UPSA PLAGIARISM POLICY

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1.0   Introduction

1.1   The University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA) has a vision 'to be a world-class education provider in both academic and professional disciplines, nationally entrenched, regionally relevant and globally recognized'. To realize this vision, the University offers academic and professional programmes leading to the award of Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates.

1.2   In carrying out its functions, the University has an ongoing commitment to the values of Integrity, Respect and Service. Both staff and students are required to maintain scholarship with professionalism, uphold the highest level of academic integrity and shun academic dishonesty completely.

1.3   In keeping with the values of the University and principles of good conduct, the University is committed to ensuring that its staff and students do not plagiarize their own work or that of others.

1.4   Staff and students have a responsibility to avoid plagiarism but the University shall have in place a policy framework and support system to prevent, reform or punish plagiarism.

2.0   Plagiarism Policy Statement

Plagiarism is considered to be an academic dishonesty, fraud or theft and should not be tolerated. As a fraud or theft, plagiarism may not only be legally wrong but also a breach of ethical and pedagogical standards. Consequently, the sanctions for this misconduct can be very harsh.

3.0   Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clearly define what plagiarism is and the forms it takes, spell out the University's efforts at preventing and detecting plagiarism, outline the permissible extent of similarity, outline the procedures for investigating plagiarism and the sanctions thereof.

4.0   Definitions of Plagiarism[1]

4.1   Plagiarism is defined as any form of copying of another person's text or ideas and passing the copied material as one's own work. This definition also applies for figures and figure legends as well as tables and table legends which are copied without credit to the author(s) of that source.

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[1] The contents for this section is drawn from "Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It" by Peter Cobbett, PhD, August 2016.

4.2   The above definition of plagiarism applies to copied text and ideas, regardless of:
   a)   the source of the copied text or idea;
   b)   whether the author(s) of the text or idea which are copied actually copied that text or idea from another source;
   c)   whether or not the authorship of the text or idea which is copied is known;
   d)   the nature of text (journal paper/article, webpage, book chapter, paper submitted for college course, etc.) into which the copying is done;
   e)   whether or not the author of the source of the copied material gives permission for the material to be copied; and
   f)   whether the copying is from one's own earlier work(s)(self-plagiarism).

4.3   Plagiarism does not arise when copied text or ideas are delineated (i.e. separated and identified) from one's own text and ideas and giving credit to (i.e. citing the source) the source(s) of the copied text.

5.0   Types of Plagiarism

5.1   Plagiarism may be intentional (or blatant or prototypical) or unintentional (or accidental or non-prototypical).

5.2   Intentional plagiarism occurs when one knowingly or deliberately appropriates to oneself another person's work. Plagiarism is unintentional or not deliberate when an author does not follow the appropriate rules for referencing.

5.3   Even though intentional plagiarism may be considered to be more serious, all plagiarists are held to the same standards and account, regardless of whether or not the plagiarism is blatant, accidental of self-plagiarism.

5.4   Intentional and unintentional plagiarism may occur for self-plagiarism.

6.0   Procedures for Investigating Plagiarism
It is suggested that a clearly defined set of procedures be established to deal with all forms of plagiarism.

6.1   Deciding whether plagiarism has occurred is a matter for the professional judgment by academics and the University or Partner Institution.

6.2   The University will exercise its professional judgment and follow agreed processes for determining the existence of plagiarism.

6.3   When plagiarism is suspected, a formal written allegation shall be made to the Vice Chancellor by the Director of Research through the Head of Department and the Dean.

6.4   Any allegation of plagiarism shall be supported with the relevant documentation/evidence.

6.5   The Vice Chancellor shall constitute an independent committee to investigation into the allegation and submit a report to the Vice Chancellor through the Pro-Vice Chancellor. This body should be made up of a maximum of five persons, excluding all those who have along the way been involved in the earlier process. Among the membership should be a Professor, a representative from the Academic Directorate, representative from the Law Faculty, one or two Deans and representative from Registrar as a Secretary.

6.6   Where the Vice Chancellor is satisfied that a *prima facie* case of plagiarism has been established, he shall refer the matter to the Disciplinary Committee for further and detailed investigation.

6.7   The person alleged to have plagiarized, should be afforded the opportunity to defend himself before the Disciplinary Committee. The Disciplinary Committee should allow the alleged plagiarist to have legal representation if he/she so wishes.

6.8   Upon conclusion of its investigation, the Disciplinary Committee shall submit their findings and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor who shall refer the decision and implementation of the report to the Academic Board and Governing Council for students and staff/faculty respectively.

