



Union Theological College

Academic Integrity Policy

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Understanding What Is Required in Academic Assessments

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Developing Good Practice

Academic integrity is much more than simply avoiding plagiarism, but rather is about demonstrating good practice in all your academic work. It relies on the following good practices:

1) Time Management

Make sure that you allow sufficient time to produce your assignments – you are unlikely to produce your best work by cramming your study and writing into a short period of time. If you are pushed for time in the run-up to a deadline it is possible that you will not leave enough time to check that all sources have been quoted and referenced appropriately.

2) Research Skills

Strategies such as reading the introduction and conclusion of a book and then the beginnings and endings of chapters will help you engage with the main argument of a book. This in turn will help you to be much more intentional in your notetaking. Try to take notes in your own words which summarise and begin to analyse what you have read. Avoid close paraphrasing of an author's words and if you do record the text verbatim make sure the material is placed within quotation marks and that the relevant page number has been noted.

3) Mastering the Referencing System

The ability to reference other works in an appropriate manner is a very important aspect of academic integrity. The transparent use of sources not only helps guard against inadvertent plagiarism, but it also provides substantiating evidence in support of your own arguments. For any Union programme the module documentation will provide details of the referencing style that you are required to follow. If you have outstanding questions, you should seek advice from the module coordinator or your tutor.

Academic Dishonesty

Students must not, at any stage of their programme engage with the following academic offences:

1) Collusion

Collusion is the unauthorised and unattributed contribution of two or more individuals towards a piece of assessed work which is intended to be the work of one student. Whilst the College encourages students to discuss and share ideas together it is important to understand the difference between collaboration and collusion. If you utilise the work of others you must acknowledge their contribution. If you offer to provide



work to another student to be passed off as their own work you are guilty of collusion. If you allow someone to copy your work which they then present as their own you are guilty of collusion.

Acceptable collaboration may take the following forms:

- Talking about lectures, tutorials and books with other students
- Discussing the requirements of an assignment
- Comparing essays and feedback after the work has been marked.

If someone proofreads your work, in order to avoid collusion, they may not add to the content in any way e.g. they may not rewrite content where meaning is ambiguous, rearrange the order of paragraphs to enhance the argument, or rewrite sections to improve style. A proofreader may only identify issues in the text which may need to be addressed e.g. typographical errors, spelling errors, grammatical or syntactical errors, lexical repetition or omissions, and minor errors in formatting. It is a student's responsibility to ensure that they are entirely clear about the extent of collaboration permitted, and which parts of the work must be your own.

2) Plagiarism

The most basic definition of plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own. It does not just apply to situations in which there is the deliberate intent to deceive; the unintentional use of someone else's work is also classed as plagiarism. Consequently, whenever you are using or relying upon someone else's work, it is vital that your sources be appropriately referenced.

Plagiarism may take the following forms:

- Borrowing someone else's words e.g. cutting and pasting material without due acknowledgement of the source
- Paraphrasing the words, ideas, or structure of others without giving due acknowledgment to the work that you are relying on e.g. simply changing some of the words or the order of the words without referencing the original author
- The deliberate presentation of concepts generated via artificial intelligence or similar as one's own
- Including material in your bibliography that you have not consulted but which you derived from another scholar
- Submitting someone else's work e.g. buying or commissioning work from a commercial organisation
- Self-plagiarism i.e. submitting work which you previously have submitted for assessment in order to satisfy the requirements of another academic qualification.

Students should take special care to avoid infringing regulations concerning duplication or auto-plagiarism. This is especially important whenever a student might legitimately draw on their own prior preparatory work for credit-bearing assessments.

For example, a student might have occasion to present for credit – in an assignment, or an exam – material that they previously drafted for (say) a worksheet or a forum-post or other written (or verbalised) submission, and for which they may have received informal or formal tutor feedback.



To use such material as part of a credit-bearing assessment may be appropriate, if it has not previously been submitted for credit and if the material in question is the student's own work (albeit perhaps incorporating tutor feedback with which they are interacting). However, in any such case, students should explicitly state its prior use as draft material originating in any previous, not-for-credit submission, as a formative learning activity, and acknowledge interaction with any feedback received.

Plagiarism is not restricted to published books and articles but applies to work of others in any form, including lectures, class notes, and online resources. For examples of plagiarism and how to avoid it please see Appendix 1.

2.1) How the College Detects Plagiarism

The College takes plagiarism very seriously and is committed to ensuring that, so far as possible, it is detected and dealt with appropriately. Your examiners are experts in their subject areas and so are very likely to identify work that is not referenced appropriately. Furthermore, all work submitted via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is subject to scrutiny by the plagiarism detection application Unicheck which helps the College to assess the authenticity of your assessed work. In submitting your work for assessment you are giving the College permission to subject the work to scrutiny by plagiarism detection software.

2.2) How the College Disciplines Plagiarism

Plagiarism is an academic offence and, in order to maintain academic standards, it is the College's responsibility to investigate suspected cases of plagiarism. The College will investigate suspected cases and, where appropriate, take disciplinary action (see relevant undergraduate and postgraduate procedures).

