

# **A CLASSICS STUDENT'S GUIDE TO GOOD ACADEMIC CONDUCT, ESSAY WRITING AND REFERENCING**

This document explains how to acknowledge the sources of your ideas when writing your coursework essays, how to make proper reference to quotations, and also how to present these references.

The guidance on presentation is based on that given in the "Classics Essay Guidelines", which offers more extensive guidance than given here. It also contains helpful suggestions on how to form your ideas into an essay. You can find it on the School Intranet, at the following address:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/history-classics-archaeology/information-current-undergraduates/your-studies/assessment-and-feedback/coursework/essay-guidance>

**Every essay must be written in your own words, with any quotations clearly indicated.**

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Writing an essay is a way of conveying your opinions about a particular issue to your reader. Your opinions will have been informed by those of other scholars, but you should aim to paraphrase and summarize such scholarship rather than repeating it word-for-word. This shows your readers that you have understood and processed everything that you have read.

On many occasions, it will also be appropriate to quote the exact wording of your sources. You should do this:

- a) if you want to highlight a specific detail from a source (this will be particularly common in essays in Greek and Latin literature);
- b) if another scholar has expressed a particular idea in an especially interesting or useful way – perhaps a way that you want to debate or disagree with.

Quotations are indicated to your reader in different ways, depending on how much text you are quoting, the language in which your source was written, and whether it was written in prose or in verse. The "Classics Essay Guidelines" document describes these different requirements in full, and you should make sure that you follow its advice exactly.

**Whenever you use something that you have found in someone else's work, you must provide a full reference to that work, whether ancient or modern.**

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Regardless of whether you are paraphrasing something that you have read, or quoting it directly, you must also provide a reference to show the reader where you got your information. We do this in order to leave a 'paper trail' that readers (and examiners) can use to get back to the original source.

As soon as you make a point based on something which you have taken from another author, whether ancient or modern, supply your sentence with a corresponding reference, in the manner shown in the following example.

According to Aristotle, rhetoric is the art of persuasion (*Rhetoric* 1.1.3, 1.1.14). There were four main stylistic virtues with which Roman orators sought to persuade their audience: *Latinitas*, ornament, appropriateness and clarity.<sup>1</sup> Although orators had been pursuing such virtues since the Republic, the great preachers of Late Antiquity must be ranked high among them, since their sermons display these traits in abundance.

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<sup>1</sup> Kirchner (2007), 182.

In this example, the first and second sentences are paraphrasing the ideas of an ancient author and a modern scholar, and so have been supplied with references to those individuals. The third sentence has no reference attached to it, which shows that the opinion contained within it is the writer's own interpretation.

References to ancient authors should usually be placed in the text, while references to modern scholarship are usually placed in a footnote at the bottom of the page. This is not an absolute rule: a secondary work might be cited in the text if engaging closely with its argument, and a list of ancient sources might be placed in a footnote if it is useful to cite them collectively. But in any case, references made in the text are contained within brackets, while footnotes are keyed in to the text with a superscript number placed after the full stop. Your word processor probably has an "Insert Footnote" button which will do the latter for you.

**Your references to works by ancient authors should allow your reader to locate the passage, even if they are using a different edition or translation than the one which you used.**

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All references to ancient works should provide the name of the author, and should also specify the line/section number(s) of the part to which you are referring. If the author has only one surviving work, then no further information is needed:

Herodotus 1.82–3

Diogenes Laertius 8.77

...but if the author was responsible for more than one work, then you should also specify which you are using, as in the following examples:

Homer, *Iliad* 6.232–6

Virgil, *Aeneid* 3.476–81

Horace, *Odes* 3.5.1–4

If your essay is about a particular text, it is acceptable to use more abbreviated references (e.g. the references to Herodotus and Virgil above could be abbreviated to Hdt. 1.82–3, Virg. *Aen.* 3.476–81). You might even drop the author and title entirely, but **only** if the reference is obvious from what goes before. Correct abbreviations for ancient authors and works can be found in many places, e.g. the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*: do not invent your own.

