NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA

# Policy on Academic Integrity

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*Registrar*

# POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

### Preamble

Against the background of the vision to discover new frontiers and opportunities that benefit society, advancing our relevance and impact, the council of the North-West University ("NWU", "university") adopted this policy on 18 November 2026.

## 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 Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA);

1.5 Copyright Act, 98 of 1978;

1.6 Statute of the North-West University;

1.7 Related policies, systems and standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the university, including the –

1.7.1 Research Ethics Policy;

1.7.2 Policy on the Management of Intellectual Property;

1.7.3 Data and Information Security Policy;

1.7.4 Personal Information Policy;

1.7.5 Research Data Management Policy;

1.7.6 Policy and Manual on student discipline;

1.7.7 Behavioural Policy and Behavioural Manual for Employees;

1.7.8 Policy on Artificial Intelligence;

1.7.9 General Academic Rules;

1.7.10 Guidelines and Standard Operating procedures for the Integrated Research Integrity Management System (IRIMS);

1.7.11 Library and Information Services (LIS) Policy, and

1.7.12 Senate Rules on Academic Integrity including the NWU –

1.7.13 Senate Rules on Teaching-Learning Integrity Standard Operating Procedures (TL SOP);

1.7.14 Senate Rules on the ethical and responsible use of AI;

1.7.15 Senate Rules on the Utilisation of Academic Misconduct detection tools;

1.7.16 Senate Rules on Tests and Examinations;

1.8 NWU Values Statement; and

1.9 NWU Code of Ethics.

## 2 Definitions

2.1 The glossary of terms relating to academic integrity contained in Annexure 1 forms an integral part of this policy.

2.2 All senate rules referred to in paragraph 17.12 must comply with this policy.

## 3 Purposes and scope

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to –

3.1.1 strengthen and support the intentional establishment of an institutional culture conducive to academic integrity in both formal and informal NWU processes;

3.1.2 provide guidance to the university community (including academic and support staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, graduates and diplomates) on the relationship between academic integrity and teaching and learning matters (PAWP, academic misconduct and non-compliance with proctored assessments) and research-related breaches (research non-compliance, violations of good research practices and research misconduct).

3.1.3 inform the university community of the university's position on academic transgressions relating to teaching and learning matters and research-related breaches, and the consequences thereof;

3.1.4 ensure that employees and students take precautionary measures against all forms of academic misconduct in teaching-learning, and breaches in research ethics and the responsible conduct of research;

3.1.5 make clear that all forms of academic misconduct and non-compliance with proctored assessments in teaching-learning and research are prohibited, and that any transgression or breach will be dealt with in accordance with this policy;

3.1.6 outline the responsibilities of students, academic staff, faculties and academic units of the university, including research entities, to foster an environment conducive to academic integrity;

3.1.7 prevent instances of academic misconduct in teaching-learning and in research;

3.1.8 provide a framework for managing academic integrity that actively supports the NWU's value statements, and that counters academic transgressions in the form of proctored assessment non-compliance, poor academic writing practices, academic misconduct as well as breaches of research ethics and the responsible conduct of research, and

3.1.9 provide a framework for maintaining academic integrity when using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching-learning and research.

3.2 The provisions of this policy apply to the following:

3.2.1 employees, undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as graduates and diplomates of the NWU;

3.2.2 the structures of the university responsible for managing academic activities, assessments, transgressions and breaches, and

3.2.3 all academic materials produced by employees and students of the university for teaching-learning and research purposes, 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 teaching-learning and research data;

3.3.2 adherence to principles of sound academic and scientific writing;

3.3.3 attribution and integration of sources;

3.3.4 acknowledgement of the ideas and arguments of other scholars and/or Artificial Intelligence when processing information for academic and scientific writing purposes;

3.3.5 artificial intelligence generated content, acknowledgement and referencing;

3.3.6 not plagiarising, fabricating or falsifying any aspect of data or text;

3.3.7 the utilisation and interpretation of similarity indices and AI reports to refine and enhance academic and scientific writing, and to determine possible similarities with previously published work or AI-generated content. This helps to identify and eliminate plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, as well as breaches of research ethics and responsible conduct of research;

3.3.8 the utilisation and implementation of proctoring tools to ensure academic integrity and the management of instances of academic misconduct and proctoring assessment non-compliance, as indicated by proctoring tools,

3.3.9 the utilisation and implementation of embedded, technical, digital and/or other appropriate integrity measures withing assessment materials, instructions, platforms or processes for the purpose of supporting the identification and investigation of potential non-adherence to assessment requirements; and

3.3.10 presentation of research products for appropriate purposes.

