NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

NOUN POLICY ON PLAGIARISM

1.0 PREAMBLE

Cheating is a major factor that contributes to academic decadence and can hinder 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 devaluation of research, equality any research carried out without following due ethical practice cannot produce any tangible result. Short-term benefit that comes with copyright violations does not contribute anything to knowledge and does not lead to any growth or ensure independency of the author's capability, more so, academic integrity is lost. Ethical breach especially in research takes away the main reason and benefit of education system due to its effect on trust which can be used to measure the institution's ability to promote good and workable academic environments.

At NOUN, Plagiarism should not be tolerated as it is an infringement of the rights of the originator. It is unethical and un-prestigious to claim any idea, work or result that originated from someone and present same to public, institution or organisation as one's own without acknowledging the owner or source. All academic work, written or otherwise 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 of all enrolment 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 their discharge of academic / research duties and to empower the University to take necessary action on anybody who so contravenes this policy.

b)   Inform staff and students of NOUN on such practices which the University considers as plagiarism.

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 own 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. It is both poor scholarship and a breach of academic integrity.

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" (Oxford Dictionary.com).

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 inaction that is **plagiarism**, and to seek and foster a learning environment that encourages the development of academic skills including in particular, skills in academic writing, that are appropriate for each discipline.

No person(s) participating in the University academic or scholarly activities of NOUN 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, 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 author and is used in a different work by the same author without acknowledging himself, it constitutes an act of plagiarism.

d) When a student submits his or her own 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 of 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 of another student's assignment and submitting it as one's own work; and paying someone to do an assignment on one's behalf and submitting it as one's own work.

Therefore:

h) Any thesis or dissertation submitted to the University either at undergraduate or postgraduate level must be accompanied by a plagiarism declaration. It is by this policy

all stakeholders involve in students' projects/thesis should not validate such without plagiarism declaration.

i) However, theses and dissertations must be submitted to the *Turnitin* or *Grammarly* custodians located at various departments/faculties (or other appropriate similarity index evaluating software) prior to submission for moderation.

j) All cases of plagiarism must be handled consistently according to established processes, either at department, faculty or management level and 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 member of staff of NOUN 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

Any plagiarism 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 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 may 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, withdrawal of Certificate.

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 acknowledging 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 failure to heed the two (2) written warnings.

d) *Withdrawal of Certificates*
- Certificates may be withdrawn if it is established that a whole sale adoption of a previous 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 member, to the respective Faculty Dean. 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 works.
d) Requiring all term papers, essays submitted by students 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 detail on the appropriate use of for instance *Turnitin* (similarity index evaluating software not more than 15%).
  ii) The identification of committee in a department/faculty who will receive cases of allegation of plagiarism.
  iii) Adequate procedures shall be put in place to enhance investigation. Such procedures shall include an office equipped with necessary facilities; and an independency of the committee among others.
  iv) Supervisors and moderators are to report immediately to the department any suspected work which contains plagiarised topic 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 investigation on plagiarism shall be such that will not affect the graduation or resident period of the students, 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 and Advancement to the Central Proctorial Committee.

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 his/her 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 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, she/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 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 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 is appropriately acknowledged.
   ii) The assessor has required, or given prior permission for group or collaborative work to be submitted.
d) Take reasonable steps to prevent their own assessment work being copied by another student with the intention to receive credit for the work.
e) Not produce all or part of an assessment work for another student with the intention to receive credit for the work.
f) Use quotations, paraphrasing, referencing and attribution in accordance with accepted academic conventions.

10.0 GUIDELINES FOR CURBING PLAGIARISM
10.1 Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

a) All hands must be on deck in order to ensure standard academic practices. It is the duty of all NOUN staff to display certain characters which will promote trust and give good name to the University. On the other hand, the University management shall provide enabling environment which will encourage her staff to desist from dishonest academic practices. Academic integrity is a quality associated with high standards of scholarship and 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 can provide information and opportunities that will assist a student's 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 tend to focus on the punitive aspects of procedures rather than the educative, and often fail to articulate to students why 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 an intention to deceive the assessor and is outright cheating. Whatever the reasons, there are actions for all members of the University community that will minimize the incidence of plagiarism.

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) 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.

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 student's lecturer, Course Coordinator or Head, as appropriate.

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 their report and recommendations to the University Senate for final determination.

13.0 PROCEDURE FOR PLAGIARISM INVESTIGATION
a) All works by authors should be subject to plagiarism detector.
b) Provide a plagiarism software application detector like *Turnitin* or *Grammarly*.
c) Acceptance level (similarity index) or percentage of what constitutes unacceptable level of plagiarism should not be above 15 % or 30% commonly approved in most universities
d) Guidelines for the use of plagiarism software applications should be provided.
e) What constitutes "variants" of plagiarism should be identified by the University Research Ethics Board and incorporated into the final policy.

14.0 THE POLICY CUSTODIANS
This policy is a sole document of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) and shall be managed by the Directorate of Research Administration and Advancement (DRAA). The directorate shall recommend for 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. The DRAA also referred to as the policy custodian shall also be in-charge of interpretation of the Policy.

Faculty management in collaboration with DRAA 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.

14. Acknowledgements

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NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

OATH OF COMPLIANCE ON PLAGIARISM

<u>THE OATH</u>

ADVISORY:
As a student in NOUN you are responsible for ensuring that you have read and understood the university's plagiarism definition and guidance and follow it in all work submitted for assessment.

What Is Plagiarism?

NOUN defines plagiarism as, "submitting as one's own 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 academic qualification, or submitted for publication without due acknowledgement. It is both poor scholarship and a breach of academic integrity."

For the University's full guidance on plagiarism, including example of plagiarism and recourse and support, please see *(NOUN Policy on Plagiarism).*

Acceptable means of acknowledging the work of others (by referencing, in footnotes, or otherwise) may vary according to the subject matter and mode of assessment, so you should always refer to the guidance materials available that relate to the relevant scholarly conventions for submitting work in a particular subject area of study.

If a copy of this Policy is required, you should contact your Centre Director or Directorate of Research Advancement and Advancement (DRAA).

<u>WARNING</u>: Upon this oath, failure to comply with the provisions of the University's Plagiarism Policy will lead to appropriate sanctions being meted to violators.

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Name, Matric No, date and Signature of Student   Centre Director (Name and Signature)