ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

Information for tutors

This toolkit includes teaching materials to use with small or large groups of students, or as self-help tools for individual students. They are designed to build understanding of the principles of academic integrity and how they relate to academic writing and avoiding plagiarism at university in the UK. The full toolkit is directly accessible for both students and staff as a LibGuide at libguides.reading.ac.uk/academicintegrity

The topics have been identified as responding to particular learning needs for students in HE, following research with academic staff and students. Each topic has a handout with general guidance. Many have an exercise (with sample answers) to reinforce learning, and PowerPoint slide/s which can be adapted if necessary and circulated or included in lecture presentations. Some topics also have associated brief screencasts. There are also useful external web links on each page of the LibGuide.

Using the materials

Our research indicated specific issues of poor student engagement with teaching referencing, plagiarism avoidance and associated topics. The following guidance may be helpful when using these materials.

- Students often feel that they know how to use references as they have already used them in their previous educational experience (at school or college, or in study overseas). Consequently the differences between previous experience and what is needed for university need to be explicitly stated.

- Students do not always realise that there are a variety of referencing systems, or that there is a reason that their discipline uses a particular style. This is exacerbated when students are studying in more than one department. It is helpful to explain explicitly which style the department expects students to use, and why it has been chosen.

- The most frequent complaint of students was of lack of consistency in advice and interpretation within the university (even between tutors in the same department), which led to mistrust and a feeling of unfairness. As a result, students often noted that they preferred to follow external advice.

- Many students lack understanding of the role that references play in academic writing. Providing guidance on this is as important as showing how to format a citation or when to include one.

- Using the term ‘academic integrity’ puts a more positive spin on learning these practices than a narrow focus on plagiarism, which is often seen by students as referring purely to buying an essay from the internet, and therefore not applying to them.

Many of the materials include generic examples which can be replaced with subject-specific examples to encourage student engagement. To facilitate this, they are also available as Word documents. Please email studyadvice@reading.ac.uk if you need a Word version of any document.