



PLAGIARISM POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Da Vinci Institute is a registered private higher education provider with accredited programmes offered in the distance mode of delivery. The Institute offers qualifications on NQF levels five to ten, which appear on the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). This policy forms part of the institutional Integrated Quality Management System and details the principles for ensuring that programme offerings adhere to required academic standards and empower students to contribute to the transformation of their communities, society, and the economy of the future. This approach is underpinned by the Business- and Community-based Action Learning discourse on the co-creation and distribution of relevant knowledge.

The digital revolution allows for greater access to research resources, in particular, electronic resources, which has resulted in an increase of plagiarism cases being reported in higher education. Typically, the reason for this, is that students are not familiar with the correct referencing conventions and are unaware of the seriousness and consequences of submitting work that is not the student's own. The Institute places a high value on ethics and integrity and as a result, plagiarism is prohibited and any and all cases of alleged plagiarism will be viewed in a serious light.

The Institute prides itself in acknowledging the importance of cultivating well-informed and well-balanced business leaders who will be ethical and who will operate with integrity. The notion of co-creating knowledge assumes that students will engage the voices of others, but with the necessary recognition of such contributions.

The accomplishment of the above, necessitates a Plagiarism Policy to ensure the integrity and credibility of the academic content submitted by students and staff to be assessed by The Institute's academic role-players.

2. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Plagiarism	Plagiarism is defined as the act of using the ideas, arguments, writings, inventions or words of another as if they were ones' own without acknowledging and/or referencing the source.
Academic misconduct	In the research environment, academic misconduct entails any practice that constitutes a serious deviation from what is generally accepted within the scientific community in the submission, performance and reporting of research or any other written work submitted for assessment purposes.
Copyright Infringement	Copyright infringement is the use of works under copyright, infringing the copyright holder's exclusive rights such as the right to reproduce, distribute, display or perform the copyrighted

Term	Definition
	work, or to make derivative works without permission from the copyright holder, which is typically a publisher or other business representing or assigned by the work's creator.

3. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy is benchmarked against, and should be read in the context of the relevant legislation underpinning the principles against which institutional policies, processes and standard operational procedures are developed, implemented and maintained. These include:

A. Relevant Legislation

- I. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 (1996)
- II. Criteria for Programme Accreditation (CHE, 2004)
- III. Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide (CHE)
- IV. Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997)

B. Applicable Da Vinci documents and other guidelines

- I. D15 - Conducting Ethical Research Policy
- II. D18 - Invigilated Assessment Policy
- III. D19 - Assessment and Moderation Policy
- IV. E1 - Code of Conduct Policy
- V. E4 - Student Representative Council Policy
- VI. Student Contract
- VII. Onboarding Guide
- VIII. King IV™ Code.

4. SCOPE

The policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and academic work submitted to The Institute. It further applies to all and every Da Vinci stakeholder (e.g. academic role-players, namely students, clients/sponsors, staff, including facilitators, moderators, examiners, supervisors, subject matter experts and learning material designers).

5. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy includes the following:

- a) Defining and describing what is meant by plagiarism
- b) Guiding students and other Da Vinci stakeholders in the use of knowledge sources or intellectual property of others

- c) Recording The Institute's approach towards plagiarism and outlining the procedures that apply when alleged plagiarism is suspected.

6. POLICY STATEMENT

- a) Plagiarism constitutes academic misconduct and all cases of plagiarism are deemed unethical, which will result in disciplinary actions, and the penalty will depend on the seriousness and level of the infringement
- b) 'Plagiarism' refers to any attempt to benefit oneself, or another by deceit or fraud by deliberately reproducing the work of another person or persons without due acknowledgement
- c) Submissions with similarity indexes above the acceptable percentage per NQF levels, (approximately 25% at NQF level 5, 20% at NQF level 6, 15% at NQF level 7 and 10% at postgraduate level) may be scrutinised for potential plagiarism. The responsibility lies with the student to check that the similarity is within an acceptable range before final submission.
- d) No more than 10% of a student's work submitted can consist of direct quotes
- e) The Institute reserves the right to take action on any evidence of plagiarism. In such cases the burden of establishing otherwise shall rest with the party against whom such an allegation is made
- f) The Student Contract requires students to read and confirm their understanding of the Plagiarism Policy
- g) All Students have access to the following resources and services for support and assistance:
- I. The Knowledge Officer (Librarian)
 - II. The Student Support Lead
 - III. Harvard Referencing guide
 - IV. Academic Writing guide
 - V. Academic Writing interventions, such as referencing and paraphrasing workshops and webinars.
 - VI. Similarity software that is utilised to provide students with continued personalised feedback on improper citation or potential plagiarism by comparing their work against the world's largest academic database, using pattern recognition algorithms. The purpose of this feedback is to serve as a developmental tool to assist students in avoiding plagiarism. The Institute will support and assist students in mastering paraphrasing and referencing techniques to avoid plagiarism, however, students carry the full responsibility in this regard and should actively seek assistance from The Institute when needed to avoid plagiarism.
- h) On final submission, a Similarity Report is generated, that is checked by the relevant Assessor/Facilitator and/or the Learning Co-ordinator. Should plagiarism be suspected, the Learning Co-ordinator refers the submission to the Registrar. The Registrar evaluates and investigates the matter and takes the relevant action according to policy.
- i) In addition, all cases of alleged plagiarism identified by any method or means will be presented to the Registrar for evaluation, and the relevant action will be taken

