



## **POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

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## **POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

### **Preamble**

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 17 June 2021.

### **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 (2020), in particular paragraphs 68, 71 and 77(2);
- 1.6 Related policies of the university, such as the Research Ethics Policy, the Policy on the Management of Intellectual Property, the Policy and Manual on student discipline, as well as the Behavioural Policy and Behavioural Manual for Employees;
- 1.7 NWU Values Statement; and
- 1.8 The NWU Code of Ethics.

### **2 Definitions**

- 2.1 The glossary of terms to academic integrity contained in Annexure 1 is an integral part of this policy.
- 2.2 Annexures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 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 (academic employees, undergraduate and postgraduate students) on the topic of academic integrity in teaching-learning and research;
  - 3.1.2 to inform the university community of the university's position on academic misconduct in teaching-learning and research and the consequences thereof;
  - 3.1.3 to ensure that employees and students take precautionary measures against all forms of academic misconduct;
  - 3.1.4 to make clear that all forms of academic misconduct are prohibited and any transgression will be dealt with in terms of this policy;
  - 3.1.5 to outline the responsibilities of students, academic employees and the academic units (including research entities) of the university to foster an environment conducive to academic integrity;
  - 3.1.6 to prevent instances of academic misconduct; and
  - 3.1.7 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, students and graduates/diplomates 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 materials:
- 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 acknowledgement of the ideas and arguments of other scholars in the processing of information for the purpose of academic writing;
  - 3.3.5 not fabricating or falsifying any aspect related to data;
  - 3.3.6 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 eliminate plagiarism; and
  - 3.3.7 presentation of research products for appropriate purposes.

## **4 Policy statement**

- 4.1.1 It is the policy of the NWU to establish an environment that nurtures, values and pursues academic integrity.
- 4.1.2 The university accepts the responsibility to inculcate integrity and its corollary, academic honesty, in all employees and students.
- 4.1.3 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**

- 5.1.1 The council approves and oversees the implementation of this policy.
- 5.1.2 Senate oversees the management of this policy in all the relevant academic pursuits of the university.
- 5.1.3 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**

Faculty boards and academic units (including research entities) must establish processes and procedures for the effective implementation of this policy in order to ensure that –

- 6.1.1 academic employees and students are sufficiently trained on the provisions of this policy and procedures deemed relevant within the particular faculty to ensure compliance and responsible conduct;
- 6.1.2 with the annual registration form, an academic code of conduct is entered into with every student; (Annexure 5);
- 6.1.3 with the annual performance agreement an academic code of conduct is entered into with every academic employee; (Annexure 4);
- 6.1.4 academic material used within the faculty or academic unit, including study guides, contain the relevant information regarding this policy;
- 6.1.5 the requirements for assignments and research projects, including the correct citing of sources and all information regarding the applicable referencing style for the particular academic environment are set out in the faculty yearbooks;

- 6.1.6 reports of alleged breach of academic integrity through acts of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism are tabled at appropriate substructures of the relevant faculty board, that record is kept of complaints of fabrication, falsification and plagiarism and that, where appropriate, such matters are escalated to the relevant structures of the university in accordance with Annexure 2 to be dealt with in accordance with the relevant disciplinary codes; and
- 6.1.7 the process prescribed in Annexure 2 be followed in all instances of breaches to the Policy.

## **6.2 Academic employees**

The academic employees of the university are responsible to adhere to the principles of academic integrity and to sign the Code of Academic Conduct and to sign the code annually as part of the performance-agreement process in order to:

- 6.2.1 educate students on all matters regarding academic integrity and ethics of academic writing, as well as the acceptable standards thereof and of academic honesty;
- 6.2.2 ensure the inclusion of a reminder clause in all module that outlines academic integrity including academic misconduct, e.g. fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, copyright infringement, cheating, and dishonesty;
- 6.2.3 provide students with explicit and well-defined instructions on how to avoid academic dishonesty through acts of fabrication, falsification and plagiarism;
- 6.2.4 advise students against giving or receiving assistance with individual assessments or work;
- 6.2.5 supervise students to conduct research in a responsible manner in which research integrity serves as a standard;
- 6.2.6 to implement the measures required by this policy to safeguard the integrity of the academic endeavour; and
- 6.2.7 to refrain from committing any acts of academic misconduct.

