



# Policy

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## Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Prevention

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## **ACRONYMS**

DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQsF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer

## 1. PREAMBLE

Academic integrity and honesty are fundamental to the work of any higher education institution (HEI). The Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA), likewise, views the maintenance of its academic integrity vitally important. MANCOSA requires that all its staff and students behave according to high standards of academic honesty in any assessment, research and publications in which they engage. This policy and procedures document, therefore, reflects the importance MANCOSA attaches to academic honesty and integrity and it is intended that it will help educate both staff and students about plagiarism and how to prevent it.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

### *Academic integrity*

This comprises important values that shape the work teaching, research and engagement. These are:

- **Respect** for the participatory nature of learning and the work and perspectives of others;
- **Honesty** so that commitment is given to acknowledging the work and ideas of others that is built upon;
- **Fairness** through realistic assessment expectations and clear standards that are applied fairly;
- **Trust** so that there is confidence in people and in services that enable students to achieve to the best of their abilities; and
- **Responsibility** because every person at MANCOSA has a duty to maintain academic integrity.

### *Academic misconduct*

This involves dishonesty and premeditation in the preparation and/or presentation of assessable work, usually gaining an unjust academic advantage for the student(s) to which the student(s) are not entitled and/or which may result in the diminution of academic integrity, thereby bringing the institution into disrepute.

### *The need to acknowledge*

When another's ideas are used they should be acknowledged so that work is not misrepresented as original. There are two levels of acknowledgement:

- **Attribution**  
This is where the majority of someone else's intellectual output (ideas, writings, creative thinking, designs, etc.) in a modified form, are presented in the author's own words. For example, paraphrasing or summarising. In these instances it is appropriate to name the 'owner' (in the body of the writing) without enclosing the sentence(s) or part of a sentence in quotation marks. The original source of attributable work must be recorded in the bibliography/reference list.
- **Citation**  
This is where a body of text has been copied exactly from the original. The source is identified using quotation marks text and/or indenting. Consequently the text is clearly distinguished as work originating from another source. The original source of work that is cited must be recorded in a reference list and/or bibliography.

### *Bibliography*

This is a reference list that includes all the texts and websites that have been read for understanding, as well as those that have been cited in a piece of work.

### *Collaboration*

This is academic work that is undertaken jointly by two or more students with the knowledge and consent of the teacher.

### ***Collusion***

This is a deliberate joint attempt by a student and another person or persons to deceive an assessor that work submitted is solely the student's own work.

### ***Paraphrasing***

This involves a student / author using someone else's ideas but expressing them in his/her own words. As another person's intellectual output (ideas) are being used, they must be acknowledged, for example, by a footnote.

### ***Plagiarism***

This is the practice that involves use of another person's intellectual output and presenting it (without appropriate acknowledgement) as one's own. Here are some examples of plagiarism:

- Word-for-word copying of sentences/paragraphs in an assignment without acknowledgement or with insufficient or improper acknowledgement;
- Downloading essays or assignments from the web and presenting these for assessment;
- Presenting another student's work or research data as the student's work;
- Copying parts of any text without acknowledging the source(s); and
- The use of someone else's concepts, results and conclusions or arguments without acknowledging the originator of the idea(s) or conclusion(s).

### ***Reference list***

This contains the full details of all the in-text citations arranged alphabetically and is located at the end of the work. There are more than one referencing systems for arranging your reference list.

## **3. POLICY TO INCULCATE ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PREVENT PLAGIARISM**

### ***Policy statement***

MANCOSA was established in response to the need for increasing access of individuals to higher education in South Africa. MANCOSA's prime aim is to build the capabilities of individuals and communities by increasing access to, and promoting participation in higher education. Ensuring the Institution's standing internationally, regionally, nationally and locally is a prerequisite for positive change. Therefore, MANCOSA expects its students and staff to behave in a manner that does not impact the academic standing or reputation of the institution and jeopardising its ability to positively transform lives through better participation in higher education.

In common with all reputable higher education institutions globally, academic integrity, therefore, is fundamental to MANCOSA's functions of teaching, learning and research. Plagiarism diminishes the quality of learning and the integrity of its awards and is therefore prohibited. MANCOSA expects high standards of behaviour in all its teaching, assessment, research and publications, and accordingly, it is committed to the transparent and fully acknowledged use of sources in academic work undertaken by staff and students. Students must know that MANCOSA takes violations of academic honesty seriously and it will deal with these transgressions in an appropriate manner. The emphasis in this policy, however, is on education to prevent academic dishonesty and prevention of plagiarism.

