



Writing types and conventions

A learning activity to develop academic integrity

Audience: This development activity is targeted at students to scaffold their understanding of the culture of academic endeavour and the research-based nature of academic writing. Ideally it might be incorporated into tutorials, preferably not all at once but over a matter of some weeks to allow students' ideas to develop.

Context: When students begin university studies their understanding of academic integrity is sometimes limited to an awareness that they must avoid plagiarism or cheating. These perceptions have more to do with attitude and behaviour management than with the development of understandings and skills. The fact that an analysis of 2010 academic integrity policies of the 39 Australian universities found a far heavier focus on preventing and dealing with breaches than educational statements on achieving an understanding of academic integrity only serves to confirm the perceptions that students bring with them.

By engaging in discussions about their beliefs, and examining their perceptions in the light of some contradictory facts and searching questions, students and staff are encouraged to explore logical and productive reasons for the practice of citations and referencing in academic writing.

Learning objectives: Participants will:

- clarify conventions of different contexts of non-academic and academic writing;
- discover that referencing is not conventionally used in every context;
- build a list of writing types and contexts where referencing is not used – and discuss why not;
- build a list of writing types and contexts where referencing is required – and discuss how these texts differ from the first list;
- draw conclusions for the context of academic writing;
- arrive at notions of validity and verifiability as characteristics of documents that provide evidence to support an author's point of view
- consider the notion of integrity as the dispassionate presentation and unbiased interpretation of source texts and other data as evidence

Activity:

1. Brainstorm writings for a variety of contexts: email to a friend; letter to the editor; a novel; a film script; an environmental impact statement; an accident report; a wikipedia entry, etc. – and discuss whether referencing is used, if not, why not?
 - *Q: what would the effect be if we DID include references in these?*
2. Examine some published academic articles in two different disciplines, discuss what the function of the references might be; select several, and work out whether or how they contribute to the author's text.
 - *Q: what would be the effect if the quotes or references were left out?*
 - *Q: in what ways are some assignments like published articles?*
3. Discuss purpose of the different types of writing, who the author is, who the intended

- reader is, how important it is that true, trustworthy, that it can be checked?
 - *Q: what is the purpose of different written assignments?*
4. Brainstorm meanings of integrity: e.g. Intact, unaltered etc. include dictionary meanings; link integrity to research data, including source texts

Results and reflection:

- Draw conclusions – consider dispassionate presentation and unbiased interpretation of source texts and other data as evidence
- Listen to the following audio PowerPoint:
Avoiding plagiarism: Achieving academic writing. The University of Adelaide
<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/online/learningmodules/avoidingPlagiarism/player.html>
- Write personal reflection on the purpose of citing and referencing in academic assignment writing.

Resources and references: McGowan, U. & O'Regan, K. (2008) 'Avoiding plagiarism: Achieving academic writing', The University of Adelaide. Retrieved 04/07/2012,
<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/learning/staff/plagiarism/>

McGowan, U. (2010) Re-defining academic teaching in terms of research apprenticeship. In M. Devlin, J. Nagy and A. Lichtenberg (Eds.) *Research and Development in Higher Education: Reshaping Education*, 33 (pp. 481-489).
Retrieved 25/1/2012 http://www.herdsa.org.au/?page_id=1371#M

You can use and adapt this learning activity to suit your students and teaching context by using the citation available on the web page: www.aisp.apfei.edu.au/content/learning-activities

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