

Cohort B



6 Week Pre-sessionals Live Learning: Week 1

The University Language Centre

Timetable

Week 1	MONDAY 3 August	TUESDAY 4 August	WEDNESDAY 5 Aug.	THURSDAY 6 August COHORT A & B	FRIDAY 7 August
Live group learning	<p>10.30-12.00</p> <p>Introducing yourself</p> <p>Blackboard quiz review</p>	<p>10.30-12.00</p> <p>Original thinking</p>	<p>10.30-12.00</p> <p>Reflection on pre-course tasks</p>	<p>8.30-10.30</p> <p>Discussion: <i>Exploring the essay mill industry</i></p> <p>11.00-12.00 Group Tutorials</p>	<p>10.30-12.00</p> <p>Group Tutorials</p>

Monday 3 August

Introducing yourself & Blackboard quiz review

Student focused learning outcomes

By the end of the lesson you will be better able to:

- clarify any questions about the Blackboard quiz
- introduce yourself and get to know others in the group

1 In Week 0 you completed a Blackboard quiz. Do you have any questions about this?

2 Introduce yourself to other students in the group and to your teacher

Tuesday 4 August

Original thinking

One of the key components of studying at university is demonstrating understanding of your learning. The challenge is to demonstrate your ideas and those of other people by appropriately identifying the sources of information in your work. In this session you will learn about the rules of academic practice in Higher Education in the UK. This includes referencing others' work, and what are the outcomes of not referencing or using other people's work as your own.

Student focused learning outcomes:

By the end of the lesson you will be better able to:

- understand plagiarism and the importance of referencing other people's work
- understand how Turnitin software is used by the University

1 Which of the following approaches to writing do you think are acceptable?

Answer yes or no

- a. Copying a paragraph directly from the source with no changes.
- b. Copying a paragraph making only small changes, for example, replacing some words with words of a similar meaning.
- c. Cutting and pasting a paragraph by using the sentences from the original but leaving out one or two words, or by putting one or two words in a different order.
- d. Composing a paragraph by taking short standard phrases from a number of sources and putting them together with some words of your own.
- e. Changing some of the words and sentences in a text, but keeping the vocabulary and the overall structure of the text the same as in the original text.
- f. Using the original author's organisation and style of argument.
- g. Paraphrasing a paragraph by rewriting with substantial changes in language, organisation and amount of detail; giving your own examples and including an acknowledgement of the source.
- h. Quoting a paragraph by placing it in block format with an acknowledgement of the source.

Adapted from: Gillet, A. (2013). *Academic Writing: Avoiding Plagiarism*. [online] Available at: <<http://www.uefap.com/writing/plagiar/plagfram.htm>> (Accessed: 21 February 2018)

2 Discuss the following with others in your group and answer the questions:

- a. Is it necessary to reference material from the Internet, lectures, a TV/radio programme, or interviews?
- b. Is it necessary to reference charts, diagrams or tables that you have not created yourself?
- c. Which aspects of your own academic writing do not need referencing?

3 Discuss the following with others in your group and answer the questions.

For which of the following are acknowledgements necessary?

- a. information that is not common knowledge in the subject area
- b. statistical information
- c. other people's opinions
- d. information which is regarded as common knowledge
- e. field-specific knowledge which is "common" within a particular field or specialisation

- f. your own opinion
- g. other people's words (i.e. a quote)

4 Discuss the following with others in your group and answer the questions.

Decide whether each of these extracts from an essay on population require an acknowledgement. Give reasons for your answers from the list above.

- a. In 1984 the population of China was 1029.2 million.
- b. Many densely populated areas, such as Western Europe and USA, are economically prosperous.
- c. It has been claimed that population control policies are basically racist.
- d. The fall in the death rate is largely due to improvements in public health care.
- e. As the ever-growing population puts greater strain on the world's resources, the richer nations may be tempted to apply "the harsh ethics of the lifeboat".
- f. Politicians believe Singapore needs to introduce economic measures to control family size.
- g. Pets in the western world consume enough to feed 12 million people in the developing world.

Turnitin

Turnitin is software that is used by the University to help academics identify plagiarised work. It allows you to submit your work via Blackboard, where an **Originality Report** may be generated. This report will highlight text in your submission that matches text from one or more of the following sources:

- other students' work at the University of Manchester
- any previous work you have submitted
- students' work at other institutions
- academic publications
- Internet sources

These reports are examined as a standard part of the assessment process. When your work is submitted to *Turnitin* it will normally be added to an international database of student papers.

