



Policy on academic integrity

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POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Against the background of the dream to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care, the council of the North-West University (NWU) has adopted this policy on Academic Integrity on 27 September 2018.

1 INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

This policy must be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the –

- 1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- 1.2 Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997;
- 1.3 Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 3 of 2000 (PAJA);
- 1.4 Copyright Act, 98 of 1978;
- 1.5 Statute of the North-West University (2017), in particular paragraphs 68, 71, 72 and 77(2);
- 1.6 related policies of the university, particularly the Policy on the Management of Intellectual Property and the Behavioural Policy and Behavioural Manual for Employees, and the
- 1.7 Student Disciplinary Rules,
- 1.8 NWU Values Statement, and
- 1.9 the NWU Code of Ethics.

2 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 The glossary of terms relating to academic integrity contained in Annexure 1 is an integral part of this policy.
- 2.2 Annexures 1, 2 and 3 to this policy may, on the advice of senate, be amended and extended by the University Management Committee in conformity with this policy, and any such amendments must be tabled before the council for noting and review if deemed necessary.

3 PURPOSES AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

3.1 The purposes of this policy are the following:

- 3.1.1 to provide guidance to the university community on the topic of academic integrity;
- 3.1.2 to inform the university community of the university's position on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof;
- 3.1.3 to ensure that students and employees take precautionary measures against plagiarism and self-plagiarism as a serious form of academic misconduct that will not be tolerated in any form;
- 3.1.4 to outline the responsibilities of students, academic employees and the academic units of the university to foster an environment conducive to academic integrity;
- 3.1.5 to prevent instances of academic misconduct , and
- 3.1.6 to provide a framework for the management of academic integrity in order to counter academic misconduct.

3.2 The provisions of this policy apply to the following:

- 3.2.1 employees and students of the NWU;

- 3.2.2 the structures of the university responsible for the management of academic activities and assessments;
- 3.2.3 all academic materials produced by employees and students of the university and their assessment.

3.3 This policy is concerned with the management of the integrity of the following aspects related to academic products:

- 3.3.1 collection and use of data;
- 3.3.2 adherence to principles of sound academic writing;
- 3.3.3 attribution and integration of sources;
- 3.3.4 acknowledgment of the ideas and arguments of other scholars in the processing of information for the purpose of academic writing;
- 3.3.5 the utilisation and interpretation of similarity indices for the purpose of refining and enhancing academic writing and for determining possible similarities with previously published work in order to identify and counter academic misconduct, and
- 3.3.6 presentation of research products for appropriate purposes.

4 Policy statement

- 4.1 It is the policy of the NWU to establish an environment that nurtures, values and pursues academic integrity.
- 4.2 The university accepts the responsibility to inculcate integrity and its corollary, academic honesty, in all students and employees.
- 4.3 It is the policy of the university to have clear and consistent rules, processes and procedures to manage the university's commitment to academic integrity.

5 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE POLICY

- 5.1 The council approves and oversees the implementation of this policy.
- 5.2 Senate oversees the management of this policy in all the relevant academic pursuits of the university.
- 5.3 All academic units, academic employees and students of the university are responsible for the management of the implementation of this policy.

6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Faculty boards and academic units

- 6.1.1 Faculty boards and academic units must effectively educate academic employees and students about the provisions of this policy and its implications, as well as establish processes, mechanisms and systems in order to ensure –
- 6.1.2 that, with the annual registration form, an academic code of conduct is entered into with every student;
- 6.1.3 that academic material used within the faculty or academic unit, including study guides, contain the relevant information regarding this policy;
- 6.1.4 that the requirements for assignments, including the correct citing of sources and all information regarding the applicable referencing style for the particular academic environment are set out in faculty yearbooks;
- 6.1.5 that reports of alleged academic misconduct are tabled at appropriate substructures of the relevant faculty board, that record is kept of such complaints and that, where appropriate, such matters are escalated to the relevant disciplinary structures of the university, and
- 6.1.6 that, in the event of an academic employee being suspected of academic misconduct, the complaint is dealt with in accordance with the process prescribed in Annexure 2 .

