



Integrity is a set of habits, not a single rule.

Most integrity problems are not deliberate cheating; they are confusion about where the line sits. This document names the kinds of plagiarism, distinguishes collusion from collaboration, quotes the rules that apply at UNZA, works through before-and-after examples, and sets out how to use AI tools honestly.

1 What plagiarism actually is

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work, words or ideas as your own. It is not only copying a whole paragraph; it takes several forms, and several of them are accidental.

Kind	What it looks like
Copying without citation	Text pasted from a source and presented as your own writing, with no acknowledgement.
Close paraphrase without citation	Rewording a source sentence by sentence while keeping its structure and meaning, with no reference.
Mosaic or patchwriting	Stitching together phrases from several sources with a few connective words changed, and no citation.
Reusing your own submitted work	Submitting previously graded work, or a large slice of it, as if it were new.
Collusion presented as individual work	Work divided among a group and then submitted by each person as personal effort.
Fabricated or altered data	Inventing results, or editing them, so the evidence supports the conclusion you wanted.

Notice that only two of the six are deliberate. The rest usually come from working too close to a source, from reusing an old assignment under time pressure, or from not realising that a group discussion must still be written up alone — which is why the habits matter more than the intention, and why the checks at the end of this document are worth running every time.

CHECK If a sentence arrived from somewhere else, it needs a citation, however much it has been reworded.

2 Collusion and collaboration are not the same

LEGITIMATE COLLABORATION

Discussing ideas, comparing approaches, quizzing each other and checking understanding — where the work you submit is written by you and the thinking is yours. Where an assessment permits group work, it will say so.

COLLUSION

Splitting a task so each person's section is dropped into a single submission, or borrowing a classmate's answer and passing it off as your own. The problem is the *submission*, not the discussion before it.

TEST If the marker cannot tell whose thinking produced the submitted words, and the assessment was meant to be individual, it is collusion. Ask before you submit, not after.

A practical rule: discuss freely, write separately. Talking a problem through with classmates is one of the best ways to learn, and the line is crossed only when their words, working or answers arrive in your submission. When an assessment permits group work it will say so; if it does not, treat the submission as individual.

3 Two rules that apply at UNZA

These two are quoted verbatim from UNZA's own documents. They are the institutional floor, not the whole of good practice. The first sets a threshold for the dissertation or thesis; the second says where a suspected misconduct matter is reported.

"plagiarism exceeding the similarity index of 25% excluding tables, figures, references and appendices."

UNZA, *Regulations and Guidelines for Postgraduate Studies* (2024) — stated as a ground for termination of registration

"Issues of misconduct in Research should be brought to the attention of the Research Ethics Committee"

UNZA, *Research Policy and Intellectual Property Rights* — Section 4, "Misconduct in Research"

NOTE The first line is written for the dissertation or thesis, and the threshold is a termination ground, not a number to work up to. For coursework, treat a low similarity figure as what examiners normally expect — and always write in your own words rather than aiming at a figure.

A similarity report is a starting point for a conversation, not a verdict: it matches text, and it cannot tell whether a match has been properly quoted and cited. Read your own report, check every flagged passage, and fix the ones that are not attributed.



4 Three worked examples: source, weak, acceptable, quoted

The source sentences below were written for this exercise, so nothing long is reproduced from anywhere. The citations use (Surname, Year) as a form; substitute your own real source and page.

Version	Text
Example 1 — source	When a cell is placed in a solution whose solute concentration is lower than that of its cytoplasm, water crosses the partially permeable membrane into the cell and the internal pressure rises.
Example 1 — weak	When a cell is put in a solution with less solute than the cytoplasm, water moves across the membrane into the cell and the pressure inside goes up. (<i>Too close to the source wording, and no citation.</i>)
Example 1 — acceptable	Water enters a cell from a more dilute surrounding solution, raising the internal pressure (Surname, Year).
Example 1 — quotation	"water crosses the partially permeable membrane into the cell" (Surname, Year, p. 00).
Example 2 — source	Demand for a good is elastic when a given percentage change in price produces a larger percentage change in the quantity demanded, so a seller who raises the price loses total revenue.
Example 2 — weak	Demand is elastic when a percentage change in price causes a bigger percentage change in quantity demanded, so raising price loses revenue. (<i>Synonym swap, same structure, no citation.</i>)
Example 2 — acceptable	Where demand is price-elastic, a price increase reduces total revenue because quantity falls proportionally more (Surname, Year).
Example 2 — quotation	"a seller who raises the price loses total revenue" (Surname, Year, p. 00).
Example 3 — source	A measured value should be reported to the number of significant figures that the measuring instrument justifies; a burette read as 24.30 cm ³ therefore implies an uncertainty in the second decimal place.
Example 3 — weak	A measured value is reported to the number of significant figures the instrument justifies; a burette reading of 24.30 cm ³ implies uncertainty in the second decimal place. (<i>Barely changed, and no citation.</i>)
Example 3 — acceptable	The precision of a reported measurement is set by the instrument, so a reading such as 24.30 cm ³ carries an implied uncertainty in its last digit (Surname, Year).
Example 3 — quotation	"reported to the number of significant figures that the measuring instrument justifies" (Surname, Year, p. 00).

