

# **SU POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: THE PREVENTION AND HANDLING OF PLAGIARISM**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

The academic work done at a university means that academics and students are exposed to the ideas, written material and various intellectual and creative products of fellow students and colleagues. The intention of academic work is precisely that the ideas of the lecturer/researcher and student are shaped and honed by these ideas and material of others. At the same time, a process of critical evaluation is required to make new or original inputs or syntheses in order to make it applicable to contemporary international and local questions. Herein lies the particular satisfaction of academic work at university level.

Naturally, the original contribution by a person can only be evaluated if it can be distinguished clearly from the contributions of other people. This is done by way of acknowledged systems of acknowledgement and referencing. By not following these conventions and giving the necessary acknowledgement, the basis of the academic work at a university is undermined. By taking over this work (words, ideas, creations) of other people and passing it off as the writer's own is to commit plagiarism.

The University wishes to ensure that the mechanisms are in place that will enable staff and students to promote academic integrity and eliminate plagiarism. At the same time it is important that the effort to deal with cases that are related to plagiarism are dealt with in a consistent and fair manner. It therefore is essential that the University have a policy in place to intercept these aspects and create a framework within which it is possible to function.

The following policy is thus proposed and has to be read together with the Framework Policy for the assurance and promotion of ethically accountable research at Stellenbosch University, the disciplinary code for students of SU, the disciplinary code for staff of SU, as well as any other University policies and guidelines that may be applicable from time to time.

## **2. PLAGIARISM: DEFINITION AND BROAD CATEGORIES**

### **2.1 Definition:**

*Plagiarism is the theft and use of the ideas, material and other intellectual property of others that are passed off as one's own.*

The intellectual property contained herein is, among others:

- a) *literary works*, which include articles, books, dissertations, theses, newspapers, notes, course material, the assignment of fellow students, e-mail messages, data, computer code, internet sources, and *spoken text*, which includes speeches, cassette recordings, lectures, interviews, etc.
- b) *artistic works*, which include images and graphic art, photographs, etc.
- c) *multimedia products*, which include websites, video productions, films, CDs, design projects, etc.
- d) *musical works*, which include compositions, lyrics, CDs, DVDs, music or sound bites on the internet, etc.

## 2.2 Categories:

All cases of *plagiarism* amount to a serious offence, which can have dire consequences for the person concerned, including suspension or expulsion (in the case of a student) or dismissal (in the case of a member of staff) from the University, besides possible criminal or civil action.

In terms of the University's handling of cases of plagiarism, the offences are divided into three broad categories:

- Category 1: Minor offences that can be regarded as resulting from ignorance, negligence or inaccuracy in working with and acknowledging sources, but that can still be regarded as plagiarism.
- Category 2: Less serious cases, in which sources/work/material has/have been handled injudiciously, but that by nature still constitute plagiarism. Category 1 and 2 offences are usually dealt with by the department concerned in the case of students. Repeated category 2 offences can be referred to the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) in the case of students, and in the case of staff they will be dealt with in terms of the Disciplinary Code for Staff (refers to less serious cases).
- Category 3: Blatant cases, i.e. where the work/material of another person has been taken over and used intentionally and deliberately. In the case of students, such cases will normally be referred to the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC), and in the case of staff will be dealt with in terms of the to the Disciplinary Code for Staff (refers to serious cases).

### **3. THE UNIVERSITY'S APPROACH**

The University's policy approach is based on a developmental or awareness-creating dimension, particularly in the case of students and with due observance of the University's Policy on Learning and Teaching. This does not mean that the University is lenient in its handling of plagiarism; on the contrary, it creates a basis for the firm, consistent and tenable handling of cases of plagiarism. Through this dimension, the University creates an opportunity for offences relating to plagiarism to be handled in a decentralised manner and for certain cases to be dealt with at the departmental level and for others to be addressed by way of disciplinary processes, as set out in 3.1 and 3.2 of this document.

#### **3.1 ALLEGED OFFENCE(S) BY A MEMBER OF STAFF**

- (a) The departmental chairperson will only respond to written complaints that plagiarism has allegedly been committed, together with the necessary documentary evidence. Such complaint may be made anonymously.
- (b) In cases where it is suspected that a member of staff has committed plagiarism, the case will be facilitated by the chairperson of the department. If the member of staff who pointed out the plagiarism is also the departmental chairperson, another member of staff in the department concerned has to be involved in the process.
- (c) The departmental chairperson will make enquiries at the Legal Services Division to determine whether any previous offence with regard to plagiarism has been reported. This information is taken into account in the further handling of the case.
- (d) Action against a member of staff is subject to the provisions of the Disciplinary Code for Staff. A first offence, if of a less serious nature, is handled by the dean of the faculty. All complaints of alleged serious (second or further) offences by a member of staff will be dealt with in terms of the provisions for serious offences in the Disciplinary Code for Staff.