6.2 Academic employees

The academic employees of the university are responsible to –

- 6.2.1 adhere to the principles of the academic integrity declaration signed annually as part of the performance-agreement process;
- 6.2.2 educate students on all matters regarding academic integrity and ethics of academic writing, as well as the acceptable standards thereof;
- 6.2.3 ensure the inclusion of a reminder clause in all module outlines on academic integrity including plagiarism, cheating, or dishonesty and copyright infringement;
- 6.2.4 provide students with explicit and well-defined instructions on how to avoid academic misconduct;
- 6.2.5 advise students against giving or receiving help with individual assessments or work;
- 6.2.6 ensure adequate academic standards of masters and doctoral theses and that where publications are generated from these, these are appropriately referenced;
- 6.2.7 create awareness about the policy and the process of investigating academic misconduct; and
- 6.2.8 to implement the measures required by this policy to safeguard the integrity of the academic endeavour;

6.3 Students

All students of the university are responsible to –

- 6.3.1 adhere to the principles of the academic code of conduct entered into on an annual basis;
- 6.3.2 take due cognisance of this policy and all other policies and information regarding academic integrity and the inverse thereof, namely academic misconduct;
- 6.3.3 be aware of the consequences of transgressing the principles of academic honesty;
- 6.3.4 seek assistance in acquiring academic writing skills and where uncertainty exists in regard to matters related to proper citation or referencing methods;
- 6.3.5 take the necessary measures to ensure that other students do not copy their original work or improperly give or acquire assistance or collaboration amongst students;
- 6.3.6 ensure that each student only submits their own work except for instances where group work is required and only when all contributors to such work are acknowledged;
- 6.3.7 implement the measures required by this policy to safeguard the integrity of the academic endeavour.

7 INVESTIGATION OF INSTANCES OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

- 7.1 All investigations into suspected instances of academic misconduct by employees and students must be conducted in accordance with the Student Disciplinary Rules or the Staff Behavioural Manual.
- 7.2 All investigations into academic misconduct must follow the procedure provided for in Annexure 2 and in accordance with the categorisation grid contained in Annexure 3.



Registrar

GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATING TO ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

“Academic integrity”	The adherence to ethics of honest scholarship and the ability to work independently; also to give credit to the ideas of others and the re-use of one’s own previous work, and the submission of original research products for assessment, examination and review.	
“Academic materials”	Includes all academic products, irrespective of the form in which it was produced, both at undergraduate and post-graduate level, research articles, chapters in books, conference presentations and papers and research conducted on a contract-basis.	
“Academic misconduct”	1	Conduct constituting an act of fraud including the following instances of deception by a student:
	1.1	Obtaining, including copying, for the purpose of improving marks, by utilising notes, electronic devices or other forms of assistance during examination sessions where these have been prohibited by examination procedures.
	1.2	Assisting fellow-students in assessments (both formative and summative) or receiving assistance from fellow students regarding take-away assessments when any collaboration has been prohibited by the relevant assessment procedures, or copying or providing assistance regarding the writing of assessments.
	1.3	Sitting on behalf of another student for an assessment session or requesting a fellow-student to take an assessment on behalf of oneself.
	1.4	Taking unauthorised materials into an assessment room.
	1.5	Stealing assessment materials or disruptive behaviour during an assessment period.
	1.6	Submitting the same academic materials for different modules or academic programmes.
	1.7	Publishing, uploading or making available any material in which the NWU holds copyright without appropriate authorisation.
	1.8	Fabrication by constructing research data and/or results.
	1.9	Falsification by changing, omitting or manipulating research data and/or results.
	2	Conduct constituting an act of fraud including the following instances of deception by an academic employee:
	2.1	Utilising or presenting the work of a student who is or has been supervised or guided by the relevant academic employee without the permission of and proper acknowledgement of the work or contribution by the student.
	2.2	Knowingly publishing in a predatory journal whose editorial practices hinge on unethical and unscholarly practices.

