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NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
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NWU POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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NWU 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”) has adopted this policy on 13 November 2024.

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 Personal Information Privacy Policy (POPIA)
- 1.5 Copyright Act, 98 of 1978;
- 1.6 Statute of the North-West University (2022), in particular paragraphs 69, 72 and 78(2);
- 1.7 Related policies, systems and standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the university, including:
 - 1.7.1 the Research Ethics Policy,
 - 1.7.2 the Policy on the Management of Intellectual Property,
 - 1.7.3 the Data and Information Security Policy,
 - 1.7.4 the Personal Information Policy,
 - 1.7.5 the Research Data Management Policy,
 - 1.7.6 the Policy and Manual on student discipline,
 - 1.7.7 the Behavioural Policy and Behavioural Manual for Employees,
 - 1.7.8 the Integrated Research Integrity Management System (IRIMS),
 - 1.7.9 the COPIA Standard Operating Procedures for teaching-learning;
- 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 Rules of Senate adopted as intended in para 5.2.1 may be attached to this policy as annexures.

3 Purposes and Scope of the Policy

3.1 The purposes of this policy are the following:

- 3.1.1 to strengthen and support the intentional establishment of an institutional culture conducive to academic integrity, both in formal and informal processes of the NWU;
- 3.1.2 to provide guidance to the university community (academic employees, undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as graduates and diplomates) on the relation of academic integrity to assessments and academic writing related to teaching-learning matters, as well as assessment and scientific writing related to research matters;
- 3.1.3 to inform the university community of the university's position on academic misconduct in teaching-learning and misconduct in research by means of non-compliance or violation of good research practices, and the consequences thereof;
- 3.1.4 to ensure that employees and students take precautionary measures against all forms of academic misconduct in teaching-learning, and research;
- 3.1.5 to make clear that all forms of academic misconduct in teaching-learning and research are prohibited and any transgression will be dealt with in terms of this policy;
- 3.1.6 to outline the responsibilities of students, academic employees, faculties, and the academic units of the university, including research units and research entities, to foster an environment conducive to academic integrity;
- 3.1.7 to prevent instances of academic misconduct in both teaching-learning and research;
- 3.1.8 to provide a framework for the maintenance of academic integrity in active support of the NWU's value statements and as a measure to counter academic misconduct; and
- 3.1.9 to provide a framework on 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 the management of academic activities, assessments, as well as transgressions; and
- 3.2.3 all academic materials in teaching-learning and research 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 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 Artificial Intelligence in the processing of information for the purpose of academic and scientific writing;
- 3.3.5 Artificial Intelligence generated content and referencing;
- 3.3.6 not plagiarising, fabricating or falsifying any aspect related to data;
- 3.3.7 the utilisation and interpretation of similarity indices for the purpose of refining and enhancing academic and scientific writing and for determining possible similarities with previously published work or Artificial Intelligence generated content, in order to identify and eliminate plagiarism or any forms of academic misconduct; and
- 3.3.8 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 the responsibility to inculcate integrity and its corollary, academic honesty, in all employees and students to ensure a trusted academic community.
- 4.3 The NWU accepts that Artificial Intelligence provides opportunities to higher education and is regarded as a resource but could also harbour risks, and therefore, the university is committed to unlock and maximise the potential of the utilisation of Artificial Intelligence in an ethical and responsible manner in its academic endeavours and to prevent misuse.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 Research misconduct is always escalated due to the seriousness of the act in research.

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 procedures to ensure the effective and efficient management of this policy in all the relevant academic pursuits of the university.
- 5.3 While the UMC must establish and maintain an ethical environment conducive to nurturing and expanding academic integrity, faculties, academic units, academic employees and students of the university are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

6 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Faculty boards and academic units

- 6.1.1 Faculty boards are accountable for the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of this policy and the related Senate Rules.
- 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 in order to ensure that –
 - 6.1.2.1 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, as well as COPAI and IRIMS processes;
 - 6.1.2.2 with the annual registration form, an academic code of ethical academic conduct is entered into with every student as part of the registration process;
 - 6.1.2.3 with the annual performance agreement an academic code of ethical academic conduct is entered into with every academic employee;
 - 6.1.2.4 academic material used within the faculty or academic unit, including study guides, guidelines and standard operating procedures, contain the relevant information regarding the policy and the related Senate Rules, also 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 information regarding the applicable referencing style for the particular academic environment and the extent to which the use of Artificial Intelligence is allowed 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 academic misconduct of alleged breaches of academic integrity in teaching-learning through various forms of academic misconduct or alleged breaches of academic integrity in research by means of non-compliance or violation of good research practices both by students and academic employees are developed and followed;
 - 6.1.2.7 reports of the alleged breaches of all the academic misconduct in teaching-learning and research and the records of the management thereof are kept on faculty level;
 - 6.1.2.8 alleged breach of academic integrity through acts of fabrications, falsification or plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct and cheating are tabled at appropriate substructures of the relevant

faculty boards, and record is kept of instances of academic misconduct and, where appropriate, matters are escalated to the relevant structures of the university in accordance with the relevant Senate Rules;