The Originality Report is the result of comparison between the text of the submission against the search targets selected for the assignment which may include billions of pages of active and archived internet information, a repository of works previously submitted to *Turnitin*, and a repository of tens of thousands of periodicals, journals, & publications. Any matching or highly similar text discovered is detailed in the Originality Report that is available in the assignment inbox.

You will listen to a short documentary titled, **“Reading Between the Lines: Exploring the Essay Mill Industry”** on the use of essay mills in higher education in the Integrated Learning lesson. The documentary was created by a group of Broadcast Journalism students from Nottingham Trent University.

5 Identify the key vocabulary by matching the phrases (a-l) with their possible meaning (1-12)

a. To read between the lines	1. Make sure a set of rules are obeyed
b. To prey on vulnerability	2. Make money from someone in an unfair way
c. To put at risk	3. Endanger someone or something
d. To police something	4. Do something in the easiest but not legal way
e. To cut corners	5. Make money quickly without thinking of the consequences
f. To hinder	6. Cause delay or difficulty
g. Contract cheating	7. Try to understand someone's real feelings or intentions from what they say or write
h. Fair use policy	8. A rule put in place to protect the user
i. To make a fast buck	9. Responsibility towards someone
j. A duty of care	10. Exploit someone's weakness
k. To demonise	11. Hire / pay someone to do your studies or exams on your behalf
l. To pocket money	12. Make someone or something appear bad

You will practise how to say the phrases with your teacher. Listen and repeat.

Mark which words and syllables in the phrases a-l in the table are stressed.

Wednesday 5 August

Reflection on pre-course tasks

Student focused learning outcomes

By the end of the lesson you will be better able to:

- review the concepts and vocabulary you came across in your pre-course tasks
- use signposting language to give advice about understanding lectures, based on your experience

1 In your integrated learning lesson titled Campus Vocabulary, you wrote about your previous university experience in the discussion board and you used key university terms to research your degree programme at the University of Manchester.

In your group, share your answers to the questions below.

- a. What did you find out about your degree programme at the University of Manchester?
- b. Is this the same or different to your previous university experience? How?

2 In the integrated learning lesson titled Signposting Language, you looked at some of the phrases speakers use to indicate that they are moving from one section of the talk to another.

In your group, discuss the following questions:

- a. What are main points, subordinate points and digressions?
- b. Why is it useful to take notice of signposting language when listening to a talk or lecture?
- c. What do you think are some of the most useful signposting phrases for giving a presentation?

3 You also completed the integrated learning lesson called Lectures in the UK, where you reflected on your previous experience of lectures and learned about lectures in the UK.

In your group, discuss the following questions:

- a. What are lectures like in your country?

- b. What are some advantages and disadvantages of lectures being online, due to social distancing guidelines?

For this question, try to use some of the signposting phrases you reviewed in Q2.

- c. Following your experience of notetaking in the integrated learning lesson, what advice can you give about making the most from a lecture?

Your group should prepare to share your answer with the class.

Thursday 6 August

Discussion: Exploring the Essay Mill Industry

You will work in groups and prepare for a formal discussion on the topic of using Essay Mills in Higher Education which you have studied. **One group will support using essay mills in higher education and the other group will oppose this point of view.** Your teacher will tell you which group you are in.

Student focused learning outcomes

By the end of the lesson you will be better able to:

- discuss your responsibilities as members of the university academic community
- understand the possible outcomes of educational malpractice at the UoM

You have some time to prepare relevant ideas for the discussion on the use of essay mills in Higher Education.

1 Use the listening transcript on Essay Mills to focus your ideas and comments from the discussion board from the Integrated Learning lesson. Also find information from other sources on the Internet to support your arguments for and against the use of Essay Mills in Higher Education.

During the discussion you should use the phrases in the table to give your opinion, agree and disagree. Your teacher will practise these with you.

2 Read the link below on the University of Manchester guidance regarding educational malpractice.

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=2870>

Read section 4.3 on "Contract cheating" in the following document.

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=639>

After reading the documents think about:

- What your responsibilities as a member of the University of Manchester academic community are?
- Have you changed your opinion on the use of essay mills?
- Are there any circumstances where you think they could be used?

Add your thoughts and comments in the reflective journal.