6.9   Any student, faculty member or staff who makes malicious, false and unjustifiable accusations of plagiarism against any student, faculty member or staff shall be reported by the relevant Head of Department/Unit to the Vice Chancellor for referral to the Disciplinary Committee.

7.0   Sanctions for Plagiarism

7.1   The disciplinary authority for students and staff shall be with the Academic Board and Governing Council respectively.

7.2   The sanctions for plagiarism differ according to whether the plagiarist is a student or staff and the extent/gravity of the offence.

7.3   Subject to the disciplinary rules of students, one or more of the following sanctions may apply upon conviction of any student on account of plagiarism:
   a) an oral or written reprimand;
   b) an order for the resubmission of the piece of academic work in respect of which the offence was committed;
   c) assignment of a grade of zero or a failure for the piece of academic work in respect of which the offence was committed;
   d) a reduction of the final grade in the course in respect of which the offence was committed;
   e) denial of privileges to use any facility of the University, including library and computer facilities;
   f) a monetary fine;

g) suspension from a course or courses, a programme, an academic unit or division, or the University for such a period of time up to five years as may be determined by the Disciplinary Committee;

h) expulsion from the University. Expulsion shall mean that the student shall be permanently denied registration in any University programme;

i) disqualification from contesting elections or removal from any office in the University;

j) cancellation, withholding or withdrawal of any degree, diploma, certificate, or any other qualification previously awarded;

k) loss of academic position;

l) withdrawal of certificate;

m) cancellation of academic work,

n) award of a reduced or failing grade in a course;

o) issuance of public apology or

p) withdrawal of plagiarized material.

7.4   Subject to the disciplinary rules of staff/employees, a faculty member or staff found guilty of plagiarism shall attract one or more of the following sanctions:

a) dismissal;

b) termination of appointment;

c) suspension for a period with or without pay;

d) demotion or reduction in rank or grade;

e) deferment of increment;

f) stoppage of increment;

g) withholding of increment;

h) reprimand;

i) warning;

j) signing of a bond to be of a good behaviour;

q) issuance of public apology or

r) withdrawal of plagiarized material.

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE A: University's Efforts at Prevention and Detection of Plagiarism

A.1   The University recognizes that it is the collective responsibility of both students and staff to ensure the prevention and detection of plagiarism.

A.2   To fulfil its responsibilities, the University:
   a) finds its expedient to develop this policy that is preventive, reformative and punitive;
   b) Shall through its curricular highlights issues pertaining to plagiarism;
   c) Shall procure and put to use similarity checking software

A.3   Students and staff should also bear in mind that they have the responsibility to:
   a) Familiarize themselves with this policy;
   b) Know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it;
   c) Ensure that there is no plagiarism in their work.

SCHEDULE B: Adoption of Similarity/Originality Checking Software

B.1   In order to curtail plagiarism issues among students and staff, the University adopts Unicheck as its official similarity checking software believing that it will help:
   a) minimize students' ability to copy other authors' work as their own for theses, dissertations or project works;
   b) encourage students to do independent work;
   c) enhance the learning of ethical values;
   d) build students' ability to have successful academic career in the future as they begin to be original;
   e) improve quality of faculty members' research publications;
   f) enhance the quality of the general research outputs in the University;
   g) improve and safeguard the quality of articles published in the University journal - Journal of Business Research;
   h) deter students from trying to plagiarize.

B.2   Students and Staff should refer to Unicheck as similarity/originality checking software and not plagiarism detection software.

B.3   Similarity or originality reports are only tools for detecting textual similarities between compared works and do not conclusively determine the existence of plagiarism.

B.4   The University's primary purpose for adopting this similarity/originality checking software (currently Unicheck) is to afford students and staff a means by which they can enhance their knowledge and understanding of good academic practice, thereby minimising the risk of plagiarism.

B.5 The adoption of Unicheck for checking similarity/originality does not imply that it is the only method for checking similarity and sources of copied work. Other methods and software can be used and these may include:

   a) normal internet check when write-ups are suspected;
   b) using google scholar to check and other free plagiarism checks.
   c) Using other licensed software such as:
      i. WriteCheck
      ii. Ithenticate
      iii. Turnitin
      iv. Copycatch

B.6 Although Unicheck can be a useful tool, it has some limitations including inability to detect matches from:
   a) sources which are unavailable on the Internet;
   b) password-protected sources;
   c) non-English source;
   d) all electronic journals;
   e) images, including graphs and mathematical equations inserted as images.

