Avoiding plagiarism / unfair means / academic cheating

Our expectation is that our students will be proud of the original work they have done and where they draw upon the work of others (which is something all scholars have to do) they do so in a way that properly acknowledges the other scholars’ work. By contrast, plagiarism (taking the work, ideas, text, pictures, drawings, artwork, diagrams, computer programs etc. of others and presenting them as one’s own, e.g. by not properly attributing the author) is a form of academic cheating and must be avoided.

Catching students who cheat by copying and pasting material taken from the internet, books, journals and other students’ assignments into their assignment is easy thanks to powerful search engines and anti-plagiarism services available to all UK universities (e.g. TurnitInUK see http://www.submit.ac.uk)

We always investigate suspicions of plagiarism because we owe it to the majority of students, who don’t cheat.

In recent years there have been some serious cases of plagiarism which have led to students being expelled / cases resulting in module failure / having to completely re-do work with a maximum mark of a bare pass / missed graduation ceremonies – all through plagiarism.

Those who plagiarise jeopardise their award, and could jeopardise their career.

The University is sometimes asked to comment on the honesty or trustworthiness of students, for example the police (as a potential employer) and in such or similar cases we are obliged to answer honestly and factually.

Obviously, you will seek and obtain support and help from various sources and people (including your peers and tutors) as you work towards the completion of assignment tasks. If you acknowledge carefully and precisely any help you receive from anyone you will be able to avoid any misunderstandings that might otherwise arise.

You must take care to ensure that it is quite clear to those who assess your work which parts are your own original work produced by your hand, unaided, and which parts are (wholly or in part) the work or ideas of others. Where you quote directly from a source (written or otherwise), or refer to specific ideas or parts within it, or include copies of part or all of a source, then you should attribute the source exactly by using a precise and accurate reference including a page number because it is a direct quote. If you do not do this you are, in effect, claiming the work as your own. If it is not your own work, then this is plagiarism. Make sure directly quoted material is clearly and properly identified. Follow the advice above about presenting short and longer direct quotations.
For artistic works, whilst it is acceptable to use others’ art/design work as an influence in the production of your own work, unfair means also relates to copying work from existing art/design work and passing that work off as your own creation, which is not acceptable practice and is an infringement of Design Copyright Laws.

If you include any sheets in your assignment of which you are not the author, write on the sheets to identify and acknowledge the source fully.

Typical examples of plagiarism, all of a serious nature, include:

- Taking text or images or diagrams from a book, journal or website and including them in your assignment (with or without minor alteration) without making it clear (through proper use of referencing and quotation techniques) that you have done this. You are thus claiming the work as your own, and (largely or completely) it is not.

- Including material as in the above example, but where the only indication in your assignment that the material is somebody else’s is by including the source as an item in your bibliography (say to a book or website) at the end. In addition to the bibliography entry at the end, there must be proper Harvard references (with page numbers for direct quotation) in the body and correct use of quotation technique in the body if you are to ensure you will not mislead the person marking your work about what is yours and what is not.

- Taking (for example) a test, exam question, acetate, hand-out or worksheet etc. that is not your work and presenting it in your assignment without explicitly identifying it as the work of somebody else. You may mislead the tutor about whose work the item is.

- Copying part of the assignment work of another student (past or present) and presenting it as your own.

- Submitting work as your own in cases where a part of it has been produced for you by somebody else and you have not precisely acknowledged these parts. It isn't sufficient to have an "acknowledgements" section thanking people in a general way. Your tutor needs to know precisely which parts are attributable, all or in part, to others.

- Using components of referenced artwork and passing it off as your own artwork.