Module 2 Unit 3
Quoting and paraphrasing: Guidelines for effective paraphrasing

1. Check your understanding of the original text.
   How?
   If you understand the original text correctly in the first place, your chances of using your own words to paraphrase it accurately are much higher.
   Try explaining it to a friend.
   Share your understanding of it with other students taking the same course or the same assessment task. Their words may help you clarify your own.
   Raise it in a seminar or tutorial and seek some feedback.

2. Always make your starting point the meaning of the original, rather than the way it is organised and structured.
   How?
   When you are sure that you have correctly understood the meaning of the original material (guideline 1), use that meaning to guide you in paraphrasing. It is the meaning of the original and the way it contributes to your arguments and writing purpose that is important. So your paraphrase may:
   • order information from the original in quite a different way.
   • highlight different aspects of the original.
   • show relationships between the original and other material you have read.

3. Recognise that the original author(s) may not have been writing for the same purpose as you.
   How?
   The original authors’ material was organised to suit their particular purposes. Their way of defining, classifying, arguing, presenting evidence etc., suited their purposes but may not suit yours.

continued next page
Guidelines for effective paraphrasing

3. (cont)
You need to look critically at your sources and be selective about what you paraphrase. You should:

- select only that information which is directly relevant to your own writing purpose (responds to the specific assessment task).
- use the information to support your own arguments and help construct your own conclusions.

4. Use a combination of some of the language of the source with some of your own words.
Why?
If you try to use your own words entirely, you risk:

- moving away from acceptable academic language – your writing may become too colloquial or appear substantially different from other, more academic, parts of your text.
- changing the meaning of the original – this may happen even though you don’t intend it.
- representing the meaning of technical words incorrectly - you need to retain any technical or semi-technical words or terms that are recognised and accepted in the field you are writing about.

5. Use specific language (grammar and vocabulary) strategies to recreate the meaning of the original in your own words.
How?
Go to Module 2, Unit 3, Section 7 ‘Language strategies for paraphrasing’, to learn strategies you can use to help you paraphrase.