## **6.3 Students**

All students of the university must –

- 6.3.1 adhere to the principles of the academic code of conduct (see 6.1.2 above) entered into on an annual basis as part of the registration process;
- 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 and plagiarism;
- 6.3.3 be aware of the consequences of transgressing the principles of academic dishonesty;
- 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 his/her own work except for instances where group work is required and only when all contributors to such work are acknowledged;
- 6.3.7 take measures to ensure the responsible conduct of research in which research integrity serves as standard; and
- 6.3.8 must refrain from committing any acts of academic misconduct.

## **7 Inquiries into instances of alleged academic misconduct**

All inquiries escalated in terms of 6.1.6 to the relevant structures allege must be conducted in accordance with the relevant prescripts of the Staff Behavioural Manual and the NWU Policy and Manual on Student Discipline.

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATING TO ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

“Academic misconduct”	1	Conduct constituting an act of fraud including, but not limited to the following instances of intentional 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.
	1.10	Plagiarism (see definition included below)
	1.11	Self-plagiarism (see definition included below)
	1.12	Academic trafficking (see definition included below)
	2	Conduct constituting an act of fraud including, but not limited to the following instances of intentional 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	Fabrication (see definition included below). Falsification (see definition included below). Plagiarism (see definition included below) Self-plagiarism (see definition included below)

“Academic integrity”	The adherence to the ethics of honest scholarship in teaching-learning and research practices as well the ability to work independently; to give credit to the ideas of others and the re-use of one’s own previous work, not fabricating or falsifying any aspect related to data 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 ‘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.
	3 “Copyright infringement” refers to any kind of direct kinds of infringement in terms of sections 23(1)(a) or 23(2) of the Copyright Act (98 of 1978), i.e. when someone, not being the copyright holder, is involved in the copying, adaptation or publication of a work without stated permission.
“Fabrication”	Making up data or results and recording or reporting the fabricated material.
“Falsification”	Manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research records.
“Graduate/ Diplomat”	A person who has been conferred a degree or has been awarded a diploma or certificate from the NWU or its predecessors;
“Investigations into allegations of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct”	All allegations of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism need to be investigated in accordance with the prescribed investigation procedure as included in Annexure 2.
“NWU Code of Academic Conduct”	The contract between the Executive Dean and an academic employee 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. Also, the Academic Code of Conduct entered into by the NWU and its students during the annual registration process.
“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, processes results, 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 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, or sections of 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.
Research integrity		The active adherence to ethical principles and professional standards essential for responsible practice of research.
Research misconduct		The intentional deception in proposing, performing, reviewing or reporting research through the acts of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism.
Research non-compliance		Any violation of any regulation governing human, animal or environmental research or any deviation from the Research Ethics Committee approved proposal/protocol.
Similarity indices		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.
Student		A person admitted and registered as a student of the NWU in order to attain a qualification.
Violation of good research practice		Violation of good research practices that damage the integrity of the research process or of the researchers.

## 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 graduand/diplomand, a graduate/diplomate, or an employee of the NWU.

### 1 Investigation of academic misconduct of a student

#### 1.1 *Phase 1: Report of academic misconduct of a student (UG and PG) by means of an internal faculty process.*

- 1.1.1 The lecturer/study leader/promoter concerned reports a case of suspected academic misconduct that had allegedly been perpetrated by an undergraduate or postgraduate student. The report is done to the school/research director.
- 1.1.2 An initial assessment, upon suspect of alleged academic misconduct, is done in accordance with the relevant faculty processes. In relevant instances, the faculty may consult the Campus Academic Writing Centre for advice on norms and standards of academic writing.
- 1.1.3 The school/research director reports the matter to the substructure of the relevant faculty board, established in accordance with para 6.1.6 of the Policy and a resolution of the best suitable approach<sup>1</sup> to deal with the alleged instance of academic misconduct is taken and recorded.
- 1.1.4 Where appropriate, the faculty reports the case to the Student Judicial Office where a case number is allocated to the matter and a process proceeds in accordance with the NWU Manual on Student Discipline.
- 1.1.5 the faculty board receives regular reports from the substructure mentioned above and, in turn, includes the information on these reports in the regular reporting to Senate.
- 1.1.6 in the instance that a process is followed in terms of 1.1.4 above, and where plagiarism, falsification or fabrication is suspected, phase 2a follows; and where other forms of academic misconduct could be evident, phase 2b follows.

