

**Arab Open University**  
**Scheme of Plagiarism Penalties**

**Version 4**

## ***Introduction***

Plagiarism at AOU is considered as serious academic offenses and therefore dealt with stringently. Students and tutors alike are expected to comply with academic standards and rules for students' assessments that stress academic integrity.

## **Plagiarism:**

**Definition:** The Online Oxford English Dictionary definition of plagiarism is as follows:

- “The practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own.”
- “Plagiarism is another form of cheating which occurs when a student is working independently on an assignment (e.g. essays, reports, presentations) and presenting other people’s work as one’s own.”

Examples of plagiarism include copying from a single source or multiple sources using one or more of the following as the basis for the whole or good part of the assignment:

- 1) Published or unpublished books, articles or reports
- 2) The internet
- 3) The media (e.g. TV programmes, radio programmes or newspaper articles)
- 4) An essay from an essay bank
- 5) A piece of work previously submitted by another student
- 6) Copying from a text which is about to be submitted for the same assignment.

## **Academic Integrity:**

**Definition:** “Academic integrity is the moral code or ethical policy of academia.”

Academic integrity allows students and staff the freedom to build new ideas, knowledge and creative works while respecting and acknowledging the work of others. Academic integrity embraces the values of accuracy, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect. The University students are expected to take an active role on their own regarding the information they need to study, and to be honest in reporting their ideas and the ideas that are derived from others.

## **Academic Misconduct:**

**Definition:** “Academic misconduct is any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community.”

Academic misconduct includes a wide variety of behaviors such as cheating, plagiarism, altering academic documents or transcripts, gaining access to materials before they are intended to be available, and helping others to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The current plagiarism scheme of penalties and combating approach has been developed after a 6) Reporting process of considerable analysis of the implementation and outcome of the previous policy that was designed and floated for a number of years. The scheme reinforces that curbing plagiarism cannot be restricted to merely detecting but has to lead to measures that help students identify aspects of writing that amount to plagiarism and thus develop their skills in refraining from leaning on plagiarism to communicate their work of writing. It also acknowledges the institutional role in combating

plagiarism by having stricter enforcement and compliance measures by the teaching staff. This holistic approach in combating plagiarism coupled with a stretched leverage of benefit of doubt to the students as compared to that of the previous policy. The current policy aims to be able to develop a plagiarism free culture at AOU.

Implementation of plagiarism policy and plagiarism scheme of penalties at AOU rests on the following three principles:

- 1) **Academic Integrity:** Both students and staff are expected to observe the highest level of integrity to the academic work undertaken at AOU. At no point of time should students adopt methods wherein they indulge in academic malpractice such as plagiarism and contribute towards misjudgment of their actual learning outcome. Tutors are also expected to maintain highest standards in assessing student work and at all times and have no tolerance to plagiarism.
- 2) **Accountability:** Tutors assessing students work are accountable at AOU to ensure that no plagiarized student work is passed. Tutors are required to document any plagiarized work found and provide justified evidence of the same. All official forms for recording plagiarism numbers and implementation has to be maintained and produced when deemed necessary.
- 3) **Academic Judgement:** A blanket approach to defining plagiarism for all courses cannot be applicable always. The nature of certain courses e.g.; programming courses cannot be viewed for plagiarism with the same parameters as that of other courses and therefore the approach to defining what constitutes as plagiarism will be different. Since manual detection of plagiarism can be a lengthy and complicated process especially when it involves large volume of students work, electronic detection using

plagiarism software is a feasible option. However, relying on it solely may not be the best option and therefore combination with manual analysis, nuanced academic judgement and clear processes must provide the means to determine if plagiarism has occurred.

The following is the generic plagiarism scheme for all University programmes, except for the Information Technology and Computing (ITC) programme of the Faculty of Computer Science (FCS). The specific FCS scheme of penalties is shown after this section.

<b>Offense (1st time)</b>	<b>Penalty</b>	<b>Further Action</b>	
	<b><i>Proposed deduction of marks</i></b>	<b><i>Preventive measures</i></b>	<b><i>Documentation</i></b>
Plagiarized/copied : 0 to 30%	Assessment is marked normally, except for the plagiarized section. The tutor should comment on it.	Student is directed to refer to plagiarism tutorial.	
Plagiarized/copied : Over 30%	Award 0 mark	Student is directed to refer to plagiarism tutorial and test.	Formal warning in addition to placing the incident in the student's record.

