2. ACADEMIC HONESTY AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

2.1. Academic Honesty

Science is built on the work of others who have come before, and so proper identification and acknowledgement of sources is extremely important in scientific writing. In recent years, plagiarism has become an increasing concern among educators. Here at WPI, there are specific repercussions for students who are caught cheating on papers and projects. The Academic Honesty Policy of WPI states:

> "Individual integrity is vital to the academic environment because education involves the search for and acquisition of knowledge and understanding, which are, in themselves, intangible. Evaluation of each student's level of knowledge and understanding is a vital part of the teaching process and requires tangible measures such as reports, examination, and homework. Any act that interferes with the process of evaluation, misrepresentation of the relation between the work being evaluated, or the resulting evaluation, and the student's actual state of knowledge is an act of academic dishonesty. The following are some examples of such acts [emphasis ours]:
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> a. Fraud, such as alteration of grades or official records, changing of exam solution after the fact, inventing or changing laboratory data, or falsifying research;
>
> b. **Misrepresentation of the work of another as one's own, as well as plagiarism,** use of purchased term papers, copying on exams, and submission of homework, take home exams, etc., with portions performed by another person; **inaccurately or inadequately citing sources (such as in papers, project work, theses, or dissertations and publications); representation of the contribution of others in a project as one's own;**
>
> c. Use of unauthorized materials or sources of information such as "crib sheets" on exams or assistance of another person in cases where prohibited;
>
> d. Sabotage of another student's work or academic records
>
> e. Facilitation or assistance in any act of academic dishonesty" (WPI Judicial Policies, 2002).

WPI holds every student responsible for upholding the Academic Honesty Policy. The penalty for violating it can range from a lowered grade to no credit for a course or project to suspension from WPI. But more importantly, as a scientist in training, you obviously need to know and practice the acceptable ethical standards of the discipline. So, exactly what does academic honesty mean when you are writing your MQP?

2.2. Avoiding Plagiarism[1]

Academic writing in American institutions is filled with rules that writers often don't know how to follow. A working knowledge of these rules, however, is critically important; inadvertent mistakes can lead to charges of *plagiarism* or the unacknowledged use of somebody else's words or ideas. While other cultures may not insist so heavily on documenting sources, American institutions do. A charge of plagiarism can have severe consequences, including expulsion from a university. This handout, which does not reflect any official university policy, is designed to help writers develop strategies for knowing how to avoid accidental plagiarism.

Since teachers and administrators may not distinguish between deliberate and accidental plagiarism, the heart of avoiding plagiarism is to make sure you give credit where it is due. This may be credit for something somebody said, wrote, emailed, drew, or implied.

Choosing When to Give Credit

Need to Document	No Need to Document
• When you are using or referring to somebody else's words or ideas from a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, Web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium • When you use information gained through interviewing another person • When you copy the exact words or a **"unique phrase"** from somewhere • When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, and pictures	• When you are writing your own experiences, your own observations, your own insights, your own thoughts, your own conclusions about a subject • When you are using "common knowledge" — folklore, common sense observations, shared information within your field of study or cultural group • When you are compiling generally accepted facts • When you are writing up your own experimental results

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[1] (Material in this section is located at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html. Copyright ©1995-2002 by OWL at Purdue University and Purdue University. It is reproduced here in accordance with the OWL's stated terms and conditions of fair use.)

- When you use ideas that others have given you in conversations or over email

Making Sure You Are Safe

	Action during the writing process	Appearance on the finished product
When researching, note-taking, and interviewing	• Mark *everything* that is someone else's words with a big **Q** (for **quote**) or with big quotation marks • Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources (**S**) and which are your own insights (**ME**) • Record all of the relevant documentation information in your notes	Proofread and check with your notes (or photocopies of sources) to make sure that *anything* taken from your notes is acknowledged in some combination of the ways listed below: • In-text citation • Bibliography • Quotation marks
When paraphrasing and summarizing	• First, write your paraphrase and summary without looking at the original text, so you rely only on your memory. • Next, check your version with the original for content, accuracy, and mistakenly borrowed phrases	• Begin your summary with a statement giving credit to the source: *According to Jonathan Kozol, ...* • Put any **unique words or phrases** that you cannot change, or do not want to change, in quotation marks: *... "savage inequalities" exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).*

Deciding if Something is "Common Knowledge"

Material is probably common knowledge if . . .

• You find the same information undocumented in at least five other sources

- You think it is information that your readers will already know

- You think a person could easily find the information with general reference sources