RMIT academic and teaching staff play a critical role in promoting scholarship and academic integrity. This can be facilitated by:

1. Consistently encouraging and rewarding students who openly demonstrate they have researched widely, acknowledging their sources and demonstrating how this research has shaped their thinking.
2. Reminding students of the expectations to comply with RMIT’s standards of academic integrity, especially in relation to plagiarism.

Academic integrity

RMIT defines academic integrity as:

“Honesty and responsibility in scholarship through respecting the work of others whilst having the freedom to build new insights, new knowledge and ideas.”

Encouraging academic integrity

Students may unintentionally plagiarise material due to limited knowledge about correct referencing. If assessment requires students to write researched papers, essays and reports teachers can remind students to reference all materials. You can assist students by demonstrating the correct referencing method: http://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/bus/public/referencing/

RMIT subscribes to Turnitin, which is an online text-matching service that can assist both academic and teaching staff and students review written work to determine if the materials used have been referenced correctly. Registered lecturers, teachers and students can submit assignments and articles to Turnitin, which are compared line-by-line to previous submissions and other database content such as webpages and e-journals. A report is generated identifying similarities between the submission and previous material or database content, allowing teachers and students to review the citation and paraphrasing used throughout the assignment to see if any changes are needed. TurnItIn is an excellent tool to prevent plagiarism when used educationally or developmentally.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined by RMIT University as stealing somebody’s intellectual property by presenting their work, thoughts or ideas as though they are your own. It is cheating. It is a serious academic offence and can lead to expulsion from RMIT.

“Borrowed thoughts, like borrowed money, only show the poverty of the borrower.”

Lady Marguerite Blessington
Plagiarism can take many forms (written, graphic and visual) and includes the use of electronic data and material used in oral presentations. Plagiarism may occur unintentionally, such as when the source of the material used is not correctly cited.

What constitutes plagiarism?

Under RMIT’s charter, students may be accused of plagiarism if they do any of the following:

• Copy sentences or paragraphs word-for-word from any source, whether published or unpublished (including, but not limited to books, journals, reports, theses, websites, conference papers, course notes, etc.) without proper citation.
• Closely paraphrase sentences, paragraphs, ideas or themes without proper citation.
• Piece together texts from one or more sources and add only linking sentences without proper citation.
• Copy or submit whole or parts of computer files without acknowledging their source.
• Copy designs or works of art and submit them as their own original work.
• Copy a whole or any part of another student’s work.
• Submit work that someone else has done as their own.

More detail on what constitutes plagiarism is found in the RMIT University Policy on Plagiarism [Link to RMIT University Policy on Plagiarism]

Students should also be made aware that it is unacceptable to enable plagiarism. Enabling plagiarism is ‘the act of assisting or allowing another person to plagiarise or to copy your own work’.

Both plagiarising and enabling plagiarism are deemed to be misconduct and a serious academic offence under RMIT Student Conduct Regulations Part 2, Division 2 – Academic Misconduct [Link to RMIT Student Conduct Regulations Part 2, Division 2 – Academic Misconduct]

Cultural differences & plagiarism

Transnational students may plagiarise material inadvertently because of differences in attitudes towards authorship and ownership. Academic and teaching staff teaching offshore must be aware of the following:

Some cultures place different value on the western concept of ‘ownership’ of an idea or intellectual property. In some cultures students are encouraged to memorise and use long segments from works by famous authors or experts. This practice of using the experts’ words without referring to them is construed as showing respect for the expert and is considered more appropriate than using the student’s own words (Song-Turner, 2008).

Students students might also view ‘helping’ classmates do well as more important than competing with them. Consequently students may not...
distinguish between helping a classmate with his/her assignment and helping him/her finish a take-home exam. Reporting a classmate who cheats can be very difficult in some cultures where it is considered poor form to take action that upsets an interpersonal relationship.

Penalties for plagiarism

All academic and teaching staff are required to ensure students understand the concept of academic integrity, the actions that constitute plagiarism and the penalties that apply if a student is charged with plagiarising material.

Penalties for plagiarism include:

- Reprimanding the student
- Recording of a failure for all or any part of any assessment
- Requiring the student to repeat the assignment
- Cancellation of any or all results
- Suspension from the program
- Expulsion from the program

Useful resources

Support is available from your Deputy Head of School (Learning & Teaching) or equivalent. Your College Academic Development Group or learning & teaching specialist can also provide advice, support and professional development.

More detail on what constitutes plagiarism can be found in the RMIT University Policy on Plagiarism
http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=sg4yfqzod48gl

RMIT Student Conduct Regulations Part 2, Division 2 – Academic Misconduct
http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=r7a7an6qug93

RMIT University Student Charter
http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=tkn8wtd23h84z

RMIT University Library referencing guide (all referencing models)
http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=8rwjnkmf0eeez

Harvard method interactive online referencing resource – This is an easy to use tool that provides you with referencing rules, examples of the rules, and interactive exercises

College of Business ‘Guidelines for referencing and presentation in written reports and essays’ – This detailed guide offers information on citing references, avoiding plagiarism, and essay and report writing.
http://prodmams.rmit.edu.au/s9sx559hurvc.rtf

Study and Learning Centre – The Learning Lab
http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/referencing
Suggested readings

This paper discusses strategies and tips to help reduce the incidence of plagiarism.

This paper proposes a theoretical framework for understanding student behaviour and suggests improved learning and teaching strategies.