#### **3.2 ALLEGED OFFENCE(S) BY STUDENTS**

- (a) Where it is suspected that a student has committed a form of plagiarism, the matter will be handled further by the chairperson of the department and the lecturer concerned. If the lecturer who pointed out the plagiarism is also the departmental chairperson, another lecture in the department concerned should be involved in the process.
- (b) The student shall be informed in writing that he/she has allegedly committed an offence and that, in terms of the rules of the University, the case can at the sole discretion of the student directly be referred to the CDC, that the process before the CDC is formal and that, among others, the student has "a right to legal representation" (in terms of the Disciplinary Code for Students). The student's attention should also be drawn to the possible sanctions that can be imposed by the CDC.
- (c) The departmental chairperson will make enquiries at the Legal Services Division to determine whether any previous offence with regard to plagiarism by the student concerned has been

reported. This information is taken into account in the further handling of the case. (See (d) and (e) below).

**(d) In the case of a Category 1 or 2 offence:**

- i. Category 1 cases are handled in the department and repeated cases of Category 2 are referred to the Central Disciplinary Committee for students (CDC).
- ii. A first Category 2 offence can be dealt with at the departmental level. However, the student has to make an informed decision on the possibility of the case being handled internally, in which case there can be specific sanctions (e.g. that a mark of nil is allocated, that the assignment has to be redone, etc.). In the case of action at the departmental level, the student's "right to legal representation" falls away, as does the right to have a process conducted before the CDC. The decision taken by the student must be put in writing, on the prescribed form that can be obtained from the Legal Services Division.
- iii. The minimum sanction by a department is a verbal warning.

**(e) In the case of a Category 3 offence:**

- i. The departmental chairperson must refer to case to the Manager: Student Discipline, who will handle the case in terms of the CDC protocol.
- ii. The decision of the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) on action against the student is put in writing.
- iii. The Legal Services Division is informed of the case in writing on the prescribed form that can be obtained from Legal Services.

### **3.3 RECORD KEEPING IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE CONSISTENT HANDLING OF PLAGIARISM**

3.3.1 Departmental chairpersons must report all cases of alleged plagiarism to the Legal Services Division. This is also done for cases where the person concerned was found not guilty, for the record.

3.3.2 The following information should accompany all reports:

- i. Plagiarism: Departmental handling (form as prescribed in Addendum 2)
- ii. Written complaint that was submitted
- iii. Alleged documentary evidence that was submitted
- iv. Names of people who were involved in the investigation/hearing
- v. Proof that the alleged offender, in the case of students, exercised his/her choice regarding whether or not the case should be referred directly to the CDC.
- vi. Verdict, with the sanction, where applicable.
- vii. Proof that the alleged offender has been informed of the decision.

- 3.3.3 The Legal Services Division must standardise all cases on an annual basis – the reason being to ensure consistent action at the institutional level and to determine a median punishment. In cases where it is clear that a particular department is imposing penalties beyond the median, the department concerned should be informed accordingly and be provided with a copy of the latest guidelines.
- 3.3.4 Appeals are dealt with according to the existing protocols and procedures.
- 3.3.5 All cases should be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

#### **4 IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of departments to ensure that all students and staff are aware of the policy and to make sure that the processes contained therein are implemented consistently.
- 4.2 It is compulsory for all students to sign the Plagiarism Declaration (as attached in Addendum 1) and to attach it to any relevant study assignments, as prescribed by the department concerned. Furthermore, it is essential that members of staff are aware that they are also subject to this declaration as employees of the University.
- 4.3 The University has a development instrument (Turnitin software) that is available for students to check their documents as part of the learning process. Lecturers are also encouraged to make use of it. The Centre for Teaching and Learning can assist you with training where required. The University's Library and Information Service also provides information literacy sessions that address plagiarism.
- 4.4 In the case where a thesis/dissertation/mini-dissertation is examined for plagiarism, the item must be withdrawn from SUNScholar for the duration of the investigation, as should any other online forms of the document (e.g. on departmental websites). If no form of plagiarism can be found, the document may once again be made available.
- 4.5 Departments should endeavour to ensure the greatest possible measure of consistency in the implementation of the policy with regard to the handling of plagiarism, in order to ensure fairness for all staff and students.
- 4.6 This policy takes preference over all other arrangements that faculties and departments might make with regard to dealing with plagiarism, and the necessary adjustments should be made to such faculty and departmental arrangements to ensure that they are in line with this policy.
- 4.7 The responsibility for supporting those involved in dealing with plagiarism is assigned to the Division for Research Development, which support will take place in consultation with other appropriate support service divisions, such as the Legal Services Division and the SU Library and Information Service.
- 4.8 The Legal Services Division keeps a record of all instances of plagiarism that are reported by the department concerned or by the relevant disciplinary committees.