# 4 Policy statement

4.1 It is the policy of the NWU to establish an ethical environment that nurtures, values and pursues academic integrity.

4.2 The university accepts responsibility for instilling integrity and academic honesty in all employees and students, ensuring a trusted academic community.

4.3 The NWU recognises that Artificial Intelligence provides opportunities for higher education and is regarded as a resource but could also pose risks. Therefore, the university is committed to unlocking and maximising the potential of AI in an ethical and responsible manner in its academic endeavours, while preventing misuse.

4.4 It is the policy of the university to have clear and consistent rules, processes and procedures to manage its 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 The senate approves and oversees the development and implementation of appropriate frameworks, systems, guidelines, rules and standard operating procedures to ensure the effective and efficient management of this policy in all relevant academic pursuits of the university.

5.3 While the University Management Committee is responsible for establishing and maintaining an ethical environment conducive to nurturing and expanding academic integrity, the implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the faculties, academic units, academic employees and students of the university.

# 6 Roles and responsibilities

## 6.1 Faculty boards and academic units

6.1.1 Faculty boards are accountable for the effective and efficient implementation of this policy, and the related senate rules, IRMIS guidelines and standard operating procedures within their faculty.

6.1.2 Academic units (including schools, research units and research entities) must establish processes and procedures for the effective implementation of the policy and senate rules to ensure that –

6.1.2.1 academic employees and students are provided with sufficient training on the provisions of this policy and the relevant procedures within their faculty, in order to ensure compliance and responsible conduct. They are also trained in the principles of the TL SOP and IRIMS processes;

6.1.2.2 with the annual registration form, every student enters into a code of ethical academic conduct as part of the registration process;

6.1.2.3 with the annual performance agreement, every academic employee enters into a code of ethical academic conduct;

6.1.2.4 academic material used within the faculty or academic unit, including study guides, guidelines and standard operating procedures, contains relevant information regarding the policy and related Senate Rules, accounting for the ethical and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence;

6.1.2.5 the requirements for assessments, assignments and research projects, including the correct citing of sources and the applicable referencing style for the academic environment, as well as the extent to which Artificial Intelligence can be used in academic activities and assessments, are set out and published in study and research guides, and on relevant platforms;

6.1.2.6 processes for managing PAWP, alleged academic misconduct in teaching-learning and breaches of academic integrity in teaching-learning through various forms of academic misconduct or alleged breaches in research ethics and the responsible conduct of research by both students and academic employees are developed and followed;

6.1.2.7 reports of alleged academic misconduct in teaching-learning, and of breaches of research ethics and the responsible conduct of research, along with records of how they are managed, are kept at faculty level;

6.1.2.8 the reports contemplated in 6.1.2.7 are tabled at appropriate substructures of the relevant faculty boards and a record is kept of instances where matters are escalated to other university structures in accordance with the applicable senate rules and guidelines. This includes, where appropriate, matters of research misconduct such as the unethical use of AI, plagiarism, fabrication or falsification that may be detrimental to the reputation of the university.

6.1.2.9 where appropriate, matters of research misconduct that may be detrimental to the reputation of the university are escalated to the relevant university structures in accordance with the applicable senate rules, and

6.1.2.10 the processes prescribed in the relevant senate rules and procedures referred to in 1.7 are followed in all instances of breaches of this policy.

## 6.2 Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

6.2.1 In accordance with its mandate, the CTL provides professional services according to an annual plan to help academic staff keep up to date with –

6.2.2 the appropriate interpretation and use of similarity indices and AI reports;

6.2.3 relevant data privacy and security practices when training Artificial Intelligence models, and training of academic employees and students on using AI to avoid POPIA, intellectual property, and copyright policy infringements;

6.2.4 professional development opportunities on relevant aspects of the Senate Rules and industry or good practice developments, and

6.2.5 the management of academic misconduct systems and referrals as well as collaboration with faculty integrity committees.