Primary sources do not need to be listed in your bibliography, unless you have quoted from a published translation. Because of this, you should never cite ancient authors according to the page number of the book you are using (which is meaningless if your reader is using a different edition). For each text there will be a standard form of abbreviation, usually involving book, (poem), and line number (for verse), or book, chapter (and subsection) for prose. This should be perfectly sufficient to identify the relevant passage.



**All references should refer accurately and honestly to the specific source which you used.**

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Sometimes you will wish to make use of information which you have obtained at second hand. This might be through one scholar's summary of another's work, or through a lecture handout containing a useful extract from a source that you have not otherwise read.

Ideally you should track down the original, but second-hand information of this kind is quite acceptable, as long as it is accurately and honestly acknowledged in your footnotes. The following examples show some of the ways that you can indicate this to your reader:

König (2005); quoted in course handout.

Syme (1939); summarized in Galinsky (2005), 16.

### **Citing websites**

Although external websites should not constitute the bulk of your reading, there is absolutely no problem in using them when they are genuinely appropriate.

In order to assess an electronic source, you need to identify its origin. Are you reading a scan of an article that was previously published in a physical format, or an ebook which you have found through the library, or an online journal that publishes articles with numbered volumes and pages? If so, then you can simply handle it as if it were a physical article or book, and cite it like the examples in the previous pages.

If instead you are reading a third-party website, then you need to take extra care and provide more information for your examiner. Any references to such websites need to be provided with their exact URL address in the bibliography, and a note of the date at which you accessed that site (in case the site is updated in future).

#### **In the footnote:**

*Digital Egypt for Universities* website.

#### **In the bibliography:**

Grajetzki, W. *et al.* (2000), *Digital Egypt for Universities*, <<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt>> [accessed 24 August 2016].

Ideally, you should also provide the name of their author(s) and their date of publication. If a website does not provide such information, it can often be a sign that you should treat its contents with caution.

**Failing to give an accurate and honest account of your sources, or failing to provide a reference for information which you have taken from elsewhere, are examples of plagiarism.**

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By following the steps above, you will be able to show the examiners that you can distinguish your own ideas from those of others, and that you can accurately document all the sources which helped you produce the essay.

Essays which do not accurately cite their sources will be guilty of plagiarism – that is, they will have passed off the work of others as their own. This is a form of dishonesty that runs counter to the principles of academic study, and is therefore taken very seriously by the University. This is true regardless of whether or not there was any deliberate intention to cheat. Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and all suspected cases will be reported to the School Academic Conduct Officer, and may be investigated by the College Academic Misconduct Officer. Plagiarised work may lead to a heavy deduction of marks, or result in the essay being given a mark of zero.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- copying the exact wording of sentences without marking them as quotations;
- paraphrasing someone else's work without referring to the source of that material in a footnote;
- closely following the stages of another person's argument without also offering original opinions of your own;
- using another person's material without acknowledging it (regardless of whether or not that person gave permission for re-use);
- letting another person write all or part of your essay for you;
- buying or being allowed to copy another person's essay, whether in whole or in part.

**Self-plagiarism is still plagiarism.**

Students should also be aware that the University also considers self-plagiarism to be a form of academic misconduct. If you have already submitted a piece of work for assessment, you cannot submit it again, nor copy any section of it into a new piece of coursework. Every student who submits a piece of work signs a declaration to that effect, and is expected to hold to this rule. If you are concerned about potential overlap between different pieces of coursework, then this is something which you should discuss with your tutor or supervisor at the earliest opportunity.

## **Accurate note-taking and citation is essential for avoiding plagiarism.**

You must ensure that you take full and accurate notes when conducting research for your essays. Make sure that you know whether you have copied down someone else's words, or whether you have paraphrased them in your own words. Whenever you make a note of anything you find in a book or article, make sure that you have also kept a record of exactly where that information came from (which book or article? who wrote it? which page?).

You may also find it useful to consult the EUSA student guide on how to avoid plagiarism, which is available online:

[https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support\\_and\\_advice/the\\_advice\\_place/academic/citeright/](https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/support_and_advice/the_advice_place/academic/citeright/)