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UNIVERSITAIRES ET DE LA QUALITE

GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRITY IN UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND RESEARCH

PROCEDURE FOR BREACH OF INTEGRITY

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Preface

In order to fully carry out its mission of training and support to economic development, the University should overcome the constant challenge of matching the quality and competencies sought through diplomas with the intrinsic value of their holders whose vocation is to become development stakeholders. In other words, more than a mere ideal, the issue of the quality of diplomas, fair marks or research integrity, is understood as the need to safeguard our higher education system.

Here and elsewhere, higher education deploys itself within large national and sub-regional groups and ultimately aims for global reference. But, since these large spaces are characterised by standardised requirements and criteria, competition becomes an almost permanent modality in the dynamic of relationships between training institutions. At the national level, this competition is seen at various levels: amongst public institutions, now 9 in total, amongst private institutions, but also between these two sectors of education. In the later case, public institutions claim a legitimacy that is theirs by right and private institutions do not want to be dictated any law in their legitimate ambition to replicate, in higher education, a domination already achieved at primary and secondary levels. The battle is rough. Just to have an idea, it should be recalled that, thanks to the liberalisation of training offer through law No. 005 on the orientation of higher education of 16 April 2001, there are currently one hundred and eighty five private higher education institutions; whereas, in the public sector, we have moved from the single University of Cameroon to nine State-owned universities.

The situation is similar at the sub-regional, regional and global levels. Competition is tough and ruthless. Consequently, the quest for recognition of each university by others becomes a major stake which compels institutions and higher education systems to build a positive image that, far from being fake, should also be as close as possible to reality, since it will be tested on facts. In other words, to be accepted by others and engaging them in interuniversity cooperation and exchange actions of all kinds, the way a system is viewed, how it portrays itself to the outside world, becomes a constant concern which shapes its future and survival.

The various successes won by our compatriots here and beyond our borders, the numerous teaching missions in renowned universities across the world, scientific productions that command respect in international journals, patents of invention and many other feats, contribute to the development of a positive image of our higher education system. This is even why, and it is a positive development, new criteria for the evaluation of teachers applying for inclusion in the aptitude list lays emphasis on their reputation at the international level.

Though we can be proud of these achievements, we should also readily acknowledge the fact that the publicity surrounding these feats is parallel to the silence which characterises long years of self-sacrifice, hardships and hardwork leading to glory. Unfortunately, carried away and subjugated solely by the happy end which the certificate represents, success in an examination or a good mark in a defence irrespective of the level of study, some stakeholders of our community care less about the amount of work required to reach this end. This careless attitude seriously compromises the image, efficiency and future of our training system. Thus, misconduct and cheating are used as means to reach a happy end, with the risk of destroying all sympathy that has been hard earned over time and out of hardwork.

The university community has the pressing and sovereign duty of preventing, guiding, reporting and sanctioning this group of stakeholders. Any attitude contrary to this would be tantamount to

irresponsibility, collusion and resignation.

Therefore, these guidelines are in line with the responsibility of public authorities in compliance with standard practices, generating legislation where it does not exist, but especially recalling and ensuring compliance with the existing one.

Indeed, our current regulation does not cover all the offences which are the result of a morbid and ever fertile imagination, and of which we see new forms every day. However, the aim of this initiative is not very much to generate new rules, but to recall the responsibilities of each and everyone; revive a conscience that should be maintained awake; and finally, engage each member of the university community to own the fight against a phenomenon of dishonesty that is likely to occur in many aspects of the academic life of our universities: falsification of documents, cheating in examinations, acts of plagiarism, etc.

It is needless to recall the consequences of these misconducts that may undermine the huge efforts made by our training system in its constant evolution imposed by the numerous challenges it has to overcome. It is a war which should be waged with the greatest determination; since it gives sense to all our activities in the area of training, production of human resources and outreach.

The underlying spirit hinges on a sense of firmness and responsibility. The mission is that of protecting a precious tool for which the entire Nation pays a great tribute and on which is founded the dreams of a people. Firmness stems from the lucidity and objectivity which must characterise the administration in the implementation of the regulation in force. Responsibility, on its part, arises from the duty of guidance and training which compels institutions not only to constantly raise awareness of each and everyone on the serious consequences of dishonesty on people and institutions, but also to reduce, to the barest minimum, aberrations which could arise from ignorance or shortcomings of the training process. Hence, one of the serious consequences is the embarrassment arising from the need to punish, to preserve the integrity of science even though suspicions of good faith persist.

