GUIDE ON ORIGINAL ACADEMIC WORK AND SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

September 2, 2024

At university, learning and critical thinking are central. Critical thinking is the ability to effectively analyze information and form judgment, particularly by designing original work that expresses your own creativity.

Original academic work refers to the creation and presentation of academic content entirely produced by oneself, without direct or uncredited dependence on the work or ideas of someone else. This involves producing new and unique contributions while recognizing and respecting the contributions of third parties through appropriate citation and referencing.

This guide is designed to clarify the rules relating to original academic work. It first defines what plagiarism is, provides some examples, and then sets expectations for your personal work. It also provides a framework for the use of generative artificial intelligence in academic work.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism can be defined as taking all or part of a work, an idea, or a creation and passing it off as one's own without mentioning (or not correctly mentioning) its sources.

The question of original academic work arises throughout the university career. For students, this may involve seminar work, a thesis, a dissertation, an article, etc.

Examples of plagiarism[1]

- Passing off a third party's work as one's own;

- Modifying an author's text by replacing their words with synonyms, without mentioning the source at the exact location of the borrowing (paraphrasing);

- Taking an author's original idea without reformulating it in one's own words and without mentioning the source;

- Taking excerpts from a text without indicating it with quotation marks (or in accordance with disciplinary usage);

- Limiting oneself to a general note at the end of a paragraph, without quotation marks when the text reproduction is literal (the borrowed passage must always be clearly identifiable);

- Copy-pasting from the internet, without putting the text in quotation marks or citing the reference (URL address and date of consultation);

- Not indicating a reference adequately (e.g., in parentheses, in footnotes or end-of-paragraph notes, or in accordance with disciplinary usage). Translating a text without mentioning the source (translating a text does not make its translator the author of an original work);

- Taking an image, graph, table, or any other original representation without mentioning the source;
- Taking text generated by a generative artificial intelligence tool without mentioning its origin (see below).

Recognizing the merit of others... increases your own merit

The recipe for avoiding plagiarism is quite simple: you just need to recognize the contributions of third-party sources in your work. Correctly citing your sources allows you to show precisely what constitutes your original contribution. In other words, by recognizing the merit of others, you also highlight your own contribution, your ideas, what you bring scientifically. Ideas, statements, consulted works, etc., must therefore be cited in your work using the specific criteria of your disciplinary field.

Some basic elements regarding citation

To help you cite correctly, you will find below some indications, which must be completed according to the scientific field of the work you are carrying out, and the indications of the teacher.

- Word-for-word reproduction of text elements from another author must be indicated by quotation marks (or in accordance with disciplinary usage) and be accompanied by the precise and complete mention of the source at the end of the citation. Attention: the citation must reproduce not only the text identically, but also the punctuation. The use of copy-paste from the internet is a literal reproduction.
- If a quoted passage in quotation marks is slightly modified, it should be clearly indicated, for example by putting comments and changes made in brackets.
- When an idea, image, graph, table, or any visual element is taken, as well as when a text is reformulated, the use of quotation marks is inappropriate. Instead, it is necessary to cite its source precisely at the exact location of the reproduction.
- When developing the bibliography, it is essential to cite all consulted works precisely. The same applies if internet sites have been consulted, mentioning the URL address and the date of consultation.

Aspects related to generative artificial intelligence (AI)

It is important to cite the use of generative artificial intelligence in your university work to preserve the integrity and transparency of this work. The logic is always the same: generally, you must cite everything we did not write ourselves and reference it correctly. Moreover, the results obtained using a generative AI tool are based on a corpus, at least partly scientific, and its use will not necessarily respect the rules of scientific integrity.[2]

The following recommendations are therefore useful[3]; you must:

- **Cite** a generative AI tool each time you paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into your own work any content (text, image, data, or other) that has been created by this tool.

- **Acknowledge** all functional uses of the tool (such as editing your texts or translating words) in a note, in your text, or in another appropriate place.
- **Verify** the sources cited by generative AI.

Can I use generative AI tools?

Before using a generative AI tool, it is necessary to:

- Check if its use is authorized by the teacher;
- Understand the advantages, limitations, and data protection issues related to generative AI and remain critical of it;
- Keep in mind that the work must remain personal and that a generative AI tool must not perform this work for us.

