

Plagiarism and academic honesty: a guide for centres

For assessment to be fair and accurate, centres and candidates must make sure that work submitted meets standards of **academic honesty**. This includes plagiarism (the attempt to pass off another's work as the candidate's own). Plagiarism takes various forms and can even happen unintentionally. **The candidate and centre both remain responsible for detecting and preventing it.** This brief guide highlights the major ways in which plagiarism affects candidate's work and suggests how it can be avoided.

Referencing and citations

Successful research draws critically on the work of others and academic honesty requires crediting that work in appropriate ways. Candidates must clearly show:

- exactly where and how someone else's work has been used within their own submission
- whose work it is and the source it came from.

Please check the syllabus document for what referencing system to use as we do sometimes specify a preferred system. Many academic citation and referencing systems exist and if one is not specified in the syllabus, you may select which one to use. We require candidates to adopt a clear and consistent system appropriate to the research area and this should include, at a minimum:

- the author(s), photographer or artist
- the title
- the date and place of publication (where stated)
- (for electronic resources) the URL and the date it was accessed, as the content may change over time.

It is good practice to use one of the well-known academic referencing systems, such as APA, Turabian, Chicago or MLA style (See Resources listed below), depending on the subject area chosen. Using one of these systems will help candidates prepare for research at higher levels, where these are often mandatory. But any system that allows a reader to trace unambiguously the origin of the materials used is acceptable. See Palmquist's (2012) *The Bedford Researcher* guide for further advice on thorough referencing and choosing an appropriate system.

Quoting, paraphrasing or otherwise relying on others' work without credit can amount to plagiarism.

How do citations and referencing break down?

Candidates can easily plagiarise without meaning to by failing to keep good records of sources used when preparing their work and then reproducing materials from those sources without attribution. To avoid this candidates should be encouraged to record details of each work they consult as they gather their research notes (some may wish to use referencing software; see Resources listed below). Candidates must also use quotation marks diligently when transcribing material from sources. This helps to ensure the candidate will not later mistake such material for their own ideas and reproduce it without appropriate attribution.

Some candidates wrongly assume that they can reproduce verbatim material from a source listed in the reference section without direct in-text attribution. For example, a candidate might copy a sentence or

paragraph from an online article into an essay submitted for assessment, then include the article in a reference list at the end. This is **not** acceptable. To avoid plagiarism, the reproduced material in the essay must be identified **clearly and immediately** as another’s work, e.g. by enclosing it in quotation marks and including a footnote, endnote or parenthetical citation. Closely paraphrased material should be cited too, as below.

Unacceptable: unattributed reproduced material	Acceptable: attributed verbatim quote with footnote	Acceptable: paraphrase with parenthetical citation
<p>Some argue that the only practical response to droughts and flooding is to allow people to migrate to less affected areas.</p> <p>Governments should be harnessing, rather than preventing, the use of migration as a climate adaptation strategy.</p> <p>Governments must begin to understand that allowing this to happen, making it legal and facilitating it is their best option. The alternative is trying to prevent it and creating a crisis. Refugee populations will not simply disappear, so governments need to find realistic and constructive ways to deal with them.</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>References</p> <p>Randall, Alex. (2018). ‘Migration is a successful climate adaptation strategy.’ Al Jazeera, 11 March. Online. https://bit.ly/2Hqmt3i (accessed 23/3/18).</p>	<p>Some argue that the only practical response to droughts and flooding is to allow people to migrate to less affected areas. As Alex Randell argues in an opinion piece for Al Jazeera, ‘Governments should be harnessing, rather than preventing, the use of migration as a climate adaptation strategy.</p> <p>Governments must begin to understand that allowing this to happen, making it legal and facilitating it is their best option. The alternative is trying to prevent it and creating a crisis’.¹ Refugee populations will not simply disappear, so governments need to find realistic and constructive ways to deal with them.</p> <hr/> <p>¹ Randall, Alex. (2018). ‘Migration is a successful climate adaptation strategy.’ Al Jazeera, 11 March. Online. https://bit.ly/2Hqmt3i (accessed 23/3/18).</p>	<p>Some argue that the only practical response to droughts and flooding is to allow people to migrate to less affected areas.</p> <p>Governments might even be able to benefit from the arrival of climate refugees – in any case, they cannot prevent them from arriving without causing a humanitarian disaster (Randall, 2018).</p> <p>Refugee populations will not simply disappear, so governments need to find realistic and constructive ways to deal with them.</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>References</p> <p>Randall, Alex. (2018). ‘Migration is a successful climate adaptation strategy.’ Al Jazeera, 11 March. Online. https://bit.ly/2Hqmt3i (accessed 23/3/18).</p>

Candidates should note too that simply quoting others’ material at length without commentary or discussion, while not necessarily plagiarism if the source is clearly cited, is also unlikely to achieve high marks. This is because the material cannot be credited as the candidate’s own original work.

Off-the-shelf essays

Candidates may commit deliberate misconduct by submitting work written by someone else. Such attempts are usually detected after submission by antiplagiarism software, but centres are also responsible for verifying work as a candidate’s own. Centres can detect misconduct of this type by comparing the material to work that is verifiably the candidate’s own (e.g. work produced in class). Look out for obvious deviations in fluency or style from the candidate’s other work.

‘Spinning’

Some candidates attempting to pass off others’ work as their own use so-called ‘article spinners’. These are web-based tools that disguise copied material by replacing key words with their synonyms, producing material that is structurally identical to the original but features subtly different vocabulary. The prose generated by ‘spinning’ can seem superficially impressive at a glance, but clearly lacks coherence when read attentively. An example of text produced using a ‘spinning’ tool is provided below.

Source text from Wikipedia, ‘Euthanasia’	‘Spun’ text produced at Spinbot.com
<p>Euthanasia is the practice of intentionally ending a life to relieve pain and suffering.</p> <p>There are different euthanasia laws in each country. The British House of Lords Select Committee on Medical Ethics defines euthanasia as ‘a deliberate intervention undertaken with the express intention of ending a life, to relive intractable suffering’.¹</p> <p>¹Adapted from “Euthanasia”. From the English Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthanasia (accessed 23 March 2018; CC-BY-SA).</p>	<p>Wilful extermination is the act of purposefully finishing an existence to assuage agony and enduring.</p> <p>There are distinctive wilful extermination laws in every nation. The English Place of Rulers Select Advisory group on Restorative Morals characterizes wilful extermination as ‘a think mediation attempted with the express expectation of closure an existence, to alleviate unmanageable suffering’.²</p> <p>²Generated using SpinBot, https://spinbot.com (accessed 23 March 2018).</p>

Look out for candidate work that displays unusually grand or overstated vocabulary (‘assuage agony and enduring’), especially alongside awkward or faulty phrasing (‘expectation of closure an existence’). ‘Spun’ text of this type is still plagiarism. It is not acceptable in material submitted for assessment. Centres must again rely on their familiarity with candidate’s usual standard of work when verifying material for assessment so be wary of any inconsistencies in their usual style and level of performance.

Resources

Palmquist, Mike. (2012). *The Bedford Researcher*. 4th edn. Boston, MA: Bedford/St Martin’s. (A practical guide to student research writing.)

Purdue University. (2018). ‘The Purdue Online Writing Lab.’ <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> (accessed 23 March 2018). (This site offers easy guides to using the major academic citation systems.)