

## Quick Guide to Embedding Information Literacy in Your Modules

It is often assumed that our students will know how to find the resources they need to support their studies – after all, they seem perfectly at home with Facebook, Google, Amazon and a myriad of other online resources and services. However, many students, whilst having a superficial grasp of the technology for social purposes, have difficulty in applying methodical searching strategies to more academic resources in a systematic way and evaluating these resources once they find them.

Library Services is taking the opportunity that has arisen from the requirement to write new course and module specifications, to offer some ideas on how to embed the key Academic Skill of Information Literacy into your modules so that your students can make full use of the wide range of resources available to them to support their studies and produce better researched work.

There are links within this Quick Guide to further information and resources for you to refer your students to, but probably the best way to get your students on the right track is to embed within your module, a series of short sessions from your [Academic Liaison Librarian](#). This doesn't mean sacrificing a whole lecture slot – what works best is a series of short interventions, timetabled for first few weeks of a first year core module or for two or three weeks when the coursework is starting for other modules.

See [Examples from the Faculties](#) for some illustrations of good practice.

**Directed reading** – do your students know how to find the specific items on your module resource list? Many of the new students may never have come across such lists or used a library and its e-resources before.

In order to do this they will need to:

- Know the difference between a reference to:
  - A book
  - A chapter in a book
  - A paper within an edited collection
  - A journal
  - A journal article
  - A website
  - A document on the web
- Then they need to be able to find these via:
  - The [library catalogue](#)
  - The library's e-resource collections
  - WebLearn
  - The web

See also our separate [Quick Guide to Compiling Module Resource Lists](#)

**Research for coursework and dissertations** – do your students know how to search beyond the directed reading of your module resource lists for additional relevant resources?

In order to do this they will need to:

- know how to search for information (books, articles, websites etc) on a specific topic by using keywords and
  - be able to identify the keywords relevant to the topic they are interested in
  - know how to manipulate and combine these to refine their searches
  - be able to evaluate the references they find for accuracy, currency etc
- be able to identify the right way to search for these resources via:
  - the library catalogue
  - a relevant e-journal
  - a relevant database
  - the web
- know how to use the resources that they find to support their points and develop their arguments and to do so in a way which
  - does not plagiarise these resources
  - gives full recognition of these resources by means of accurate referencing

Some help on this is available via the [Library Subject Guides](#) and there are tutorials, podcasts and video clips under the skills heading on the [Library Services](#) web page and a more comprehensive list of [Information Literacy “competencies”](#) is available here.

**Referencing (and avoiding accidental plagiarism)** - The Oxford English Dictionary defines plagiarism as:  
*The action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft.*

But in many cases, charges of plagiarism arise from poor understanding of the *why, when and how* of referencing, rather than from a deliberate attempt to mislead. Your students need to understand that all information, ideas and quotations from anything they have consulted in order to write an assignment must be correctly referenced. This includes books; chapters in books; newspaper and journal articles; images; maps; web pages. The CELT guide on “*designing out plagiarism*” provides further guidance on the *why* and *when* of referencing.

There are a number of different referencing systems in use, some of which are subject specific e.g. OSCOLA (law), APA (psychology) and others which are more general e.g. Harvard and Numeric. You need to make it very clear which system should be used in your module, particularly for students who are taking modules from a range of programmes.

The Library Services website has an [Introduction to Referencing](#) section which includes an introduction on [What is Referencing](#) along with a very detailed guide to using the [Harvard System](#) and links to information on using the [OSCOLA](#) and [Numeric](#) systems. There is also a link to the [Don't Cheat Yourself](#) online tutorial on avoiding plagiarism which is produced by University of Leicester.

**Remember, your [Academic Liaison Librarian](#) will work collaboratively with you to embed the necessary Information Literacy skills into your modules.**