### 3.1. Maintaining academic integrity – a collective responsibility

Maintaining academic integrity requires a collective approach by the institution, its staff and students, and as such MANCOSA is responsible to:

- engage staff and students on the value of academic integrity to the core activities of MANCOSA;
- provide appropriate support for students with academic or other problems and taking reasonable steps to ensure staff who interact with students are aware of these;
- inform and educate staff and students on strategies of how to avoid plagiarism;
- provide systems and facilities (for example, plagiarism detection software such as 'Turnitin') for use by both staff and students for educative and detection purposes; and
- ensure that staff are aware of the appropriate approach to citation and referencing within their discipline and are able to communicate this to their students,

### 3.2. Prevention and education

Students will be provided with, or have access to, information about academic integrity that shows how plagiarism constitutes a violation of this principle because it amounts to stealing another person's work or intellectual property. In particular, this should include descriptions and subject specific examples of what is unacceptable and guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism. Having regard to the range of students and programmes at MANCOSA there should be careful consideration given to the most effective means for the communication of this information.

In respect of the above, academic and support *staff* must disseminate information to:

- ensure that each module guide or handbook contains information on the requirements for citation, together with the preferred referencing style, where appropriate;
- make material available to students at the commencement of their studies (including this Policy or an explanation of the policy) and clearly explaining expectations and requirements;
- provide information about plagiarism, including consequences in cases of transgression at staff or student orientation or induction programmes;
- arrange academic integrity courses and workshops for students at key times of the year on specific and relevant subject matter;
- encourage the use of leading practice in assessment design;

In respect of the above, *students* must understand that they are responsible to:

- understand and respect MANCOSA's policies and procedures regarding plagiarism, collusion, and other forms of academic misconduct and as such should only submit work for correction or academic credit that is their own or which properly acknowledges the ideas, interpretations, words or creative works of others;
- avoid the lending or making accessible original work to others without ensuring proper acknowledgement;
- be clear about the appropriate referencing rules that are applicable to their field of study;
- refuse to be a party to another student's efforts to undermine the academic integrity of MANCOSA; and
- seek assistance with their learning and assessment tasks if they are unsure of appropriate forms of acknowledgement.

### 3.3. Procedures for dealing with suspected plagiarism

Academic dishonesty and plagiarism are matters of serious concern to MANCOSA. At the same time MANCOSA is fully aware that unless it does its fair share of educating students about the negative consequences of academic dishonesty, it cannot respond to any transgression of plagiarism in a punitive manner. Consequently, MANCOSA has taken a firm decision to deal with questions of academic dishonesty in a proactive manner. In this regard, academic staff follow these procedures:

- If a staff member suspects plagiarism, then confront the student directly, as soon as possible, and without other students present.
- Objectively explain your understanding of the problem, avoiding accusations or use of the words cheating or plagiarism. Listen carefully to what the student has to say.
- If you are reticent to confront the student, talk to an experienced colleague or your department head. Ask to have them present if you feel it would be helpful.
- Ascertain that you know and understand MANCOSA's policy and procedures for academic honesty and plagiarism and the disciplinary process.
- Be prepared for pleas, excuses, and tales of hardship, and extenuating circumstances. Many students will tell you they didn't understand what constituted plagiarism, which is why it is so important to explain this at the beginning of class.
- If the student denies any wrongdoing, question him or her about specific aspects of the paper. If you've used plagiarism software such as 'Turnitin', you will be able to demonstrate sections in the paper matching items found in the database.
- Show sympathy if the student is distraught or upset. Make a referral to the student counselling service, if necessary.
- Explain what will happen next to the student. For many departments, this means referring the student to the Dean or the Principal for follow-up.
- Remember, that this policy recommends a 'learning process' approach. If all attempts to educate a student or staff fail, then the individual will have to be dealt with in terms of the MANCOSA disciplinary processes.

### **3.4. Levels of seriousness of plagiarism**

Deciding on the severity of an act of plagiarism involves professional judgement and the weighing of evidence on a case-by-case basis. Schedule A is designed to assist in determining the level of severity. There are three levels.

