



## University of Rwanda: Academic Integrity, Plagiarism Control and Scientific Writing

### 1. Introduction

The University of Rwanda's (UR) mission is to support the development of Rwanda by discovering and advancing knowledge, committed to the *highest standards of academic excellence*, where students are prepared for lives of service, leadership and solutions. Hence, to achieve this mission, strategies to ensure high academic integrity must be put in place. The purpose of the guidelines in this document is to establish a systematic framework for deterring, controlling, detecting and dealing with plagiarism cases in academic writing.

This document includes a set of instructions to ensure academic integrity by reducing the chances of plagiarism at the University of Rwanda.

### 2. Scope

With the advance in technology and Internet, databases of research and other forms of information are easily accessed online. Therefore, this has significantly contributed to an increase in the number of plagiarism cases in digital learning environment, which in turn, hamper the academic integrity and quality of education. In order to tackle this problem, the University of Rwanda, not only continues to develop different policies and regulations for ensuring academic quality, it has also introduced a computer-based plagiarism control tool to support the academic community within this framework.

UR uses Turnitin® plagiarism control software used by many international higher learning institutions across the world to detect plagiarism. This document is the first set of instructions as part of a holistic and detailed UR Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Control Policy being developed.

The instructions elaborated in this document are in line with the following existing UR academic regulations, procedures and policies:

- Framework and regulations for higher degrees by research and regulations on cheating and plagiarism in research degrees. (B1.3. i, B3.2. i)
- General Academic Regulations for undergraduate programmes (Section V, 121, 122 & 123)
- Policy and Procedures on Academic Staff Appointments and Promotions (Point 2,3,5 and Appendix 2, 3& 4)
- Guidelines on Teaching Portfolio and Assessment Criteria (Point 3.8 & 3.9)

### 3. List of preliminary instructions for UR Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Control

***Instruction 1: Turnitin® Software Licenses for all Academic Staff***

- 1.1. Every UR Academic Staff Member shall receive a license for Turnitin® Software for online text matching that must be used as a support for controlling plagiarism and ensure high academic integrity at UR.
- 1.2. As licenses are renewed on a yearly basis, the renewal of Turnitin® shall be done in accordance with what will have been used in the year before and any new requests made by College Principals.
- 1.3. It is a responsibility of the Centre for Instructional Technology at UR to acquire and distribute Turnitin® licenses to the UR academic community.

***Instruction 2: Plagiarism check and declaration of originality***

- 2.1. All students' submissions including Essays, Dissertations, Course assignments and Internship reports must be checked for plagiarism using Turnitin®.
- 2.2. The system produces and stores Originality Reports on each submitted document and it is a responsibility of academics to analyse and reflect on whether a particular document is plagiarised or not.
- 2.3. Academic staff trained on the use of Turnitin® must start using it for checking students' submissions as outlined in 2.1.
- 2.4. A declaration of originality shall be filled and signed by each student before it can be sent together with the work submitted for marking.
- 2.5. An originality declaration form will be designed by the Centre for Instructional Technology in consultation with the University Director of Teaching and Learning Enhancement and the University Director of Research and Postgraduate Studies and then approved by the UR Senior Management Council.

***Instruction 3: Technical support for faculty and students***

- 3.1. As Turnitin® is newly introduced at UR, the School of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and the Centre for Instructional Technology will be responsible for providing timely and adequate support to faculty and students with access to and use of Turnitin® software.
- 3.2. The Centre for Instructional Technology shall provide a special training on Turnitin® for at least one focal staff member in each department who will assist in providing technical support to staff and students in the Department.

***Instruction 4: Plagiarism penalty scale based on similarity indexes***

- 4.1. In close consultation with the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research, the School of ODL and Centre for Instructional Technology shall develop the plagiarism penalty scales (frequency) from minor, moderate and high levels, and the associated actions or sanctions to related plagiarism cases.

4.2. Academics must deal with suspected cases of plagiarism in a fair and transparent manner by referring to the UR penalty scales. They must not turn a blind eye on any case of academic misconduct.

***Instruction 5: Academic integrity course for students***

5.1. Incoming students at UR starting a new programme shall be required to complete the online Academic Integrity Course (a compulsory but non-credit rated module) developed and availed online by the School of ODL in partnership with the Centre for Instructional Technology and other College level units in charge of curriculum development.

5.2. The aim of this course shall be to increase student knowledge on academic integrity, University regulations and rules of academic conduct, and the consequences of academic misconduct on individuals and the institution, with reputational risk for the sector.

5.3. This online course should be passed in the first year to prepare students for academic work.

5.4. Completion of the academic integrity course shall be recorded on a student's transcript.

5.5. Completion of the online course on academic integrity shall be a requirement in order to be awarded any academic degree, diploma or certificate by UR.

***Instruction 6: Priority course on plagiarism detection tool for academics***

6.1. After the initial preliminary training on Turnitin®, Colleges and Schools should immediately take responsibility to speed up the training of all faculty and E-learning Officers before the tool can be formally and compulsorily used to check students' work (Research Projects, Internship Reports and Assignments).

6.2. The Centre for Instructional Technology and School of ODL must collaborate with the Directorates of Teaching and Learning Enhancement in coordinating all the Academic Integrity course delivery to Colleges and Schools.

6.3. The completion of the Academic Integrity course shall be sanctioned with a certificate that will be considered as additional requirement for academic promotion.

***Instruction 7: Enhancement of Lecturers' and students' skills in Academic Writing***

7.1. UR Directorate of Library shall plan Courses on Computer-Based Reference Management Systems in collaboration with Colleges, Schools and Departments and the Centre of Instructional technology.

7.2. The Centre for Instructional Technology and the Library Directorate shall select tools for reference management systems that shall be recommended for integration as teaching tools in the research methods courses in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to equip students with adequate information literacy skills.

7.3. To increase skills in academic writing and citation styles, an online self-regulated learning tutorial shall be developed collaboratively by the Library Directorate and the Centre for Instructional Technology and be availed on the library website and UR E-learning platform.

***Instruction 8: Awareness on academic integrity guidelines and policy***

8.1. Strategies for creating an awareness of these instructions, the policy and the plagiarism control system available at UR shall be established for all incoming and on-going students.

8.2. Colleges, Schools and Departments shall ensure that the Academic Integrity Policy and Instructions are disseminated at Student Orientation and Staff induction times, Online Registration System, UR E-learning platform, Library Web Systems and at each course introduction.

8.3. The Centre for Instruction Technology and School of ODL shall assist in creating this awareness through institutional seminars and workshops under the coordination of the office of Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research.

***Instruction 9: Plagiarism Registration system***

9.1. UR shall maintain systematically a plagiarism database to facilitate a consistent application of penalties and disciplinary measures for identified cases of plagiarism.

9.2. This academic integrity database will serve as a reference to review and monitor the extent of plagiarism within the University.

9.3. To facilitate the registration process, a form for reporting plagiarism cases shall be designed by the Centre for Instructional Technology in collaboration with the University Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement, and be made available at the department level in all the Colleges.

***Instruction 10: Development and enforcement of Academic Integrity Policy***

10.1. Upon approval of these Instructions by the UR Senate, a detailed inclusive and informative 'UR Academic Integrity Policy' shall be developed under the supervision of the office of Deputy Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Research in consultation with Colleges, Centre of Instructional Technology, University Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement and the University Directorate for Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies.

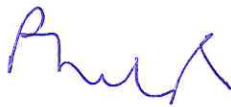
10.2. This UR Academic Integrity Policy shall be developed at institutional level and cascaded to College, School and Department levels.

10.3. To ensure this policy is enforced Academic Integrity Boards (Academic Disciplinary Boards) shall be stipulated in this policy and established at each College level. This governing body for academic integrity shall implement, support and monitor the adherence to the overall UR Academic Integrity Policy.

10.4. They shall also ensure that appropriate Schools and Department Level policies for plagiarism control are developed to reflect their specific study programmes and research areas.

10.5. All the above-mentioned organs to be involved in the UR Academic Integrity Policy at each level, shall recommend regular policy revision to accommodate changes in higher education as a result of emerging technologies.

Approved by the Senate of 13 July 2017



**Prof. Philip Cotton**

Vice Chancellor