Thursday 6 August and Friday 7 August

Group Tutorials: Strengths and weaknesses, differences to IELTS exam, Qs and concerns with assessment

Student focused learning outcomes:

By the end of the lesson you will be better able to:

- Identify your strengths and weaknesses as language learners
- Understand the assessment on this course

This group tutorial will help you to identify your strengths and weaknesses as language learners in relation to the assessments that you have been introduced to earlier on this course.

1 Rank your skills from strongest to weakest. Think of your previous language tests, feedback from teachers, situations in which they were tested (in and outside of a classroom) and your own perceptions. Explain the ranking to the group and, if possible, say why you think that some of your skills are stronger than others.

a. Listening

- b. Reading
- c. Speaking
- d. Writing

Example: *I think that speaking (1) is my strongest skill, probably because I like to talk in my first language too. Reading (4) is the most difficult because I don't enjoy it and rarely read for pleasure, I prefer watching TV and movies, maybe that's why my listening (2) is better. Writing (3) is okay because I often send messages to my friends from other countries and post on social media, but I it's different from essays so my IELTS score was disappointing and I need to work on that.*

2 Having completed the four introductory sessions, what do you think are the similarities and differences between them and your previous language tests e.g. IELTS? Discuss these with your group and make a list.

a. Similarities:

- Listening:

- Reading:

- Speaking:

- Writing:

b. Differences:

- Listening:

- Reading:

- Speaking:

- Writing:

Make notes on your discussion; you will need them to present to the tutor.

3 Have you got any questions about the assessments?

Transcripts

Week 1



Thursday 6 August

Reading between the Lines: Exploring the Essay Mill Industry

"I think they are the leeches of academia and they prey on young students' vulnerability to make a fast buck and shame on them."

(Lord Michael Storey CBE, Liberal Democrat Peer)

"It's students getting an award they don't deserve; it's the reputation of the university being put at risk and it's also damaging to other students that might graduate from that university."

(Dr Thomas Lancaster, Academic Integrity Expert, Imperial College, London)

"They believe that every student that purchases the model answer will simply hand it in and they can't police that and that is what they are scared of."

(Daniel Dennehy, Chief Operating Officer, UK Essays, Nottingham)

Graduation for many is a day full of celebrations, happiness and achievement, all the hard work has finally paid off but at what cost? How would you feel if your degree had lost its integrity because despite putting in your own time, effort and hard work, someone else had paid their way to success?

An 'Essay Mill' is a business that allows customers to commission an original piece of writing on a particular topic so that they may commit academic fraud.

There are hundreds of online essay mill services for students to choose from. **Dr Thomas Lancaster is an academic expert at Imperial College, London.** "Contract cheating is what determines essay mills so students will often go to an essay mill to get a piece of work completed for them. Along with my colleague Robert Clark we came up with term contract teaching to describe a wider range of behaviour. All kinds of students use contract cheating services, we know home student use them, we know international students use them, but the advertising from many sites now is incredibly targeted."

'UK Essays' is a sub company within 'All Answers Ltd', which is based in Nottingham. It is one of the largest essay mills in the country and have served over 75,000 students.

Daniel Dennehy, Chief Operating Officer, UK Essays, Nottingham:

“We are an educational support service ranging from different educational support products and services from proof reading, marking, essay writing service, model answers from essays, dissertations as well. Our aim is and always will be to help students as much as we possibly can in terms of understanding their course and their particular subject area. We can put you in contact with an approved academic that has already achieved the qualification that you’re looking to acquire, receive a model answer can help everybody. Services such as UK Essays believe they are a greater support to student than universities themselves.”

So, are they really helpful? Or are they hindering the integrity of a student’s education?

Lord Michael Storey CBE, Liberal Democrat Peer:

“The issue of what’s called an essay mill, companies who provide essays for you, or contract cheating where someone actually writes your essay for you, were once seen as a very minor problem. But it was clearly growing and growing and growing. We’re not just talking about students in their first degree or masters, we are also talking about people doing PHDs. Imagine you go to your doctor and your doctor has got his/her qualification because they have used contract cheating.”

So, how detrimental can these services be? To the students that are caught? To students [who] now find that their degrees are devalued? And to the suffering reputation of universities?

Josephine Spanswick, Senior Advisor, Nottingham Trent Student Union:

“It’s what the integrity of what higher institution education is, so even if someone is struggling or makes a mistake and gets something wrong with an element of plagiarism or an aspect of their work, that is their attempting to do something themselves, this is literally like I’ll just buy it.”

