



National Open University of Nigeria

Policy Title	Policy on Plagiarism
Policy No:	NQSA/POL/TEL/020
Owner:	National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
Approved By:	The University Senate
Manager/Driver:	Directorate of Research Administration (DRA)
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1.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK

Taking another person's work and passing it off as one's own is a major factor that contributes to academic decadence, which hinders access to good ethical values. It reduces the uprightness that comes with research and its findings, and discourages standard academic practices. Infringement on copyright leads to the devaluation of research quality. Research carried out without following due ethical practice cannot produce any tangible result. The short-term benefit that comes with copyright violations do not contribute to knowledge growth nor ensure independence of the author's capability; moreover, academic integrity is lost. Ethical breach, especially in research, takes away the main reason and benefit of the education system. This is due to its effect on trust, which can be

used to measure the institution's ability to promote conducive academic environment.

At NOUN, plagiarism should not be tolerated as it is an infringement on the rights of the originator. It is unethical to claim any idea, work or result that originated from someone else and present it to the public, institution or an organisation as one's own without acknowledging the owner or source. It is both a poor scholarship and a breach of academic integrity. All academic work, written or oral and data or report (in case of non-academics), presented by a staff member (permanent or contract) or student is expected to be the product of his/her own skill and labour. The moral rights of an originator are infringed upon when their effort is not given due recognition through clear citations and acknowledgements by someone who uses all or part of the result of that effort itself to claim an effort.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all university staff and students involved in scholarly work at NOUN.

3.0 AIM

The aim of this policy is to:

- a) Encourage staff and students of NOUN to display ethical standards in the discharge of their academic/research duties and to empower the university to take necessary action against anybody who so contravenes this policy.
- b) Inform staff and students of NOUN about such practices that the university considers as plagiarism and the consequences of such actions.

- c) Inform staff and students the university's determination to protect the rights of copyright holders and provide staff and students with guidelines for ethical research and study practices.
- d) Present the principles under which preventing, detecting and dealing with cases of plagiarism and other related forms of cheating are managed.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

The following are acceptable expressions of plagiarism:

- a) Submitting as one's work, irrespective of intent to deceive, that which derives in part or in its entirety from the work of others without due acknowledgement; or, in the case of self-plagiarism, unless explicitly permitted by regulation, submitting one's own work that has already been submitted for assessment to satisfy the requirements of any other academic qualification, or submitted for publication without due acknowledgement.
- b) The use of the ideas or material of others without acknowledgement, or the re-use of one's own previously evaluated or published material without acknowledgement.
- c) Plagiarism is defined as "the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own"

5.0 PRINCIPLES OF THIS POLICY

In order to maintain high standards of academic integrity, it is the obligation of every member of the University to know and respect the acts or inactions that is **plagiarism**, and to seek and foster a learning environment that encourages the development of academic skills and integrity, including in particular, skills in research and academic writing, that are appropriate for each discipline.

No person(s) participating in the University's academic or scholarly activities shall commit plagiarism as the University has zero tolerance for plagiarism.

The National Open University of Nigeria views the under-listed activities as acts of **plagiarism**:

- a) Failure to obtain permission for the use of portions longer than a paragraph or to acknowledge the source and the name of the author from where sentences or passages not longer than a paragraph, figure, or pictures have been taken and used word-for-word (this is also known as *Direct Plagiarism*)
- b) Paraphrasing, translation without proper acknowledgement of the source and pulling out of key points and then rewriting these points as if they were ones' own ideas.
- c) When a work which was previously presented by the author and is used in a different work by the same author without acknowledging himself.
- d) When a student submits his or her previous work, or mixes parts of previous works, without permission from **all** lecturers involved (the former and latter are also referred to as *Self-Plagiarism*).
- e) Borrows phrases from a source without using quotation marks, sometimes called "patch writing or Mosaic Plagiarism," this kind of paraphrasing, whether intentional or not, is academically dishonest, even if the footnote indicates the source.

