POLICY ON PLAGIARISM (IN SUPPORT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY)

Policy governance	
Document reference and version number	
Purpose	**Set standards of academic conduct for the use of the work of others and the reuse of one's own published work; promote academic integrity.**
Document type	**Policy**
Commencement date	**1 December 2016**
Date of next review	**2021**
Revision history	**Revised Policy. Second Version. The original Policy "Stellenbosch University Policy on academic Integrity: The prevention and handling of plagiarism" was approved by SU Council in 2009.**
Policy ownership	
Policy Owner[1]	**Vice-Rector: Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies[1] and Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching**
Policy custodian	**Senior Directors: Research and Innovation and Learning and Teaching Enhancement**
Date of Approval	**28 November 2016**
Approval by	**Stellenbosch University Council**
Key words	**Academic integrity, plagiarism, self-plagiarism**

1. Introduction

The academic activities of a university entail the exposure of academics and students to the ideas, written material and various intellectual and creative products of fellow students, colleagues and other scholars. At the same time, a process of critical evaluation is required to place this information in context and to make new or original inputs or syntheses that address contemporary international and local questions.

The original contribution to work presented by a person as part of an academic activity can only be evaluated if it can be distinguished clearly from the contributions of others or the author's own earlier work. This is done by acknowledgement and referencing. By not following these conventions, the integrity of the academic work at a university is undermined. The representation of work (words, ideas, creations) of other people as the writer's own is plagiarism. The re-use of one's own previously presented or published work, without disclosure or adequate referencing, is now widely viewed as self-plagiarism.

---

[1] The Vice-Rector (Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies) will assume responsibility as Policy owner at an institutional level, recognising that this Policy is as relevant to teaching and learning as it is to research.

The University must ensure that mechanisms are in place that promote academic integrity and eliminate plagiarism. At the same time it is important that plagiarism cases are dealt with in a consistent and fair manner. As a consequence, it is essential that the University has a policy and procedures in place to intercept these aspects of misconduct and to create a framework within which it is possible for staff and students to write and publish.

This Policy should in particular be read together with the *Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism*, henceforth referred to in this Policy as **"the Procedure"** in support of the Policy, but not as part of it. Other important documents that should be read together with this Policy include the *Guideline for avoiding plagiarism*, the *Policy for responsible research conduct at Stellenbosch University (SU)*, the *Policy in respect of exploitation of intellectual property*, the *Disciplinary code for students of SU*, the *Disciplinary code for staff of SU*, the *Procedure for the investigation of allegations of breach of research norms and standards*, as well as any other University policies and guidelines that may be applicable.

2.   Application of Policy

This Policy applies to the academic activities of the University and by implication all those involved in these activities.

This Policy is intended for institutional use and does not confer any rights or privileges to a third party.

3.   Definitions

In this Policy the following words will carry the meaning ascribed to them below.

3.1 **Academic activity:** Any activity that contributes to or is part of the broad academic project of the University. This includes all activities in teaching and learning, research, writing and publishing and community interaction.

3.2 **Acknowledgement**: Reference indicating the source of previously expressed ideas or published material and the details of the publication.

3.3 **Affected area**: Any faculty, department or other environment within the University that may need to manage plagiarism.

3.4 **Member**: Any person permanently employed or under contract to the University, registered students, and any others engaged in academic activities falling under the jurisdiction of the University; joint staff employed by the Western Cape Department of Health and SU and also any person formerly in any of the aforementioned categories, whose work remains associated with the name of SU.

3.5 **Plagiarism**: 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 (self-plagiarism).

3.6 **Self-plagiarism**: The re-use of one's own previously evaluated or published material without acknowledgement or indication thereof.

4. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this Policy is to support the academic integrity of the University and its members and to reinforce the value system of Stellenbosch University as an ethically responsible institution.

5. Practical objectives of the Policy

The practical objectives of this Policy are to define plagiarism and to provide a framework for identifying and avoiding plagiarism and managing instances of alleged plagiarism.

6. Principles of this Policy

6.1 No person(s) participating in the academic activities of the University should commit plagiarism or self-plagiarism.

6.2 Honesty and transparency are two core values that must be upheld when participating in the academic activities of the University.

6.3 All students, staff and affiliates are obligated to act ethically and in the best interests of the University at all times.

6.4 All cases of plagiarism must be handled consistently according to established processes, either at department, faculty or central management level. These processes must comply with both this Policy and the **Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism**.

7. Determining plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of wrongdoing which can have serious consequences for the person concerned. These consequences include suspension or expulsion (in the case of a student) or dismissal from the University (in the case of a member of staff). In addition, criminal or civil legal proceedings could ensue.

Plagiarism covers a broad spectrum of wrongdoing, and for the purposes of deciding at which level of University management an allegation of plagiarism should be dealt with, the gravity of the wrongdoing must be considered by taking into account all the circumstances, including the following factors:

7.1 Blameworthiness (intent or negligence) of the person committing plagiarism: Did the person commit plagiarism knowingly (intentionally), or in circumstances indicating that he/she should reasonably have known of the plagiarism (negligently)? A state of blameworthiness (either intent or negligence) is required to make a finding of plagiarism. To determine intent or negligence, all the circumstances must be taken into account, including but not limited to the following factors:

7.1.1 The extent of the plagiarism: How much of the work presented as part of an academic activity constitutes plagiarism, in relation to the part of the work constituting an own intellectual contribution? Is the plagiarism contained in the work so extensive that it is not possible to determine or assess own intellectual contribution?

7.1.2 The importance of the academic activity: Did the alleged plagiarism occur in a small assignment, a final thesis, or an article submitted for publication?