SCHEDULE C: Users of the Similarity/Originality Checking Software

C.1 The University through the ISTD and the Research and Consultancy Centre shall make available to the University Community access to the similarity/originality checking software.

C.2 The similarity/originality checking software shall be available to all faculty members or academics of the University.

C.3 Students may submit their work to Unicheck via Moodle or a link set up for them.

C.4 The University may allow its partners (or other institutions that it deems fit) the right to use its software or submit their work to the University for similarity checking on their behalf.

SCHEDULE D: Conditions of Use of the Similarity/Originality Checking Software

D.1 The University has purchased a license for Unicheck similarity checking software. Usage of the software is subject to the "Terms and Conditions" the usage of the Unicheck (www.Unicheck.com).

D.2 All students and staff wishing to use Unicheck should first review the terms and conditions of using Unicheck and agree to them.

D.3 Submitting work to Unicheck does not affect ownership of the work; the copyright and intellectual property of all works remain with the original owner(s).

D.4   Unicheck software can be accessed in three ways, directly from Unicheck website, through the University of Professional Studies, Accra Moodle system or through a web link generated.

D.5   In all the different ways that Unicheck can be accessed, proper authorization is needed.

D.6   For staff use of the Unicheck, an account may have to be set up.

D.7   Account set up must allow at least one draft submission before the final submission.

D.8   Submitting the work of others, or having one's own work submitted by others without proper authorization, is expressly forbidden.

D.9   All works submitted to Unicheck will be stored indefinitely on Unicheck database and shall become part of the international databases that subsequent works are checked against.

D.10   Retention of work on Unicheck database helps to ensure that the work remains protected from future attempts to plagiarise it. This also maximises the effectiveness of the software.

D.11   Personal or sensitive data should be protected.

SCHEDULE E: Use of the Similarity/Original Checking Software for Student's Research

E.1   The University seeks to ensure that all students develop good academic practice in their research including assignments.

E.2   Formatively, supervisors are advised to encourage their students to submit early drafts of their work for similarity/originality checking so that they can undertake the necessary corrections and become fully aware of how to use the software.

E.3   Students are required to provide a copy of their Unicheck report when submitting their research report for assessment. Supervisors should insist on this before appending their signature to the research reports.

E.4   Both supervisor(s) and student(s) should counter-sign the Unicheck report.

E.5   Departmental Research Officers should verify that all research reports submitted for assessment are accompanied with their Unicheck reports.

E.6   Departmental Research Officers should compare the Unicheck reports with the research reports submitted and report on the outcome of their verifications to Director of Research through their respective Heads of Departments and Deans of Faculties.

SCHEDULE F: Use of the Similarity/Original Checking Software the University's Journal

F.1   The University seeks to ensure that it maintains highest academic standards of good practice in the publication of its flagship journal.

F.2   All manuscripts submitted to the Journal for publication considerations should be run through the similarity/originality checking software to ensure that they are within the allowable similarity level. This initial checking should not be retained in the Unicheck database.

F.3   Any manuscript which does not meet the standard could be rejected or returned to the author(s) for amendments and resubmission.

F.3   Before manuscripts are eventually published in the Journal, the final versions should be rechecked for similarity or originality.

SCHEDULE G: Limit of Allowable Similarity

G.1   Text matches or similarity identified by any software does not necessarily imply plagiarism but may constitute grounds for further investigation.

G.2   There is no level of percentage of similarity that proves that a piece of work is plagiarized.

G.3   The choice therefore is for the instructors/department/institution/University to look at the originality report and document to:
a) make the determination of whether or not something is plagiarized;
b) determine the extent of plagiarism/matching, whether it is:
     i.   intentional plagiarism;
     ii.   unintentional plagiarism;
     iii.   improper/lack of citation; or
     iv.   mere coincidence.

G.4   In most writings, some amount of similarity may be unavoidable. For example, matched texts may simply be common terminologies in a discipline.

G.5   What constitutes an allowable percentage of similarity therefore may be an institutional policy which could also differ from one discipline to another even within the same institution.

G.6   For the purposes of this policy and UPSA's objectives, a maximum of 20% similarity (excluding definitions, direct quotation and references) is considered acceptable and allowable. However, efforts should be made to reduce the similarity to the barest minimum possible.

G.7   The allowable limit of similarity should be concentrated in the literature review section/chapter.

G.8   The allowable limit for words in a continuum of a sentence must not be more than 8 words (but this does not apply in proper nouns and proverbs).

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