#### 1.2 *1.2 Phase 2a: Investigation process for instances of alleged fabrication, falsification or plagiarism*

- 1.2.1 The registrar appoints a technical expert(s) to consider the reports as put forward by the faculty concerned in terms of 1.1.3 and 1.1.4, and to consult other sources relevant for the investigation.  
The expert is to determine whether fabrication or falsification of data occurred; or the extent of alleged textual similarities in the suspect academic material, using Turnitin or similar similarity-index software.
- 1.2.2 Where fabrication is suspected, the technical expert would need to determine the extent to which the “construction and/or addition of data, observations or characterizations that never occurred in the gathering of the data or running of experiments”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bu determining the relevant category of offence as per Annexure 3 of the Policy and resolving on the relevant measures to correct behaviour (either in an educational or punitive manner and whether a positive discipline approach within the faculty would be followed, or whether the case would be reported in terms of para 2.1.2 of the NWU Manual on Student discipline).

<sup>2</sup> PennState University BIOET 533: Ethical Dimensions of Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems. 2.1 Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism. (URL: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/bioet533/node/654>) [Accessed: 2021.04.6]



- 1.2.3 Where falsification is suspected, the technical expert would need to determine the extent to which any relevant aspect of the research process or research product had been changed to support claims or hypothesis and leading to an inaccurate research outcome.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.2.4 In the instance of suspected plagiarism, the expert performs a manual interpretation of the similarity-index as from the software mentioned in 1.2.1 as well as a micro-level linguistic analysis. This is done for purposes of determining whether there were indications in the linguistic strategies employed in the academic material under consideration of an intention to plagiarise.
- 1.2.5 A technical report is drafted by the expert and is submitted to the relevant Campus Student Judicial Officer.
- 1.2.6 In the instance that the technical report has substantiated the allegations of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism, a disciplinary process follows in accordance with the relevant sections of paragraph 2 of the Manual on Student discipline.

### 1.3 *Phase 2b: Investigation process for other instances of alleged academic misconduct*

In accordance with para 2.1.2 of the Manual on student Discipline, the Manager Student Judicial Services appoints an investigation officer for the purpose of the investigation of a particular case, and will, if the need arises, involve other and/or external technical experts to assist with the said investigation.

### 1.4 *Phase 3: Disciplinary action following Phases 2a and 2b*

Based on the report received in accordance with 1.2.6 or 1.3 above, a charge may be laid in terms of Para 72(c) of the Statute against the student concerned.

## 2 Investigation of academic misconduct of a graduand/diplomand<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1 *2.1 Phase 1: Report of academic misconduct of a graduand/diplomand*

- 2.1.1 The director or deputy dean concerned reports a case of suspected academic misconduct during the period of enrolment as a student of the university that had allegedly been perpetrated by a graduand/diplomand. This report is done to the registrar.
- 2.1.2 Upon detection of a possible transgression in terms of the Policy on Academic Integrity, the examination process of the graduand/diplomand is halted, and all examiners are informed of the reason for the suspension of the examination process.
- 2.1.3 If fabrication, falsification or plagiarism is suspected, phase 2a follows.
- 2.1.4 Where other forms of academic misconduct could be involved, phase 2b follows.
- 2.1.5 Phases 3 and 4 follow ordinarily in all instances.

### 2.2 *Phase 2a: Investigation process for instances of alleged fabrication, falsification or plagiarism*

- 2.2.1 The registrar appoints a technical expert(s) to consider the reports as put forward by the faculty concerned in terms of 2.1.1, and to consult other sources relevant for the investigation.
- 2.2.2 The expert is to determine whether fabrication or falsification occurred; or the extent of alleged textual similarities in the suspect academic material, using Turnitin or similar similarity-index software.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.2.3 Where fabrication is suspected, the technical expert would need to determine the extent to which the “construction and/or addition of data, observations or characterizations that never occurred in the gathering of the data or running of experiments”.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.2.4 In the instance of suspected plagiarism, the expert performs a manual interpretation of the similarity-index indication as from the software mentioned in 2.2.1 as well as a micro-level linguistic analysis.

