

Virtual University of Pakistan

Plagiarism Policy

1. Preamble

In the wake of fundamental improvements being introduced in the system of Higher Education in Pakistan, the credit, respect, recognition of research and scholarly publications, career development and financial gains are now linked with such original works accomplished without replicating the efforts of other researchers. It has therefore become necessary that the menace of plagiarism is highlighted and curbed through exemplary punitive actions. On the other hand, we must also guard against bogus or false complaints in order to prevent victimization which may make researchers and scholars shy away from research simply because of the fear of prosecution. A Plagiarism Policy has therefore become necessary to create awareness, define various forms in which Plagiarism exhibits itself, present a methodology of investigation, cater for punitive action proportional to the extent of the offence and even address the issue of false or spurious complaints.

2. Definition

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, **Plagiarism** is defined as "**taking and using the thoughts, writings, and inventions of another person as one's own**".

This, or various similar definitions found in recognized publications / documents, are very broad and can be used to create awareness about Plagiarism but are not practical enough to apply in order to ascertain guilt or innocence in specific cases. In order to establish the violation of ethical norms, or academic or intellectual dishonesty resulting from Plagiarism and to take punitive actions in this regard, it is necessary that the variety of forms in which Plagiarism manifests itself are known. These include but are not limited to the following:

- “Verbatim copying, near-verbatim copying, or purposely paraphrasing portions of another author's paper or unpublished report without citing the exact reference.
- Copying elements of another author's paper, such as equations or illustrations that are not common knowledge, or copying or purposely paraphrasing sentences without citing the source.
- Verbatim copying portions of another author's paper or from reports by citing but not clearly differentiating what text has been copied (e.g. not applying

quotation marks correctly) and /or not citing the source correctly”^[1].

- "The unacknowledged use of computer programs, mathematical /computer models / algorithms, computer software in all forms, macros, spreadsheets, web pages, databases, mathematical deviations and calculations, designs / models / displays of any sort, diagrams, graphs, tables, drawings, works of art of any sort, fine art pieces or artifacts, digital images, computer-aided design drawings, GIS files, photographs, maps, music / composition of any sort, posters, presentations and tracing."^[2]
- "Self-plagiarism, that is, the verbatim or near-verbatim re-use of significant portions of one's own copyrighted work without citing the original source."^[1]

3. **Explanation from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia on the web describes and explains Plagiarism as "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work. Unlike cases of **forgery**, in which the authenticity of the writing, document, or some other kind of object itself is in question, plagiarism is concerned with the issue of false attribution. Within **academia**, plagiarism by students, professors, or researchers is considered

academic dishonesty or **academic fraud** and offenders are subject to academic censure. In **journalism**, plagiarism is considered a breach of journalistic ethics, and reporters caught **plagiarizing** typically face disciplinary measures ranging from suspension to termination. While plagiarism in scholarship and journalism has a centuries-old history, the development of the **Internet**, where articles appear as electronic text, has made the physical act of copying the work of others much easier. Plagiarism is different from **copyright infringement**. While both terms may apply to a particular act, they emphasize different aspects of the transgression. Copyright infringement is a violation of the rights of the copyright holder, which involves the loss of income and artistic control of the material when it is used without the copyright holder's consent. On the other hand, plagiarism is concerned with the unearned increment to the plagiarizing author's **reputation**. In the academic world, **plagiarism by students** is a very serious academic offense which can result in punishments such as a failing grade on the particular assignment (typically at the high school level), or a failing grade for the course (typically at the college or university level). For cases of repeated plagiarism, or for cases where

a student has committed a severe type of plagiarism (e.g. copying an entire article and submitting it as his / her own work), a student may be suspended or expelled, and any academic degrees or awards may be revoked. **For professors and researchers**, who are required to act as role models for their students, plagiarism is a very serious offence, and is punishable by sanctions ranging from suspension to termination, along with the loss of credibility and integrity. Charges of plagiarism against students, faculty members and staff are typically heard by internal disciplinary committees, which students and faculty members have agreed to be bound by."^[3]

