

**FACULTY OF HISTORY: GUIDELINES ON PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**  
**(UNDERGRADUATES)**

**1. Plagiarism and good academic practice: your responsibilities**

Academic misconduct is taken very seriously within the university and any breach of university policy could jeopardise your degree. You should ensure that you have read and understood the University's definition of academic misconduct and related guidance on the University website

<https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/>

You should also familiarise yourself with the discipline-specific guidance about referencing conventions and good academic practice which is issued by the Faculty of History, which can be found below and at <https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/plagiarism-and-academic-misconduct>

You should ensure that you always follow these conventions, and ask for clarification or support from your Director of Studies or supervisor if you need it, at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to the guidance on the University webpages, the Faculty provides training in the meaning and avoidance of plagiarism in the [Information Hub for Undergraduates Moodle](#) course. **In each year of study, students are required to sign and submit** a declaration to confirm that they have seen these resources and are aware of the University policy on academic misconduct.

Plagiarism is also discussed in the session on 'How to do a dissertation' for Part II students and by teachers when preparing students to write long essays.

**2. Faculty of History: discipline-specific guidance**

The University's [definition of academic misconduct](#) sets out clearly the various types of poor scholarly practice. The Faculty will investigate and act upon any suspicions of a breach of academic misconduct. When detected, this can lead to serious consequences under the Student Discipline Procedure.

A common pitfall to avoid is acknowledging the work of historians only partially or citing primary source material you have not actually consulted; there is a full discussion of such practices below. In work submitted for assessment, you must leave examiners in no doubt as to which parts of any submission are original, which derivative.

Plagiarism can utilise many sources and media (books, journals, newspapers, websites, unpublished material, illustrations, data, and the work of other students). It can be distinguished in the following ways:

- quoting directly another person's language, data or illustrations and suggesting, directly or indirectly, that it is original work by the author
- paraphrasing sentences, paragraphs or complete arguments of others and presenting it as original work
- using ideas taken from someone else without attribution
- cutting and pasting from the Internet to make a collage
- obtaining concealed, systematic and substantial support from another, including another candidate (other than as might be permitted for joint project work)

Self-evidently, historical research and writing are, in varying ways, collaborative. All historians use original sources, habitually refer to the work of other historians, converse and debate, and hence, in order to demarcate what is original from what is derivative, conventions have developed. These include:

- citing sources, whether original or secondary, so that a reader can verify any such sources – for published works, this means giving an author's name, the title of the work, the place and

date of publication, and the page reference – for unpublished sources, it means citing the original document, its date (if known) and its present location (in an archive or elsewhere, including the writer's personal possession)

- placing words in inverted commas and providing a citation, if a text is quoted verbatim
- giving a source, if an illustration or statistical data in a graphic form is used, and acknowledging any help from a collaborator or advisor
- providing URLs for any material obtained from the internet and citing sources for other forms of electronic media (CD-ROMs etc.)
- making clear when you are paraphrasing someone else's argument, ensuring that this person is identified and that a reader knows where the source ends and you as the author resume.

These necessities should be viewed with common sense. It is unnecessary, for example, formally to annotate familiar facts – that the battle of Waterloo happened in 1815, for example. Rather these conventions serve to distinguish **what is original in your own work from what is derived from the originality of others.**

Plagiarism and poor scholarly practice frequently arise from inadvertence. In the course of your undergraduate career, you will make many notes on lectures, on various printed texts, even on conversations in supervisions and classes. In such notes, it is important to distinguish between the ideas and language of others, and your own thoughts and language, or else it can be easy – after the lapse of months or even years – to forget who said what, and to imagine that what is borrowed from others is your own.

Traditionally, supervision essays were unannotated, as, by necessity, are all scripts in three-hour unseen examinations, but word-processing makes it easier for you to acquire the scholarly habits of furnishing footnotes and bibliographies in weekly essays. In all circumstances, it is imperative to place inverted commas around quotations and to attribute ideas to their original authors in your written text.

The **Faculty style guide**, which explains how to do footnotes and bibliographies in essays and dissertations, can be found here: <http://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/style-guide>

The following examples will help to show how these conventions work in practice.

A passage in Rosemary Horrox, "Service", in Horrox, ed., *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 61, reads:

Service has some claim to be considered the dominant ethic of the middle ages. This essay is mainly concerned with the social and political manifestations of service, but it is important to recognize that these rested upon attitudes, which were very deeply rooted in medieval society. That society, to a degree, which modern readers sometimes find disconcerting, was based on hierarchy. Human society, mirroring the whole created universe, was arranged in order of importance. There is no doubt that this orderliness was found satisfying in itself. Medieval writing bears witness to a passion for arranging things in order and for resolving all the possible ambiguities and contradictions which might arise. The minutely detailed lists of precedence to be found in late medieval courtesy books reflect not only a sense that it was socially important to seat people in the right order at the dinner table, but a sheer pleasure in working out the minutiae of relative status.

