

**MUHIMBILI UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH AND ALLIED SCIENCES**



**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR THE USE OF ANTIPLAGIARISM  
SOFTWARE**

**October 2021**

**1.1 Background**

Plagiarism undermines the quality of research globally, plagiarism may be intentional with deliberate efforts and non-intentional when there is limited understanding of authors particularly those in training. Most developed countries have put in place strategies to curb the growing problem of plagiarism and these include awareness creation among students and academic staff, enhanced research training and mentorship to improve scholarly writing, use of antiplagiarism software to detect plagiarism. Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences which is the largest medical school of in Tanzania could also be faced with the problem of plagiarism, as a result of an increase in number of students with limited number of academic staff/supervisors. Thus if thoroughly investigated there could be various research misconduct including plagiarism which requires appropriate measures. Therefore, MUHAS is currently establishing measures to strengthen the quality of research and these have included preparation of policies to guide research for students such as Research Integrity and conflict interest, post-graduate guideline, professionalism, and now these standard operating procedures for antiplagiarism which will also guide the use of antiplagiarism software for faculty, undergraduates, postgraduates, clinicians and researchers at MUHAS.

## **1.2 Rationale**

MUHAS being a reputable university with capacity of conducting credible research which has resulted in national and international policy change, needs to maintain its integrity by ensuring quality research free of plagiarism.

The quality of research outputs, which is free of plagiarism, calls for efforts for raising awareness among staff and use of tools for detection. The University shall prepare guideline to promote awareness about plagiarism, determine acceptable level of plagiarism and code of conducts for detection and remedial actions.

## **1.3 Purpose and Context**

Strengthening the quality of researches conducted at MUHAS is the goal the university management has emphasized throughout her existence since research is one of the core activities in addition to teaching and consultancy. MUHAS is also entrusted with the task of conducting research training through its various programs, therefore observing fundamental principles of research conduct including integrity and professionalism necessary. Plagiarism undermines the quality of research, thus increasing awareness of plagiarism and creating initiatives for timely detection are of paramount importance. This standard guideline provide guidance on measures to prevent plagiarism, threshold for plagiarism, use of antiplagiarism

software for students and measures to be taken once plagiarism is detected for scholarly works prepared by MUHAS students and staff.

#### **1.4 Scope of the antiplagiarism Standard Operating Procedures**

This SOP is applicable to all MUHAS staff and students involved in research and academic activities requiring maintenance of integrity inline with all reports, assignments, publications produced by MUHAS staff, students and researchers. All units, departments, schools and directorates will be responsible for ensuring this SOP is implemented and standards of antiplagiarism are observed at all time. The implementation of this SOP shall be kept under regular review by the Directorate of Research and Publications.

#### **1.5 Standard Operating Procedures Objectives and Outcomes**

The main objective of these Standard Operating Procedures are to establish principles and procedures for preventing plagiarism at MUHAS and to create conducive environment to support learners to acquire skills necessary for producing credible and plagiarism free research outputs. To achieve these goals, the specific objectives of the SOPs are to:

- i. Create awareness on plagiarism to all MUHAS staff and students
- ii. Facilitate detection of plagiarism from all research products at MUHAS using anti-plagiarism software and ensure all scholarly activities are meeting the pre-determined plagiarism threshold.
- iii. Provide measures to assist staff and students who are not meeting the agreed plagiarism threshold at MUHAS.

The following outcomes are expected to be attained with the implementation of the SOP at MUHAS;

- i. The Staff and students at MUHAS will be aware of plagiarism and its impact on research activities.
- ii. All University research outputs will meet the plagiarism threshold which will be ensured by use of antiplagiarism software.

