



Mathematical  
Institute

# Where does collaborating end and plagiarising begin?

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Oxford  
Mathematics



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- ▶ The notion of plagiarism can sometimes be a bit slippery
- ▶ **But** we can refer to guidance from the university

Over to you

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So collaboration can be a good thing, but it comes with possible pitfalls. . .

Over to you

Let's explore different scenarios to determine what qualifies as plagiarism and what falls under collaboration—perhaps, in some cases, poor collaboration.

## Scenario 1

Three students,  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\gamma$ , work together on a question from one of the problem sheets. Student  $\gamma$  is much more vocal than the other two and leads the discussion, essentially laying out the entire solution.

The students then begin writing their solutions independently, but  $\alpha$  is still quite confused. To work through the details, he refers to  $\gamma$ 's written solution and, while going through it line by line, ends up with a solution that is very similar to  $\gamma$ 's.

## Scenario 2

Student  $\epsilon$  is struggling with a particular question from the problem sheet. With the deadline approaching, they decide to search online for solutions to similar problems. Eventually, they find a solution to the exact problem. While writing their own solution, they feel that they cannot express it in a way that is not very similar to the one they found online.

## Scenario 3

Student  $\delta$  is working on their dissertation, having read articles from the internet, research papers, and books. When they begin writing, they realize that although they have taken notes on interesting ideas and gathered useful quotes, they did not record all the articles they consulted. Since they are unable to properly cite these sources, they decide not to use the direct quotes from them in their dissertation. Instead, they opt to paraphrase the main ideas they want to include.

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Did you spot any problems with these collaborations?

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What exactly is plagiarism anyway?

## The university's definition of plagiarism

'Presenting work or ideas from another source as your own, with or without consent of the original author, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. [...]

Plagiarism can also include re-using your own work without citation. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.'





Over to you

How can you avoid plagiarism?

## The university's advice

'The best way of avoiding plagiarism is to learn and employ the principles of **good academic practice** from the beginning of your university career. Avoiding plagiarism is not simply a matter of making sure your references are all correct, or changing enough words so the examiner will not notice your paraphrase; it is about deploying your academic skills to make your work as good as it can be.'

But what about AI?

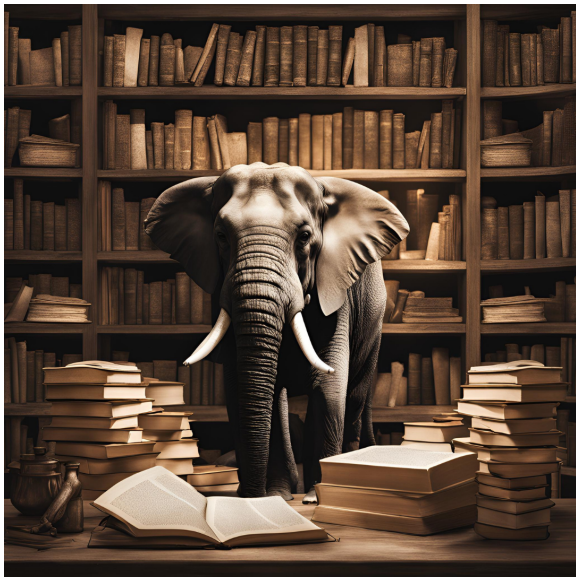


Image generated at <http://canva.com>

## The university's advice

'You can make use of generative AI tools [...] in developing your academic skills to support your studies. Your ongoing critical appraisal of outputs by reviewing them for accuracy will maximise the potential for AI outputs to be a useful additional tool to support you in your studies.'



## The university's advice

'Students using AI during their studies must learn and practise the same academic skills of note-taking and clear attribution which are safeguards against plagiarism, ensuring clear differentiation of their own work from any text or material derived from any AI tools. **Unauthorised use of AI falls under the plagiarism regulations** and would be subject to academic penalties in summative assessments.'



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- ▶ If collaboration is permitted for assessed work, **always acknowledge any help you have received**



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- ▶ Treat AI just as you would any other collaborator

## Guidance



'Plagiarism'



'Use of generative AI tools'

The left-hand webpage links through to an online training course:  
'Avoiding plagiarism'

Department-specific advice on the use of generative AI is  
forthcoming

## Some scenarios revisited

### Scenario 1

Three students  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\gamma$  work together on a question from one of the problem sheets. The student  $\gamma$  is way more vocal than the other two and leads the discussion, basically laying out the entire solution alone...

### Scenario 2

Student  $\epsilon$  is having a very hard time with one question from the problem sheet. Since the deadline for submission is very close, they decide to look online to see if they can find a solution to a similar question...

### Scenario 3

Student  $\delta$  is working on their dissertation, having read articles, research papers, and books. When they begin writing, they realize that although they've taken notes on interesting ideas and collected useful quotes, they did not record all the articles they consulted...

Over to you

What does effective collaboration look like?

## Effective collaboration

- ▶ Make sure you both understand the problem
- ▶ Establish common ground
- ▶ Don't be afraid to share half-formed thoughts
- ▶ Be patient
- ▶ Listen!

In conclusion

Any final questions, comments, or concerns?