- 3.4.1.** Level I plagiarism constitutes conduct that is judged to be not deliberately dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic work and, therefore, is not academic misconduct.

Examples of plagiarism not found to be dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic output may be inadequate or misleading citation, referencing or paraphrasing, arising from a student's limited knowledge about plagiarism, or how to conform to academic conventions, or from carelessness or neglect rather than a deliberate intention to deceive the assessor. Greater leniency is provided to students in their first year of undergraduate study, or students who are returning to postgraduate study after many years and may be unfamiliar with recent conventions in this regard.

- 3.4.2.** Level II plagiarism constitutes conduct that is judged to be dishonest or deliberately misleading in connection with any academic output and, therefore, constitutes academic misconduct. It is more serious than Level I plagiarism and includes inappropriate or fraudulent acts or work arising from a student's ignorance of academic honesty or academic conventions (where adequate knowledge would have been expected), and where intention to deceive an assessor or cheat by way of plagiarism is apparent, but where the overall effect or consequence of the plagiarism does not significantly compromise the overall assessment process.

- 3.4.3.** Level III plagiarism is conduct that is judged to be dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic output. It is more serious than Level II plagiarism and includes crudely or nuanced copied or appropriated work arising from a clear and deliberate intention to deceive an assessor, or premeditated cheating by way of plagiarism, and where the effect or consequence of the plagiarism seriously compromises the overall assessment process.

- 3.4.4.** In determining the seriousness of an act of plagiarism, the following should be taken into consideration:

- (a) whether the plagiarism is dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic output;
- (b) the experience and seniority of the student;

- (c) the nature of the plagiarism;
- (d) the extent of the plagiarism; and
- (e) where evidence is available, the intention of the student to plagiarise.

A student's prior record of plagiarism should not be used to determine the level of seriousness of a new incident. However, prior records may be used to determine the most appropriate course of action in relation to a particular incident.

## **4. PROCEDURES**

This policy outlines the process of the management of plagiarism incidents.

### **4.1. Detecting, reporting and dealing with plagiarism by students in modules**

- 4.1.1** All staff are required to take action in respect to suspected plagiarism.
- 4.1.2** All suspected plagiarism cases that, if established, would not clearly be Level I plagiarism (i.e. may be dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic output) must be reported to the dean who will deal with the matter.
- 4.1.3** Suspected plagiarism that, if established, would clearly be Level I plagiarism (i.e. was not dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic output) must be reported to the relevant programme coordinator and module coordinator.
- 4.1.4** If the programme or module coordinator, and the staff member reporting the suspected plagiarism, decide that plagiarism has not occurred, there should be no further action.
- 4.1.5** If Level I plagiarism has occurred; the coordinator should inform the student of the fault in their work, provide the student with appropriate educational advice and provide the student with the opportunity to re-submit their work for assessment. The coordinator may also recommend the student attend counselling if they consider this would benefit the student. The coordinator then records the incident and details of educational advice and recommendations provided to the student for recording in the student record.
- 4.1.6** If Level II or Level III plagiarism is suspected, a formal student disciplinary process must be followed. Those processes should be recorded and documented.
- 4.1.7** An external examiner who suspects that plagiarism may have occurred should report the matter to the dean.

### **4.2. Detecting, reporting and dealing with plagiarism by honour's, master's Research Report or doctoral Research Report students**

- 4.2.1** On detecting possible plagiarism, a supervisor or examiner, in consultation with the Chair of the Research Committee, will decide whether plagiarism may have occurred and, if so, whether;
  - 4.2.1.1** It is clearly Level I plagiarism (i.e. it is not dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic output); or
  - 4.2.1.2** It is not clearly Level I plagiarism (i.e. it may be dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic output).
- 4.2.2** If, the supervisor or examiner decides that plagiarism has not occurred, there should be no further action.



- 4.2.3** If the supervisor or examiner decides that it is not clearly Level 1 plagiarism (i.e. that it may be dishonest or unfair in connection with any academic output), the supervisor or examiner must report the matter to the Research Department. The authorised officer is to deal with the matter and the processes should be recorded and documented.
- 4.2.4** If the supervisor decides that Level I plagiarism has occurred, the supervisor should inform the student of the fault in their work, provide the student with appropriate educational advice and provide the student with the opportunity to re-submit their work for assessment. The supervisor may also recommend the student attend an education course or counselling if they consider this would benefit the student. The incident and description of educational advice and recommendations provided to the student is then recorded by the supervisor and placed in the student's academic record.
- 4.2.5** An external examiner who suspects that plagiarism may have occurred should report the matter to the supervisor in accordance with 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 above.