## **2.0 DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

1	<b>Academic integrity</b>	Means the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner.
2	<b>Academic staff</b>	means teaching staff, research fellow and librarian of the University.
3	<b>Acknowledgement</b>	means appropriately referencing or citing the source of information being presented.
4	<b>Electronic Material</b>	Information documents that are in digital format.
5	<b>Library</b>	University Library that contains books and periodicals in both printed and non-printed format
6	<b>Researcher</b>	A Bona fide student or faculty of MUHAS who carries out academic or scientific research
7	<b>Plagiarism</b>	Is the copying of other people's work (ideas, writings, structures, designs, images, plans, code, ...) or one's own previously written work, without adequate source references either in an identical or slightly adjusted fashion.
8	<b>Scholarly Work</b>	Proposal, thesis, project, term paper, written assignment, research work, fiction work, reports, or any other literary work that has been written and submitted for either assessment, academic qualification or publication.
9	.Similarity index	The percentage of overlap between text submitted to plagiarism detection and that in original source material.
10	<b>Supervisor</b>	A member of staff who directs and oversees the work of a research student

### 3.0 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE STATEMENTS

The SOPs statements are presented in seven thematic issues followed by the operational procedures under each statement.

### **3.1 SOP Statement I: Types of Plagiarism**

**There are different types of plagiarism:**

**Copy and paste or Direct plagiarism:** This is more or less the only kind of plagiarism that is quickly recognizable and named as a plagiarism. When the author finds a useful source and copies a portion of that and changing the name of the author.

**Disguised Plagiarism:** this is when text from a source is copied and then some effort is exerted in order to disguise the copy. Words may be removed or added, word order is changed, or even an attempt at paraphrase may be undertaken. However, source is not given or only given for a part of the text taken, this is still considered to be plagiarism.

**Plagiarism by translation:** When a text is taken from one language and translated, either manually or with the help of an automatic translation system and use without the source being named, then we speak of plagiarism by translation.

**Accidental Plagiarism:** when you present information for your sources but forget to include citations.

**Mosaic Plagiarism:** patchwork paraphrasing refers to obtaining content from a various sources catering to the same topic of interest and rephrasing the sentences, switching words, using synonyms and improvising on the grammar styles to finally producing one's own research paper without citing the sources.

**Paraphrasing without giving a credit to Authors Plagiarism:** when you change the wording of your sources information without giving due credit.

**Self-plagiarism:** the author of the research paper reuses his own previous work to produce a new work.

### **3.2 SOP Statement II: Plagiarism prevention measures**

The Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences shall enforce the use and maintenance of software to detect levels of plagiarism in documents submitted for reviews or for examinations by postgraduate (thesis/dissertation) and undergraduate (elective reresearch) students. Staff submitting manuscripts and consultation reports shall also use this piece of software to maintain the institution's reputation and credibility at the international level.

The following procedure can help to prevent plagiarism<sup>1</sup>

1. All authors (students and staff) must maintain a list of the sources they consult in their write-ups for research and reporting in correct context.
2. When writing authors should always try to paraphrase and cite the resources used in addition to their own ideas without disturbing the actual meaning.
3. Authors should always acknowledge the original writer of the source they are referencing inside their main document body and at the end of the document, where they provide a list of bibliographic items cited.
4. Authors should always make use of plagiarism detection software before submitting their document to evaluate if the document is in keeping with the university policy/SOP/threshold for anti-plagiarism.
5. The committee will undertake periodic training on plagiarism to both staff and students
6. The committee shall undertake surveys to review compliance of plagiarism with the institution over intervals of time,

### **3.3 SOP Statement III: Threshold of plagiarism**

There is no standard threshold of plagiarism applicable to all institutions in the world, since all writings may contain certain words from other sources including own work. MUHAS shall accept overall similarity index of  $\leq 30\%$  and similarity index of  $\leq 5\%$  from single source

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<sup>1</sup> Stabingis, L., Šarlauskienė, L., & Čepaitienė, N. (2014). Measures for plagiarism prevention in students' written works: case study of ASU experience. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 110, 689-699.

in the Turnitin Originality Reports for proposals, MSc dissertations, PhD theses, manuscripts accompanying dissertations, books etc.