	2.3	Entering into suspect research collaboration involving multiple submissions leading to so-called “salami-slicing” of the same research product.
	3	Plagiarism Self-plagiarism
“Academic ‘trafficking”		The unauthorised uploading of academic materials belonging to the NWU on collaborative academic platforms for the purpose of obtaining access to international study material.
“Copyright”	1	An umbrella term that, in terms of the law, provides legal protection to the copyright holder against the unauthorised reproduction of: Literary works Musical works Artistic works Cinematograph films Sound recordings Broadcasts Programme-carrying signals Published editions Computer programmes***
	2	“Originality” of a work in the context of copyright law means that the work has not been copied from a source and that its production required a substantial (or not trivial) degree of skill, judgment or labour.
“Investigations into allegations of plagiarism”		All allegations of plagiarism need to be investigated in accordance with the prescribed investigation procedure as approved by Senate.
“NWU Code of Academic Conduct”		The contract between the Executive Dean and an academic employee and students in inculcating a shared understanding of the values statement of the university in the pursuit towards academic integrity for all processes and products of academic output.
“Plagiarism”	1	The use without appropriate acknowledgement of another’s ideas, hardcopy or electronic texts, images, computer programmes, sounds, designs, performance or any form of creative work as one’s own work, including activities such as appropriating the knowledge, insights, wording or formulation of anybody else’s work.
	2	Since the <i>intention to deceive</i> is a key notion in the understanding of plagiarism the findings in an investigation of plagiarism must be presented in a continuum ranging from “strong intention to deceive” (<i>presenting the work as original and/or as the author’s own</i>) to “weak intention to deceive” (<i>careless or sloppy writing and/or improper referencing</i>).
	3	Unconscionable lifting of text.
“Self-plagiarism”	1	Self-plagiarism occurs when authors improperly re-use their own work presenting the work as new and original.
	2	Self-plagiarism may infringe the copyright of others involved in the publication of the original work.
Similarity indices	1.	Similarity-index software (such as Turnitin and Ithenticate) used by the university for the purpose of determining similarities of the text of academic material with any other texts applying computational string-matching techniques to identify words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs that are recognised to be identical, copied, or altered from the original texts.



Registrar

Procedure for the investigation of academic misconduct

The investigation of academic misconduct proceeds in various phases determined by the status of the person whose academic material is investigated being either a student, a person to whom the university has awarded a degree (a graduate) or an employee of the NWU.

1. Investigation of academic misconduct of a student

1.1. Phase 1: Internal process

- 1.1.1 The academic unit concerned reports a case of suspected academic misconduct perpetrated by a student to the registrar and the Student Judicial Office where a case number is allocated to the matter. The process proceeds in accordance with the Student Disciplinary Rules.
- 1.1.2 If plagiarism is suspected, phase 2 follows, and where other forms of academic misconduct are involved, the report must set out the details of the suspected misconduct, in which case phase 3 follows.

1.2. Phase 2: Internal process in the case of alleged plagiarism

- 1.2.1. The registrar appoints a plagiarism expert to determine the extent of textual similarities in the suspect academic material, using Turnitin.
- 1.2.2. The plagiarism expert performs a manual interpretation of the Turnitin index indication.
- 1.2.3. For the purposes of determining if there are indications in the linguistic strategies employed in the academic material under consideration of an intention to plagiarise, a micro-level linguistic investigation is undertaken.
- 1.2.4. A technical report is drafted by the plagiarism expert in which the extent of similarity and possible intention to plagiarise are presented in tabular form.
- 1.2.5. The report is submitted to the registrar to be forwarded to the Student Judicial Office.

1.3. Phase 3: Disciplinary action

Based on the report prepared in phase 2, a charge may be laid in terms of the Student Disciplinary Rules against the student concerned.

2. Investigation of academic misconduct of a graduate

2.1. Phase 1: Report of academic misconduct of a graduate

The academic unit concerned reports a case of suspected academic misconduct perpetrated by a graduate to the registrar.

2.2. If plagiarism is suspected, phase 2 follows, and where other forms of academic misconduct are involved, the report must set out the details of the suspected misconduct, in which case phase 3 follows.