<sup>3</sup> PennState University BIOET 533: Ethical Dimensions of Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems. 2.1 Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism. (URL: <https://eee.e-education.psu.edu/bioet533/node/654>) [Accessed: 2021.04.06]

<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this procedure a “graduand/diplomand” is an NWU student who had been enrolled for a higher-degree qualification, who had submitted the dissertation or thesis for examination and who had been alleged of academic misconduct during the examination of the said dissertation/thesis.

<sup>5</sup> PennState University BIOET 533: Ethical Dimensions of Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems. 2.1 Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism. (URL: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/bioet533/node/654>) [Accessed: 2020.04.06]

<sup>6</sup> PennState university BIOET 533: Ethical Dimensions of Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems. 2.1 Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism. (URL: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/bioet533/node/654>) [Accessed: 2020.04.06]

This is done for purposes of determining whether there were indications in the linguistic strategies employed in the academic material under consideration of an intention to plagiarise.

- 2.2.5 A technical report is drafted by the expert and is submitted to the registrar.
- 2.2.6 The registrar informs the graduand/diplomand of the outcome of the investigation and the person is allowed at least three weeks to submit a written representation in response to the findings.

### 2.3 *Phase 2b: Investigation process for other instances of alleged academic misconduct*

- 2.3.1 The registrar, in consultation with the executive dean concerned and the DVCs Teaching-Learning and Research and Innovation, appoints an appropriately qualified expert to determine the extent of the alleged misconduct.
- 2.3.2 The appointed expert considers all the relevant factors in relation to the alleged misconduct and drafts a report and submits such to the registrar who needs to discuss the report with the functionaries mentioned in 2.3.1.
- 2.3.3 The registrar informs the graduand/diplomand of the outcome of the investigation and the person is allowed at least three weeks to submit a written representation in response to the findings.

### 2.4 *Phase 3: Adjudication process (fabrication, falsification or plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct)*

- 2.4.1 The registrar requests the executive dean concerned to provide the names of at least two appropriately qualified subject-matter experts (internal/external) working in the research field concerned who are capable of expertly evaluating the outcomes of the technical report mentioned in 2.2.5

The registrar contacts the subject-matter experts requesting their availability for the task and enters into an agreement regarding the terms and conditions of the commission.

The mentioned technical report is forwarded to the subject-matter experts and a meeting is convened where the expert of fabrication, falsification or plagiarism briefs the subject-matter experts on the relevant technical aspects of the report. A report is drafted from the observations by the subject-matter experts.

- 2.4.2 The registrar convenes a panel comprising the executive dean concerned or his/her delegate, the DVC Teaching-Learning, the DVC Research and Innovation, the registrar, the subject-matter experts and the fabrication, falsification or plagiarism expert(s) to consider all relevant aspects with a purpose to draft a final report on the matter.
- 2.4.3 The report is submitted to the faculty board of the relevant faculty for internal handling and reporting to Senate.

## 3 Investigation of academic misconduct of a graduate or diplomate

### 3.1 *Phase 1: Report of academic misconduct of a graduate*

- 3.1.1 The director or deputy dean concerned reports a case of suspected academic misconduct that had allegedly been committed by a graduate/diplomate during the period of enrolment as a student of the university. This report is done to the registrar.
- 3.1.2 If fabrication, falsification or plagiarism is suspected, phase 2a follows.
- 3.1.3 Phases 3 and 4 follows ordinarily in all instances.

### 3.2 *Phase 2a: Investigation process for instances of alleged fabrication, falsification or plagiarism*

- 3.2.1 The registrar appoints a technical expert(s) to consider the reports as put forward by the faculty concerned in terms of 3.1.1, and to consult other sources relevant for the investigation.

The expert is to determine whether fabrication or falsification occurred; or the extent of alleged textual similarities in the suspect academic material, using Turnitin or similar similarity-index software.