### **4.3. Penalties**

- 4.3.1** No penalty is to be imposed for Level I plagiarism. The actions to be taken are described above.
- 4.3.2** The penalties to be imposed for Level II or Level III plagiarism, following a determination of academic misconduct, could constitute a written warning, counselling, suspension from studies for one or two semesters, or expulsion for category III offences where a student is a serial offender.
- 4.3.3** Those responsible for recommending or imposing penalties for Level II or Level III plagiarism (i.e. an Authorised Officer, the relevant student discipline panel, the dean) should have regard to the current practice at leading local higher education institutions.

Factors which may be considered in determining the outcome:

Mitigating factors (that may justify a less severe penalty):

- Offender under duress
- Degree of remorse and cooperation shown
- Role played by offender, if others involved

Aggravating factors (that may justify a more severe penalty):

- Student's previous plagiarism offences
- Degree of premeditation
- If the offending work was in final draft Research Report material or in a submitted Research Report

### **4.4. Appeals**

A student may submit a written appeal in relation to a finding of academic misconduct or penalty imposed for Level II or Level III plagiarism.

## **5. Annual Reporting**

Aggregated reports will be made available to Senate for the purposes of monitoring plagiarism management and may be published in academic works relating to academic integrity and plagiarism. These reports will not disclose the identity of individuals.

## **ANNEXURES**

### **Guidelines for the use of Turnitin (Adapted from Curtin University)**

#### **Overview/Background information**

MANCOSA makes use of 'Turnitin', a product used in support of academic integrity widely throughout the higher education sector worldwide. Turnitin scans submitted work and produces an 'originality' report which identifies matching text in other works.

#### **Models for the use of Turnitin**

Turnitin may be used in a number of ways. It may be used:

- in a formative mode, where students are able to access the system to upload and check work, gaining feedback on their writing; and/or
- as part of a summative assessment to help detect and locate the sources of plagiarised work in submitted assignments.

There are significant benefits in allowing students to use Turnitin in a formative mode as access to the Originality Report provided by the system raises student awareness of the issue of plagiarism and allows the student benefit directly and rapidly from this evaluation of their work. Giving students an understanding of how the system works also helps to demystify the process of plagiarism detection and potentially reduce any anxieties.

There is a danger, however in allowing students to repetitively submit the same assignment to Turnitin. This has been shown to lead to poor academic writing practice as it encourages instrumental approaches to paraphrasing (word substitution). One draft submission to Turnitin is normally sufficient, and allowing more than two draft submissions is not recommended.

Where Turnitin is used in a summative mode, at the end of the assignment, there are a number of issues relating to fair assessment. Blanket use of Turnitin for all students submitting that particular assignment is probably the most defensible approach as each student's work is subjected to the same level of scrutiny. Random sampling, whereby each student's work has an equal probability of being selected, may be used in situations where all students work has not been submitted through the Turnitin system at the time of assignment submission. Selected sampling of student work is likely to lead to complaints on equity grounds. Random and selected sampling approaches require the staff member to individually submit each assignment. This can be extremely time consuming and requires access to an electronic copy of the submitted work. If specific cases of plagiarism are identified in this process it may subsequently lead to a desire to review the entire cohort (with the concomitant workload necessary to complete this review).

None of the above removes the right for staff to individually check any single student item using Turnitin where plagiarism may be suspected.

If Turnitin is to be used, staff must ensure that students are treated fairly and equitably. Information as to how Turnitin is to be used should be made available at the earliest opportunity. At MANCOSA, module outlines are the means by which this is achieved.

#### **Known limitations of Turnitin**

Turnitin is able to scan a substantial set of databases, journals, web published material and other student submissions. It requires the submission of student work in a digital form in a common file format such as Word or PDF. Users of Turnitin should note that it is not able to match to sources such as:

- Books, unless these have been made available digitally;
- Material located in journals to which Turnitin does not subscribe;
- Text that has been converted to an image;

- Material located behind password protected sites such as intranets;
- Material generated by a translation engine from a non-English source;
- Images, mathematical equations, and certain types of computer code; and
- Essays that have been written by someone else ('ghost-writing').