2.3. Phase 2: Internal process

2.3.1. The registrar appoints a plagiarism expert to determine the extent of textual similarities in the suspect academic material, using Turnitin.

2.3.2. The plagiarism expert performs a manual interpretation of the Turnitin index indication.

2.3.3. For the purpose of determining if there are indications in the linguistic strategies employed in the academic material under consideration of an intention to plagiarise, a micro-level linguistic investigation is undertaken.

2.3.4. A technical report is drafted by the plagiarism expert in which the extent of similarity and possible intention to plagiarise are presented in tabular form.

2.3.5. The report is submitted to the registrar for determination of the implementation of phase 3.

2.4. Phase 3: External process

2.4.1. The registrar requests the executive dean concerned to provide the names of appropriately qualified scholars working in the research field concerned who are capable of expertly evaluating the outcomes of the technical report submitted in phase 2.

2.4.2. The registrar requests at least two of the external subject experts nominated by the executive dean to report on the extent of the academic misconduct suggested by the technical report produced in phase 2.

2.5. Phase 4: Independent legal evaluation of the evidence

At the request of the registrar the council appoints an independent legal expert to evaluate all reports and evidence emanating from phases 1 to 3 to report on such evaluation and to make recommendations to council on dealing with the matter.

2.6. Phase 5: Consequences of academic misconduct

2.6.1. If the council expresses the view that a graduate obtained the qualification concerned by dishonest means, the graduate is informed by the registrar of the outcome of the investigation and is allowed at least three weeks to submit a written representation in response to the findings.

2.6.2. The registrar convenes a panel comprising the executive dean concerned, two persons appointed by the faculty board concerned from their number, the registrar and the independent legal expert appointed in phase 4, who chairs the panel, to make recommendations based on all relevant reports and the representations, if any, of the graduate concerned.

2.6.3. The final recommendations of the panel are submitted by the registrar to the senate, and the senate may recommend to the council that the degree conferred upon the graduate concerned be revoked in terms of paragraph 77(2) of the Statute.

3. Investigation of academic misconduct of an employee

3.1. Phase 1: Report of academic misconduct of an employee

- 3.1.1. The academic unit concerned reports a case of suspected academic misconduct perpetrated by an employee to the registrar.
- 3.1.2. If plagiarism is suspected, phase 2 follows, and where other forms of academic misconduct are involved, the report must set out the details of the suspected misconduct, in which case phase 3 follows.

3.2. Phase 2: Internal process in case of suspected plagiarism

- 3.2.1. The registrar appoints a plagiarism expert to determine the extent of textual similarities in the suspect academic material, using Turnitin.
- 3.2.2. The plagiarism expert performs a manual interpretation of the Turnitin index indication.
- 3.2.3. For the purpose of determining if there are indications in the linguistic strategies employed in the academic material under consideration of an intention to plagiarise, a micro-level linguistic investigation is undertaken.
- 3.2.4. A technical report is drafted by the plagiarism expert in which the extent of similarity and possible intention to plagiarise are presented in tabular form.
- 3.2.5. The report is submitted to the registrar for determination of the implementation of phase 3.

3.3. Phase 3: External process

- 3.3.1. The registrar requests the executive dean concerned to provide the names of appropriately qualified scholars working in the research field concerned who are capable of expertly evaluating the outcomes of the technical report submitted in phase 2 or the averred misconduct contemplated in 3.1.2.
- 3.3.2. The registrar requests at least two of the external subject experts nominated by the executive dean to report on the extent of the academic misconduct suggested by the technical report produced in phase 2 or averred as contemplated in 3.1.2.

3.4. Phase 4: Independent legal evaluation of the evidence

At the request of the registrar the council appoints an independent legal expert to evaluate all reports and evidence emanating from phases 1 to 3 to report on such evaluation and to make recommendations to council on dealing with the matter.

3.5. Phase 5: Consequences of academic misconduct

- 3.5.1. If the council expresses the view that an employee has committed an act of academic misconduct, the employee is informed by the registrar of the outcome of the investigation and is allowed at least three weeks to submit a written representation in response to the findings.
- 3.5.2. The registrar convenes a panel comprising the executive dean concerned, the DVC Research and Innovation, the DVC Teaching-Learning, the registrar and the independent legal expert appointed in phase 4, who chairs the panel, to make recommendations based on all relevant reports and the representations, if any, of the employee concerned.

