

# Plagiarism and Bibliographic Referencing

The University views plagiarism and copying of copyright materials, without the licence of the copyright owner, as a serious disciplinary offence. These guidance notes aim to help students of the University comply with the Institution's policy on plagiarism in coursework, bibliographic referencing and photocopying of copyright materials.

## What is plagiarism?

Here are some definitions of plagiarism:

'To take (words, ideas, etc.) from someone else's work and use them in one's own work without admitting one has done so.' (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1987*)

'... The action of using or copying someone else's idea or work and pretending that you thought of it or created it.' (*Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, 1987*)

'... The taking and using as one's own of the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another.' (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1973*)

'To steal or pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: [to] use (a created production) without crediting the source: [to] commit literary theft: [to] present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.' (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1987*)

'The appropriation or imitation of another's ideas and manner of expressing them ... to be passed off as one's own.' (*Macquarie Dictionary, 1985*)

The above definitions all suggest that plagiarism involves the idea of intending to plagiarise; it is important to realize that this dishonest intention will be assumed. Excuses such as 'having forgotten' to insert quotation marks, or 'not having remembered' that an idea was someone else's, or 'having thought the reader would understand' that a passage was a paraphrase of someone else's words cannot be accepted. In a similar way, it will be assumed that those who walk out of a shop carrying goods which they have not paid for, and do not intend to pay can be accused of shoplifting.

In short, it is the students' responsibility to avoid any possible suggestion of plagiarism in their work. The golden rule is 'if in doubt, acknowledge' -this should be followed in all 'grey areas', i.e. cases in which you are not sure whether the acknowledgement of a source is necessary or not.

## How are Sources Referred to?

There are two ways of referring to a source: by using direct quotations, or by paraphrasing the author's words. Each of these is exemplified below.

## Using Direct Quotations

- A quotation integrated with the text, e.g.  

‘The coal reserves,’ said Thomas J. Johnson (1982, p.21) ‘will not deplete as rapidly as oil reserves’, and this claim is already being borne out by experience.
- A quotation presented as an indented paragraph, e.g.  

Conflict within the marketing channel required its own definitions, and one of the first of these was established by Stern and Gorman(1969, p.58). Their view was that a conflict was a process of system changes: ‘ ... a change occurs in the task environment or within a channel member’s organisation that eventually has implications for the channel members ... when the other affected members perceive the change as cause of frustration, a conflict situation emerges.’

Note the use of the three-full-stop device (...), separated by one space from the preceding and/or following words, to indicate a word or words have been omitted from the original. (The assumption is, of course, that the omission has not changed the sense of the author’s words.)

Secondly, note the use of square brackets, [ ], to indicate that a word has been added or replaced to clarify (but not of course to alter) the author’s original meaning, e.g.

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**Original** Registers are, then, types of text, not types of discourse, since they are not defined in terms of what kind of communication they represent.

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**Quotation** ‘... [registers] are not defined in terms of what kind of communication they represent’ (H.G. Widdowson, 1973).

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Thirdly, note that where the original itself includes a word or words between inverted commas or quotation marks, a quotation should reproduce this by using double inverted commas between single ones, or vice-versa, e.g.

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**Original** One obvious development within a pedagogical grammar would be to use Searle’s illocutionary acts to fill in Halliday’s ‘ relevant models of language’.

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**Quotation** As Widdowson (1973) points out: ‘One obvious development within a pedagogical grammar would be to use Searle’s illocutionary acts to fill in Halliday’s “relevant models of language” ’, but this suggestion has yet to be followed up.(Alternatively: “... Halliday’s ‘relevant models of language’”.)

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Fourthly, note that italics in the original may be reproduced by underlining in a quotation. If the underlining is not the original's, then this should be made clear. The usual method is to add a note in brackets after the quotation: (my emphasis), (my underlining) or (emphasis added). If one wants to make it quite clear that the emphasis is the original's, one can add: (emphasis as in the original).

## Paraphrasing the Author's Words

Paraphrasing is not simply altering a word here and there, but rather rewording the original - either to shorten/summarise or to expand/clarify. Paraphrasing often leads into 'grey areas' where one may be unsure of whether or not plagiarism could be alleged, so remember the golden rule: 'if in doubt, acknowledge'. In particular, a lengthy piece of paraphrasing (say, several paragraphs) should remind the reader at frequent intervals - at least once per paragraph - of the source.

- Paraphrasing which shortens/summarises, e.g.

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**Original** 'There are many abusive parents for whom [therapy] groups may be the only answer, not only because of the quality of services offered, or the potential benefits they promise, but chiefly for the fact that a group of this type is the only service that some abusive parents will attend and participate in.' Blizinsky, M. (1982, p.311)

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**Paraphrase** Martin Blizinsky (1982, p.311) believes that therapy-group sessions may be the only answer for some abusive parents, being the only programme in which they will participate.