## 6.3 Library and information services

Library and Information Services (LIS) must provide access –

6.3.1 for the university community to multiple literacies relating to information, data, and AI literacy skills, to locate, evaluate, and use information and data effectively and ethically, including information regarding citation practices, avoiding plagiarism, authorship malpractice, and other forms of academic misconduct by supporting adherence to academic standards in teaching, learning, and research, and

6.3.2 to a wide range of credible, open-access scholarly materials and guide researchers toward reputable, peer-reviewed avenues to safeguard against unethical publishing and predatory platforms.

## 6.4 Academic employees

The academic employees of the university must adhere to the principles of academic integrity and take responsibility for:

6.4.1 explicating the implications of the applicable senate rules, guidelines, and standard operating procedures referred to in paragraph 1, and ensuring their implementation in the relevant teaching-learning environment, as well as in all research practices;

6.4.2 informing students of matters relating to academic integrity and the ethics of academic and scientific writing, including the acceptable standards thereof and academic honesty;

6.4.3 creating awareness of acceptable standards for the use of AI, the ethics and the related risks involved concerning academic honesty;

6.4.4 ensuring that a reminder clause is included in all modules and research guidelines, stressing the Senate Rules on Artificial Intelligence, ethics and academic misconduct in teaching-learning and research;

6.4.5 providing students and academic employees with guidance on how to avoid PAWP and academic dishonesty through the unethical use of AI, fabrication, falsification and plagiarism in teaching-learning, as well as breaches through acts of research non-compliance, violation of good research practice and research misconduct, and advising students against giving or receiving assistance with individual assessments or misconduct in teaching-learning and research;

6.4.6 supervising students to conduct research responsibly, ensuring compliance with appropriate research ethics and integrity standards;

6.4.7 conducting own research as an academic in a manner that ensures research ethics and integrity are standard practice;

6.4.8 informing students and academics of support services and opportunities to develop academic and scientific writing skills, and to learn about proper citation and referencing methods;

6.4.9 informing students of the consequences of non-adherence to the principles of academic and research integrity;

6.4.10 equipping themselves to stay current with professional developments on the topics of academic integrity, research integrity, the optimal usage of similarity indices and AI detection tools, as presented by the CTL, the Library and Information Services, the Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate and faculties, and

6.4.11 implementing and enforcing the measures required by this policy to safeguard the integrity of the academic endeavour; and

6.4.12 refraining from committing any acts of academic misconduct or breaches of research ethics and the responsible conduct of research.

### 6.5 Students

All students at the university must –

6.5.1 adhere to the senate rules, standard operating procedures and guidelines referred to in paragraph 1, as well as those of the faculties and academic programmes;

6.5.2 take due cognisance of this policy and all other relevant policies, standard operating procedures, guidelines, and information regarding academic and research integrity, including all types of academic misconduct in teaching-learning and research;

6.5.3 take due cognisance of reminder clauses in module study guides and the research guidelines contemplated in paragraph 6.4.4;

6.5.4 be aware of the consequences of transgressing or breaching the principles of academic and research integrity;

6.5.5 seek assistance in acquiring academic and scientific writing skills, as well as the applicable citation or referencing methods, and skills in the ethical and responsible use of AI;

6.5.6 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;

6.5.7 ensure that each student only submits their own work, except in instances where group work is required, and only when all contributors to such work are acknowledged;

6.5.8 ensure that each student adheres to senate guidelines on the ethical and responsible use of AI to ensure academic integrity and is informed about the associated risks;

6.5.9 take measures to ensure the responsible conduct of research, making research ethics and research integrity standard practice, and

6.5.10 refrain from committing any acts of academic misconduct or breaches of research ethics and the responsible conduct of research.