3.5.3. The final recommendations of the panel are submitted by the registrar to the Vice-Chancellor to deal with the matter in terms of paragraph 68 of the Statute after consultation with the Council Executive Committee.



Registrar

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CATEGORISATION OF ALLEGED INSTANCES OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT, IN PARTICULAR PLAGIARISM

The following framework provides the backdrop for the quantification of instances where lifting of text is evident. *(Note that not all sub-categories need to be true or substantiated in order to categorise the patterns of lifting that become evident from an investigation).*

(See next pages)

	Poor academic-writing practice (PAWP) ¹	Category 1 offence ²	Category 2 offence ³	Category 3 offence ⁴	Category 4 offence ⁵
The work in question includes (but is not limited) to answering to the following characteristics:					
(i)	Limited amount of material/copied text/ideas/concepts taken from the work of others in the words of the researcher/student, but without proper citation/referencing.	Short blocks of material/copied text ⁶ expressing ideas or concepts taken from the work of others without appropriate citation. Short blocks of copied text that is cited, but without proper referencing or adherence to conventions to utilize quotation marks	Significant or numerous blocks of material or text copied that express ideas or concepts taken from the work of others without proper referencing or adherence to conventions to utilize quotation marks. <i>(Note that the line between category 1 and category 2 offences is to be determined by the levels of similarity between the writing and the source text on a case-by-case basis.)</i>	The evaluation takes place with due regard to substantiation in terms of Categories 1 and 2 measures. However, the investigation process must determine whether proof exists in terms of the level of severity regarding instances of copied text/material. The evaluation must take into consideration the possible mitigating and aggravating circumstances.	The investigation process must determine the severity of the offence and the risks to the university.
(ii)	Limited amount of material/copied text, although referenced in the text and/or bibliography, but not properly cited.	Short blocks of material/copied text, although referenced in the text and/or bibliography, but not properly cited	Significant or numerous blocks of material/copied text, although referenced in the text and/or bibliography, but not properly cited		

¹ Poor academic writing practice is understood to involve possible collaboration or poor citation practice in which evidence is obvious that (i) the researcher/student did not appreciate the rules for academic writing, or (ii) where the extent of copied material is considered to be of minor impact or slight copying.

² Category 1 offence is understood as evidence that is in breach of the conventions of academic writing by presenting the material of others as the researcher's/student's original work.

³ Category 2 offence is understood as being committed when copied material represents a significant proportion of the work.

⁴ Category 3 offence would have been committed when a researcher/student has received a Category 1 or Category 2 penalty on a previous occasion. In instances where no time existed for remedial action in Categories 1 and 2 offences and evidence to this extent exists, a subsequent commitment of plagiarism will be dealt with as a PAWP, Category 1 or Category 2 offence. Also known as a repeat offence. If not in terms of a so-called *repeat offence*, the investigation needs to point to cheating.

⁵ Category 4 offence is committed in instances where a Category 3 offence is substantiated and in which the intent to deceive is clearly demonstrable, of which the sanction by the disciplinary committee may be expulsion of students or dismissal of employees.

⁶ Short blocks of text may be as small as two continuing lines.

	Poor academic-writing practice (PAWP) ¹	Category 1 offence ²	Category 2 offence ³	Category 3 offence ⁴	Category 4 offence ⁵
The work in question includes (but is not limited) to answering to the following characteristics:					
(iii)	Limited amount of material/copied text that has been adjusted linguistically or stylistically, with or without citation.	Short blocks of material/copied text that has been adjusted linguistically or stylistically and presented as the researcher's own work, with or without citation	Significant or numerous blocks of material/copied text that has been adjusted linguistically or stylistically and presented as the researcher's own work, with or without citation		
(iv)	Limited amount of material/copied text that is cited, but not adhering to conventions of citation such as quotation marks	Short blocks of material/copied text that is cited, but not adhering to conventions of citation such as quotation marks	Significant or numerous blocks of material/copied text that is cited, but not adhering to conventions of citation such as quotation marks		
(v)	Evidence of instances of limited collaboration between researchers/students as evidenced by (i) source, (ii) structure or (iii) copied text	Collaboration between researchers/students as evidenced by (i) source, (ii) structure or (iii) copied text (incl copied texts that have been adjusted linguistically or similar bibliographies)	Collaboration between researchers/students as evidenced by (i) source, (ii) structure or (iii) copied text (incl copied texts that have been adjusted linguistically or similar bibliographies)		
(vi)			Blocks of copied code, or computer files, or experimental results copied from sources without proper referencing.		