### **3.3.1 Threshold of plagiarism procedures**

- i) All scholarly materials at MUHAS prepared by students and staff shall be subjected to Turnitin online anti-plagiarism software to check text matching with existing documents.
- ii) Presence or absence of plagiarism in the document requires careful interpretation by the authors, supervisors, HoDs and other responsible persons because the Turnitin report suggests matching of the texts (similarity) but does not confirm plagiarism.
- iii) All proposals from students and staff submitted to IRB for ethical clearance shall be accompanied with the Turnitin originality reports prepared by the HoD or any person assigned by the HoD or School/Institute to run Turnitin anti-plagiarism check.
- iv) All MSc dissertations and PhD theses submitted to the DPGS shall be accompanied with the Turnitin originality reports prepared the HoD or any person assigned by the HoD or School/Institute to run Turnitin anti-plagiarism check
- v) Turnitin originality test report submitted by the HoD indicates four groups of similarity index: 0 %, 1-24%, 25-49%, 50-74% and 75-100%.
- vi) High similarity index in the Turnitin originality reports does not always represent plagiarism. Authors, supervisors and HoDs shall review the matched text to confirm if there is Plagiarism or not and act accordingly.
- vii) All proposals, MSc dissertations, PhD thesis and other scholarly materials at MUHAS shall be considered to pass anti-plagiarism check if the Turnitin originality reports show a similarity index of  $\leq 30\%$  and the similar texts are cited and referenced accordingly.
- viii) High similarity index in the cited materials copied with permission, references, bibliographies, table of contents, preface, acknowledgement, names, book titles, laws, standard symbols and standard equations are not considered as plagiarism if they represent the primary source.

- ix) Threshold of similarity index for manuscripts accompanying MSc dissertations can be negotiated between supervisor and students after thorough inspection of each single matching depending on the requirement of the journal.
- x) Threshold of similarity index for elective reports, undergraduate research projects, practical reports etc can be negotiated between the supervisors and the HoDs after thorough inspection of each single matching and careful interpretation.
- xi) Authors, Supervisors and HoDs shall ensure that all matched texts in the documents are cited and referenced accordingly before submission.
- xii) Plagiarism in unpublished materials can't be detected by Turnitin online software because it is limited to online sources. Supervisors and HoDs shall use their experience to detect plagiarized texts from unpublished materials like dissertation, thesis, previous elective reports etc.
- xiii) Authors, Supervisors and HoDs shall check incorrect synonyms, grammatical and typographical errors because they tend to mask detection of plagiarism by lowering similarity index.
- xiv) Supervisors and HoDs shall check translational (copied from original source in different language), figure, images, and diagrams plagiarism. Google scholar can help to detect translational plagiarism.

#### **3.4 SOP Statement IV: Consequences of plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a violation of trust and directly impinges upon academic integrity, which is a fundamental tenet of all University outputs. Plagiarism can destroy student, professional and academic reputation as well as legal and monetary repercussions.

The Directorate of Research and publications and its affiliates, supervisors and heads of Department will all be in a position to detect plagiarism due to laid down procedures for submission of scholarly materials. Once plagiarism is suspected, the claim should be forwarded to the DRP's office with the accompanying plagiarism software report. The DRPs office will review each of the flagged cases individually and request the authors to explain in written format the observed discrepancies.



If plagiarism or attempts at plagiarism are confirmed, it may have serious consequences for the student. If the suspicion is justified, subject to Universities Act, rules and guidelines, may lead to automatic fail in the subject or course. This may necessitate grade penalties or a complete re-sit of the course if it involves citing a source in the text but forgetting to add it to the reference list or paraphrasing an idea from a source without citing it. Depending on the extent and seriousness of confirmed plagiarism, punitive measures taken may also include a complete discontinuation from studies and expulsion from the University if it involves plagiarizing parts of different sources to create a new work and passing it off as your own or submitting a paper written by someone else.

There is no limitation for right to annulment from the exam or course. Therefore, plagiarism can be investigated long after it has taken place and even after one has left the university. If a decision to annul an exam or assessment on the grounds of plagiarism is upheld, transcripts and any conferred degree must be returned to the University.

Consequence for an academician or a researcher can involve retraction of previous published work, banned from future contribution to the journal and even hesitancy of sponsors to fund a staff future research work.

### **3.5 SOP Statement V: Use of software for detecting plagiarism**

The Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences shall enforce and appoint a contact person to manage the plagiarism software and keep it up to date and accessible to the staff and students who want to use it.