- 3.2.2 Where fabrication is suspected, the technical expert would need to determine the extent to which the “construction and/or addition of data, observations or characterizations that never occurred in the gathering of the data or running of experiments”.<sup>7</sup>
- 3.2.3 Where falsification is suspected, the technical expert would need to determine the extent to which any relevant aspect of the research process or research product had been changed to support claims or hypothesis in leading to an inaccurate research outcome.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.2.4 In the instance of suspected plagiarism, the expert performs a manual interpretation of the similarity-index indication as from the software mentioned in 3.2.1 as well as a micro-level linguistic analysis. This is done for purposes of determining whether there were indications in the linguistic strategies employed in the academic material under consideration of an intention to plagiarise.
- 3.2.5 A technical report is drafted by the expert and is submitted to the registrar.
- 3.2.6 The registrar informs the graduate/diplomate of the outcome of the investigation and the person is allowed at least three weeks to submit a written representation in response to the findings.
- 3.2.7 The registrar requests the executive dean concerned to provide the names of at least two appropriately qualified scholars working in the research field concerned who are capable of expertly evaluating the outcomes of the technical report mentioned in 3.2.5.
- The registrar contacts the subject-matter experts requesting their availability for the task and enters into an agreement regarding the terms and conditions of the commission.
- The mentioned technical report is forwarded to the subject-matter experts and a meeting is convened where the fabrication, falsification or plagiarism expert briefs the subject-matter experts on the relevant technical aspects of the report. A report is drafted from the observations by the subject-matter experts.
- 3.2.8 The registrar convenes a panel comprising the executive dean concerned or his/her delegate, the DVC Teaching-Learning, the DVC Research and Innovation, the registrar, the subject-matter experts and the fabrication, falsification or plagiarism expert(s) to consider all relevant aspects with a purpose to draft a final report on the matter.

### 3.3 *Phase 2b: Investigation process for other instances of alleged academic misconduct*

- 3.3.1 The registrar, in consultation with the executive dean concerned and the DVCs Teaching-Learning and Research and innovation, appoints an appropriately qualified expert(s) to determine the extent of the alleged misconduct.
- 3.3.2 The appointed expert considers all relevant factors in relation to the alleged misconduct and drafts a report and submits such to the registrar who needs to discuss the report with the functionaries mentioned in 3.3.1.
- 3.4 The registrar informs the graduate/diplomate of the outcome of the investigation and the person is allowed at least three weeks to submit a written representations in response to the findings.

### 3.5 *Phase 3: Independent legal evaluation of the evidence*

- 3.5.1 At the request of the registrar the council appoints an independent legal expert to:
- 3.5.1.1 evaluate all reports and evidence emanating from phases 1 and 2;
- 3.5.1.2 report on such evaluation; and
- 3.5.1.3 make recommendations to senate on the best way to dealing with the matter.
- 3.5.2 The independent legal expert is assisted by an external attorney as recommended by the NWU Legal Services Department and has, as chairperson of the external review process, the mandate to request the presence of the functionaries mentioned in 3.2.8 to be present at the meeting or to request the services or other appropriately skilled experts.
- 3.5.3 The registrar acts as secretary of the processes relevant to phase 3.

<sup>7</sup> PennState University BIOET 533: Ethical Dimensions of Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems. 2.1 Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism. (URL: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/bioet533/node/654>) [Accessed: 2020/04/06]

<sup>8</sup> PennState University NIOET 533: Ethical Dimensions of Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems. 2.1 Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism. (URL: <https://e-education.psu.edu/bioet533/node/654>) [Accessed: 2020.04.06]

### 3.6 Phase 4: Consequences of academic misconduct

- 3.6.1 The final recommendations of the panel are submitted by the registrar to the Senate to deal with the matter in terms of paragraph 77(2) of the NWU Statute.
- 3.6.2 The Senate makes a recommendation to Council
- 3.6.3 If the Council, in its consideration of all reports submitted, expresses the view that a graduate/diplomate obtained the qualification concerned by dishonest means, a resolution in this regard is made and the registrar is tasked to ensure the completion of the involved legal process to revoke the qualification.