7. LEVELS OF PLAGIARISM

The Institute encourages students to debate ideas with others for the purpose of refining their arguments. All submissions must however be the original work of the student.

At any Postgraduate level, students are expected to be well-versed in Academic writing requirements. Consequently, non-acknowledgement, inaccurate acknowledgement or insufficient paraphrasing, for any coursework material, will immediately result in a level two (2) offence. For any research component, the transgression will be considered a level three (3) offence (see Table below).

The levels of plagiarism are categorised into four (4) levels. These levels are described in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Levels of Plagiarism

Level 1:	
Type of offence:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-acknowledgement or inaccurate acknowledgement and citation – first time offence • Insufficient paraphrasing – first time offence.
Remedial Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar to issue the student with a disciplinary letter, indicating corrective measures • The student will be allowed to resubmit his/her assignment within a specified timeframe.
Penalty:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% deduction off the final mark for the assessment
Level 2:	
Type of offence:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-acknowledgement/inaccurate acknowledgement - repeat offence of level one • Insufficient paraphrasing – repeat offence of level one.
Remedial Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar to issue a disciplinary letter indicating corrective measures. • The student is required to participate in a compulsory Academic writing intervention
Penalty:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide evidence of successful completion of the academic writing intervention • Resubmission, addressing all plagiarism-related issues • The final mark of the re-submission will be capped at 50%.
Level 3:	

<p>Type of offence:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-acknowledgment/inaccurate acknowledgement - repeat offence of level two • Insufficient paraphrasing – repeat offence of level two • Intentional passing off someone else's work or parts of their work as the student's own work will immediately result in a level 3 offence. This would implicate the student who shares work with another student, who without their knowledge plagiarises the work in part or in totality. Note, an additional misconduct charge may also be laid as per the E1 - Code of Conduct Policy.
<p>Action:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Registrar will have a telecom or set up a meeting with the student to discuss the allegation • The Registrar will inform the student that the matter will be escalated to the Research and Ethics Committee for deliberation • The Registrar will be responsible for processing the matter and presenting the case to the Research and Ethics Committee • The Committee evaluates the matter based on the evidence presented and decides whether a hearing is required • The Registrar will notify the student of the decision of the Research and Ethics Committee in writing • In the case of a hearing, the student will be obliged to attend the hearing. This meeting could be conducted via technologically-mediated platforms • The hearing will be constituted by the Chair of the Research and Ethics Committee, the Registrar and one other member of the Research and Ethics Committee • The student may request the attendance of a Student Representative Council (SRC) member at the hearing • At the hearing, the student will have the opportunity to share any mitigating circumstances that the student believes may have affected his/her conduct or performance • Should the student not attend the hearing as requested, the panel will proceed to make a determination in the case, without offering the student a further opportunity to make a representation • A final standing decision will be taken by the Research and Ethics Committee • The Registrar will notify the student of the Research and Ethics Committee's decision in writing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Registrar will inform the Senate of the decision • Records will be kept of the hearing and the decision of the Research and Ethics Committee • Students are allowed to appeal the decision of the Research and Ethics Committee, to the Registrar in writing • The Registrar will present the appeal to the Senate • The decision of the Senate is final • The Registrar will notify the student of the Senate's decision in writing.
Penalty:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The penalty will depend on the outcome of the hearing and the severity of the plagiarism • The penalty will include one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Awarding of 0% for the submission that may result in re-registering for the module ○ Suspension from all academic activity for up to a year

Level 4:	
Type of offence:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional passing off someone else's work as the student's own work - repeat of a level 3 offence. Note, an additional misconduct charge may also be laid as per the E1- Code of Conduct Policy. • Offences of such a nature that displays no reasonable prospects of honest academic conduct.
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Registrar will have a telecom or set up a meeting with the student to discuss the allegation • The Registrar will inform the student that the matter will be escalated to the Research and Ethics Committee for deliberation • The Registrar will be responsible for processing the matter and presenting the case to the Research and Ethics Committee • The Committee evaluates the matter based on the evidence presented and decides whether a hearing is required. • The Registrar will notify the student of the decision of the Research and Ethics Committee in writing • In the case of a hearing, the student will be obliged to attend the hearing. This meeting could be conducted via technologically-mediated platforms.