Many CV services is a threat to higher education, but there are a number of components which have created this escalating issue.

STUDENTS:

Dr Thomas Lancaster, Academic Integrity Expert, Imperial College, London:

“Problem of cheating has been a long time round now, is nothing new. But no matter what we try the message doesn’t seem get firmly out there. Students do know what they are doing when they are buying a piece of work, they might think they will do it once and they might it’s work they can do anyway, but this is still damaging to them.”

ACADEMIC WRITERS:

Lord Michael Storey CBE, Liberal Democrat Peer:

“There are retired academic staff, retired professors who are writing these essays for students, somebody has to write them so shame on them to do that, they should know better. The notion that a professor in history who is retired is busy writing [a] thesis for a student so he/she can cheat is just plainly wrong.”

Dr Thomas Lancaster, Academic Integrity Expert, Imperial College, London:

“We know that students have left UK universities’ courses and then they have become a specialist in that course, they know what the lecturers want to see, they know the content of the course and they set themselves up in business supplying students work of their course. Some are based in UK; some are based internationally and it’s frustrating to me on one hand that this is the only work that they feel they can get and it’s frustrating to me that they feel this is the work they have to take on.”

UNIVERSITIES:

Daniel Dennehy, Chief Operating Officer, UK Essays, Nottingham:

“You can regulate this industry, but the lead has to come from the universities. We know the industry very, very well, hence the reason why we always said and why we are very vocal and passionate about the service that we provide because it can be regulated, it can be used in a correct way, but universities will look to demonise it for no reason other than they can’t control it, so they are scared of it.”

Dr Thomas Lancaster, Academic Integrity Expert, Imperial College, London:

“I don’t know why universities aren’t doing more, I think sometimes they are worried about what the results will be if they make these changes, could it mean that more students will not be successful in their course, it’s just one of the number of challenges that universities have and it’s not one that has made quite at the top of the list.”

ESSAY MILLS:

Josephine Spanswick, Senior Advisor, Nottingham Trent Student Union:

“I think the reality is, they are selling work and they are selling the potential to submit that work as a student, there isn’t an expectation as I mentioned previously if you get anything below 2:1 then that’s it, it’s not worth having your degree and they are selling on that level of higher marks when you’ve got somebody who potentially on a cusp of something or a grade boundary, that we can guarantee you’re going to get this mark that is so much an incentive.”

Essay Mills sites [say] that they are a model answer service which students should use as a support to produce their own original work.

UK Essays advert says:

The final and most important part of adhering to the Fair Use Policy is making sure that the work you submit to your university is 100% your own, as tempting as it maybe to submit a custom written piece of work, this is not how our service is designed to be used. UK Essays does not condone a student passing off a writer's work as their own in any circumstances.

We took part in an online chat on the UK Essays website, going through the process of purchasing a piece of written work. We posed as a final year student who wanted an essay on diversity within a workplace, we asked multiple questions regarding the price, how long it would take and the overall grade we were looking for. After 10 minutes, the fair use policy has still not been mentioned and it took our prompted question on plagiarism for us to be told that this work could not be submitted. Daniel was adamant that their 'fair use policy' is visibly clear.

Daniel Dennehy, Chief Operating Officer, UK Essays, Nottingham

"The website itself has numerous different web pages talking about the 'fair use policy', how to use the work correctly. Our homepage again it has a video on numerous website pages it has a video, when you go to place an order you agree to the 'fair use policy' as well. We will always try to stipulate to ensure you are aware how to use the service correctly. Now our website speaks for hundreds and thousands of visitors every single day, unfortunately we can't speak to them all verbally or via the online chat service to really push that message home."

Miles Lockwood from the Advertising Standards Authority says whilst these companies are not illegal, they do have a duty of care to their customers. "They should be clear what is the legitimate use of their services and they should be thinking should we be going further by also explaining the risks to students who are vulnerable of them trying to submit that work as their own and that information should be clear in upfront."

Despite companies promoting a 'Fair Use Policy', they are still widely criticised.

Dr Thomas Lancaster, Academic Integrity Expert, Imperial College, London:

"It's really frustrating to me to see these firms pocketing money from students, a student would have worked really hard for that money, they would spend their loan, they may have really little to show for it at the end other than the assignment that they could have written by themselves."

Lord Michael Storey CBE, Liberal Democrat Peer:

“Behind that sort of smiling face, we are here to support students, but actually there is a business that does help students to cheat and has been shown to happen. They’re not going to lose this profitable business, are they?”