Faced with the legitimate ambitions of our higher education system and the multiple distinctions which it continues to earn here and elsewhere and which contribute to building its reputation, all forms of cheating, which are developing to the extent of becoming normal practice, constitute constraints for which a fierce battle should be waged. Thus, these guidelines aim at involving the entire university community, without exception, in this battle for public sanity.



Introduction

Social relevance appears as to be one of the requirements on which the quality and efficiency of higher education are constantly questioned and appreciated. In other words, the University finds its full meaning in the measure of its ability to suggest answers to questions and concerns addressed to it by the society of which it is at the same time the product and which it contributes to edifying. However, such ability stems mainly from the fact that certificate holders intrinsically embody skills and other abilities that their diplomas reflect. Ultimately, this involves, inter alia, a set of requirements that protect access to certification to all sorts of impostures, including cheating.

Thus, the quality of diplomas, publications and other scientific productions ensures the academic freedom and authority which the stakeholders of the university community enjoy. Given the magnitude of the impact of higher education and university research on man, society and environment, it is necessary to guarantee the credibility of academic activities and integrity of the university community.

However, and on many instances, this integrity is often compromised or subjected to severe test by various actors of the university community who do not always resist the morbid temptation to obtain, at all costs, a diploma or a qualification that can fundamentally change the course of a lifetime or a career.

The exacerbation of competitiveness in research with a view to obtaining fast results creates real pressures and constraints on our university system. It is also the case of a certificate which constitutes a condition of access to a first job. Factual data that ought or ought not to have been considered as motivating factors to work harder, given the underlying competition, have unfortunately become alibis around which is structured all the pathogenious dynamics which leads to action through cheatings of all kinds. This social pressure has not always spared certain administrative executive who have developed some kind of empathy; which, unfortunately, leads to collusions that cannot be tolerated by a University whose very existence is constantly subjected to the test of ability to meet the needs of its social context of emergence, and to align with international standards in order to sustain the competition imposed to it by modernity.

Yet, regrettably, there is rather a recurrence of cases of serious breaches of university ethics with regard to research, assessments of stakeholders, issuance of certificates, grades and distinctions, without adequate measures being taken. Such situations deserve special attention if we do not want our higher education system to be eaten up by this canker worm and the quality of its productions to be discredited.

It should be recalled that the Cameroonian University must be able to ensure the legitimacy of its certificates and recognitions. In particular, it must ensure that cheating in examination, as well as plagiarism in dissertations, theses, and scientific publications do not discredit the quality of the training offered and the integrity of university research. In this regard, the entire university community must act collectively against all forms of cheating, not only by preventing, but also by meting out appropriate sanctions for proven breaches. To ignore cases of misconduct would be tantamount to an attitude of collusion and resignation which would tend to make believe that the Cameroonian university has desisted from upholding a level of quality indispensable for its development.

This guideline applies to all activities carried out within Cameroonian university institutions. To

this end, it:

- specifies the rights and duties of members of the academic community with regard to integrity in the field of university teaching and research ;
- aims at ensuring quality higher education research and education ;
- defines harmonised conditions relating to compliance with integrity in science and teaching within higher education institutions ; and
- specifies the competent bodies and the procedure to be followed in case of suspected cheating or proven infringement .

In this guide, offences committed by students are dealt with separately from those committed by the teaching /researcher staff.

I. Reminder of the common rules applicable to studies and examinations

A. *Types of offences committed by students*

Any act of cheating, as well as any involvement in or attempts to commit such acts in an examination, a piece of work or probationary period or in any other circumstance, constitutes an offence. The jurisprudence in this area provides an infinite variety of forms of cheating, of which the list below is indicative and non-exhaustive:

- The use or keeping, even without using them, of unauthorised documents or material during an examination or during the execution of work, including the use of computer tools or technological gadgets (telephone or any other mobile equipment).
- The exchange of information among candidates or getting of any unauthorised help; be it collective or individual.
- Substitution of scripts.
- The use, during examination, of an examination script or any other material which is coming from another person.
- Substitution of a third party or candidate or impersonation.
- Forgery of documents or creation of a forged document, notably a document submitted to the university or a document of the university submitted or not to a third party, whatever the circumstances.
- Plagiarism: total or partial use of documents published in any form of media, including the internet, presenting it as one's own or without indicating the reference; this offence constitutes an infringement of copy right.
- Self-plagiarism: the submission of a work for evaluation whereas it constitutes most of a work already submitted to a previous academic evaluation in the current institution or in another educational institution, except with the prior consent of the teacher.
- Possession or obtaining through theft, manoeuvre or bribery of examination questions or answers.
- Obtaining or attempting to obtain an undeserved mark, notably through corruption, blackmail, intimidation or any form of harassment.
- Falsification of research data in a work, notably a thesis, dissertation, creative work, internship report or research report.