Furthermore, the use of Turnitin is reasonably resource intensive in terms of the time required to manually review originality reports (as discussed later, equitable and defensible decisions for action cannot be based on the basis of the percentage score alone).

The system is subject to delays in processing at peak times, which can cause problems where work is submitted close to the deadline.

Finally, it should be observed that Turnitin does not evaluate the accuracy of a referencing style and is unable to impart or judge discipline specific conventions in referencing.

The decision to use Turnitin (or not) should be made with these points in mind.

### Review of Originality Reports

The Turnitin system is effectively a text matching tool, and the Originality Report identifies the section of text that match to another text source. A colour coded label is attached to each report to categorise the percentage of text matching that has occurred. This label should be used as a guide only as there is no threshold level at which plagiarism is deemed to have occurred. Reports that have been coded blue have been shown to be heavily plagiarised, whilst red reports may be entirely free of plagiarism.

Percentage	Match Colour Code
0%	Blue
1-24%	Green
25-49%	Yellow
50-74%	Orange
75% +	Red

The colour coded label must not be used as the sole basis for action. Instead, the Originality Report should be viewed to identify the nature of the text that is highlighted as matching another source. The following key points are particularly relevant when interpreting an originality report.

1. Correctly attributed quotations in text will increase the percentage match reported. Quoted sections can be removed from the analysis, but this will only work effectively if the quotation marks are in the correct place.
2. Certain aspects will match, such as correctly formed references. These can also be excluded from the analysis.
3. Small matches will occur where a sequence of words in submitted work happens to match with another source. Some 'innocent' matches of this nature are inevitable, and to some extent small matches can be ignored and excluded from the analysis. However, multiple small matches may indicate that a student has paraphrased from other works quite extensively and this possibility should be explored further.
4. Very low percentage matches in Originality reports (i.e. 0%, colour coded blue) are unusual, in that some parts would be expected to match in most cases (such as references, common phrases). Suspiciously low scores may arise where work has been repetitively submitted to Turnitin and edited to remove matching parts.
5. Very high percentage matches may arise where there is an excessive use of quoted work in the assignment. If properly referenced, this is not plagiarism. It is, however poor assessment practice if very little of the assignment is the students own work.

## **Requests for copies of matched work**

In an Originality report, Turnitin may report a match to an existing student paper in their database. These sources are not immediately visible to the reviewer and permission is required in order to access this work.

The following types of match are possible:

- A match to a student in another institution
- A match to a student at MANCOSA in a different module
- A match to a student at MANCOSA in the same module

Equally, MANCOSA may receive an external request from a third party in respect of work matching an item previously submitted by MANCOSA. Where the match is to student work at MANCOSA within the same module, student permission is not required. In all other cases, student work must not be divulged to third parties without the express written permission of the student concerned.

## **Removing material from Turnitin**

Deleting a paper, or a group of papers, from the Turnitin account does not remove the submission from the Turnitin database.

It is possible for work to be completely removed from Turnitin. However, the effectiveness of Turnitin depends on its ability to store copies of all documents submitted to it. This has the benefit of protecting a student's rights and intellectual property in the future. Under exceptional circumstances (such as in situations where the work is commercially sensitive) a student may request that a paper be removed from the database. Undergraduate work would not be expected to fall into this category under normal circumstances.

If a student believes that exceptional circumstances apply in their situation, they should make a formal request explaining their reasons to their module coordinator in the first instance.

Coordinators may elect to refer to the Teaching and Learning Department for advice.

## **Legal issues associated with Turnitin**

A copy of all work submitted to Turnitin will normally be retained on the Turnitin database for future text matching. This is reasonable and is probably in compliance with copyright, privacy and data protection laws.

## **Code of conduct**

Staff should be aware that any misuse of Turnitin may be seen as a breach of MANCOSA's Code of Conduct. Staff should use Turnitin in a manner that upholds personal and professional behaviours and not be party to any conflict of interest. Importantly, Turnitin should normally only be used by a staff member to process the work of students enrolled in modules in which they are actively teaching.

## **Password security**

Passwords should not be shared between users.

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