6.1.2.9 where appropriate, in matters of research misconduct (fabrication, falsification and plagiarism) and related matters that could be detrimental to the reputation of the university these are escalated to the relevant structures of the university in accordance with the Senate Rules; and

6.1.2.10 the processes prescribed in the relevant rules and procedures of Senate referred to in 5.1.2 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 equip academic employees staying abreast with:

6.2.1.1 the optimal application of similarity indices;

6.2.1.2 relevant data privacy and security practices when training Artificial Intelligence models, and training of academic employees and students on using AI as a means to avoid POPIA, Intellectual Property, and Copyright policy infringements; and

6.2.1.3 professional development opportunities on relevant aspects of the Senate Rules and industry or good-practice developments.

6.3 Library and information services

The Library and Information Services must:-

6.3.1 equip students with information literacy skills to effectively and ethically locate, evaluate, use information, understand citation practices, avoid plagiarism to ensure adherence to academic standards and to prevent misconduct; and

6.3.2 provide access to a wide range of scholarly materials, including books, journals, and databases, to assist students and employees to find credible information for their research

6.4 Academic employees

The academic employees of the university must adhere to the principles of academic integrity and to sign the Code of Ethical Academic Conduct annually as part of the performance-agreement process in order to take responsibility for:

6.4.1 explicating the implications of the Senate Rules contemplated in paragraph 5.1.2 in study guides and research guidelines to ensure implementation of the Rules in the relevant teaching-learning environment and research practices;

6.4.2 educating students on all matters regarding academic integrity and ethics of academic and scientific writing, as well as the acceptable standards thereof and of academic honesty;

6.4.3 educating students on Artificial Intelligence ethics and use, as well as the acceptable standards thereof as well as the harboured risks and of academic honesty;

6.4.4 ensuring the inclusion of a reminder clause in all module study guides and research guidelines that explains academic integrity and the various types of academic misconduct in teaching-learning, including cheating, dishonesty, fabrication and falsification of teaching-learning materials, plagiarism, copyright infringement, and unethical use of Artificial Intelligence, and in research through non-compliance with, or violation of good research practice and research misconduct .

6.4.5 ensuring the inclusion of a reminder clause in all modules and research guidelines stressing the Senate Rules on Artificial Intelligence ethics and acts of academic misconduct in teaching-learning and research;

6.4.6 providing students with explicit and well-defined instructions on how to avoid academic dishonesty through acts of fabrication, falsification and plagiarism in teaching-learning and research and unethical use of Artificial Intelligence; advising students against giving or receiving assistance with individual assessments or work;

6.4.7 supervising students to conduct research in a responsible manner in which research ethics and research integrity serves as the standard practice;

6.4.8 conducting own research as an academic in a responsible manner in which research ethics and research integrity serves as the standard practice;

- 6.4.9 informing students on support services and opportunities to acquire academic and scientific writing skills and to be equipped on matters related to proper citation or referencing methods;
- 6.4.10 informing students of the consequences of transgressing the principles of academic integrity;
- 6.4.11 equipping themselves to stay abreast of professional developments on the topic of academic integrity, research integrity, the optimal usage of similarity indices, Artificial Intelligence as presented by CTL, the Library Information Services, the Research Support Office and faculties;
- 6.4.12 implementing the measures required by this policy to safeguard the integrity of the academic endeavour; and
- 6.4.13 refraining from committing any acts of academic misconduct.

6.5 Students

All students of the university must –

- 6.5.1 adhere to the principles of the Code of Ethical Academic Conduct entered into on an annual basis as part of the registration process and the NWU code of conduct for researchers to be signed when submitting their research ethics approval application to the relevant Research Ethics Committee;
- 6.5.2 adhere to the relevant directives of the Senate Rules contemplated in paragraph 5.1.2 and that of faculties and academic programmes as intended in paragraph 6.1 and included in study guides;
- 6.5.3 take due cognisance of this policy and all other relevant policies, guidelines and information regarding academic integrity and the inverse thereof, namely academic misconduct;
- 6.5.4 take due cognisance of reminder clauses in module study guides and research guidelines contemplated in paragraph 6.4.4;
- 6.5.5 be aware of the consequences of transgressing the principles of academic honesty;
- 6.5.6 seek assistance in acquiring academic and scientific writing skills and the applicable citation or referencing methods;
- 6.5.7 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;
- 6.5.8 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;
- 6.5.9 ensure that each student adheres to the Senate Guidelines on the ethical and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence to ensure academic integrity and knows the risks involved;
- 6.5.10 take measures to ensure the responsible conduct of their research in which research ethics and research integrity serves as standard practice; and
- 6.5.11 must refrain from committing any acts of academic misconduct.

