

## Rules about copying at university

Understanding the rules about copying at university will help you to practise academic integrity, and avoid plagiarism. This guide offers an introduction to when it is OK and NOT OK to copy at university.

## University conventions about copying and drawing inspiration from others' work are very strict

Practising academic integrity requires carefully acknowledging every time you use others' work. At university, there are very strict and highly valued conventions about using others' work in assessments and exams.

### 1. Students are expected to read and use relevant, credible sources when writing assessments and exams

No matter the topic, there will be existing published sources you will be expected to read and use in assessments and exams at university to **demonstrate understanding**.

### 2. Students are expected to correctly and consistently reference every time they use others' work

**Every time** you use ideas, information, data, examples, images, or words from sources you need to show this via consistent and correct referencing.

You need to reference even if you are not copying words or images from a source (direct quotations). If you are paraphrasing (putting the meaning of the source into your own words) or summarising (picking out the key points) you still need to reference.

It is important to understand that it is **not** the responsibility of the marker (reader) to recognise famous quotes or ideas used in your writing. At university, it is **your responsibility**, as the writer, to clearly show **every time** you use others' work.

### 3. ALL sources used in your writing must be acknowledged via referencing

It is important to reference whether the source is published or not. This means it is just as important to reference whether you use the study guide, lecture podcasts, e-readings, discussion board posts, journal articles, book chapters, reports, newspaper articles, pamphlets, or websites.

### 4. In most disciplines it is OK to copy and include very small sections of sources in your writing, if you do so sparingly, and reference

Students do copy **very small sections** of sources in order to include them into their writing. Direct quotation (word-for-word extracts from sources) is the most common way students do this.

However, **direct quotations should be used sparingly** and **referenced correctly** according to the set style guide.

Usually, direct quotations are used:

- to define concepts
- when you want to respond to the **wording** of a claim (e.g. agree or disagree)
- if the quote itself is famous.

In some types of scientific writing, the use of direct quotations is **not acceptable**. Make sure you **always** ask your tutor or put a question on the discussion board. This is how you will learn how to follow the academic writing conventions in your discipline and practise academic integrity in your assessments.

## 5. Mostly students include sources in their writing by paraphrasing or summarising

In assessments at university the goal is to show you have read, understood, and used existing knowledge on the topic, issue, or problem. This means you will be expected to include and respond to (e.g. apply, and/or evaluate) ideas, information, arguments and findings from relevant, credible sources.

Students usually include sources in their writing by using paraphrases and summaries. Paraphrases are where you put the meaning of the source into your own words. Summaries are where you identify the main points of a source. Summaries and paraphrases must be referenced.

## 6. It is NEVER OK to copy others' work and present it as your own work

At university it is a very strong rule that students (and teachers) must only claim credit for their own work. Using ideas, words, information, images, or data found in sources **without acknowledgement** is considered a breach of academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism) and can result in significant penalties.

**Remember, as the writer, it is your responsibility to:**

- put in the effort expected to complete the assessment
- always indicate when you use others' work,
- clearly show where your work ends and others' work begins.

[Check the SCU Learning Zone for more related Quick Guides.](#)