3) Cheating

Students must comply with the rules governing any examinations or class tests. Cheating is defined as using, or making arrangements to have, unauthorised access to information during an exam or class test.

Cheating includes the following forms of misconduct:

- Regardless of intent, the use or possession of unauthorised books, notes, electronic devices or other materials in a test or exam (unless specifically permitted)
- Sharing information or resources (in person or via social media) that facilitates an unfair advantage for one or more students
- Seeking to obtain a test or exam paper ahead of its authorised release
- Copying from another student's work or communicating with other students during a test or exam
- Attempting to impersonate, or to be impersonated by, another individual during a test or exam.

4) Submitting or Commissioning Work from a Third Party

Students must not seek to gain advantage by using or incorporating into an assessment material that had been purchased or obtained from an unauthorised third party e.g. another student, essay mills, or family and friends.



Student Responsibility

It is important that you read and understand this Academic Integrity Policy and that you familiarise yourself with the guidance contained in it. If you are in doubt about what is required please consult the relevant module or programme coordinator.

By submitting your assessment, you are confirming that:

1. You have read and understood the College's guidance about the undertaking of your assessment, including examinations, and about academic misconduct.
2. You are submitting your original work and no part of it has been copied from another source without proper acknowledgement.
3. You understand that presenting the work and idea(s) of another person as though they were your own constitutes plagiarism.
4. You have not impersonated, or allowed yourself to be impersonated, by any person or organisation for the purposes of this assessment.
5. You have not presented content created by generative AI tools (such as Large Language Models like ChatGPT) as though it were your own work.
6. You have not previously submitted this work for any other module or programme.
7. You give permission for your submission to be reproduced, communicated, compared, and archived for plagiarism detection, benchmarking, or other quality assurance purposes.

Conclusion

The College is an institution which prizes intellectually honest and transparent scholarly discourse and academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, squanders the opportunities before you during your time of study. It damages relationships between tutors and students and it damages the relationship between students because left unchecked it has the potential to devalue the reputation of a Union College degree. More positively, plagiarism is to be avoided because it undermines the very essence of your own learning and development. By referencing your sources in an appropriate manner you will give due acknowledgement to your sources, present evidence of your familiarity of literature within the discipline, and demonstrate how you have arrived at your conclusions.

Appendix 1 – worked examples of various forms of plagiarism



Here you will find several examples of how a section of source text might be plagiarised in different ways. There is also an example of how a section of text could be appropriately paraphrased and referenced.

All theology, not just that which takes place in the subregion of the doctrine of the Trinity, is marked by its doxological provenance and orientation. This is true not merely in the sense of Herman Bavinck's admonition that 'theology is about God and should reflect a doxological tone that glorifies him', but in a more constitutive sense as well. Theology is not itself if it is not also praise. Because theological statements have their point of departure in the local and the limited, but their intended point of arrival in the Transcendent One, their very mode of referentiality is doxological in structure.
Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Wheaton, 2016), 27-8.

Various examples of plagiarism in **red type**:

Theology is marked by its doxological source and orientation. This means that theology is not itself unless it is doxological in structure.

Explanation: This is a pastiche of phrases taken from Sanders with a few of the words having been changed and reordered. There is no reference to the source and no indication that these words are taken from someone else.

Some theologians have argued that since theology is about God it should reflect a doxological tone that glorifies him. This means that theology is not itself if it is not also praise.

Explanation: Some of the text has been paraphrased but there is verbatim copying of the author. The reference to 'some theologians' is insufficient – Bavinck must be mentioned. If you have not consulted Bavinck you must attribute the source of the quotation to Sanders i.e. 'Sanders cites Bavinck as saying...'. It is important to give due acknowledgement to all the sources upon which you are relying.

Theological statements have their intended point of arrival and referentiality in the Transcendent One. As Sanders argues, 'Theology is not itself if it is not also praise'.

Explanation: Some of the text is, rightly, presented as a quotation but it fails to attribute the rest of the quotation to the author – there was unacknowledged borrowing of the first sentence.

All doctrine, not simply that which takes place in the depths of Trinitarian theology, is characterised by coming from and being directed towards the praise of God. This is not just the case with respect to Bavinck's warning that 'theology is about God and should reflect a doxological tone that glorifies him', but also in a more fundamental sense. For Theology to be itself it must also praise.

Explanation: Although very few of the actual words are preserved the idea has been borrowed without it being attributed.

An example of *appropriate* paraphrasing and citation:

Sanders makes the point that it is not just the deep mysteries of Trinitarian theology which must be characterised by doxology. He cites Bavinck in support of his contention that '[t]heology is not itself if it is



not also praise'.¹ Sanders argues that since the very 'mode of referentiality' involves finite creatures speaking about their transcendent Creator that all theology must be doxological in its 'provenance', 'structure', and 'orientation'.²

¹ Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Wheaton, 2016), 27.

² Sanders, *The Triune God*, 28.