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### **Plagiaatverklaring / Plagiarism Declaration**

- 1 Plagiaat is die oorneem en gebruik van die idees, materiaal en ander intellektuele eiendom van ander persone asof dit jou eie werk is.  
*Plagiarism is the use of ideas, material and other intellectual property of another's work and to present is as my own.*
- 2 Ek erken dat die pleeg van plagiaat 'n strafbare oortreding is aangesien dit 'n vorm van diefstal is.  
*I agree that plagiarism is a punishable offence because it constitutes theft.*
- 3 Ek verstaan ook dat direkte vertalings plagiaat is.  
*I also understand that direct translations are plagiarism.*
- 4 Dienooreenkomstig is alle aanhalings en bydraes vanuit enige bron (ingesluit die internet) volledig verwys (erken). Ek erken dat die woordelike aanhaal van teks sonder aanhalingstekens (selfs al word die bron volledig erken) plagiaat is.  
*Accordingly all quotations and contributions from any source whatsoever (including the internet) have been cited fully. I understand that the reproduction of text without quotation marks (even when the source is cited) is plagiarism.*
- 5 Ek verklaar dat die werk in hierdie skryfstuk vervat my eie oorspronklike werk is en dat ek dit nie vantevore in die geheel of gedeeltelik ingehandig het vir bepunting in hierdie module/werkstuk of 'n ander module/werkstuk nie.  
*I declare that the work contained in this assignment is my original work and that I have not previously (in its entirety or in part) submitted it for grading in this module/assignment or another module/assignment.*

<b>Studentenommer / Student number</b>	<b>Handtekening / Signature</b>
<b>Voorletters en van / Initials and surname</b>	<b>Datum / Date</b>



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## DEPARTMENTAL TREATMENT OF PLAGIARISM

Mr/ Ms ..... Student number: .....

You have allegedly committed plagiarism in the assignment .....

.....

that you submitted to the Department of .....

on \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ as part of the module .....

In terms of the *SU Policy on Academic Integrity: The Prevention and Handling of Plagiarism*, alleged plagiarism can be addressed either departmentally or by the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC), on the basis of the following guidelines:

Category 1: Minor offences that can be regarded as resulting from ignorance, negligence or inaccuracy in working with and acknowledging sources, but that can still be regarded as plagiarism.

Category 2: Less serious cases, where sources/work/material has/have been handled injudiciously, but that by nature still constitute plagiarism. Category 1 and 2 offences are usually dealt with by the department concerned in the case of students.

Category 3: Blatant cases, i.e. where the work/material of another person has been taken and used intentionally and deliberately. In the case of students, such cases must be referred to the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC).

The CDC process is a formal one and you have “the right to legal representation” in terms of the Disciplinary Code for Students. The sanctions that can be imposed by the CDC include suspension or expulsion from the University; the forfeiture of a degree or diploma; the forfeiture of a class mark or other forms of credit that have been attained. The CDC may also

publicise the details of the offence and the sanction, together with the student's name, on notice boards on campus.

The Department of ..... is of the opinion that your alleged offence mentioned above is a category ..... offence and that the case can be handled at the departmental level.

If you should choose to have the matter dealt with departmentally, the following sanctions are in force:

- (i) .....  
.....  
.....
- (ii) Your "right to legal representation" lapses.
- (iii) You forfeit the right to have the process conducted before the CDC.

If the departmental option above does not appeal to you, the matter can be referred to the CDC to be dealt with further.

Hereby I, .....,  
with student number....., choose

that the case is dealt with at the departmental level.

that the case is referred to the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC).

.....  
(signature of student)

.....  
(date)

.....  
(signature of lecturer)

.....  
(date)

.....  
(signature of departmental chairperson)

.....  
(date)

**Note:** After it has been signed, a copy of this form must be sent to:  
**The Manager: Student Discipline, Legal Services, office B4207, Administration block B, Stellenbosch Campus.**