## 4 Investigation of academic misconduct of an employee

### 4.1 Phase 1: Report of academic misconduct of an employee

- 4.1.1 The deputy dean or executive dean concerned report a case of suspected academic misconduct perpetrated by an employee to the registrar.
- 4.1.2 If fabrication, falsification or plagiarism is suspected, phase 2a follows.  
Where other forms of academic misconduct are involved, the report must set out the details of the suspected misconduct, in which case phase 2b follows.
- 4.1.3 Phases 3 and 4 follow ordinarily in all instances.

### 4.2 Phase 2a: Investigation process in case of suspected fabrication, falsification or plagiarism

- 4.2.1 The registrar appoints a technical expert(s) to consider the reports as put forward by the faculty concerned in terms of 4.1.1, and to consult other sources relevant for the investigation.  
The expert is to determine whether fabrication or falsification occurred; or the extent of alleged textual similarities in the suspect academic material, using Turnitin or similar similarity-index software.
- 4.2.2 Where fabrication is suspected, the technical would need to determine the extent to which the “construction and/or addition of data, observations or characterizations that never occurred in the gathering of the data or running of experiments”.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.2.3 Where falsification is suspected, the technical expert would need to determine the extent to which any relevant aspect of the research process or research product had been changed to support claims or hypothesis and leading to an inaccurate research outcome.<sup>10</sup>
- 4.2.4 In the instance of suspected plagiarism, the expert performs a manual interpretation of the similarity-index indication as from the software mentioned in 4.2.1 as well as a micro-level linguistic analysis. This is done for purposes of determining whether there were indications in the linguistic strategies employed in the academic material under consideration of an intention to plagiarise.
- 4.2.5 A technical report is drafted by the expert and is submitted to the registrar.
- 4.2.6 The registrar informs the employee of the outcome of the investigation and the person is allowed at least three weeks to submit a written representation in response to the findings.
- 4.2.7 The registrar requests the executive dean concerned to provide the names of at least two appropriately qualified scholars working in the research field concerned who are capable of expertly evaluating the outcomes of the technical report mentioned in 4.2.5.  
The registrar contacts the subject-matter experts requesting their availability for the task and enters into an agreement regarding the terms and conditions of the commission.
- 4.2.8 The registrar convenes a panel comprising the executive dean concerned or his/her delegate, the DVC Teaching-Learning, the DVC Research and Innovation, the registrar, the subject-matter experts and the fabrication, falsification or plagiarism expert(s) to consider all relevant aspects with a purpose to draft a final report on the matter.

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<sup>9</sup> PennState university BIOET 533: Ethical Dimensions of Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems. 2.1 Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism. (URL: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/bioet533/node/654>) [Accessed: 2020.04.06]

<sup>10</sup> PennState university BIOET 533: Ethical Dimensions of Renewable Energy and Sustainability Systems. 2.1 Falsification, Fabrication, Plagiarism. (URL: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/bioet533/node/654>) [Accessed: 2020.04.06]

#### **4.3 Phase 2b: Investigation process for other instances of alleged academic misconduct**

- 4.3.1 The registrar, in consultation with the executive dean concerned and the DVCs Teaching-Learning and Research and Innovation, appoints an appropriately qualified expert(s) to determine the extent of the alleged misconduct.
- 4.3.2 The appointed expert considers all relevant factors in relation to the alleged misconduct and drafts a report and submits such to the registrar who needs to discuss the report with the functionaries mentioned in 4.3.1.
- 4.4 The registrar informs the employee of the outcome of the investigation and the personal is allowed at least three weeks to submit a written representation in response to the findings.

#### **4.5 Phase 3: Independent legal evaluation of the evidence**

- 4.5.1 At the request of the registrar, the council appoints an independent legal expert: -
  - 4.5.1.1 to evaluate all reports and evidence emanating from phases 1 and 2;
  - 4.5.1.2 to report on such evaluation; and
  - 4.5.1.3 to make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor on the best way to dealing with the matter.
- 4.5.2 The independent legal expert is assisted by an external attorney as recommended by the NWU Legal Services Department and has, as chairperson of the external review process, the mandate to request the presence of the functionaries mentioned in 4.2.8 to be present at the meeting.
- 4.5.3 The registrar acts as secretary of the processes relevant to phase 3.