B. *Cheating in examinations*

Cheating in examinations is subject to the provisions of decree N°93/027 of 19 January 1993 to lay down general regulations governing universities: chapter IV on disciplinary offences committed by students and Order N°08/0249/MINESUP of 11 September 2008 on the general status for students of Cameroon university institutions. These texts make provisions for the competent bodies, the procedure and sanctions applicable to cases of cheating.

Competent bodies in charge of cheating in examinations

Section 61 of the above-mentioned decree states that "any breach of discipline, regulations governing studies, rules of university decency by the student; any direct or indirect participation of a student to acts likely to compromise the smooth functioning of the university institution, any behaviour put up by the student which is contrary to university dignity shall constitute a disciplinary offence".

Section 65 adds that "in the event of cheating in examinations, disciplinary action shall be taken by Heads of Schools/faculties who shall therefore refer the case to the examination jury" (paragraph 1).

Section 66, paragraph 1 sets up in each school/faculty within university institutions, a Disciplinary Board which should examine disciplinary breaches committed by students.

From the reading of the above provisions, it emerges that disciplinary sanction on students is generally the prerogative of the Disciplinary Board, but **in the case of cheating in examinations, such action is vested**, at the discretion of the Head of school/faculty, **to the examination jury**.

This implies a number of prerequisites

- In the organisation of examinations, there must be a sub-jury in charge of misconducts which meets permanently during examinations. In practice, it should meet on a daily basis as from the end of the day's papers, or as soon as a case of cheating is referred to it because paragraph 3 of Section 65 states that it "meets without delay", to suggest appropriate sanctions.
- An invigilation report sheet should be given to each Head of invigilation room as well as summoning forms to the jury in charge of misconducts.

Consequently, any student caught cheating or attempting to cheat will be subject to a procedure likely to result in a disciplinary sanction.

Procedure (steps to be followed in case of cheating)

By invigilators

Section 65, paragraph 2 of the above-mentioned Decree of 93 provides that "any student suspected of cheating shall immediately be excluded from the examination hall; and a detailed report signed by two invigilators shall be submitted to the Head of School/faculty."

The straight-forwardness of this provision is in contradiction with its severity. In particular, it puts to question the presumption of innocence which is a fundamental principle in any repressive proceedings. This is because suspicion presupposes that the evidence of cheating is not consistently established; therefore, exclusion from the examination room results, in most cases, leads to irreversible effects. Therefore, it is important to apply this provision with much caution.

Moreover, in order to reserve the possibility of restoring the student to his/her rights in the event that his/her guilt has not been established, exclusion of a candidate from an examination hall is highly guided and remains, in any case, an extreme and even exceptional measure.

In case of simple cheating (without material evidence for the offence) or attempted cheating, the chief invigilator of the examination hall shall:

- Take all necessary measures to stop cheating. He/she may, in this case, take palliative

measures such as changing the candidate's seat, issuing a verbal warning, etc.

- In case of flagrante delicto (i.e., in the very act of committing a misdeed) with proven evidence, seize the document(s) or material(s) that will help to establish the truth of facts later on.
- Draft a precise and detailed report countersigned by other invigilators in the hall and by the perpetrator(s) of the cheating. If the latter refuses to countersign, mention shall be made of it in the report.
- Serve the candidate a summons to appear before the jury in charge of cheating within the shortest time possible. The chief invigilator shall keep a coupon of this summons. In no instance shall the candidate be summoned to appear before the jury in charge of cheating when he/she is supposed to sit for other papers of the same examination.
- Send the candidate out of the hall. The expulsion of a candidate from an examination hall is also recommended in the case of proven substitution of persons, or disturbances affecting the conduct of the examination. In the latter instance, the matter is reported to the Disciplinary Board.
- But, the expulsion of a candidate from an examination hall by the invigilator is made possible by the presence of indisputable physical evidence.
- At the end of the paper, all invigilation reports and, if need be, elements of evidence are handed to the Head of the school/faculty, as well as examination scripts and counterfoils of summonses of the suspected cheats or presumed cheats.