7 Inquiries into instances of alleged academic misconduct

All inquiries escalated in terms of 6.1.2.9 and 6.1.2.10 to the relevant structures must be conducted in accordance with the 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 either during teaching-learning or in research, but not limited to the following instances of intentional deception by a student or an academic employee in the case of research:
	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 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	Fabricating or falsifying teaching-learning material.
	1.9	Plagiarism during teaching-learning (<i>see definition below</i>)
	1.10	Unethical use of Artificial Intelligence (<i>see definition below</i>)
	1.11	Academic trafficking (<i>see definition below</i>)
	1.12	Research misconduct referring to either fabrication, falsification or plagiarism during research the research process (FFP). (<i>see definitions below</i>)
	1.13	Self-plagiarism (<i>see definition below</i>)
	1.14	Research non-compliance.
1.15	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 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 (<i>see definition included below</i>). Falsification (<i>see definition included below</i>). Plagiarism (<i>see definition included below</i>). Self-plagiarism (<i>see definition included below</i>). Research non-compliance (<i>see definition below</i>). Violation of good research practice (<i>see definition below</i>). Unethical use of Artificial Intelligence (<i>see definition below</i>).
“Academic integrity”		Displaying the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage ¹ in the adherence to the ethics of honest scholarship in teaching-learning and research practices as well as the ability to work independently; to give credit to the ideas of others and the re-use of one’s own previous work; and not to transgress through any acts of teaching-learning misconduct, research misconduct, research-non-compliance or violation of good research practice; as well as 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.
“Artificial Intelligence”		The development and deployment of computer systems or sophisticated algorithms in teaching-learning or research with the capabilities to perform tasks that would typically require human intelligence. These systems have the ability to analyse large amounts of data, identify patterns, formulate predictions, learn from experience, and automate complex processes. Put differently: the development of computer systems that can copy human behaviour ² .
“Unethical use of Artificial Intelligence”	1	The unethical use or application of Artificial Intelligence incurring risks including using Artificial Intelligence to deceive or manipulate, implementing Artificial Intelligence systems without proper transparency or attribution during assessment, examination, or research.
	2	Appropriation or unethical application of Artificial Intelligence may also take the form of fabrication, falsification, plagiarism of data, text, sources, multimodal artefacts.
	3	The unauthorised training of Artificial Intelligence agents on protected data, proprietary information, intellectual property or copyright protected information.
“Ethical use of Artificial Intelligence”	1	The application of Artificial Intelligence in a manner that is transparent, in that, clear attribution is given to the use of Artificial Intelligence models, systems, or algorithms during the production of assessments, examination, or research; and adheres to faculty-specific Artificial Intelligence ethics and guidelines for use.
	2	Artificial Intelligence may be used as language editors as long as it does not rewrite significant portions of text, resulting in Artificial Intelligence plagiarism.
	3	Adhering to Artificial Intelligence faculty-specific guidelines or specific guidelines set by lecturers.

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]

“Artificial Intelligence-generated plagiarism”	The use of Artificial Intelligence-based language models to generate contents, or paraphrasing sources and pass it off as one’s own formulated text during teaching-learning or research practices.
“Artificial Intelligence writing/content detection”	The use of Artificial Intelligence algorithms and tools to detect instances of Artificial Intelligence-generated plagiarism or unauthorised Artificial Intelligence-generated content.
“Copyright”	<p>1 An umbrella term that, in terms of the law, provides legal protection to the copyright holder against the unauthorised reproduction of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literary works Musical works Artistic works Cinematograph films Sound recordings Broadcasts Programme-carrying signals Published editions Computer programmes <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
“Fabrication”	<p>Can be applied in both teaching-learning and research practices. In teaching-learning it can be the making up of any teaching-learning material i.e. a report built on fake information. It can also refer to the fabrication of authority that does not exist.</p> <p>In research it refers to making up data or results and recording or reporting the fabricated material as if they were real.</p>
“Falsification”	<p>Can be applied to both teaching-learning and research practices. In teaching-learning it could refer to the falsification of a signature, or changing and omitting important information. In research it refers to the manipulation of research materials, equipment, or processes or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research records or suppressing data or results without justification.</p>
“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 transgressions in academic misconduct (teaching-learning or research) need to be investigated in accordance with the prescribed investigation procedure as included in the relevant Senate Rules and the IRIMS and the COPIA Standard Operating Procedures for teaching-learning;
“NWU Code of Academic Conduct”	<p>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.</p> <p>Also, the Academic Code of Conduct entered into by the NWU and its students during the annual registration process.</p>

"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 meaning the direct, or verbatim usage from existing sources, without adherence to the conventions on academic integrity related to quotations and citation.
	4	Artificial Intelligence plagiarism (see definition included above)
"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 minor or major violation of any regulation governing human, animal or environmental research or any deviation from proposal or protocol approved by the relevant Research Ethics Committee.	
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.	

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