#### **4.6 Phase 4: Consequences of academic misconduct**

- 4.6.1 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.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE CATEGORISATION OF ALLEGED INSTANCES OF PLAGIARISM**

*The following framework provides the backdrop for the qualification 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) <sup>1</sup>	Category 1 offence <sup>2</sup>	Category 2 offence <sup>3</sup>	Category 3 offence <sup>4</sup>	Category 4 offence <sup>5</sup>
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 <sup>6</sup> 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)</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 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	The evaluation must take into consideration the possible mitigating and aggravating circumstances.	

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

<sup>4</sup> Category 3 offence would have been committed when a researcher/student has undergone corrective action in terms of a Category 1 or Category 2 outcome 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Short blocks of text may be as small as two continuing lines.

	Poor academic-writing practice (PAWP) <sup>1</sup>	Category 1 offence <sup>2</sup>	Category 2 offence <sup>3</sup>	Category 3 offence <sup>4</sup>	Category 4 offence <sup>5</sup>
	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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	<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. 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>Students 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>	

*Office of the Registrar*

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES**

As an academic employee of the North-West University, I subscribe to the strategy statement approved by Council on 15 November 2015 that the university is transformed and positioned as unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice.

I therefore commit myself, in all my endeavours:

- To uphold the set of values of the university as this is embedded in the constitutional values of human dignity, equality and freedom;
  - Academic integrity.
  - Ethics in all endeavours.
  - Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.
  - Responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency.
  - Embracing diversity.
- To demonstrate utmost integrity in my academic work (teaching-learning and research practices) and to maintain high standards of academic honesty in accordance with the NWU Policy on Academic Integrity.
- To refrain from any acts of academic misconduct, such as (but not limited to the following):
  - Any acts of fabrication or falsifying in relation to academic work.
  - Any acts of plagiarism e.g. cutting and pasting sections of text without proper referencing or citing sources not used.
  - Any acts of self-plagiarism.
  - Utilising or presenting the work of a student who is or has been supervised or guided by me without the permission of and proper knowledge of the work or contribution by the student.
  - Knowingly publish in a predatory journal.
  - Entering into suspect research collaboration involving multiple submission leading to s-called “salami-slicing” of the same research product.
  - Breach in any aspect related to the NWU Code of Conduct for Researchers, etc.
- To submit to the disciplinary rules of the NWU in instances of alleged transgression of the NWU Policy on Academic Integrity.

(Confirmed annually as part of the performance agreement process)

*Office of the Registrar*

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STUDENTS

As a student of the North-West University, I subscribe to the strategy statement approved by Council on 15 November 2015 that the university is transformed and positioned as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice.

I therefore commit myself, in all my academic endeavours:

- To uphold the set of values of the university as this is embedded in the constitutional values of human dignity, equality and freedom:
  - Academic integrity.
  - Ethics in all endeavours.
  - Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.
  - Responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency.
  - Embracing diversity
- To subscribe to the stated student-value proposition that pursues the following:
  - the quality of the core academic project;
  - equity of access and success;
  - sense of belonging;
  - an empowering and supportive learning experience in an aligned programme offering that is locally and regionally relevant, and internationally competitive;
  - seamless teaching and learning experience;
  - functional multilingualism that promotes access, academic performance, student growth and employability;
  - a diverse and integrated student life;
  - employability of graduates who are known to be responsive and caring citizens and knowledgeable to be leaders in our developing country and our continent.
- To demonstrate utmost integrity in my academic work and to maintain high standards of academic honesty in accordance with the NWU Policy on Academic Integrity.
- To refrain from any acts of academic misconduct, such as (but not limited to the following):
  - Any acts of Fabrication or falsification related to academic work.
  - Any acts of plagiarism e.g. cutting and pasting sections of text without proper referencing or citing sources not used.
  - Copying from someone else's work.
  - Hiring a person to write my assignment.
  - Submitting as assignment that had already been assessed.
  - Dishonest conduct in a formative or summative assessment session.
  - Assisting fellow-students in assessments.
  - Sitting on someone else's behalf in the examination, etc.
- To submit to the disciplinary rules of the NWU in instances of alleged transgression of the NWU Policy on Academic Integrity.

(Confirmed as part of the annual registration process)