

Academic integrity

What is academic integrity?

VU's [Academic integrity and preventing plagiarism policy](#) explains the importance of staff and student honesty in relation to academic work. It outlines the kinds of behaviours that are considered to be "academic misconduct" including plagiarism.

According to this document examples of plagiarism include:

1. Presenting another person's work or research data as your own work
2. Purchasing and/or downloading essays or assignments from the web and presenting these for assessment
3. Word for word copying of sentences/paragraphs in an assignment without acknowledgement
4. Copying out parts of any work without acknowledging the source(s)

(Adapted from VU's Academic integrity and preventing plagiarism policy (available at <https://policy.vu.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00198>).

Most people would interpret the first two examples given above as cheating. You are required to do your own assignments and research so using someone else's work and pretending it is your own would not be acceptable.

The last two examples are breaches of academic integrity that are perhaps less clear cut, but are equally important and students need to be aware of what they refer to and understand how to avoid doing this.

Acknowledging the sources of the ideas you use

An important part of academic writing within Australian and other academic contexts is **acknowledgement** of the work of other people. The ideas and concepts that you use in your academic assignments while at university need to be acknowledged. In other words, you need to indicate to your readers which ideas belong to other authors by indicating the "**sources**" of these ideas.

The term "**sources**" as used here, refers to where these ideas and information come from. They are often **readings from textbooks and journals** particularly ones that are part of your **weekly readings**. They may also be **readings from other materials that you find**. This could include materials from hard-copy books, or very frequently, materials you have found in digital format online from a range of websites, both academic and less-academic ones.

Wherever your ideas come from and whatever the sources, it is important that you acknowledge these clearly and accurately each time. If you do not do this adequately, your writing may be considered to be a form of **plagiarism** and in some cases this could lead to your failing the assignment or even the unit. To avoid this, you must use **referencing**.

Using referencing styles to acknowledge the work of others

There are various kinds of **referencing conventions** or **referencing styles**.

Author-date (or ‘in-text’) styles, like APA or Harvard, include referencing information about quotes and paraphrases in brackets as part of your writing (VU, 2015). While numeric styles, such as Oxford or IEEE, use superscript¹ or square bracketed numerals [1] that refer the reader to referencing information at either the bottom of each page (as in our example) or at the end of the work.

You can find out which style is required for your subject area by consulting your unit guide or asking your tutor. Once you know which referencing style you are expected to use, you can visit the VU Library to find the appropriate style guide

<http://www.vu.edu.au/library/referencing-copyright>

Each style guide provides examples of the correct referencing formats for everything from books to journal articles to podcasts, lecture notes and visual material.

Maintaining your integrity

Developing good assignment writing habits and consistently and accurately acknowledging the source of the ideas you use will not only improve the quality of your assignments, but will ensure you maintain the standard of academic integrity required at university.

More information about academic integrity is available at:

- VU Library Guide: Referencing & plagiarism
<http://guides.library.vu.edu.au/referencing>
- Introducing academic literacy <https://www.vu.edu.au/campuses-services/student-support/academic-support-development/academic-writing/introducing-academic-literacy>
- VU’s Policy page: <https://www.vu.edu.au/about-us/administration-governance/university-policies>

¹ VU, *Referencing, Plagiarism and Integrity*, Melbourne, Victoria University, 2015