SECTION 23: PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism refers to passing off someone else's work as your own. It is a serious offence with potentially serious consequences.

Plagiarism can be both intentional and unintentional (where students do not understand what does and doesn't constitute plagiarism).

UCL offers very clear guidance on plagiarism (at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/guidelines/plagiarism), and this is reproduced below:

"Plagiarism is defined as the presentation of another person's thoughts or words or artefacts or software as though they were a student's own. Any quotation from the published or unpublished works of other persons must, therefore, be clearly identified as such by being placed inside quotation marks, and students should identify their sources as accurately and fully as possible. A series of short quotations from several different sources, if not clearly identified as such, constitutes plagiarism just as much as does a single unacknowledged long quotation from a single source. Equally, if a student summarises another person's ideas, judgements, figures, software or diagrams, a reference to that person in the text must be made and the work referred to must be included in the bibliography.

Recourse to the services of 'ghost-writing' agencies (for example in the preparation of essays or reports) or of outside word-processing agencies which offer correction/improvement of English is strictly forbidden, and students who make use of the services of such agencies render themselves liable for an academic penalty.

Use of unacknowledged information downloaded from the internet also constitutes plagiarism.

Where part of an examination consists of 'take away' papers, essays or other work written in a student's own time, or a coursework assessment, the work submitted must be the candidate's own.

It is also illicit to reproduce material which a student has used in other work/assessment for the course or programmes concerned. Students should be aware of this 'self-plagiarism'. If in doubt, students should consult their Personal Tutor or another appropriate teacher.

Failure to observe any of the provisions of this policy or of approved departmental guidelines constitutes an examination offence under UCL and University Regulations. Examination offences will normally be treated as cheating or irregularities under the Regulations in respect of Examination Irregularities. Under these Regulations students found to have committed an offence may be excluded from all further examinations of UCL or the University or of both.

The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

1 The Academic Manual contains information relevant to plagiarism (www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/c4/irregularities-plagiarism/principles)
What is considered plagiarism

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

Believe it or not...
Changing the words of an original source is not sufficient to prevent plagiarism. If you have retained the essential idea of an original source, and have not cited it, then no matter how drastically you may have altered its context or presentation, you have still plagiarized.

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

Did you know?
The penalties for plagiarism can be surprisingly severe, ranging from failure of classes to expulsion from academic institutions!
- It doesn't matter if you intend to plagiarise or not! In the eyes of the law, and most publishers and academic institutions, any form of plagiarism is an offence that demands punitive action. Ignorance is never an excuse.
- It is even possible to plagiarise from yourself, if you are citing a work you submitted elsewhere. In most Universities this will result in a failing grade for the work, and possibly for the course!
- Plagiarism is almost always a symptom of other educational problems.

Why do students plagiarise?
There are two main types of plagiarism – intentional and unintentional. The list below is not exhaustive but contains the most commonly encountered reasons:

On the whole unintentional:
- Misunderstanding about citation
- Over-reliance on the original source material
- Following practices encouraged or accepted in previous educational experience or culture
- Not fully understanding when group work ceases and individual work begins
- Compensating for poor English language skills
- Poor note-taking practice

On the whole intentional:
- Leaving the work to the last minute and taking the easy option
- Needing to succeed
- Sheer panic
- Thinking that it is easy to get away with it
- Having problems with the workload
- Copying others is easier than original work
- Sensing that the teacher will not mind
What does this mean in practice for you, as a student at UCL?

It means you CAN'T do the following:
- Cut and paste from electronic journals, websites or other sources to create a piece of work.
- Use someone else's work as your own.
- Recycle essays or practical work of other people or your own (this is self-plagiarism).
- Employ a professional ghostwriting firm or anyone else to produce work for you.
- Produce a piece of work based on someone else's ideas without citing them.

So what CAN you do?
- You can quote from sources providing you use quotation marks and cite the source (this includes websites). You can paraphrase (take information from a piece of work and rewrite it in a new form) but you must still mention the source.
- In the case of joint practical or project work (or some group projects) individuals may use the same data, but the interpretation and conclusions derived from that data i.e. the 'write-up' must be their own.”