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Penalty:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-registration with the possibility of re-registration after a period of five years

8. GENERAL

In the event that a student is found guilty of an act of plagiarism following the completion of a programme at The Institute, such assessment(s)/mark(s) will be nullified, and where necessary, the records will be amended on the relevant regulatory databases.

In the case of a level 4 finding, a student can apply for a rehabilitation process after a period of 12 months, where evidence or circumstances can be presented to justify rehabilitation. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Executive Deans , who may consult with the Registrar and/or the relevant chair of the disciplinary committee.

9. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Regular review and amendment of this policy will be done in line with the approved institutional and regulatory requirements, when required or every three years. This will take place in consultation with the relevant quality assurance structures at departmental and institutional level, under the auspices of the official custodian of this policy, namely the Executive Deans..

10. PROCEDURES RELATED TO THIS POLICY

PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING PLAGIARISM AND MATTERS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Managing academic integrity remains key to maintaining the educational quality, reputation and validity of the qualifications offered by the Da Vinci Institute.

This procedure will be followed when possible plagiarism or similar violations of academic integrity during assessment are suspected.

Step	Description	Notes
1	At appropriate intervals during the student journey, students will be informed about Academic integrity, the use of similarity detection software, the appropriate use of sources in an academic context, appropriate use of AI or similar tools, and referencing processes using the Harvard methods.	Resources to support this will be put on Moodle These events may be during onboarding, academic support sessions, or during tuition support sessions
2	Students prepare their responses to assessments based on the requirements of the relevant module and academic requirements. Students are required to use the prescribed cover page and sign the relevant declaration before submission. Assessments are submitted on Da Vinci Connect before the relevant deadlines, where these assessments are automatically evaluated by similarity software.	Currently, the Institution uses Turnitin
3	Before the deadline, students are able to evaluate feedback and improve their assessments if needed	Requirements as per policy are applied
4	When the Deadline has passed Learning Co-ordinators check the assessments and alert the relevant faculty member to start marking	
5	Faculty members review assessments before marking and take note of high similarity scores – these reports are reviewed, and professional judgement is applied to evaluate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the student referenced sufficiently and appropriately in-text? • Has the student compiled a comprehensive reference list which includes all sources utilized? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the above in the appropriate Harvard format? • Is more than 10% of the assignment quotes or are quotes so long that the student's knowledge and application is not evident? • Is the similarity score above the permitted percent as indicated in policy? • An evaluation of the AI score reported – scores higher than 25% for Undergraduate assessments and 10% for Postgraduate assessments/dissertations or obvious use of AI should be interrogated and evaluated. • Has the student submitted work that is not their own as if it was their own (refer to plagiarism policy) 	
6	Problematic submissions are reported to the Learning Co-ordinator to send to the registrar's office for investigation	
7	Learning Co-ordinators record that reviews or investigations are in progress on client reports and send to the Registrar's office	
8	The relevant staff member initiates an investigation and evaluates the assessment	
9	Students may be contacted to verify information or if they copied.	
10	The Registrar's office checks the history of the student concerned	Verify if a previous warning is in place
11	Evidence is gathered and an assessment made if no action should be taken, if a warning should be issued (level 1 or 2 infraction), or if the matter should be formally referred to the disciplinary committee (level 3 or 4)	The disciplinary committee is convened as a subcommittee of the Research and Ethics committee on an ad hoc basis
12	The decision or action being taken is communicated to the student and Learning Co-ordinator	
13	The Learning Co-ordinator may then advise the faculty member to mark or cap or other instruction as needed.	
13	If the matter is referred to the disciplinary committee, the committee follows the disciplinary committee procedure	Refer to relevant procedure here
14	The registrar's office records violations (level 1 to 4) in the plagiarism register.	
15	Students may be referred for academic support or required to attend student support workshops to prevent repeat infractions or enable	

	compliance with relevant academic requirements.	
16	The Registrar's office reports new entries to the plagiarism register each quarter at the relevant Research and Ethics committee meetings	These are noted in the relevant minutes and actions may be recommended if needed

All cases of alleged plagiarism identified by any method or means will be presented to the Registrar for evaluation, and further investigation. Even after results are published, if violations of academic integrity or misconduct are found, the matter may still result in disciplinary action at the discretion of the Registrar's office.