- f) Neglects to cite sources, or misquotes sources, or unintentionally paraphrases a source by using similar words, groups of words, and/or sentence structure without attribution (this is also called *Accidental Plagiarism*).
- g) Copying another student's assignment and submitting it as one's work; and paying someone to do an assignment on one's behalf and submitting it as one's work.

Therefore:

- h) Any project, dissertation or thesis submitted to the university either at undergraduate or postgraduate level must be accompanied by a plagiarism declaration. It is by this policy all stakeholders involved in students' projects/dissertation/thesis should not validate such without the plagiarism declaration.
- i) Theses and dissertations must be submitted to *Turnitin, drill bit or any university app plagiarism check* custodians located at various Departments/Faculties (or other appropriate similarity index evaluating software) before submission for moderation.
- j) All cases of plagiarism must be handled consistently according to the established processes, either at the Department, Faculty or Management level. These processes must comply with both this Policy and the Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism enunciated therein.

6.0 CONTRAVENTION OF THIS POLICY

A student or NOUN staff member who is guilty of the infringement of copyright or unethical practice of plagiarism will be subjected to applicable disciplinary processes.

7.0 CONSEQUENCES OF BREACH OF PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism of any form is unacceptable. Each case of plagiarism would be treated on its own merits. The university shall put in place, enlightening procedures to assist staff and students to avoid submitting assessment work that does not meet the required standards of evidence-based writing. Thus:

- a) All assessment work submitted by a student should be assessed in accordance with its academic merit.
- b) Inappropriate practices in the use of referencing, citations, quotations or attributions for formative assessment may be dealt with by the assessor, who should refer students to appropriate resources to improve their academic skills.
- c) The penalties associated with plagiarism are designed to impose sanctions that reflect the seriousness of the university's commitment to academic integrity. Penalties may include revising and re-submitting assessment work, receiving a result of zero for the assessment task, failing the course, expulsion; and if it resulted in financial gain, necessitate the imposition of a financial penalty. *(Please note that the happenstance of a student receiving a reduced grade or failing an assessment task because of the absence of appropriate citations and references may be a consequence of the student failing to meet the stated criteria for the task, rather than as a punishment for plagiarism.)*
- d) Without prejudice to (c) above and depending on the severity of the infraction for either staff or students, the offender may also be warned, suspended, dismissed or expelled, and if a student, the withdrawal of Certificate may result.
- e) If a Plagiarism Review Committee finds that a student or staff member has committed multiple and/or systematic acts of

plagiarism, or admits to, or is found to have committed misconduct that prejudices the interests of other people or the integrity of an assessment scheme itself, then the case will be dealt with as a complaint of misconduct against the student or staff, and a further penalty may be imposed as provided for in the university rules.

7.1 PENALTIES

Depending on the severity of the infraction for either staff or students, any of the four under-listed penalties may be recommended:

a) Warning (under listed):

- First-time offence of lifting more than the approved 30% without acknowledgement in three (3) papers
- Staff or Students who recycled previous work and claim same as original.

b) Suspension (as listed):

- Failure to heed two (2) written warnings

c) Dismissal or Expulsion

- After facing the Ethics Board three (3) times and failing to heed the two (2) written warnings.

d) Withdrawal of Certificates

- Certificates may be withdrawn if it is established that a wholesale adoption of a previous project, dissertation or thesis without any alteration or credit is used as the project that qualified a student for graduation.

8.0 APPEALS

A staff member or student who wishes to appeal against a ruling decided under this policy may do so in writing to the Director of Learner Support Services and, if an academic staff, to the respective Dean of Faculty. Students will be informed of this right in the notification of an investigation.

