five of the assignment, then words two to six, and so on). The software then compares these fragments with all the material it can find on the internet and all the material it has in its database (which includes all material previously submitted to *Turnitin*). It then produces a report that summarises how much of the material in the submitted assignment appears to be the same as material it can find elsewhere. The report produces a 'score', i.e. the percentage of the assignment that matches with other material found by *Turnitin*.

It is important to realise there is no magic number above which the School believes you are guilty of plagiarism and below which you are not guilty. We will use the score as a guide (obviously, all else being equal, the higher the score, the more likely is plagiarism). However, what is most important in determining whether or not we investigate a student for possible academic misconduct is the judgement of staff within the School. If we feel a student may be trying to present material that is not their own we will investigate the case, even if the *Turnitin* score is relatively low. Sometimes student present plagiarised material but are very good at disguising it and therefore get a low *Turnitin* score. Sometimes students get a relatively high score but there is a reason for this other than plagiarism. A low *Turnitin* score is not proof that plagiarism has not taken place.

Sanctions if you are found guilty of academic misconduct.

The School and the University take academic misconduct EXTREMELY seriously, as it is essentially cheating to get an unfair advantage over your fellow students. If you are suspected of academic misconduct by the School, we will write to you to explain what is happening. Full procedures are outlined in the [University Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

Sanctions if you are found guilty depend upon the severity of the offence. For undergraduate students they range from a written warning to 0 (ZERO) for a module with no right to reassessment or to take an alternative module (for an honours student this may effectively mean expulsion from the University). For our MSc students sanctions range from a written warning to a Discontinuation of Studies (i.e. expulsion from the University). If you are found guilty more than once you will almost certainly be thrown out of the University. The University outlines the possible sanctions in more detail in its [Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

Within the School in recent years, we have had a number of cases of proven academic misconduct. Some examples are anonymously outlined below.

Form of Misconduct	Sanction
Student submitted same essay in two modules	0 for second essay
Student downloaded friends essay from her computer without permission and submitted as her own after alterations	0 for module with no right to re-assessment. (Since this was in a core module she could not complete her degree and left the University).
Student downloaded material for an essay from a Chinese website and translated using translation software	0 for essay
Student plagiarised multiple sources for an essay and submitted after alterations	0 for essay
Student submitted an essay containing some material that was submitted in an essay at another University	0 for essay