

# **UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**



## **PLAGIARISM POLICY**

**April 2015**

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## 1. Purpose of Policy

- 1.1. The mission of the University is to “develop world-class human resources and capabilities to meet national development needs and global challenges through quality teaching, learning, research and knowledge dissemination”
- 1.2. In carrying out its mission, the University is committed to the highest level of integrity and ethical standards, and therefore endeavours to ensure that the academic work of its staff and students is of the highest standard.
- 1.3. The University is committed to ensuring that its staff and students do not plagiarize the work of others. This policy document therefore seeks to clearly define what plagiarism is, spell out the University’s efforts at preventing plagiarism by staff and students, give the permissible extent and formats for citing the work of others, and what the sanctions for plagiarism are.

## 2. Definitions of Plagiarism<sup>1</sup>

- 2.1. The definition of plagiarism, as stated in paragraph 41(1) (d) of the Statutes of the University of Ghana, 2012, is to represent, without acknowledgement of its authorship by another, an expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of work attributed to an individual, such as a publication, invention or creative work.
- 2.2. Plagiarism can also constitute the re-use of one’s own work without appropriate acknowledgement. This is referred to as self-plagiarism, text recycling and salami publishing.
- 2.3. The ‘work’, in both cases, can be ideas, methods, results, and the words or language used to describe these ideas, methods and results.
- 2.4. Four interacting elements of plagiarism have been identified: ‘(1) *publication* (the public presentation (or publication) of another’s work); (2) *content* (the presentation of the contents of another’s work); (3) *appropriation* (the passing off of another’s work as one’s own); and (4) *lack of credit given* (passing of another’s work without the appropriate attribution to the original source)’<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.5. Plagiarism is considered to be academic fraud or theft, or the fraudulent use or theft of intellectual property. The fraud or theft may breach ethical, pedagogical and legal norms.
- 2.6. Depending on the nature of the plagiarism (ethical, pedagogical, legal) and the institutional context, the plagiarist may be forced to issue a public apology or withdraw the plagiarised material or lose their academic position or face legal prosecution or experience all the aforementioned.
- 2.7. Retrospective punishment may apply in cases where the plagiarism is discovered at a much later date than its initial occurrence.

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<sup>1</sup> Key references for this section are Clarke, 2006; Kleinart, 2011; Lancet, 2009; Pecorari, 2003; Rosamond, 2002)

<sup>2</sup> Clarke, 2006, p.97.

### 3. Types of Plagiarism

- 3.1. There are two main types of plagiarism: intentional (or prototypical) plagiarism and non-intentional (non-prototypical) plagiarism.
- 3.2. The most common, and severe, form of plagiarism is intentional. This occurs when the plagiarist deliberately appropriates another person's work. A typical example would be when an individual uses sentences, phrases, paragraphs and pages belonging to another person verbatim, without citing the source reference or presenting the appropriated material in quotation marks. There are examples of individuals appropriating entire academic peer-reviewed articles and textbooks (in the case of academics) or entire student dissertations and theses (in the case of students) with the intention to pass these works off as their own.
- 3.3. Non-intentional (non-prototypical) plagiarism is not driven by the intention to deceive. This commonly occurs when the writer does not follow conventional standards for referencing. It can also occur when the writer produces imitations of a source text, because they are writing in a non-native language, they do not understand the language and technical concepts and the lack of understanding undermines their ability to present what they read in their own words. This process is referred to as '**patchwriting**' (Howard, 2001, cited in Pecorari, 2003). Patchwriting is viewed as a pedagogical problem – for instance a lack of academic writing skills – rather than an ethical problem.
- 3.4. Intentional and non-intentional factors also occur for self-plagiarism. Intentional self-plagiarism occurs when the writer appropriates a significant amount of material from previously published work. The Lancet (2009, p.664) describes this as such: “when large parts of a paper are a word-for-word copy of previously published text” or “republishing large parts of an original research paper”. In this case, it is difficult for the writer to claim inadvertent recycling of their own material. Non-intentional self-plagiarism occurs when the appropriation is not significant and the re-use of existing material is clearly referenced.

### 4. Evaluating Plagiarism

- 4.1. Plagiarism is complex, in terms of whether it relates to another person's work or one's own work. This complexity must be taken into consideration when the scale and consequences of plagiarism are being evaluated.
- 4.2. The first aspect relates to intentionality (see Section 3). The second aspect relates to how appropriateness of acknowledgement is measured. Transparency is the accepted measure for evaluating appropriateness of acknowledgement.
- 4.3. Transparency is ascertained using three criteria: language, presence of a citation and presence of a secondary citation.
  - i. Language: when the language used in a text is presented as a quotation, this suggests a secondary source has been consulted; when the language is not presented as a quotation it is assumed the writer owns the language.