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- Paraphrasing which expands/clarifies, e.g.

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**Original** 'Although photosynthesis is the principal autotrophic process, chemosynthesis also occurs.' I. Pearson (1978,p.135)

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**Paraphrase** As Pearson points out (English in Biological Sciences, 1978,p.135), although photosynthesis - the process by which plants make their own food with the help of sunlight - is the major self-feeding process, synthesis involving chemical reactions also takes place.

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## How to Cite Bibliographic References?

The following guidance notes, which aim to help students with bibliographic referencing, address the question of how, rather than whether, to acknowledge the sources.

Bibliographic references identify the work in question (usually either a book or an article), and give sufficient information on the author, title, publisher and date of publication for this identification to be quite clear and unambiguous. Such references are normally written according to fixed conventions, which it is sensible to follow; one set of these conventions is outlined below.

**For books:** author's surname first, followed by the initials of his/her other name(s), then by the full title of the book *underlined*; this underlining will be replaced by italics in printed text (as opposed to typescript or handwriting). There then follows the place of publication - usually a city - then the name of the publisher, and lastly the date of publication, e.g.

Crane, D. *Invisible Colleges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Where there is more than one author, the examples are:

- Crystal, D. and Davy, D. *Advanced Conversational English*. Harlow: Longman, 1975.
- Brazil, D., Coulthard, M. and Johns, C. *Discourse Intonation and Language Teaching*. Harlow: Longman, 1980.

Where the book is a collection (of articles or monographs) rather than a single text, the examples are:

- Pride, J.B. ed. *Sociolinguistic Aspects of Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Richards, J.C. and Nunan, D. eds. *Second Language Teacher Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

**For articles in a collection:** similar to book references, but the author and title of the article come first, e.g.

Pennington, M.C. A professional development focus for the language teaching practicum. In Richards, J.C. and Nunan, D. eds. *Second Language Teacher Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

**For articles in a journal (serial):** much as above, except that information on the journal replaces that on the book (collection), e.g.

Stieg, M.F. The information needs of historians. *College and Research Libraries*, 1981, 42(6), 549-560.

The figures '42(6)' mean 'volume 42, no.6'; the figures '549-560' mean 'pages 549 to 560'. Note also that capital letters are not usual in the titles of articles (though in those of books, of course, they are).

Bibliographic references can be placed as footnotes to the text, or far better, listed alphabetically (by author) in a 'bibliography' at the end of the text. If a bibliography is used, references in the text need only state the author(s) and the publication date, e.g.

Conflict within the marketing channel required its own definitions, and one of the first of these was established by Stern and Gorman (1969).

If the bibliography contains two or more publications by the same author(s) in the same year, identify them as 1969a, 1969b, etc.

If the text does make references to books/articles in this way, then the bibliography should put the publication date after the author's name, rather than at the end, e.g.

Crane, D., 1972. *Invisible Colleges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Finally, minor differences from the above conventions may be found, as between one published bibliography and another, but these are unimportant; what does matter is that consistency in following one set of convention is ensured. Not only should the information in the bibliography be correct in every detail (author's name and initials, publisher's name, etc.), complete typographical accuracy - spacing, punctuation, etc. is also very important. Thorough proofreading is essential here, as in the rest of the text, and is a measure of the care that has been taken; conversely, a text full of 'typos' (typographical errors), misspellings, inconsistencies, etc. is not only evidence of carelessness but also very irritating for the audience - the reader- and thus obviously counter-productive.

## Honesty in Assignment and Examination

You are expected to be honest in performing your academic assignments. The University takes a very serious view against dishonesty in examinations and plagiarism in coursework. For details of examination regulations, please refer to P.31 of this Handbook. Guidance notes on avoiding plagiarism and on bibliographic referencing are also given on P.62 of this Handbook.

Penalties ranging from disqualification and expulsion may be imposed in cases of proven dishonesty in examination and plagiarism.

## Penalties Applied to Offences

The University may take disciplinary action against any student who commits any misconduct, violates the laws of Hong Kong or any of the above regulations.

Such cases may be referred to the Student Discipline Committee for investigation and decision. If the student is found guilty of the alleged offence, penalties considered appropriate by the Committee may be imposed, depending on the seriousness of the case. These may include:

- reprimand;
- fine;
- suspension from use of any of the University facilities for a specified period;
- suspension of studies for a specified period of time;
- expulsion for a specified period or indefinitely; and
- any other penalties as considered appropriate.