9.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1. Faculties, Departments and Directorates' Responsibilities

The Faculties, Departments and Directorates are responsible for:

- a) Enlightening students and staff on the acts relating to plagiarism;
- b) Ensuring each course guide has a statement on plagiarism;
- c) Providing clear instructions regarding assessment requirements, including group work and or collaborative work;
- d) Requiring all term papers, and essays submitted by students to contain an acknowledgement of originality and authorship;
- e) Setting appropriate assessment tasks that minimise the opportunities for plagiarism;
- f) Establishing processes for the detection, reporting and investigation of allegations of plagiarism that are compliant with the University's overarching policy and procedures. Such processes could include:
 - i) An internal memo containing the details on the appropriate use of, for instance, *Turnitin* (similarity index evaluating software of not more than 15%).
 - ii) The identification of a committee in a Department/Faculty who will receive cases of the allegation of plagiarism.
 - iii) Adequate procedures shall be put in place to enhance investigation. Such procedures shall include an office

equipped with the necessary facilities and the independence of the committee, among others.

- iv) Supervisors and moderators are to report immediately to the Department any suspected work which contains plagiarised topics or contents.
- v) The allegation of plagiarism is a serious issue; therefore, such cases shall be treated with high consideration and shall be reported, with a supporting document, to the Departmental/Faculty's head of plagiarism committee.
- vi) The time frame for concluding the investigation on plagiarism shall be such that it will not affect the graduation or the residency period of the student, should the alleged candidate be exonerated.
- vii) All referral cases of alleged plagiarism shall be routed from the Faculty through the Directorate of Research Administration to the Senate Committee on Plagiarism.

9.2 Staff Responsibilities

The role of the academic staff in imparting knowledge with integrity is unambiguous. It is the responsibility of the teaching staff to:

- a) Ensure s/he does not run afoul of plagiarism act in her/his teaching practices;
- b) Provide clear instructions regarding assessment requirements, including group activities and/or collaborative work;
- c) Provide resources and feedback, as appropriate, to assist students to practise and learn the academic language and conventions required for their assessment tasks;
- d) Set appropriate assessment tasks that minimizes the opportunities for plagiarism;

- e) Take all reasonable steps to detect plagiarism and collusion. The particular steps taken may vary with discipline, but the staff should incorporate the use of the university plagiarism detection software, where appropriate;
- f) If a suspected plagiarism incident is brought to the attention of a Unit Head or Head of Department, s/he has a responsibility to investigate the incident according to the University Rules, Policies and Guidelines.
- g) When submitting works for publication or for research grants, it is the staff member's responsibility to uphold the discipline's standards of academic integrity in relation to the use of the work of others.

9.3 Students Responsibilities

- a) Read and abide by all instructions distributed by the University/Faculty/ Discipline/Teaching Staff, including course guides, assessment task requirements and the examination rules and the policy on plagiarism.
- b) Seek assistance with their learning and assessment tasks if they are unsure of the appropriate forms of attribution and referencing for their discipline.
- c) Submit for assessment, whether by examination or otherwise, only their own piece of work, except where:
 - i) The works of others are appropriately acknowledged;
 - ii) The assessor has given prior permission for a group or collaborative work to be submitted;
- d) Take reasonable steps to prevent their assessment work from being copied by another student to receive credit for the work;
- e) Not produce all or part of an assessment work for another student with the intention of receiving credit for the work;

f) Use quotations, paraphrasing, referencing and attribution in accordance with the accepted academic conventions.

10.0 GUIDELINES FOR CURBING PLAGIARISM

10.1 Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

- a) All hands must be on deck to ensure standard academic practices. It is the duty of all NOUN staff to display characters that will promote trust and the good name of the university. On the other hand, the University Management shall provide an enabling environment, which will encourage staff to desist from dishonest academic practices. Academic integrity is a quality associated with high standards of scholarship and it is a responsibility of both staff and students. Academic staff should provide examples of good practices in academic integrity by acknowledging appropriately the works, designs, ideas and words of others in their teaching and research. Providing appropriate examples of assessment work that display good practices in using citations, references and acknowledgements and providing opportunities for students to practise their uses, will assist in developing academic skills and in reducing the instances of plagiarism and collusion.
- b) The university is committed to assisting staff and students in maintaining high standards of academic integrity by implementing appropriate educational programmes and highly visible procedures for plagiarism detection. Staff can also assist by employing approaches to assessment that minimize the possibility for students to submit plagiarized material.
- c) Teaching staff provide information and opportunities that will assist students' progress from a high-level of dependence on the works of others to a stage where they are using the work of