5 Common knowledge, and how much paraphrase is too much

Common knowledge is a fact so widely established that no reader would ask where you got it — that water boils at 100 °C at sea level, or that demand usually falls as price rises. It needs no citation. The test is simple: if a reasonable reader could ask "says who?", cite it. Ideas, findings, figures, opinions, and anything specific to a particular source all fail that test.

Paraphrase becomes too much when the sentence order is the source's, when the vocabulary is the source's with one or two words swapped, or when a whole paragraph tracks the original step by step. The fix is not better synonyms; it is a different structure. Close the source, write what you understood, then check it against the original — and cite it either way.

A rough guide: if you could lay your sentence beside the original and mark one-to-one correspondences, it is still too close. Summarising three paragraphs into one, from memory, is usually safe — and always cite it.

6 Quoting correctly, and translating a source

QUOTING

- Use the exact words, in quotation marks, with the page number.
- Quote only where the wording itself matters — a definition, a contested claim.
- Do not pad an essay with quotations; the argument still has to be yours.

TRANSLATING A SOURCE

- A translation is still the author's idea, so it is still cited.
- Name the original language and, where applicable, the translator.
- Putting it in your own words does not make the idea your own.

NOTE A direct quotation without a page, and a translation without a citation, are both treated as plagiarism even when the words themselves are accurate.

One further habit: record the page number at the moment you take the note. Reconstructing page numbers days later is where most incomplete quotations begin.



7 Using AI tools honestly

Normally acceptable	Not acceptable
Brainstorming angles and questions to research.	Submitting generated text as your own writing.
Asking for an explanation of a concept, then verifying it against a real source.	Generating references or a bibliography.
Checking the grammar and clarity of text you wrote yourself.	Paraphrasing sources you have not read.
Suggesting a structure you then fill with your own argument.	Using it to answer an assessment meant to be done unaided.

NOTE "Acceptable" here means generally acceptable. Your own course may restrict these uses, so check before you rely on any of them.

The dividing line is simple: the thinking and the wording you submit must be yours. A tool that helps you think is a tool; a tool that replaces the thinking is not.

8 How AI tools fabricate citations

Tools that generate text will also generate references — and a fabricated reference looks exactly like a real one. Both examples below are **FABRICATED**: no such works exist, and they are not attributed to any real author. They are shown only so you can recognise the pattern.

FABRICATED EXAMPLE 1 — A JOURNAL ARTICLE

Doe, J. (2019). The effect of note-reviewing on examination performance. *Journal of Applied Learning Studies*, 14(2), 88–103.
<https://doi.org/10.9999/jals.2019.1402>

FABRICATED. No such article or journal exists; the volume, page range and DOI are all invented.

FABRICATED EXAMPLE 2 — A BOOK

Roe, R. (2021). *Retrieval practice in the wider university classroom*. Example Publishing.

FABRICATED. No such book or publisher exists; the whole entry was generated and would not resolve to anything you could read.

WHY IT MATTERS A plausible author, a plausible journal, a plausible volume and a neat DOI are precisely why these are hard to spot. Never submit a reference you have not located and opened yourself.

9 A specimen disclosure wording

SPECIMEN ONLY — ADAPT IT TO YOUR COURSE'S REQUIREMENTS

"I used an AI writing assistant on [date] to [task, for example brainstorm possible essay structures]. All ideas, analysis and wording in the submitted work are my own. I have verified every source cited, and no text was generated by the tool and submitted as my own."

Keep a copy of the tool's output alongside this statement, so the disclosure can be checked if asked.

10 Ten checks before you submit

- Every borrowed idea is cited, and every citation has a list entry.
- Paraphrases are in my own structure and words, not a synonym swap.
- Quotations are exact, in quotation marks, with page numbers.
- Nothing is reused from my own previously submitted work.
- Group discussion did not produce the submitted words.
- No reference was generated without being located and read.
- Any AI use is disclosed and is within the rules for this assessment.
- Figures and data are real, not invented or adjusted.
- Translations carry a citation to the original work.
- I checked the course's own rules before relying on this document.

RULES DIFFER BY INSTITUTION AND COURSE

Only the two quoted lines on page 1 are UNZA rules, and the similarity-index line is written for the dissertation or thesis. Everything else here describes general university practice or what examiners normally expect. Confirm the requirements for your own institution and course with your lecturer before relying on anything in this document.