What contributions from generative AI must be mentioned?

It is possible to distinguish between direct and indirect contributions from generative AI. The contribution is indirect when an AI tool is used to provide you with inspiration or initial ideas that significantly shape the direction of your work or your arguments. Similarly, when AI tools help gather or organize research materials (for example, citation management, literature review organization). The same applies to spell-checking and grammar checking at the end of work. In case of indirect AI contribution, its use must be mentioned (see below).

A direct contribution can be the generation of text or ideas directly included in your work. Data analysis and interpretation of results are also considered direct contributions. In case of direct AI contribution, it must be cited as a source in your work.

How can I reference the use of generative AI?

For indirect contributions from AI tools, it is necessary to mention their use. There is no universal method for identifying the use of generative AI; however, as long as you clearly indicate when and how you used it, several ways of acknowledging its use are possible: in the preamble of the work, in footnotes, in the methodological section, at the top of the reference list, or via an honor declaration. In case of doubt, do not hesitate to contact your teachers to know their preference.

Example text for acknowledging the use of generative AI in one's work:

"In this work I used ChatGPT 4o (Open AI, https://chat.openai.com/chat) to make a summary of my notes and to correct the English of the final version."

When it comes to direct contributions, you must first refer to your teacher's instructions. In the absence of specific guidelines on how to cite the use of generative AI in your work, here are some fundamental rules.

- If you use text generated by an AI tool, whether word for word or in paraphrased form, you must cite it directly in the body of the text and then include a complete reference in the reference list or in footnotes, following the chosen citation style.

- Depending on different citation styles (for example, APA, MLA, etc.), the form of citation in the text may vary. For example, this may include the author's name, date, and year. In the reference list, the name of the developing company is used instead of the author, the name of the tool instead of the work title, the mentioned year corresponds to the current year, it is also necessary to add the URL pointing to the tool.

Example text for citing the use of generative AI directly in the text:

"To the following question: Am I cheating when I use ChatGPT in my university work? The text generated by ChatGPT 4o indicated to me that it depends on several factors and that 'the ethical use of ChatGPT in the university context requires transparency, respect for institutional guidelines, and judicious use that complements your own intellectual work rather than replacing it. It is always preferable to consult your professor if you have doubts about the appropriate use of these tools in your university work.' (OpenAI, March 1, 2024)."

In your reference list, you will then cite the source in full. For example:

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT (March 1, 2024). https://chat.openai.com/chat

In some cases, you may be asked to put in appendix the conversations (prompts and responses) you had with generative AI. It is recommended to keep traces of these conversations, to be able to transmit them to your teacher if they request it.

In all cases, it is necessary to adopt a critical and thoughtful approach to the ideas and content generated by generative AI, to personalize your work inspired by these tools, and to scrupulously respect academic integrity policies. This is to guarantee transparent, responsible, and ethical use of generative AI in your original academic work.

Commitment to scientific integrity

The University of Neuchâtel has regulations regarding respect for scientific integrity, which provide for sanctions if the latter is not applied and respected. Sanctions can range from failing a course to exclusion in the most serious cases. If you follow the advice in this guide, you should be able to meet the criteria for original academic work that corresponds to the rules of scientific integrity. When carrying out certain work, an **honor declaration** may also be requested from you. Signing this declaration implies that you have taken note of the documents issued by UniNE regarding scientific integrity (including this guide) and that you commit to respecting them to produce original academic work.

The Rectorate

¹ Elements taken from the plagiarism directives of the Faculty of Law of the University of Geneva, October 10, 2007, the report of the commission "master's thesis and plagiarism" to the Faculty Council on student plagiarism, Faculty of Law of the University of Neuchâtel, December 9, 2010 and from the site http://www.uclouvain.be/99514.html, consulted on 22.02.2011.

² Burri, M., D. Kaufmann, and N. Ostovan, 2024. "AI in economic research – A guide for students and instructors," IRENE Policy Reports 24-03, IRENE Institut de recherches économiques, Université de Neuchâtel.

³ "How do I cite generative AI in MLA style?", Modern Language Association of America, https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/, accessed on June 19, 2024