This guide is intended to help students understand plagiarism, a form of copyright violation. Students are also encouraged to discuss the topic with their instructors to gain a clear understanding.

**Plagiarism and BCIT Policy**

BCIT Student Academic Integrity & Appeals Policy 5104 describes plagiarism as prohibited behaviour.

“2.1 Plagiarism

Academic integrity requires that persons do not falsely claim credit for the ideas, writing, or other intellectual property of others, either by presenting such works as their own or through impersonation.” (BCIT Academic Integrity and Appeals Policy, Number 5104, 2009, p.3)

Plagiarism may be inadvertent if the student does not have the appropriate research skills or knowledge to paraphrase and cite their information sources correctly. Or, it may be deliberate if the student knowingly presents someone else’s work as their own.

Common examples of plagiarism would include:

> Omitting placing quotation marks when citing exact words from a published source,
> Paraphrasing without documenting your source,
> Copying from a source without proper acknowledgement, or
> Buying a paper from a research service or fellow student.

Confirmed acts of inadvertent or deliberate plagiarism can result in serious disciplinary action.

**HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM**

To avoid plagiarism, you must cite your source whenever you describe or quote a topic, theory, data, drawing, image, or opinion that belongs to someone else. Examples would include:

> Direct quotations from a source,
> Paraphrasing i.e. rearranging or slightly altering words conveying a specific message found in a source,
> Statistics, graphs or drawings from a source,
> Information taken from electronic sources such as the Internet as well as print books and journals, and
> Copying and pasting from another source.
Remember that the only thing from another source that you
do not have to credit is common knowledge. Common
knowledge is information considered to be factual and/or
ideas that are generally known by everyone within a subject
discipline. Common knowledge can be found in many
sources such as text books and reference works. Common
knowledge would also include conclusions that anyone could
reach. If you are in doubt about whether or not topics and
ideas are considered to be “common knowledge” for your
course subject material, you should check with your
instructor.
Examples of common knowledge include:

- Proverbs and expressions such as Actions speak louder
  than words,
- \[ e=mc^2 \],
- Vancouver gets a lot of rain in the winter.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENT RESEARCH
SKILLS
Knowledge and use of competent research skills will help you
avoid inadvertent plagiarism. Here are some ideas to keep in
mind when conducting your subject material research:

- Use reliable information from academic or scholarly
  sources. When you use academic sources, you'll start to
  recognize common knowledge.
- In your note taking, document your source for content
  where you have paraphrased.
- Learn how to paraphrase. Paraphrasing is legitimate in
  writing papers when the source is cited.
  - Paraphrasing is using your own words to convey
    someone else’s ideas and information in an
    original way.
  - Paraphrasing is usually more detailed than a
    summary, which is often concentrated on a main
    idea.
  - You know that you have understood the meaning
    of the original work when you are able to explain
    it in your own words.
- Know the style and rules of citation that your instructors
  want you to use.
- Include a citation at all times when you use someone
  else’s ideas, words or data.
- Record your sources as you do your research and include
  all of them in your bibliography or reference list. It is
time consuming and difficult to go back later.
- Familiarize yourself with the common knowledge in your
  field. When in doubt, consult with your instructor.
- Evaluate your information sources for accuracy, currency,
  objectivity, authority and completeness of content.
- Always use quotation marks if you are using someone
  else’s exact words.
- Ask a Librarian for assistance with research.

FURTHER INFORMATION
The Library offers research skill classes. You can discuss this
with your instructor. The Library has published a number of
Research Guides which are available in print and on the
Library Web site at www.lib.bcit.ca. These include:

- APA Style Guide
- MLA Style Guide
- CBE Scientific Style
- Citation Builders and Style Guides
- Evaluating Web Sites
- Research Tips

Here are a few books that are available in the BCIT Library:

- Research Papers by William Coyle and Joe Law, Longmans,
  2005.
  LB 2369 O65 2005

  LB 2369 C3 2003

- Student Guide to Research in the Digital Age by Leslie F.
  ZA 3075 S74 2006

To find more titles, search the Online Catalogue using the
keywords plagiarism or research or report writing.