Purchased assignment/contract cheating	Award 0 mark	Student is directed to refer to plagiarism tutorial and test.	Formal warning in addition to placing the incident in the student's record.
Collusion: Similarity level > 50%	No marks will be awarded for the questionable (colluded) section.	Student is directed to refer to plagiarism tutorial and test.	Formal warning in addition to placing the incident in the student's record.
Collusion: Similarity level < 50%	Award 0 mark		Formal warning in addition to placing the incident in the student's record.

Following is the plagiarism penalty scheme for the FCS (pursuant to the nature of the course).

## **FCS – Plagiarism Penalties**

### **All level 2/5 and 3/6 modules follow the same rules**

Similarity ratios and their corresponding penalties are as follows:

- 1) Similarity between [30% - 49%]: deduct 30% of the marks
  - 2) Similarity between [50% - 69%]: deduct 50% of the marks
  - 3) Similarity between [70% - 89%]: deduct 70% of the marks
  - 4) Similarity between [90% - 100%]: Students get zero
- All papers with similarity ratio  $\geq 70\%$  should be subject to extra academic judgment from the tutor.
  - For papers with similarity  $< 30\%$ , the tutor has the right to academically judge the percentage of the undiscovered plagiarism (if exist), hence taking the proper action.
  - If the assessment contains a part that is most likely to result in similar/identical students' answers, this part should be excluded from the similarity percentage.
  - In case of similarity between students from different branches, both submissions should be investigated for the same penalty.
  - It is the tutor's full responsibility to implement the above rules and to provide rationale on the student feedback form.

### **First Offense:**

### **Implementation:**

- The primary responsibility of detecting plagiarism in student work would remain with the individual tutor who should always use his specialist knowledge and academic judgment in deciding on what is and what is not plagiarism.
- Tutors are advised to discuss plagiarized assessment with the course coordinator and to properly document all incidences of plagiarism of each section.
- The Branch Course Coordinators and as part of their monitoring roles are expected to regularly check random samples of students' assessments/section.
- Branch Course Coordinators should monitor the process of marking TMAs and other formative assessments encourage tutors to report plagiarism as some of the new tutors may not be aware of the University policy regarding plagiarism or how to handle such cases.
- Branch Course coordinators should monitor tutors' feedback on TMAs and other forms of formative assessments more rigorously, and ensure that no instance of plagiarism which can be detected by a tutor is overlooked, and to give appropriate feedback and provide the necessary support.
- The General Course Coordinators play an important role in internal quality are expected to carefully check assessments samples from the different AOU Branches and provide prompt feedback to the BCCs.

**Reporting:** All cases of plagiarism will be recorded in the plagiarism record sheet and reported by the tutors to the respective Branch Course Coordinator.

**Recording:** All cases of plagiarism will be recorded in the student's permanent record (SIS).

**Second Offense:**



Student get a 0 mark in TMA in addition to reduction of course overall grade to pass mark only.

**Third Offense:**

Failure in the course.

**Repeated Offense:**

To be dealt with according to **the Bachelor's Degree Award Examination and Assessment Bylaws at the Arab Open University, Article 12**, which stipulates:

- A) Any student found to be committing any act of cheating or plagiarism shall be referred to ***The Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures Bylaws at the Arab Open University.***
- B) The following acts represent cases of cheating and plagiarism:
- 1) Verbatim copying of printed or Internet material, and submitting them as part of TMAs without proper academic documentation.
  - 2) Copying other students' notes or reports.
  - 3) Using paid or unpaid material prepared for the student by individuals or firms.
  - 4) The use of materials or tools that are prohibited in examinations, or attempting to do so.

**General Instructions:**

- Evidence of student record of plagiarized work must be carefully stored and protected for a minimum of two semesters from the time of detection.
- Plagiarism trends must be observed amongst students in the categories of, repeated offenders, gender specific, age, course/programme etc.