The contact person will report to the committee the number of first submissions of the documents and the amount of plagiarism in their final submissions.

The committee will use this report from time to time to gauge institution compliance regarding plagiarism levels.

The currently recommended software is *TURNITIN* which will be available at URL <https://iauthenticate.muhas.ac.tz/>

The preferred software may be changed as deemed necessary by the plagiarism committee.

The following procedures shall be followed by postgraduates and students

- Enter the provided URL to submit documents to be accessed for plagiarism
- Retrieve the plagiarism report
- If the plagiarism level exceeds 30%, which is the minimum acceptable threshold, consider revising your document
- Submit again until the document is within the required threshold
- At this moment, you will now be able to submit your documents to the DPGS or DRP
- All proposals and thesis of students must attach a certified plagiarism report from the MUHAS suggested software
- It is mandatory for all applications for ethical approval by academicians and researchers to attach a **certified plagiarism report at DP office** from the MUHAS suggested software before submission to REIMS the ethics application portal.

Any students or staff submitting a document with unacceptable levels of plagiarism shall be subject to disciplinary action by the MUHAS administration via the plagiarism committee.

The following procedures shall be followed by MUHAS staff

- Enter the provided URL to submit documents to be accessed for plagiarism
- Retrieve the plagiarism report
- If the plagiarism level exceeds **30%**, which is the minimum acceptable threshold, consider revising your document
- Submit again until the document is within the required threshold
- At this moment, you will now be able to submit your documents to the REIMS system for ethical approval, to a journal of your preference or any other intended destination.

- All proposals and thesis of students must attach a certified plagiarism report from the MUHAS suggested software
- It is mandatory for all applications for ethical approval by academicians and researchers to attach a certified plagiarism report from the MUHAS suggested software before submission to REIMS the ethics application portal.
- Any staff submitting a document with unacceptable levels of plagiarism shall be subject to disciplinary action by the MUHAS administration via the plagiarism committee.

#### **4.0 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE STATUS**

Standard Operating Procedures for the use of antiplagiarism software is the new document at MUHAS. It will be approved by the MUHAS Senate and may be reviewed in the future based on the experience from the users.

#### **5.0 KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

A: The stakeholders who were consulted during formulation of these procedures include the following:

- i. Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors
- ii. Deans and Directors
- iii. Students and Staff
- iv. Projects Investigators (PIs)
- v. Senate of Reseach Publication Committee (SRPC) members

B: The main stakeholders of these Standard Operating Procedures are:

- i. All MUHAS staff and students
- ii. Deans and Directors
- iii. Heads of Departments and Administrative units
- iv. Collaborating institutions and researchers working with MUHAS staff and students

## 6.0 APPROVAL DETAILS:

The procedure was approved by university senate on its .....meeting.

## 7.0 ENDORSEMENT DETAILS

The University Senate endorsed this procedure on its ..... meeting

## 8.0 RELATED LEGISLATION

MUHAS charter of incorporation dated February 2007.

## 9.0 RELATED POLICIES

- i. MUHAS Policy on Research Integrity and Conflict of Interest
- ii. MUHAS guideline for Postgraduate studies

## 10.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- i. DRP Strategic Plan
- ii. MUHAS Reports

## 11.0 EFFECTIVE DATE FOR THE PROCEDURES

Unless otherwise determined by the approving body, the procedures shall become effective from the date it is approved by the University Senate/Council.

## 12.0 NEXT REVIEW DATE

The MUHAS antiplagiarism Standard Operating Procedures will be reviewed after every three years or when deemed necessary to assess the effectiveness of their implementation and determine areas that need to be revised. The periodic review will ensure the procedures are in line with the University, national and international changes that might have taken place.

## 13.0 PROCEDURES OWNER

The University Council shall own the MUHAS antiplagiarism Standard Operating Procedures.

## 14.0 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AUTHOR

The Directorate of Research and Publications of the University

#### 15.0 CONTACT PERSON

The contact person for issues related to the Office of Sponsored Projects Standard Operating Procedures shall be:

Director of Research and Publications

Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences

P.O. Box 65001

United Nations Road, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania