



ACADEMIC INTEGRITY FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Title

Review the **Academic Integrity Policy** to make provision for allowable text similarity index for the PG programs

Purpose

The purpose of the review is to use of appropriate technology as a measure to safeguard the integrity of the postgraduate programs at PNGUoT

Introduction

The academic integrity is one of the core values at the PNGUoT and the university is committed not only to safeguard it but also to create awareness among the students to realize the importance/value of it so that academic integrity becomes a part of the best practices of PNGUoT culture. In this context, it is important to train/educate the students in what constitute plagiarism and how to use appropriate tools/software to avoid inadvertent errors in their project write ups and/or thesis; and the consequences if they choose to be involved in it. In this respect the TLMU can play a vital role. This awareness will ultimately help to bring a change in attitude and in turn a culture to uphold/observe academic integrity.

The university has a policy on integrity that defined integrity including plagiarism, its scope and penalty for the breaches.

The purpose of this review is also to allow and encourage the students to use appropriate tools, like **TURNITIN** to check their assignments/thesis for anticipated inadvertent contents that might constitute plagiarism. Based on the similarity index report, the students would be able to re-check the document and update wherever necessary to fulfil the university integrity requirements. This similarity index report will also be a firsthand information in the disposal of the lecturers to make the determination on the status of the documents as to plagiarism is concerned and advise the students accordingly to make appropriate changes and/or probable reporting to the university academic integrity committee for any penalty.

This check and balance mechanisms would be useful and essential for the postgraduate thesis to uphold the quality and integrity of the PG programs. Even though software of the similarity check, like **TURNITIN** does not provide any indication of plagiarism, but it could be used as a firsthand information to the lecturers to make further determination.

Rationale

To maintain the academic integrity of the PG programs, it is time to review and further clarify the integrity policy in terms of acceptable similarity index for the PG thesis and/or assignments. The students would be encouraged to use appropriate software, like **TURNITIN** for all thesis and assignments to avoid any inadvertent materials in the thesis/assignment that might be in breach of the university integrity policy. Along with the policy guidelines, regular awareness about the anti-plagiarism targeting both the students and the staff would be a good prevention policy. The PNGUoT already is a subscriber of the TURNITIN software and as such readily available to both the students and staff. It would be useful and appropriate for the PG students to use TURNITIN without incurring any cost. The TURNITIN creates an originality report showing the degree of similarity between the contents of the submitted documents and the available resources in the database. However, there might be many more information that are not available to TURNITIN database, say for example printed books. Moreover, similarity index simply does not mean the plagiarized materials nor it can discard occurrence of plagiarism. Therefore, it is the lecturers themselves to check the similarity report and make the final determination. As the TURNITIN check the submitted documents against all possible internet materials as well as the TURNITIN database, students' assignment, etc. it would be appropriate to filter out the materials, like cove page, title page, acknowledgements, declaration of originality, contents, quotes, references/bibliography and a similarity of less than 5-6 words from the final report.

Recommendations

The PG Committee endorsed the following recommendations for the approval of the Academic Board to be implemented from 2020.

1. The allowable similarity index excluding cove page, title page, acknowledgements, declaration of originality, contents, quotes, references/bibliography and a similarity of less than 5 (five) words for PhD thesis would be a maximum of 10%.
2. The allowable similarity index excluding cove page, title page, acknowledgements, declaration of originality, contents, quotes, references/bibliography and a similarity of less than 5 (five) words for MPhil thesis would be a maximum of 12%.
3. The allowable similarity index excluding cove page, title page, acknowledgements, declaration of originality, contents, quotes, references/bibliography and a similarity of less than 5 (five) words for Course-based Masters programs thesis and assignments would be a maximum of 15%.
4. If the similarity index in a PG thesis from a single source is more than 5% without a citation, the contents should be revised, paraphrased.
5. The Principal Supervisor of PG students/lecturer (for any assignment) would make the final determination on the plagiarized materials based on the similarity index report as well as his/her own judgement. The Principal Supervisor/lecturer would make the appropriate recommendations to the PG Committee for any penalty as articulated in the university Integrity policy for any breach of integrity.
6. In case of PG thesis, the Principal Supervisor has to certify to the PG committee through the HOD that the particular thesis does not contain any plagiarized materials.

7. The Principal Supervisor of the PG students should provide all the possible supports including the use of anti-plagiarism software (TURNITIN) for the production of the final thesis
8. The PG School will inform all the PG students and Academic staff about the rules on the academic integrity and allowable similarity index for the PG thesis. Moreover, these rules will be integrated to the PG Calendar (PG Rules and Regulations) and uploaded to the PG School website.

Approval: This policy document on Academic Integrity for postgraduate programs was approved in the 207th PG Committee meeting on 31st October 2019 and 335th Academic Board Meeting of 15th November 2019 for implementation in 2020