Wikipedia also describes **Self-plagiarism** as "the re-use of significant, identical, or nearly identical portions of one's own work without acknowledging that one is doing so or without citing the original work. Typically, high public-interest texts are not a subject of self-plagiarism; however, the authors should not violate copyright where applicable. "Public-interest texts" include such material as social, professional, and cultural opinions usually published in newspapers and magazines."^[3]

6. Aim: The aim of this policy is to apprise students, teachers, researchers and staff about Plagiarism and how it can be avoided. It is also aimed at discouraging Plagiarism by regulating and authorizing punitive actions against those found guilty of the act of Plagiarism.

7. Applicability: The policy is applicable to students, teachers, researchers and staff of all institutions and organizations in Pakistan who are involved in writing or publishing their work. In this context a "**Student**" is a person who, on the date of submission of his / her paper / work is a registered student of any University or Degree Awarding Institution recognized by Higher Education Commission (HEC). "**Teachers and Researchers**" include faculty members or equivalent of the University /Organization or/of a constituent or affiliated college or researchers of an organization and such other persons as may be declared to be so by regulations. "**Staff**" is any employee of an organization involved in writing and publishing his / her work.

Any person listing his CV on the website or any current publication or applying for any benefit on the basis of published or presented work that is plagiarized will be liable to be punished as per prescribed rules.

8. Responsibility of the Institutions & Organizations: All institutions and organizations are responsible to apprise their students, teachers, researchers and staff of the definition, implications and resulting punishments in case, after due investigation, they are found guilty of plagiarism. The institutions / organizations must acquaint their students, teachers, researchers and staff with this policy and ensure that they are fully aware that all authors are deemed to be individually and collectively responsible for the contents of papers published by Journals / Publishers etc. Hence, it is the responsibility of each author, including the coauthors, to ensure that papers submitted for publication should attain the highest ethical standards with respect to plagiarism. To facilitate the institutions / organizations in creating awareness about Plagiarism, a modified version of "Little Book of Plagiarism", a publication of Leeds Metropolitan University is appended as "Annexure" to this policy. Any University or Degree Awarding Institution which does not adopt and implement this policy will have its degree derecognized by HEC.

7. Reporting: To inform HEC or respective Universities / Organizations of alleged plagiarism, a complaint is to be made by email, post, fax or other means to HEC Quality Assurance Division or respective Universities / Organizations. In case of lodging a complaint in the form of a letter, copy may be sent to HEC. The following information is to be provided:

- a) "Citation of the original paper or document or idea which was plagiarized, (paper title, author(s), publication title, month and year of publication if available and the journal, in which published, with details). If the original paper is unpublished (e.g. an institutional technical report, an on-line paper), the complainant is to provide as much information as possible to ensure authenticity of the claim.
10. The citation of the alleged plagiarizing paper (paper title, author(s), publication title, month and year of publication if available and the journal with details in which published). If the paper is unpublished (e.g. an institutional technical report, an on-line paper), the complainant is to provide as much information as possible to ensure proper investigation.
11. Copies of both papers if possible.
12. Any other information that would help HEC or respective Universities / Organizations to efficiently resolve the claim."^[1]
13. Name, designation, organization, address, e-mail address and telephone number of the complainant.

Investigation:

8. Upon receipt of an allegation of Plagiarism, the HEC Quality Assurance Division will request the respective Vice Chancellor / Rector / Head of the Organization to carry out investigation. The complaints received through HEC or directly by a University / Organization will be dealt with by the Universities / Organizations according to the procedures given below. The Vice Chancellor / Rector / Head of the Organization will have the discretion of not taking any action on anonymous complaints. For investigation of Plagiarism cases, the Vice Chancellor / Rector / Head of Organization will have an obligation to:

- a) Constitute a “**Plagiarism Standing Committee**” consisting of 3 senior faculty members, a subject specialist in that particular field is to be co-opted, a senior student (only if a student is being investigated upon) and a nominee of the HEC. The seniority of the members of “Plagiarism Standing Committee” should be of a level keeping in view the seniority of the individual being investigated upon and the nature and gravity of the offence.
- b) Provide a guideline, prepared by HEC for the functioning of the "Plagiarism Standing Committee", to all members of the Committee.
- c) Provide clear terms of reference to the “Plagiarism Standing Committee” for their investigation.
- d) The members of the “Plagiarism Standing Committee” are to sign a confidentiality statement that during the investigation they will, under no circumstances, disclose any individual author's name, paper titles, referees, or any other personal or specific information concerning the plagiarism complaint under investigation, nor shall they reveal the names of the committee members.
- e) Provide opportunity to the author / authors under investigation to justify the originality of their concepts and research work. Similar opportunity will also be provided to the author whose paper is deemed to have been Plagiarized and / or the complainant, to justify the complaint.
- f) Provide every opportunity to the “Plagiarism Standing Committee” to use all foreseeable means to investigate the plagiarism claim.

9. The **Plagiarism Standing Committee** shall then conduct the investigation. Depending on the details of the claim, the investigation may include, but may not be limited to, any or all of the following steps:

- a) Manual and / or automated tests for content similarity ^[1].
- b) Determination of the extent and quantum of significant material plagiarized.
- c) Soliciting comments to the claim, from the Editor-in-Chief (of a journal) or Program Chair (of conference proceedings) and referees of either or both papers.
- d) Consultation with legal counsel. ^[1]
- e) Consult / contact witnesses and record statements there-of if so required.
- f) Consult / contact present and / or past employers of the authors.

10. The “**Plagiarism Standing Committee**” will submit its report with clear cut findings and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor / Rector / Head of the Organization within a specified period not exceeding sixty days. The Vice Chancellor / Rector / Head of the Organization will have the discretion to implement the recommendations after approval through the statutory process and take punitive action against the offender as per penalties prescribed under this policy or to forward the report to HEC or his / her parent organization for further action if outside their purview / jurisdiction.

Penalties for Plagiarism

11. Plagiarism is an intellectual crime. As such the penalties for plagiarism should not only take into account the severity and recurrence of the offence, but also the intellectual standing of the offender. This entails a gradual increase in punitive action with minimum punishment for a first time offence by a student who copies a homework assignment to a maximum punishment for a teacher/researcher/staff who attempts to present / publish, or actually presents / publishes plagiarized material; as his own, in a conference / journal. Therefore, the punishments for Plagiarism have been divided into two separate categories, i.e. those for "Teachers, Researchers and Staff" and those for the "Students". The groups have already been defined in para 5 above.

(a) **Penalties for Teachers, Researchers and Staff:** When an act of plagiarism, as described earlier in paras 2 and 3, is found to have occurred, the "Plagiarism Standing

Committee" in its recommendations, DEPENDING UPON THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROVEN OFFENCE, will advise the Competent Authority of the Organization, to take any one or a combination of the following disciplinary action(s) against the teacher, researcher and / or staff found guilty of the offence:

(i) **Major Penalty:**

In cases where most of the paper (or key results) have been exactly copied from any published work of other people without giving the reference to the original work, then (a) a major penalty of **dismissal** from service *needs to* be prescribed, along with (b) the offender may be

“Black Listed” and may NOT be eligible for employment in any academic / research organization, and (c) the notification of “Black Listing” of the author(s) may be published in the print media or may be publicized on different websites at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor / Rector / Head of the organization.

(ii) **Moderate Penalty:**

In case where some paragraphs including some key results have been copied without citation, then a moderate penalty involving any one or both of the following needs to be imposed (a) demotion to the next lower grade, (b) the notification of “Black Listing” of the author(s) which may be published in the print media or may be publicized on different websites at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor / Rector / Head of the organization.

(iii) **Minor Penalty:**

In case a few paragraphs have been copied from an external source without giving reference of that work, then minor penalties need to be prescribed for a specified period involving any one or more of the following: (a) warning, (b) freezing of all research grants, (c) the promotions/annual increments of the offender may be stopped, for a specified period and (d) HEC or the University / Organization may debar the offender from sponsorship of research funding, travel grant, supervision of Ph.D. students, scholarship, fellowship or any other funded program for a period as deemed appropriate by the “Plagiarism Standing Committee”.