	Suggested action for managing PAWP:	Suggested action for managing Category 1 offences:	Suggested action for managing Category 2 offences:	Suggested action for managing Category 3 offences:	Suggested action for managing Category 4 offences:
	<p>A formal written warning and the compulsory attendance of an academic/research writing workshop, and – in the instance of students – penalising in terms of the marks awarded for the assignment</p>	<p><u>Students</u> found guilty of this category of text lifting will obtain a zero score. If the zero mark might lead to a failure in terms of the participation/module marks, a resubmission might be considered for a capped (e.g. 40% or 50%) mark.</p>	<p><u>Students</u> found guilty of this category of text lifting will obtain a zero score for the assignment, but will be required to rework the assignment for the purposes of fulfilling the learning outcomes. However, the resubmission of such an assignment will not provide the option of a further resubmission..</p>	<p><u>General remarks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the instance that it becomes clear that substantiation exists that that this is a second offender and that the offence lies within the scope of a Cat 1 offence, the second offence is dealt with as a Cat 2 offence. • In the instance that it becomes clear that this is a second offender and either of the offences is a Category 2 offence, the sanction in terms of the second offence is that of a Cat 3 offence that adds the recommendation for possible disciplinary action. • In the instance that it is a first offence, but in which cheating and intention to deceive is evident, the matter is considered a Cat 3 offence. • In the instance that it is a first offence, committed in regard of an examination piece in the higher degrees environment, for which a declaration has been made that the work is the sole and independent work of a post-graduate student and in terms of which the study leader/promoter has given permission for submission 	<p>The disciplinary case must take its full course (for both students and employees) in accordance with the stipulations in the Statute and relevant disciplinary codes. Suggested appropriate sanctions include expulsion, revoking of degrees or dismissal. (1) Reporting to all relevant governance bodies, statutory bodies, editorial boards is to be done by the Registrar.</p>

	Suggested action for managing PAWP:	Suggested action for managing Category 1 offences:	Suggested action for managing Category 2 offences:	Suggested action for managing Category 3 offences:	Suggested action for managing Category 4 offences:
				for examination, the penalty as stated below will be effective. In addition, consideration is to be given to penalties for study leaders/ promoters.	
				<p><u>Students</u> found guilty of this category of text lifting will obtain a zero score for the assignment, but will be required to rework the assignment for the purposes of fulfilling the learning outcomes. However, the resubmission of such an assignment will not provide the option of a further resubmission.</p> <p>Such instances of text lifting must be taken into account by the relevant examination committees that determine final module marks at the end of each semester and at which event the final module mark obtained for a particular module must be lowered by 10% and the student record card accordingly updated.</p>	
		<p><u>For employees:</u> Investigation to be followed by a formal report and letter from the Registrar to the editorial board of the journal in which the article had been published with a notice of plagiarism, withdrawing article from journal and keeping researcher responsible for paying back the page fees.</p>	<p><u>For employees:</u> Investigation to be followed by a formal report and letter from the Registrar to the editorial board of the journal in which the article had been published with a notice of plagiarism, withdrawing article from journal and keeping researcher responsible for paying back the page fees.</p>	<p><u>For employees</u> found guilty, a letter from the Registrar to the editorial board of the journal in which the article had been published with a notice of plagiarism, withdrawing article from journal and keeping researcher responsible for paying back the page fees. In addition, disciplinary action is to be considered against employees found guilty of a Cat 3 offence</p>	