If, in the following manner, you used this passage without attribution and quotation marks, even if the wording is slightly varied, you would be a plagiarist:

Service has some claim to be considered the dominant ethic of the middle ages. It rested upon attitudes, which were very deeply rooted in medieval society. Society was based on hierarchy and arranged in order of importance. The lists of precedence to be found in late medieval courtesy books reflect not only a sense that it was socially important to seat people in the right order at the dinner table, but pleasure in working out relative status.

Acknowledging the source in the narrative but implying that your narrative is independent of the source and, by omitting annotation, making it difficult for your larceny to be detected, is no less plagiarism. The following example constitutes an abuse because it implies that only the idea expressed in the first sentence is owed to Dr Horrox's article and that what follows is the candidate's own train of thought:

Horrox has made the point that service has some claim to be considered the dominant ethic of the middle ages. We can see that it rested upon attitudes, which were very deeply rooted in medieval society. Society was based on hierarchy and arranged in order of importance. The lists of precedence to be found in late medieval courtesy books reflect not only a sense that it was socially important to seat people in the right order at the dinner table, but pleasure in working out relative status.

This is an especially noteworthy example because it illustrates a common failing in undergraduate work, a failure which is often the result of careless rather than intentionally evasive writing. By contrast, compare the following paragraph, which avoids plagiarism because it quotes Horrox directly and provides annotation:

As Horrox has said, "Service has some claim to be considered the dominant ethic of the middle ages". This is because "society, to a degree which modern readers sometimes find disconcerting, was based on hierarchy. Human society, mirroring the whole created universe, was arranged in order of importance". She further suggests that "this orderliness was found satisfying in itself" and uses the example of late medieval courtesy books to demonstrate this "sheer pleasure in working out the minutiae of relative status".<sup>1</sup>

This is far from model academic prose, however. By carefully dismembering Dr Horrox's sentences and attributing each component to her our hypothetical author is safe from the charge of plagiarism. However, this formulation still implies a selectivity, which is in fact illusory because nothing of any substance has been omitted from the original. It would be better, because more succinct and considered, to write:

Horrox has argued that "service has some claim to be considered the dominant ethic of the Middle Ages". She links this to the contemporary emphasis on hierarchy, as reflected in the courtesy books.<sup>2</sup>

Still better, because it shows understanding of the source and takes a critical position, would be:

Horrox has argued that "service has some claim to be considered the dominant ethic of the Middle Ages", but the discussion which follows is concerned only with male manifestations of service.<sup>3</sup> If we consider the role of women . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Rosemary Horrox, "Service", in Horrox, ed., *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Another unacceptable and fairly common habit is derivative citation without clear acknowledgement. This is poor scholarly practice for two reasons. First, it implies that you have read material which you have not. Secondly, it tends to downplay the role of the modern historian whose work contains the references. You commit this error if your footnote reads:

Stains, *Lucubrations on the State of the Nation*, Boston 1860

Instead of giving the extra information required:

Obadiah Stains, *Lucubrations on the State of the Nation*, Boston 1860, as cited by Nemo Niemand in his article mentioned above, note 7.

The same standard of transparency applies to modern secondary literature: if you haven't read it but are citing it at one remove via another piece of academic work, you MUST cite it as known to you BY THAT ROUTE, as in the following example:

E. Cortese, *La norma giuridica*, vol. 1, pp. 166-8, as cited by Nemo Niemand in his article 'Law and Politics', p. 7

### **3. Turnitin**

The University subscribes to Turnitin UK software which is widely used in UK universities and matches text in work submitted to the software to that in a large database of online sources.

This University is the recognised Data Controller for the data held and processed by, or on behalf of, the service. An American company, iParadigms, is the Data Processor.

Turnitin UK may detect direct plagiarism, paraphrasing and collusion as submitted work is compared with a vast database of online material and with a 'private' database of previous submissions. Therefore, submitting work to the database helps to protect it from future attempts to plagiarise it, and helps to maintain the integrity of the University's qualifications.

The software makes no judgement about whether a student has plagiarised, it simply shows the percentage of the submission that matches other sources and produces an originality report that highlights the text matches and, where possible, displays the matching text and its immediate context.

