The problem

When you rush to meet a tight deadline, it's easy to succumb to the temptation to 'cut and paste' the work of others into your own. There is a tendency to plagiarise because you don't have time to work things out for yourself, or you leave essays until the last moment so that you fill them with copied material just to reach the word limit.

Solution

Learn to use your time effectively, and you won't need to take shortcuts.

Plan ahead and begin writing your assignment in good time. Leaving work until the last minute doesn't give you enough time to read, digest, formulate your ideas, and write them in your own words. Making better use of your time means you won't have to take these short cuts.

Time management for beginners

As a general rule, for every hour you spend in class, you'll have to study for two hours by yourself.

Learn to judge how long various study tasks take:

- how long does it take to read a book chapter?
- how long do you spend taking notes?
- how long does it take to find a book in the library?

Choose a task that fits your available time—don't start a detailed reading if you only have 30 minutes to spare before going to work. Instead, check the citations and bibliography for an essay you are working on.

- Schedule breaks for yourself.
- Reward yourself for meeting a target or deadline.
- Break large tasks into smaller sections; this will make it easier for you to allocate time. For example, don't say: 'I have three weeks to write this 1,200 essay', break it down:
  - analysing the question and the topic
  - research (locating sources in the library which can take longer than you think)
  - reading and note-making (the longer the essay, the more of this you'll have to do)
  - thinking time (your essay won't just emerge from your reading)
  - write a plan (indicate thesis and structure)
  - drafting (you'll have to produce more than just one draft of the essay)
  - editing.

Broken down like this it is clear that you have to begin your assignments early otherwise you simply won't have time.