# Glossary of terms relating to academic integrity

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| "Academic integrity" | The commitment to the principles and values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage in the adherence to (i) the ethics of honest scholarship in teaching-learning and research practices, as well as (ii) the ability to work independently; (iii) the submission of original research products for assessment, examination and review; (iv) giving credit to the ideas, works and contributions of others, as well as one's own previous work; and (v) making a concerted effort to refrain from transgressing or breaching the principles and values of academic integrity during teaching-learning and/or research activities. | |
| "Academic materials" | Includes all academic products, in any form, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. This includes research articles, chapters in books, conference presentations and papers, as well as research conducted on a contract basis. | |
| "Academic misconduct" | 1 | Conduct, actions or behaviour by a student, during teaching-learning or research activities, or by an academic employee, in research activities, that undermines or attempts to undermine the integrity of academic research, assessment and related academic practices and/or processes by means of: |
| | 1.1 | obtaining, including copying, for the purpose of improving marks by utilising notes, electronic devices, artificial intelligence 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 proctored, take-away and contact, invigilated assessments when any collaboration has been prohibited by the relevant assessment rules and/or procedures; or copying or providing assistance regarding the writing or completion of assessments. |
| | 1.3 | sitting for an assessment session on behalf of another student or requesting a fellow student to take an assessment on one's behalf. |
| | 1.4 | taking unauthorised materials, such as study notes, textbooks or articles, into an assessment room. |
| | 1.5 | unlawfully obtaining assessment materials or displaying disruptive behaviour during an assessment period. |
| | 1.6 | publishing, uploading or making available any material for which the NWU holds copyright without the necessary authorisation. |
| | 1.7 | academic trafficking *(see definition below).* |
| | 1.8 | research misconduct during research and/or research processes, referring to either unethical use of AI, plagiarism, fabrication or falsification during the research process. (See the definitions below for more information on questionable research practices, research non-compliance and violation of good research practice.) |
| | 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 permission and proper acknowledgement of the student's work or contribution. |

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| | 2.2 | Knowingly publishing in a predatory journal whose editorial practices hinge on unethical and unscholarly practices. |
| | 2.3 | Entering into suspect research collaborations involving multiple submissions, which lead to so-called "salami-slicing" of the same research product. |
| | 3 | Fabrication *(see definition below).* Falsification *(see definition below).*<br>Plagiarism *(see definition below).*<br>Self-plagiarism *(see definition below).*<br>Research non-compliance *(see definition below).*<br>Violation of good research practice *(see definition below).*<br>Unethical use of Artificial Intelligence *(see definition below).* |
| "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. | |
| "Aggravating deceptive practices" | Intentional conduct or practices aimed at concealing any form of academic misconduct or transgression in terms of this policy, with the intention of undermining or circumventing the identification of academic misconduct and/or investigative tools, practices, procedures, applications and/or software.<br>Upon considering Aggravating Deceptive Practices, the appropriate disciplinary panel may reclassify the offence as category 3 misconduct | |
| AI Report | The report produced by a Senate-approved AI detection tool. This report flags content that has been generated or edited by AI. It should be interpreted in accordance with "The NWU Senate Rules on the Utilisation of Academic Misconduct Detection Tools" and in line with the level of AI permitted for the assignment. | |
| "Artificial Intelligence"/("AI") | AI, in the form of Large Language Models (LLMs) or Generative AI, is primarily defined as "a type of artificial intelligence that can learn from and mimic large amounts of data to create content such as text, images, music, videos and code, based on inputs and prompts". AI may also include other AI tools, such as research summarising tools, automatic data analysis tools, and creation of synthetic data tools. | |
| "Ethical use of Artificial Intelligence" | The use of Artificial Intelligence according to the NWU Senate Rules on Ethical and Responsible use of AI. | |

[1] International Center for Academic Integrity (website), accessed July 2, 2023; Loleen Berdahl and Susan Bens, "Academic Integrity in the Age of ChatGPT," University Affairs, June 16, 2023.

[2] Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, Oxford University Press, 2023. (URL: https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/artificial- intelligence) [Accessed: 2024.08.21]

