



PLAGIARISM POLICY - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Plagiarism remains as one of the most important issues that compromises the quality of the learning outcome of students. The university in its effort to maintain standards in learning environment and enhancing the learning outcome takes serious cognizance of this issue of plagiarism as limiting factor and therefore has been working towards addressing this issue since its very inception.

Arab Open University Definitions of cheating and plagiarism:

According to the Arab Open University Bylaws, “the following acts represent cases of cheating and plagiarism:

- Verbatim copying of printed material and submitting them as part of TMAs without proper academic acknowledgement and documentation.
- Verbatim copying of material from the Internet, including tables and graphics.
- Copying other students’ notes or reports.
- Using paid or unpaid material prepared for the student by individuals or firms.
- Utilization of, or proceeding to utilize, contraband materials or devices in examinations”.

To address this issue of plagiarism the university has put in place an action plan that blankets the role of all key players in addressing the issue of plagiarism and the implementation of the same is in effect and is an ongoing process.

- 1. Plagiarism detection software:** plagiarism detection softwares has been in use across the branches for the last few years, namely Turnitin and ‘Copy catch’ soft-wares; however, the level of implementation of these devices varied from one branch to another. Some problems and limitations were identified by the members of staff using the plagiarism detection soft-wares. The Copy - Catch is reported to be ineffective at large. The university is currently applying the use of Turnitin across all the University branches for all taught

programmes as it has been reported as the most valid and reliable software. The software package includes training sessions for staff members. In addition, it allows the students to test whether their own writing includes plagiarized material through plagiarism detection test, which provides immediate feedback regarding plagiarism trouble spots within their assignments.

2. **Awareness:** AOU strongly believes that technical solutions would solve only part of the problem and to root out plagiarism it needs to develop a culture wherein students understand what plagiarism is and how one could avoid it and where issues of academic integrity and codes of honor are well emphasized. For this purpose, presentations and brochures are developed and distributed to the branches and posted on the University website. A similar presentation is also prepared setting guidelines and strategies to the Academic staff members to help them address plagiarism in an efficient and professional way. The branches across emphasize on creating an awareness on plagiarism and hence the academic staff and the quality assurance units across branches aggressively contribute to emphasize on the imposition of penalty as a deterrent and educate students on recognizing the act of plagiarism itself.
3. **Improving Monitoring processes:** Branch Course coordinators should monitor tutors' feedback on TMAs more rigorously, and ensure that no instance of plagiarism which can be detected by a tutor is overlooked. Faculties are required to monitor the contribution of Branch Course coordinators to combat plagiarism and cheating and give appropriate feedback and provide the necessary support. Each branch is required to make sure that plagiarism and cheating is properly discussed at the student and tutors orientation at the start of each semester. As a part of orientation, all students should be taught about proper referencing, the boundary between plagiarism and legitimate quoting.
4. **Plagiarism form:** Starting from the first semester 2011, all TMAs contain a standard cover sheet that inform the students about plagiarism, its penalties and that all TMAs are subjected to plagiarism detection devices. In addition, students have to sign an undertaking that their TMAs are not plagiarized.
5. The content of Self Learning Skills Course (GR101), which is one of the University's General mandatory requirement course reviewed and restructured to provide students with extensive skills in writing, quoting and referencing as well as information about ethical behavior and academic integrity.
6. **Workshops:** Specific workshops are organized for developing staff skills in dealing with plagiarism in addition to students and tutors induction programmes. The VPAA Office is arranging with an international expert in the subject matter to organize series of meetings and workshops for the AOU staff.
7. **Penalty on plagiarism:** A standard plagiarism penalty is applied across branches as per Article 12 of Examination and Assessment Bylaw and Student Conduct and Disciplinary

Procedures Bylaw, which were revisited and modified to be more explicit with regard to plagiarism on TMAs. Penalties include the following:

- 1) Deducting marks for all plagiarized TMAs according to AOU published plagiarism policy in serious cases. Penalties may include deduction of marks and awarding zero mark for failure in the course or dismissal from the University subject to the decision of the higher disciplinary board as per approved policies and procedures as specified in the Student Conduct and Disciplinary Bylaw.
- 2) Documentation of plagiarism incident in student record.
- 3) Failure in the course to dismissal from the University.

All University programmes are required to apply penalties that are consistent with the University bylaws.

Examples of Plagiarism:

Copying from a single or multiple sources.

This is where the student uses one or more of the following as the basis for the whole, or a 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

Procedures for handling plagiarized cases:

- The tutor must discuss all plagiarized TMAs with the course coordinator as tutor's discretion and a collective academic judgment is very important in assessing TMA.
- The tutor and the course coordinator have the authority to decide on the specified penalties as per the university bylaws.
- On detection of a plagiarized assignment, the respective tutor has to mark the TMA as plagiarized by attaching the duly filled plagiarism form. This is to protect the tutor from any arbitrary dispute arising thereof on part of the student.
- If the TMA that has more than 30% of its content plagiarized either from internet or any other identifiable source it will be awarded a zero.
- Instances wherein the above examples of plagiarized cases do not apply, the tutor needs to use academic judgment and ensure that no more than 30% of the TMA is questionable. In

case the tutor's discretion in consultation with the course coordinator results in more than 30% of the TMA being plagiarized then the tutor is authorized to award a zero.

- In instances, wherein a tutor finds randomly plagiarized parts (from any source) in a TMA amounting to less than 30%, the tutor is required to comment on the plagiarized sections.
- TMAs comprising of more than one topic, each of the topics have to be treated independently for plagiarism. i.e. if topic one is plagiarized then it deserves a zero and not the other.

Please note that Tutor's discretion in marking is of utmost importance in judging a TMA fairly.