

## Queen's Department of English Statement on Academic Integrity



Queen's University values and promotes an ethos of academic integrity, based on the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Departures from these values compromise the integrity of the scholarly community which Queen's strives to foster. Such departures are accordingly regarded with great seriousness, and are subject to a range of sanctions. The following are examples of departures from academic integrity: plagiarism, such as the unacknowledged use of sources; using unauthorized materials during a test; facilitation, such as the buying or selling of term papers; the forging of documents; and falsification, such as impersonating someone in an examination. These values and departures from them are more fully defined and explained in Queen's Arts and Science Regulation 1, Academic Integrity (<http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1>, subsequently referred to as Regulation 1). Students should be familiar with this faculty document, which provides the framework within which the Department of English treats all departures from academic integrity.

The remainder of the present document will be primarily concerned with plagiarism. This is because the boundary between what may be regarded as appropriate borrowing on the one hand, and plagiarism or improper borrowing on the other, may vary from one discipline to another. Students taking courses in English at Queen's need to understand what constitutes plagiarism in the discipline of English, why it is so regarded, and how to avoid inadvertently crossing the boundary between the acceptable and the unacceptable use of sources. To ensure that all students understand these issues, the department requires that this explanatory statement be provided with every departmental course syllabus. The purpose of this statement is thus to inform. It does not imply a presumption of anyone's intent to plagiarize. Many instructors also devote class time to the subject, and provide opportunity for discussing it. In any case, students who are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism should seek clarification from their instructor.

### Citation of Sources: Purposes and Methods

Since plagiarism results from inadequate citation of the sources of one's ideas and/or expressions, it is important to begin by understanding the purposes for citation. Citing sources properly is not just a matter of avoiding plagiarism; it has rhetorical purposes within your essay and constructive purposes within the discipline. A literary essay is not a simple monologue, in which everything originates with the essayist; it is more like a conversation involving you, your subject, your reader, and (in many cases) others who have commented on the subject before. Citation is a way of making the conversation and your part in it clear by attributing all parts to their proper sources. If exact citation makes clear what your debts are, it also helps to highlight your contributions. Proper citation has several other positive functions: (1) enhancing your authority by showing that you have informed yourself on your subject, (2) sharing information, e.g., by identifying sources your reader may not have known, and (3) ensuring accuracy by making your representations of others' ideas and statements subject to checking.

Methods or formats of citation vary somewhat from one discipline to the next: for instance, while social scientists commonly use the American Psychological Association (or APA) style of citation, the Modern Language Association (or MLA) style is widely accepted in the discipline of literary studies and is considered standard within the Queen's Department of English. In *A Canadian Writer's Reference* (the composition and grammar handbook endorsed by the Department of English), Diana Hacker presents the MLA style as a method for "avoiding plagiarism" and explains clearly and accurately how it works (376–79). She also provides examples of in-text citations and works-cited entries for most cases that are likely to be needed (388–428) and a sample essay in MLA format (436–40). Students may also refer to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, which contains the fullest description of MLA style.

## Plagiarism: Definitions and Guidelines

Just as different disciplines use different styles of citation, what counts as permissible borrowing and what counts as plagiarism may also differ between disciplines. A borrowing without citation that may be acceptable in one discipline because it is considered a statement of fact or of common knowledge may be unacceptable in a literary research paper because it is considered somebody's representation or interpretation. In general, the discipline of literary studies is more sensitive than others to the integrity of particular interpretations, representations, and phrasings, and more likely to view the re-presentation of these things as requiring citation.

Regulation 1 in the *Queen's Arts and Science Calendar* <<http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1>>, which is binding for all departments, defines plagiarism as "presenting another's ideas or phrasings as one's own without proper acknowledgement." Regulation 1.2.1 provides the following examples of prohibited acts:

- copying and pasting from the internet, a printed source, or other resource without proper acknowledgement;
- copying from another student;
- using direct quotations or large sections of paraphrased material in an assignment without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting the same piece of work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor(s).

Facilitation of a departure from academic integrity, such as "knowingly allowing one's essay or assignment to be copied by someone else" or "buying or selling of term papers or assignments and submitting them as one's own for the purpose of plagiarism," is also prohibited. In the words of Regulation 1, this listing "defines the domain of relevant acts without providing an exhaustive list."

With more specific reference to the conventions of citation used within literary research essays, the Department of English endorses the definition of plagiarism given by Diana Hacker in *A Canadian Writer's Reference*:

In general, these three acts are considered plagiarism: (1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words. (376)

The Department also offers the following guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism in undergraduate English essays:

- a. Electronic sources (e.g., web sites, online databases) have the same status as printed sources (e.g., books, journal articles). Borrowings from either type of source must be fully and specifically acknowledged.
- b. Listing a source in a "works cited" list or bibliography is not, in itself, adequate acknowledgement. All specific borrowings from the source (whether of ideas or of language) must also be acknowledged locally with internal citations and, where appropriate, with quotation marks.
- c. An internal citation is not adequate if it is not clear how much has been taken from the cited source. For instance, a citation at the end of a paragraph is not adequate if it remains unclear whether the borrowing extends to one sentence or to more, or whether it extends to ideas only or also to the language used to express those ideas. In some cases, a borrowing with inadequate citation can constitute plagiarism. For advice on how to indicate specific borrowings with quotation marks and/or "signal phrases," see Hacker 382–88.

- d. Do not attribute greater claims to a source than the source actually makes or alter a quotation without indicating how it has been altered. For advice on the conventions for signifying that you have altered a quotation to fit your context, see Hacker 380–81.
- e. Collaboration in the writing of an essay is permitted only if specified in the assignment, and then the assignment should be co-signed; presenting collaborative work without acknowledgement may fall under the definition of plagiarism. If you are in doubt about whether or to what extent collaboration is permitted, ask your instructor.
- f. Unforeseen difficulties (e.g., illness or family emergency) are not an excuse for plagiarism, for they can be dealt with in other ways. In such a case, ask your instructor (and counselling services if need be) for special consideration.
- g. Plagiarism can occur with or without intent; the definitions used by Arts and Science and by the Department of English (see above) do not presume a deliberate attempt to deceive. What Hacker calls “unintentional plagiarism” (359) may result if you copy sources carelessly, forget what originates with the sources, and then represent ideas and/or language taken from your sources as your original work. It is therefore important to keep track of exactly what comes from where during the research process; for advice on this, see Hacker 357–65. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that there can be no misunderstanding about what should be credited to the student and what derives from another source.
- h. Social media and note-sharing web sites frequently incorporate material from other online and print sources without properly citing it; students who use such sites may be at risk of committing plagiarism even if they did not consult the original sources from which the material was borrowed. Students should exercise caution when using such sites: it is ultimately their own responsibility to ensure that all language and ideas borrowed from any online or print source is fully and accurately cited.
- i. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the draft submitted for academic credit is the final or proper draft; a claim that a wrong draft was submitted by accident will not be accepted as an excuse for plagiarism.

Students who are uncertain about how to document a specific source, or about what constitutes plagiarism in the fulfilment of a specific assignment, should seek clarification from the instructor. Seeking such clarification is their responsibility.

## How Possible Departures from Academic Integrity are Treated

Regulation 1 prescribes a procedure for dealing with cases where a possible departure from academic integrity is suspected. This procedure is here summarized. For more detail, students should consult the regulation itself, and the document “Information for Students Receiving Notice of a Departure from Academic Integrity” (<http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity/students/receiving-a-notice-of-a-departure-from-academic-integrity>). An instructor who has concerns relating to a possible departure from academic integrity will send to the student a “Notice of Investigation,” outlining the basis for concern. Students must respond to this notice within ten days, either by contacting the instructor to arrange a meeting or by notifying their intention to submit a written response. Either option gives students an opportunity to respond to the instructor’s concerns; students who opt for a meeting are entitled to bring a friend or advisor.

After the meeting, or after receiving a written response, the instructor will determine whether the evidence warrants a finding of a departure from academic integrity. An instructor who determines that there are no grounds for such a finding will so inform the student, and all documents in the case will be destroyed. An instructor who determines that the evidence does warrant a finding of such a departure will then decide, taking into account the seriousness of the finding and all relevant circumstances, whether the finding is Level I or Level II, and what sanction to impose. The distinction between a Level I and a Level II finding is described in Regulation 1. Briefly, a Level I finding is less serious, the sanction is imposed within the department, and the record is kept in a separate file in the Faculty Office, but not in the student’s main file, and is *only* consulted in the case of a subsequent finding. In the Department

of English, the sanction for a Level I finding is often a mark of zero for the particular assignment. More serious cases, those categorized as Level II, typically include some aggravating circumstance, such as the existence of a previous finding, and the sanction may involve a student failing the entire course. Level II findings are kept in a student's main file in the Faculty Office. In all cases, the instructor will send the student a formal notice of a "Finding of a Departure from Academic Integrity." The student has a right to appeal this finding or to appeal the sanction, and the procedure for so doing is described on the form. In some instances, and always when the student has previously been the subject of a finding of a departure from academic integrity, the instructor will refer the finding to the Associate Dean (Studies), who may apply a more onerous sanction, possibly including a recommendation to Senate that the student be required to withdraw from the University.

It is the responsibility of all students to read both Faculty and Department policies on this matter. For the Faculty policy, see Academic Regulation 1 in the *Faculty of Arts and Science Calendar* <<http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1>>.

## Essential Further Reading

*Faculty of Arts and Science Calendar*. Kingston: Queen's University, issued annually.

<<http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendar>>.

- See especially Regulation 1: <<http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1>>.

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *A Canadian Writer's Reference*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

- This handbook is required in ENGL 100 and recommended for all English concentrators as of 2005. Copies are available in the Campus Bookstore and on reserve in Stauffer Library.
- Pages 357–65 offer note-taking strategies for avoiding "unintentional plagiarism."
- Pages 389–98 explain how to avoid plagiarism by using the MLA style of citation.
- Pages 388–440 explain MLA Style in detail.

## Also Recommended

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 2003.

- Chapter 2, "Plagiarism," includes a useful discussion of "unintentional plagiarism."
- This book offers the most detailed exposition of the MLA Style.