(b) Students: When an act of plagiarism, as described earlier in paras 2 and 3, is found to have occurred, the "Plagiarism Standing Committee" in its recommendations, **DEPENDING UPON THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROVEN OFFENCE**, will advise the Vice Chancellor / Head of the Organization, to take any one or a combination of the following disciplinary action(s) against the student(s) found guilty of the offence:

- (i) In the case of thesis the responsibility of plagiarism will be of the student and not of the supervisor or members of the Supervisory Committee.
- (ii) The offender may be expelled/ rusticated from the University and from joining any institution of Higher Education in Pakistan for a period as deemed appropriate by the "Plagiarism Standing Committee". A notice may be circulated among all academic institutions and research organization to this effect.
- (iii) The offender may be relegated to a lower class.
- (iv) The offender may be given a failure grade in the subject.
- (v) The offender may be fined an amount as deemed appropriate.
- (vi) The offender may be given a written warning if the offence is minor and is committed for the first time.
- (vii) The degree of a student may be withdrawn if **AT ANY TIME** it is proven that he or she has presented Plagiarized work in his / her MS, MPhil or PhD dissertation if the extent of plagiarism comes under the category of major penalty as conveyed in Para 11(a-1).
- (viii) The notification of the plagiarism by the author(s) may be published in the print media or may be publicized on different websites at the discretion of the Vice Chancellor / Rector / Head of the Organization.
- (ix) HEC or the University / Organization may debar the offender from sponsorship of research funding, travel grant, scholarship, fellowship or any other funded program for a period as deemed appropriate by the "Plagiarism Standing Committee".
- (x) Any other penalty deemed fit by the "Plagiarism Standing Committee".

(c) Co-Authors/Declarations

1. Provided that a co-author has listed a paper in his/her resume and applied for a benefit forthwith, any co-author is deemed to be equally responsible for any plagiarism committed in a published paper presented to or published in a journal

or presented at a conference.

2. All Journals in Pakistan must require ALL authors to sign a declaration that the material presented in the creative work is not plagiarized (Sample Attached)

12. Additional Actions Required: In addition to the above punishments, the following additional common actions must be taken if the offence of Plagiarism is established:

- a) If the plagiarized paper is accessible on the web page its access will be removed. The paper itself will be kept in the database for future research or legal purposes.
- b) The author(s) will be asked to write a formal letter of apology to the authors of the Original paper that was plagiarized, including an admission of plagiarism. Should the author(s) refuse to comply then additional punishments as deemed fit may be recommended by the "Plagiarism Standing Committee.
- c) If the paper is submitted but not published yet, the paper will be rejected by the Editor-in-Chief or the Program Chair without further revisions and without any further plagiarism investigation conducted.^[1]
However, Warning may be issued to the author/ co-author.

13. Appeal: As the penalties are severe, the affected person(s) will have the right to appeal to the Chairman HEC / Vice Chancellor / Rector / Head of the Organization for a review of the findings or may submit a mercy petition within 30 days from the date of notification. Such appeals / petitions will be disposed off within 60 days of receipt, by following the laid down procedures regarding such appeals.

14. Penalty for Wrong Reporting / False Allegation: If the case of Plagiarism is not proved and it is confirmed that a false allegation was lodged, the Vice Chancellor / Rector / Head of the Organization will inform the complainant's Organization and will recommend disciplinary action against the complainant, to be taken by his / her parent organization.

References

- [1] “ACM (Association of Computing Machinery) Policy on Plagiarism”
(<http://www.acm.org/pubs/plagiarism%20policy.html>)

- [2] “Academic Integrity Statement: Appendix1” (University of Southampton
Calendar 2006/7)
(<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/part8a.html>)

- [3] “Plagiarism From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia”
(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/plagiarism>).



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