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| "Copyright" | 1 | An umbrella term that, in terms of the law, provides the copyright holder with protection against the unauthorised reproduction of:<br>Literary works Musical works<br>Artistic works<br>Cinematograph films<br>Sound recordings<br>Broadcasts<br>Programme-carrying signals<br>Published editions<br>Computer programs |
| | 2 | "Originality" of a work, in the context of copyright law, means that the work has not been copied from a source, and that producing it required a substantial (or not trivial) degree of skill, judgement or labour. |
| | 3 | "Copyright infringement" refers to any infringement in terms of sections 23(1)(a) or 23(2) of the Copyright Act (No. 98 of 1978). This occurs when someone who is not the copyright holder is involved in copying, adapting or publishing a work without stated permission. |
| "Examination transgression" | An examination is considered to be a summative assessment opportunity for a module. Examination transgression refers to infringing or not adhering to general examination rules. | |
| "Fabrication" | This involves creating fictitious information, facts, data, results, citations, authority or sources, and representing such information as real, accurate or research based. Fabrication can occur in teaching-learning and research-related activities and/or processes. | |
| "Falsification" | This involves manipulating, modifying, distorting, altering, selectively omitting or falsifying data, documents, reports, results, records, equipment, signatures, academic materials and/or research in order to misrepresent them as accurate or true. Falsification can occur in teaching-learning and research-related activities and/or processes. | |
| "Graduate/ Diplomate" | A person who has been awarded a degree, diploma or certificate by the NWU or its predecessors; | |
| "Investigations into allegations of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct" | All allegations of academic misconduct relating to teaching-learning or research must be investigated in accordance with the prescribed procedure as set out in the relevant Senate Rules, the IRIMS and the Teaching and Learning Academic Integrity Standard Operating Procedures; | |
| "Proctored assessment non-compliance" | Proctored Assessment Non-Compliance (PANC) encompasses any action, omission, or conduct by a student that violates the rules under which a proctored assessment is administered. | |
| "Proctoring tools" | Any software, system and/or application that is used to evaluate and/or manage the validity and authenticity of online assessments in real time. | |

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| PAWP | Poor Academic Writing Practices. This involves poor academic or scientific writing and poor citation practices in which it is clear that (i) the researcher or student did not understand or apply the rules for academic and scientific writing in terms of accepted source integration techniques, (ii) where it is clear that the researcher/student did not act with intent, and (iii) it undermines the quality and originality of the submission. | |
| "Plagiarism" | 1 | This constitutes the use of another's ideas, hard copy or electronic texts, images, computer programs, sounds, designs, performance or any other form of creative work without appropriate acknowledgement, including activities such as appropriating anybody else's knowledge, insights, processes, results, wording or formulations. |
| | 2 | Lifting text means the direct or verbatim use of existing sources without adhering to academic integrity conventions relating to quotations and citations. |
| "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. |
| | 3 | Submitting the same academic materials for different modules or academic programmes. |
| "Similarity Index" | The report produced by the Senate-approved tool "Turnitin". This report flags text that is similar to previously published or submitted text. It should be interpreted in accordance with "The NWU Senate Rules on the Utilisation of Academic Misconduct detection tools". | |
| "Research integrity" | The practice of scientific investigation with *responsibility* through an awareness and application of established professional research norms/standards, research ethics principles, norms and standards, as well as research integrity principles and responsibilities in the performance of all activities related to the research. | |
| "Research misconduct" | The intentional deception in proposing, performing, reviewing or reporting research through unethical use of AI, or through fabrication, falsification or plagiarism. | |
| "Research non-compliance" | Any violation of any –<br>1. institutional or REC *policies, procedures* or *regulations* governing human, animal or environmental research, or other types of research practices that might impact society.<br>2. *deviation* from the REC-approved *proposal or protocol*.<br>The *nature, severity,* and *frequency* of research non-compliance can vary *(see definitions in IRIMS).* | |
| "Academic misconduct detection tools" | Similarity-index software and AI detection tools used by the university to determine the similarity of academic material with other texts. These tools apply computational string-matching techniques to identify words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs that are recognised to be identical, copied or altered from the original texts, or to determine the presence of AI-generated content in a student submission. | |
| "Student" | A person who has been admitted and registered as a student of the NWU in order to attain a qualification. | |
| "Violation of good research practice" | A violation of good research practices that damages the integrity of the research process or the researchers themselves. | |
| "Test transgression" | Non-adherence to the rules, guidelines or instructions relating to formative assessments in the form of tests (such as class tests or LMS tests). A test is considered a formal assessment opportunity but usually not the final summative assessment opportunity. | |

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| “Unethical use of Artificial Intelligence” | 1. The unethical use or application of Artificial Intelligence poses risks, including using Artificial Intelligence to deceive or manipulate and implementing Artificial Intelligence systems without proper transparency or attribution during assessment, examination or research.<br>2. The unethical appropriation or application of Artificial Intelligence also includes the fabrication, falsification or plagiarism of data, text, sources or multimodal artefacts.<br>3. Unauthorised training of Artificial Intelligence on protected data, proprietary information, intellectual property, or copyright-protected information. |

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