others to augment their own interpretation of a concept, issue or event. University rules, policies and guidelines should focus on the conventions of citing and referencing are an integral part of developing scholarly writing skills, and why plagiarism is considered a serious offence in the academic environment.

- d) Plagiarism may occur because of cultural issues, such as misunderstanding academic conventions in a particular discipline, or because a student's level of English language skills prevents adequate expression. In some cultures, the close replication of an expert's work represents a sign of learning and respect. However, some plagiarism results from the intention to deceive the assessor and it is outright cheating. Whatever the reasons, there are actions for all members of the University community that will minimize the incidence of plagiarism.

11. The following steps are necessary for zero dishonest academic practices:

- e) The University must ensure that mechanisms are in place that promote academic integrity and eliminate plagiarism through subscription to appropriate software which can be accessed by staff and students;
- f) The Faculties/Department Plagiarism Committees are responsible for creating an awareness of the contents of this policy as well as the procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism and for providing learning opportunities to all students and staff regarding the avoidance of plagiarism and to keep a record of such activities and attendance thereof;
- g) Plagiarism cases are dealt with in a consistent and fair manner;

- h) This policy shall be made available to all staff and students of NOUN;
- i) Cite all sources and names of authors from which information was obtained and used;
- j) Obtain permission for the use of materials that are longer than a paragraph; and
- k) Comply with the University's copyright policy.

12.0 STEP-WISE PROCEDURE TO PROCESS REPORTED CASES OF PLAGIARISM

If a facilitator or lecturer believes that students have received adequate instructions about the requirements of evidence-based writing, and there is evidence that a student has submitted an assignment that contains plagiarized material, the facilitator will notify either the Head of Department or Centre Director.

The complaint with supporting evidence would be deliberated upon at the departmental sub-committee from where a report is sent to the Faculty Ethics Board, which, in turn, assesses the report and sends a report to the University-wide Committee.

University Research Ethics Committee sits over the report of the Faculty Board and sends its report and recommendations to the University Senate for final determination.

13.0 PROCEDURE FOR PLAGIARISM INVESTIGATION

- a) All works by authors should be subjected to plagiarism detector;
- b) Provide a plagiarism software application detector like *Turnitin* or *Drill bit* or any *University approved Plagiarism Software*;
- c) Acceptance level (similarity index) or percentage of what constitutes unacceptable level of plagiarism should not be above 30%.
- d) Guidelines for the use of plagiarism software applications should be provided to all staff and students.

14.0 THE POLICY CUSTODIANS

This policy is the sole document of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and shall be managed by the Directorate of Research Administration (DRA). The Directorate shall recommend any amendment or review of the policy from time to time. Other roles of the Directorate regarding this policy shall include creating awareness, policy formulation, approval, communication, availability and monitoring for effective implementation of this policy.

Faculty Management, in collaboration with DRA, shall ensure the implementation of the Policy and shall regulate same to fit their area of various specialisations. The Faculties and Study Centres shall provide enabling environment for sensitising staff and students on how to avoid plagiarism.

15.0 IMPLEMENTATION

It is recommended that adequate sensitisation should be carried out through workshops and seminars in NOUN on the challenges posed by plagiarism to academic integrity before the new policy is implemented.

NOUN should establish repositories of project titles and academic papers by staff and students in Faculties/Departments and Libraries as part of a new strategy to curb plagiarism.

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