7.1.3 Harmfulness of the plagiarism: The extent of harm that the plagiarism has caused or can potentially cause to personal and institutional reputation, taking into account all the

circumstances, including the seniority of the person committing the plagiarism, the relevant academic activity and the extent of the plagiarism.

  7.1.4 Repeated acts of plagiarism**.**

It is the responsibility of the Dean of the Faculty or person(s) to whom he/she has delegated the authority (for example Department Chairperson or a 'Plagiarism Advisor(s)') to make an assessment of the gravity of any alleged plagiarism, for the purposes of deciding on the appropriate steps to handle such an allegation.

8.   Management of allegations of plagiarism

The management of allegations of plagiarism must be appropriate to both the academic status of the member and the academic setting of the alleged plagiarism. Hence the University's policy approach to plagiarism is based on developing and fostering an awareness of plagiarism and its ramifications, particularly among undergraduate students and in the context of the University's Learning and Teaching Policy. This means that first-time junior offenders such as first year students will be treated differently to repeat offenders, or more senior students.

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 treatment of cases of plagiarism, while acknowledging that ignorance may well be a contributing factor especially when junior students are involved.

The University creates an opportunity for the handling of suspected instances of plagiarism in a decentralised manner. Certain cases will be dealt with at the departmental level, while others will be dealt with at faculty level or referred to the University's central disciplinary committee for either staff or students, as set out in the *Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism.*

9.   Roles and Responsibilities

All members of the University are responsible for ensuring that they understand and can fully comply with the requirements of this Policy. The identification of the following roles and responsibilities does not imply exclusive responsibility:

9.1 All members of the University are responsible for ensuring that they understand and can fully comply with the requirements of this Policy at an individual level. A plagiarism declaration that is in line with this Policy (See 11.) must accompany all written work submitted for degree purposes at a post-graduate level. At the discretion of lecturers and supervisors, all substantial work submitted for marking, including assignments and essays should also include a plagiarism declaration. Notwithstanding this requirement, students who submit work without such a written declaration are in no way absolved from responsibility for plagiarism and from compliance with the requirements of this Policy.

9.2 All those engaged in teaching, including tutors, short-course or diploma presenters, and all post-graduate supervisors, are responsible for establishing mechanisms to create an awareness of plagiarism and to facilitate the detection and consistent reporting of plagiarism.

9.3 Supervisors of Masters theses and Doctoral dissertations are responsible for ensuring that adequate standards and procedures for the avoidance of plagiarism have been met prior to submission

of a thesis or dissertation for examination. Notwithstanding this requirement, the primary responsibility for avoidance of plagiarism and for complying with the policy requirements remains with the student or researcher, who will be held accountable should the work involve plagiarism or in any other way fail to meet the required standards of ethical conduct. Theses and dissertations must be submitted to the Turnitin playground module (or other appropriate similarity detection software) prior to submission for examination. The student and supervisor should concur that the Turnitin or similar report is acceptable.

9.4 Departments and Faculties 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.

9.5 Departments and Faculties are responsible for 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 an internal memo containing the following information: Detail on the appropriate use of Turnitin (or similar similarity-detection software) in a specific environment; the identification of persons in a department who are responsible for receiving allegations of plagiarism; and measures to facilitate further investigation.

9.6 Examiners and moderators who suspect plagiarism in a submitted workpiece are responsible for immediately alerting the departmental chairperson of their suspicions. The allegation must be made in writing to the departmental chairperson and supporting documentation, such as an indication of the plagiarised source or a Turnitin (or similar) report, should be provided.

10. Policy control and governance

10.1 The Policy custodians (Senior Directors: Research and Innovation as well as Learning and Teaching Enhancement) are responsible for the policy's formulation, approval, review, communication, availability and monitoring. The Policy custodians are also responsible for interpretation and guidance in respect of the implementation of the Policy.

10.2 Faculty management is responsible for the implementation of the Policy and specific control in their own areas.

10.3 The management in all affected areas is responsible for the following procedures within their respective areas:

a.   Sensitising and educating both students and staff on avoiding plagiarism.

b.   Managing allegations of plagiarism and breach of copyright in accordance with the *Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism* or the *Procedure for the Investigation of allegations of breach of research norms and standards*, if deemed appropriate. (The latter is used for example if the allegation involves senior researchers or includes additional allegations such as data fabrication or falsification).

11. Plagiarism Declaration (for use by students)

- *I have read and understand the Stellenbosch University Policy on Plagiarism and the definitions of plagiarism and self-plagiarism contained in the Policy [Plagiarism: 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 or indication thereof (self-plagiarism or text-recycling)].

- *I also understand that direct translations are plagiarism.*

- *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.*

- *I declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own 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.*

12. Supporting documentation

This Policy on **Plagiarism (In Support of Academic Integrity)** is supported by:

Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism
Guideline on the avoidance of plagiarism

13. Related documentation[2]

Significant related documents include:

Item #	Name	Status	Custodian Division
13.1.	Policy for Responsible Research Conduct at Stellenbosch University	Approved	Division for Research Development
13.2.	[SU Framework policy on academic integrity]	Proposed	To be developed
13.3.	Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism	Under development	Division for Research development
13.4.	Procedure for the Investigation of allegations of breach of research norms and standards	Approved	Division for Research development
13.5.	Disciplinary Code for Staff of Stellenbosch University	Approved	Human Resources
13.6.	Disciplinary Code for Students of Stellenbosch University	Approved	Legal services
13.7.	SU Risk Management Committee Regulations	Approved	Risk and Security Services
13.8.	SU Remuneration and Performance Management Policy	Approved	Human Resources
13.9.	SU Policy in Respect of Exploitation of Intellectual Property	Approved	InnovUS

---

[2] These include the most significant related documents and would need to be correlated with other policies and processes to ensure alignment.