- ii. Presence of a citation: when a segment of text is presented without a reference, it is assumed that the form and content of that segment are original to the writer.
- iii. Presence of a secondary citation: if a source is cited the writer should ensure that the source has been consulted. Without consulting the source, the use of secondary citation presents the appearance of a writer consulting several primary sources rather than a small set of secondary sources.

## **5. Institutional Responsibility**

- 5.1. The University recognizes the need to have a policy framework that is not just punitive but preventive and reformatory in character. In this respect, plagiarism and related issues shall constitute essential aspects of the culture of learning and scholarship of this academic community. Therefore, as an institution the University shall endeavour to:
- i. Highlight issues pertaining to plagiarism (skills and strategies for avoiding plagiarism, plagiarism cases and sanctions thereof) from the first year of the university curricular through graduate studies;
  - ii. Consider education on not plagiarising as an intrinsic part of the teaching and learning process and hence create the necessary support services;
  - iii. In this regard establish a Plagiarism Avoidance Support Services (PASS) as part of the Academic Quality Assurance Unit shall:
    - a. Acquire and manage appropriate software for detecting plagiarism
    - b. Ensure best practices in assignment/assessment design and teaching across disciplines
    - c. Assist departments, schools, and colleges to strengthen their capacity to teach discipline-specific writing conventions to students
    - d. Ensure that faculty demonstrate competence in writing from multiple sources
    - e. Assist the School of Graduate Studies in the detection of plagiarism in theses and dissertations submitted to the school
    - f. Assist Editorial Boards of University of Ghana journals in the detection of plagiarism at the review stage of articles submitted for publication
- 5.2. The University through the University of Ghana Computing Systems (UGCS) shall make available to the University Community an online resource about plagiarism. This resource shall enable staff and students to test their work for plagiarism.

## **6. Student/Author Responsibility**

- 6.1. Students and academic staff should bear in mind that they are part of the global community of scholars creating knowledge by drawing from prior knowledge, implying therefore a responsibility to make clear whose works they are drawing from and how theirs constitutes derivative or new knowledge.
- 6.2. Accordingly, our students and academic staff have the responsibility to:

- i. Familiarize themselves with the appropriate conventions for using sources, making attributions, and integrating citations into their writing;
  - ii. Know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it;
  - iii. Ensure that there is no plagiarism in their work;
  - iv. Acquire good reading and note-taking skills since the lack of these skills facilitate plagiarism.
- 6.3. The policy framework places responsibilities on both junior and senior members as well as the university authorities since it is the collective responsibility of the members of the University of Ghana academic community to ensure that we have created an intellectual environment that discourages plagiarism.

## **7. Investigation and Sanctions**

- 7.1. Plagiarism is unacceptable and shall be treated as a serious offence by the University. Colleges will be required to adhere to the provisions of this Plagiarism Policy and are responsible to ensure that students, faculty and other staff are provided with the necessary understanding to avoid plagiarism.
- 7.2. When plagiarism is suspected, a formal complaint shall be made by the Head of Department through the Dean/Director to the College Provost who shall cause the Dean/Director to perform an initial investigation and submit a report, through the Provost, to the Vice Chancellor.
- 7.3. The Vice Chancellor shall refer the matter to the appropriate Disciplinary Committee for investigation pursuant to clause 43 of the Statutes of the University of Ghana, 2012 and the Disciplinary Committee upon conclusion of its hearings shall submit their findings and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor who may implement the recommendations as he deems fit.
- 7.4. Any allegation of plagiarism shall be supported with the relevant documentations/evidence.

## **8. Sanctions for Plagiarism by Students**

- 8.1. A student accused of plagiarism shall be invited by the Disciplinary Committee per its procedures and shall be given an opportunity to respond to any and all allegation(s) of plagiarism made against him/her.
- 8.2. The Disciplinary Committee may recommend any one or more of the sanctions as provided for in Clause 45 (1) to (4) of the University of Ghana Statutes, 2012 (see Appendix 1) for offending students.
- 8.3. If the student provides a satisfactory explanation to the allegation, and is found to have plagiarized unintentionally, it may be inferred that the student committed an academic misdemeanour of failing to reference correctly. A written reprimand may be recommended by the Disciplinary Committee.

