

Plagiarism Policy & Practice Guide

NALP takes a hard line against plagiarism which is regarded as Malpractice. Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else's work (including text, ideas, or AI-generated content) as your own, whether with their consent or not, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. This includes collaborating or colluding with another student. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered by this definition.

When completing assignments, Learners may use books, notes, or other external sources for assistance, but ALL SOURCES MUST BE CLEARLY CITED within answers. Please note that whilst such citations are allowed, these should be kept to a minimum as it is important for Learners to produce original and individual work to clearly demonstrate their own knowledge and understanding.

Assignments submitted by Learners containing sufficient evidence of plagiarism will be marked as failed and may result in disqualification from the qualification as a whole.

Practice Guide – some practical steps...

All Awarding Bodies, including NALP, have a Plagiarism Policy. This is because as paralegals, lawyers, or academics – we are all part of a community which relies on **academic integrity**. This means that we rely on confidence in the knowledge that the work produced by a peer is *their* work alone.

Imagine how you would feel having worked hard for your qualification, only to discover that others with the same qualification obtained it by copying other people's (or even your own) work. The reason we have Plagiarism Policies is to try to address this issue and mitigate the risk of this happening.

At NALP, we also recognise that as important as a Plagiarism Policy is - there is often a gap between the Policy and reality. In other words, Learners are not always clear as to how the Policy works in practice and what it means for them in terms of the way they produce their work.

The aim of this guide is to illustrate how NALP's Plagiarism Policy translates into practice. Simply: the dos and don'ts.

What is plagiarism?

- Plagiarism is academic dishonesty. Bluntly, it is cheating
- Passing off someone else's work as your own
- Giving the impression that someone else's work is yours, intentionally or not

Does it matter that I didn't know I was committing plagiarism?

- No
- NALP expects you to have read and understood our Plagiarism Policy and Practice Guide and to comply accordingly. Ignorance of the policy, or of the concept of plagiarism, is not an excuse.
- To express this in a way that lawyers will understand: you do not need intention to commit plagiarism.

What are some examples of plagiarism?

- Copying a sentence or paragraph without identifying your source.
- Making small changes to someone else's work – for example:
 - Using the Learning Material provided by NALP and changing some verbs. For example, replacing 'clients must undergo mediation' with 'clients must undertake mediation'. While one word has been changed, the sentence structure remains the same as the original source.
 - Replacing an adjective with a synonym. For example, replacing 'the contract was extremely detailed' with 'the contract was very detailed'. Again, while one word has been swapped out, the sentence structure is the same as the original source.
 - Copying and pasting a paragraph but leaving out one or two sentences from the original or changing the order of the sentences.
 - Taking examples/sentences from a number of different sources and joining them together to create a 'new' paragraph using your own words to join those sentences together.
- Referencing the source of the words you have used in your bibliography without any link to where you make use of that source in your answer. In essence, this is 'hiding' the source material.

- Self-plagiarism - in research this is reusing your own previously published or submitted work (whether text, data or ideas) without proper acknowledgment and presenting it as new and original for a different assignment or publication. It undermines the integrity of the research record by creating a misleading impression of novelty and can also violate copyright and publisher agreements. To avoid it, always cite your previous work in the same way that you would cite another person's and clearly indicate reused material. You can then add new research, data, or perspectives to demonstrate a fresh contribution.

In conclusion

- **Plagiarism is unacceptable** as it amounts to academic dishonesty.
- **Plagiarism undermines academic integrity**, which is essential for ensuring the reliability of source material in both academic and professional contexts.
- **'Plagiarism' means trying to pass somebody else's work off as your own** – whether that's using someone else's words but changing or swapping out a word or sentence here and there or failing to properly cite your source material.
- **Ignorance is not an excuse**; you do not need intention to commit plagiarism.
- Expressing concepts in your own words strengthens and evidences *your* understanding, develops your writing style, and shows examiners you have a grasp on the topic at hand.

To be clear, we are *not* discouraging Learners from internet research or wider reading. All reading and research are good practice. This will enhance your understanding of the subject and is positively encouraged.

What we *are* saying is that when you do undertake reading and research, you *must* learn how to make proper and responsible use of other people's work. The simplest and most effective way to do this: write the ideas and concepts you learn about throughout your studies in your own words to evidence your own understanding.