UK Essays states they are loved by students and have the world’s best writers, so how much does the world’s best work actually cost?

Daniel Dennehy, Chief Operating Officer, UK Essays, Nottingham

“It could range anything from £124 for 1000 words for an undergraduate for a grade of 2:2 varying up to £140 for 1000 words for a 2:1 level, the average order value is around about £200-£300 for an essay that we provide.”

For a variety of reasons, students feel that there is no option but to submit work which is not their own. Mark Sergeant is a psychologist who specialises in the field of contract cheating and why students cheat.

Dr Mark Sergeant, Senior Psychology Lecturer, Nottingham Trent

“Half of the time the students have a bit of a panic, they think they’ve got to get their work submitted, they’ve got really unfortunate personal circumstances or maybe they haven’t got all the work done in time, it’s to do with family pressure and kind of self-pressure. It’s basically people who want to do well and don’t have the skills to do that and then try and cut some corners in order to actually succeed. With contract cheating it seems like “my lecturers don’t care about me, the assessment is pointless, I’ve got too many things on, therefore I am justified in using one of these contract cheating websites. A lot of students fundamentally, they don’t necessarily have the skills to be able to do the assessments and it’s quicker and easier to buy a piece of work than it is to actually go through skill development training, doing badly on assessment because unfortunately these days education is about the grades you get, not about the skills you’ve developed.”

So, is it sleepless nights or just a 5-minute bank transfer? Was there feelings of guilt or just pure relief? Was using an essay mill a small price to pay for a bright future?

“We know these sites are there, we know they are advertising to you, we’ve seen them hanging around campus, do think twice before you use these?”

(Dr Thomas Lancaster, Academic Integrity Expert, Imperial College, London)

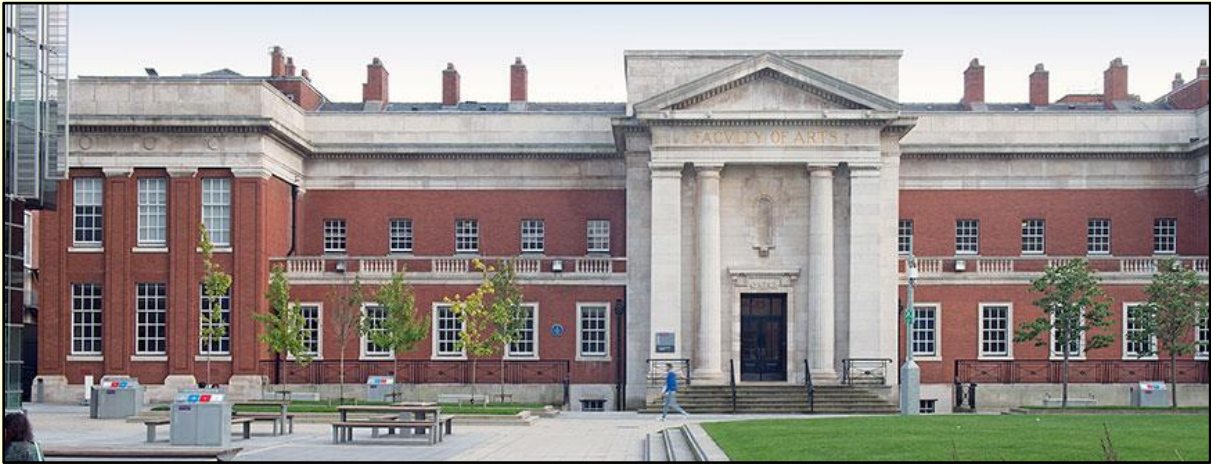
“What’s required is good teaching, good resources, good understanding for the students and that’s it”. **(Josephine Spanswick, Senior Advisor, Nottingham Trent Student Union)**

“If it’s a model answer service and it’s regulated correctly and used correctly and all the parties within the journey understand how it needs to be used, then it is a very strong academic resource tool.” **(Daniel Dennehy, Chief Operating Officer, UK Essays, Nottingham)**

“It’s making sure that you provide support, training and context of the work, but at the same time making it clear it’s not tolerated and we will catch it.” **(Dr Mark Sergeant, Senior Psychology Lecturer, Nottingham Trent)**

Nottingham Trent University (2020). *Reading Between the Lines: Exploring the Essay Mill Industry* [Youtube].

Available at: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=r_8QajLHp-k&t=1s (Accessed: 23 May 2020).



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