In many cases, the software highlights correctly cited references or 'innocent' matches. Therefore, Examiners will carefully review all originality reports to determine whether the work does contain plagiarism.

### **4. How is Turnitin UK used in the Faculty of History?**

Each piece of assessed work submitted by students will be analysed by Turnitin. Twenty percent of the total number of submissions will be selected for further scrutiny by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, acting as Faculty Academic Integrity Officer. Normally, this will be work highlighted by the Turnitin software as containing a significant amount of recognised text. Work recommended by Examiners for further investigation may also be selected for scrutiny. Originality reports for scrutinised work will be referred to the Examiners responsible for the academic assessment of the work if there is prima facie evidence of plagiarism or poor academic practice. A report on the screening process will be submitted to the relevant Examination Board.

### **5. What will happen if matches are identified between my work and another source?**

If Turnitin UK detects matches between your work and another source, the Examiners will review the resulting originality report to judge whether the matches are innocent, or whether you have

appropriately referenced these matches (if not, this may constitute plagiarism), and/or whether you have made excessive use of material from other sources (which may be poor academic practice).

In most cases, where a minor breach is found, the Chair of the relevant Examination Board will advise the examiners to make an academic mark adjustment relating to the proportion of work that was deemed to be plagiarised, so that the mark awarded reflects the extent and academic merit of the material believed to be your own work. However, depending on the extent and context of the matches, you may be summoned to a non-disciplinary hearing in the Faculty or your work may be referred to the [Office of Student Conduct, Complaints, and Appeals \(OSCCA\)](#) for further investigation. In such cases, the Turnitin UK originality report may be used as evidence.

You are reminded that Turnitin is only one method of checking the originality of your work. Examiners may initiate the standard investigative procedures if they have unresolved queries about the originality of your work, regardless of whether Turnitin has substantiated any concerns.

## **6. Will Turnitin UK affect my intellectual property rights or copyright?**

The copyright and intellectual property rights of the submitted material remain wholly with the original owner (normally the student, with the exception of some collaborative or sponsored research projects). However, you are asked to permit Turnitin UK to:

- *reproduce your work to assess it for originality;*
- *retain a copy of your work for comparison at a later date with future submissions.*

## **7. Will my personal data be retained by Turnitin UK?**

Material submitted to Turnitin UK will be identified by your examination number, course details and institution: personal data will not be used.

## **8. What will happen if text submitted by another student matches that in my work?**

### **a. Matches to text submitted from other HE institutions**

If a report generated by another institution identifies a match to your work, the report will only show the extent of the match and the contact details of the University's Turnitin UK Administrator. If approached, the Turnitin UK Administrator will attempt to contact you about the matter. The contents of your work will not be revealed to a third party outside Cambridge without your permission.

### **b. Matches to text submitted from within the University**

If a match is found to material submitted from within the University, the Examiners can obtain the full text without approaching you.

## **9. How do I apply for my work to be removed from Turnitin UK?**

Work screened by Turnitin UK will be retained in the Turnitin database for comparison with future submissions; if matches are identified, the full text is not accessible to other institutions, only the matching text. You may request that your work is removed from the Turnitin UK database at the conclusion of the examination process, but this must be done separately for each piece of submitted work. Retaining your work on the database will help to ensure that your work remains protected from future attempts to plagiarise it, will help maintain the integrity of the University's qualifications, and will maximise the effectiveness of the software.

## **10. Sources of further information and support**

Further information about the use of Turnitin can be found here:

[www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/turnitin-uk](http://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/turnitin-uk)

(Last updated November 2020)

**FACULTY OF HISTORY: ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

**All students are required to complete the following declaration ONLINE via a Moodle link which will be sent to them, by 20 January 2021.**

*DECLARATION PROVIDED HERE IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY.*

*Please read the statements and check the boxes to indicate your agreement.*

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information and guidance contained in this document, including the University's definition of academic misconduct and Discipline Regulation 7.<sup>1</sup>
- I undertake not to breach the Rules of Behaviour by committing any form of academic misconduct in any work submitted for assessment at the University and understand that the penalties may be severe if I am found to have done so.
- I confirm that I understand that Turnitin UK text-matching software is used to screen work submitted for Tripos assessment.

Personal details

Name (please print):..... College: .....

Course of study: Historical Tripos / History and Politics Tripos (delete as appropriate)

Signature: .....

Date: .....

(2020-21)

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<sup>1</sup> Discipline Regulation 7 reads:

No member of the University shall assist a candidate in any form of academic misconduct against the Rules of Behaviour for Registered Students and Formerly Registered Students.

[Statutes and Ordinances 2019, p. 191 - Chapter II, Section 19](#)