Disciplinary letters issued by the Registrar will indicate the following resources for support and assistance:

- Contact details of The Institute's Information Officer for guidance and assistance
- The Harvard Referencing guide
- The Professional Writing guide
- Professional Writing intervention or relevant Academic support

AI USAGE GUIDELINES

Given that current usage reveals that AI-generated text can be hard to differentiate clearly, and yet when AI draws on existing sources to rewrite text, using AI tools may result in high similarity scores in tools such as Turnitin. Some AI tools (e.g., Bing) include links to some sources with varying degrees of correctness, and there have been cases of fabricated tools. The detection tools are being updated and should improve in accuracy over time. In the meantime, these tools may still flag potential instances for investigation and can be used with professional discretion.

Considerations of Academic Integrity need to be upheld in alignment with the existing plagiarism policy (E2):

- Students should always be encouraged to reference correctly and reduce similarity scores aligned to guidelines. **Therefore, faculty and students remain responsible for developing familiarity with the Harvard referencing format, tools such as Turnitin which reports similarity scores, and recognising and reporting plagiarism as per established processes¹.**
- Where Turnitin or similar tools identify high "AI scores" or "high similarities" these should be investigated. Students and faculty must follow existing processes

¹ Refer to E2 the Plagiarism policy for more specific information.

aligned to the E2 Plagiarism or E1 Code of Conduct policies to report infractions or misuse of AI tools for an investigation to the Registry.

- When permitted or required as part of instructions to students, the use of AI needs to be transparent and referenced where appropriate. The use of AI should not mean that independent research, evaluation of sources and obtaining verifiable sources for research or assessments should not be undermined or bypassed by accessing AI tools within the research process.
- Students should be informed that only relying on one source is poor academic practice, does not interrogate multiple perspectives demonstrative critical thinking and does not meet assessment requirements.
- Responses from AI, like other online sources such as Wikipedia, have not been peer-reviewed, and should not be considered authoritative and do not meet the criteria of academic. Therefore, students should rather use the peer-reviewed academic sources available through online library resources.
- The applications of AI will impact different disciplines and research areas differently. Faculty remain SMEs who need to be aware of how AI developments are affecting or may affect their disciplines and research areas and mediate debates in their respective fields with students. The purpose/s of AI and its evolution and integration into various fields should be a developing discourse between faculty and students or amongst communities of practice.
- AI should be explored as an emerging tool that needs to be evaluated critically with acknowledgement of its limitations. This includes that AI can give erroneous information, fabricate (AI hallucinations) and "remix" existing sources. Faculty need to discuss with students the need to evaluate the output of AI tools and continuously develop competencies which evaluate sources, the quality of sources, awareness of 'fake news' or fabricated information and the standards of academic sources. This means that both faculty and students are encouraged to develop and apply critical thinking competencies, ensure evidence-based argumentation and defend arguments with appropriate evidence.
- Given reports of AI fabricating sources, if faculty or students use AI tools to generate content for articles, courseware, or classes, they remain responsible for critically evaluating the veracity of these sources, similar to the use of quotes from secondary articles. This is in line with existing policy and practice.
- There are AI tools or applications which are being developed to act as a writing coach or support specific research tasks. If these tools are used, they should not replace the essential role of the researcher or student as a writer and this accountability cannot be transferred.
- Similarly, AI tools or applications can be used, for idea generation (spark ideas or create outlines) or guidance for templates and possible first steps, but not in conflict with the assessment instructions or policies mentioned above. Therefore, where appropriate, faculty may demonstrate the use of AI to

improve submissions of assessments aligned to the above points and discuss the implications of using AI appropriately.

- Discussions regarding the impact of AI, ethical and appropriate use of AI, and how these link to emerging business realities or choices should be encouraged where relevant to enable better problem-solving and decision-making – as a preventative for informed choices (sometimes referred to as the "rumble strip" (warning/ alert) approach).
- Assessments need to be designed in ways that encourage a contextualised application of theory as per existing policies. This requires students to make recommendations that are "fit for purpose" or "fit for context" and apply learning to their own contexts (Principle of Mode 2 Assessment from D19 Assessment and Moderation Policy).
- The principles of assessment as learning, fair, valid, and authentic assessment contained in the Assessment and Moderation Policy (D19) require that faculty assess the capabilities and work of the student as competent against the required outcomes. This means that if a student submits work done by someone else or an AI tool as if it were their own work, they are in breach of ethical principles and with the assessment principles contained in the Institute's policies.
- Faculty are responsible for clearly communicating the appropriate use of AI tools (i.e., define the acceptable use within the larger discourse of academic integrity) aligned to the policies discussed above.
- Some lecturers report a good application of critical thinking when they use AI to compare possible answers and as a basis for critique.
- Faculty and students need to give feedback on AI use and challenges experienced in all reporting processes and share any recommendations that can support good practice.

11. VERSION HISTORY

Version History	Amendment Details	Approval Date	Approving Committee
V1		20/01/2015	
V2		20/01/2018	
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