### **Plagiarism in a Course Assignment**

- 8.4. An Accusation of plagiarism in a course assignment shall be communicated to the Head of Department of a College who shall follow the procedures stated in paragraphs 6.5 to 6.7 above to have the matter referred to the appropriate authority for resolution.
- 8.5. The investigative processes and sanctioning of any student shall be in accordance with paragraphs 6.5 to 6.10 above.

### **Plagiarism in a Submitted Thesis**

- 8.6. Accusations of plagiarism in a thesis shall be communicated to the Head of Department who shall at the first instance report the matter through the Dean/Director to the Provost of the College who shall constitute an investigative committee to investigate the matter. The findings and recommendations of the investigative panel shall be submitted to the Provost who shall then forward the findings and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor.
- 8.7. The investigative processes and sanctioning of any student shall be in accordance with paragraphs 6.5 to 6.10 above.

## **9. Sanctions For Plagiarism By Faculty Members**

- 9.1. Where a faculty member is suspected of engaging in plagiarism, the matter shall be reported by the Head of Department to the Dean/Director who will present the complaint together with a written document detailing the suspected instance of plagiarism to the School/ Institute Management Committee.
- 9.2. The complaint and report shall be forwarded to the Vice Chancellor for determination by the Disciplinary Committee in accordance with the procedures set forth in paragraphs 6.5 to 6.10 above.
- 9.3. Reports of plagiarism by faculty members from journals which are submitted to the University will be forwarded to the appropriate School Management Committees. The School Management Committee shall investigate the accusation(s) and if it finds that there is sufficient evidence of plagiarism, it shall submit its report to the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs (ASA)).
- 9.4. The Pro Vice Chancellor (ASA) shall refer the matter to the Vice Chancellor who shall refer the matter to the Disciplinary Committee for Senior Members.
- 9.5. The findings and recommendations of the Disciplinary Committee shall be forwarded to the Vice Chancellor who may implement the recommendations or vary them as he deems appropriate and where the plagiarism may have contributed to the promotion or appointment of the offending Member, the Vice Chancellor shall forward the findings and recommendations of the Disciplinary Committee to the Appointments and Promotion Board for a review of its decision.
- 9.6. Sanctions to be applied to an offending Member shall be in accordance with Clause 46 (1) and (2) of the University of Ghana Statutes, 2012 (See Appendix 2) and any other authorised sanctions currently in force.

- 9.7. A faculty member found guilty of plagiarism shall be demoted to the next lower rank for a first offence. If the faculty member has not yet been promoted, the faculty member's salary will be dropped to the next lower scale at the lecturer level.

#### **10. False Accusation of Plagiarism**

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.

## References

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Clause 45 (1) – (4) of the University of Ghana Statutes, 2012**

#### **Sanctions for Students**

(1) One or more of the following sanctions may be recommended by a Board upon the conviction of any person:

- (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, for evaluation, such a sanction shall be imposed only for minor offences and where the student has committed no previous offence;
- (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 Board;
- (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; or
- (j) if a recommendation is not approved, the Vice-Chancellor shall have the power to impose a penalty as he deems fit.

(2) For the avoidance of doubt, notwithstanding previous conferment or confirmation of an award of a degree, diploma, certificate, standing, credits or any other qualification how-so-ever described, the University shall have the power to cancel or withhold or withdraw any award at any time it becomes known that:

- (a) a candidate had gained admission into the University with false qualifications; or
- (b) a candidate had impersonated someone else, or
- (c) a candidate had been guilty of an examination malpractice for which a grade Z would have been awarded; or
- (d) a candidate had engaged in any other conduct which in the opinion of the University would have resulted in the cancellation or withdrawal of the award.

(3) The decision to cancel, withhold or withdraw an award shall be made by Council on the recommendation of the Academic Board.

(4) The Vice-Chancellor shall have power to order that any sanction imposed by the Council be recorded on the student's academic record and transcript. The decision of the Vice-Chancellor shall be reported by the University in the University bulletin and, where appropriate, in the national media.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Clause 46 (1) and (2) of the University of Ghana Statutes, 2012**

#### **Sanctions for Employees**

(1) Without prejudice to these Statutes relating to discipline, the University shall have the power to treat misconduct on the part of any employee as a matter of contract and may deal with such misconduct in accordance with the provisions of their contracts of employment and or the collective agreement as the case may be or generally under the Labour Act, 2003 (Act 651).

(2) Alternatively, the University may sanction any of its employees by suspension, demotion in rank or grade, outright dismissal or by the imposition of monetary fines which may be deducted directly from the salary or other emoluments of the employees involved in a disciplinary offence.