In any case, these repressive provisions do not exonerate the University from its pedagogic role with regard to cheating. Consequently, in order to prevent cheating, and in the framework of active surveillance organised in examination rooms, invigilators, chief invigilators are requested, at the beginning of any paper, to remind candidates of the risks in cheating and instructions relating to cheating in examinations.

By the examination jury¹

The Head of school/faculty refers the cases of cheating to the examination jury deciding on cheating which listens to the accused student. If the student is absent, the jury issues another summons out to him/her. It shall state out clearly the reasons for his/her summons; communicates, if need be, the charges against him/her; interrogates him/her; listens and deliberates on his/her case. It can request a complementary inquiry or hear invigilators.

After this phase, the examination jury deciding on cheating shall suggest, when appropriate, one of the following sanctions:

- Reprimand which can be coupled with a total or partial suspension from any form of university assistance ;
- Ban to sit for examinations at the end of the current academic year with the suspension of any kind of university assistance ;

¹ Article 65, paragraph 3 of Decree No. 93/027 of 19 January 1993 to lay down general regulations governing universities states that "the examination jury shall meet immediately and propose the appropriate sanction...". These sanctions are the same as those that may be taken by the disciplinary council.

- One to two-year temporary suspension;
- Expulsion from the school/faculty of national university institutions.

The script of the student guilty of cheating is not marked. However, it is not destroyed. On the contrary, it should be kept carefully with all evidence of the cheating.

If the candidate is acquitted, his/her script is forwarded to the body in charge of codifying scripts which, after processing, inserts the script in the pack of normal scripts to be processed as such.

Any sanction mentioned above and pronounced in the case of cheating or attempted cheating during a continuous assessment, end-of-semester examination or competitive entrance examination, the results of the corresponding question paper of the person concerned shall be nullified. The person concerned shall be considered to have been present in the examination without writing the subject.

Draft decisions of the jury in charge of cheating are forwarded, at the discretion of the Head of school/faculty to the competent authority for final decision in accordance with Section 62 of the 1993 Decree.

Apart from the subject in which the candidate cheated, the jury deliberates on the entire results of the candidate. However, no testimonial or transcript can be issued to a student suspected of cheating and subjected to a procedure thereof before the final decision of the competent authority.

Until the decision proposed by the jury in charge of cheating is endorsed by the competent body in compliance with the regulatory texts in force, the examination jury deliberates on his/her marks, but does not publish them. This is a provisional measure which should not exceed two months. The accused student is presumed innocent and, therefore, shall be authorised to sit for other question papers of the semester or year. He/she may naturally lose this advantage if such action should appear to be an outcome of the decision by the competent authority.

When cheating is discovered after the certificate has been issued, the cancellation of the results of the question papers may result in the certificate concerned being declared null and void.

In order to facilitate the diligent handling of cases of cheating, the Head of School/faculty must appoint an official in charge of cheating-related cases. All documents thereof will be submitted to the official concerned. He/she is also responsible for ensuring the liaison between various parties and proceeds, at the end of every semester, to the compilation of the cases of cheat that have been dealt with.

By the disciplinary Council

The disciplinary council, whose membership is fixed in Section 66 of the Decree N°93/027 of 19 January 1993, is the competent authority for all breaches of discipline related to students' discipline other than cheating in examinations. The disciplinary council reviews, decides the disciplinary sanction, in accordance with Section 62 of the Decree N° 93/027 of 19 January 1993.

II. Cases of specific offences committed by students

A. Plagiarism and scientific dishonesty

Plagiarism is the fact of "***appropriating someone else's reasoning and analysis without quoting the source.***" It refers to any total or partial representation or reproduction of an intellectual piece of work, without the consent of its author. Therefore, it appears that plagiarism seems easy to define. However, in practice its characterisation in the academic milieu is not that easy. In view of the practices in university systems that already have an institutional framework for its processing, plagiarism must be assessed by analysing the entire academic production and not only the relevant texts. The analysis of the cases studied in the afore-mentioned systems shows that plagiarism presents very different configurations which make it difficult to set common rules. The different cases that have been processed and disseminated on dedicated European sites reveal three main traits of variety:

- Configuration of stakeholders (plagiarists/plagiarised): plagiarisms or abusive appropriations between co-authors; doctorate/PhD student with regard to his/her thesis supervisor, or the thesis supervisor appropriating the work of his doctorate/PhD students or assistant lecturers; import/export of articles or books chapters translated in extenso, « reviewers – referees » - members of the review committee of a scientific journal – appropriating documents sent for review, etc.
- Different type, both at the level of the expression of plagiarism and its intensity : mere carelessness or awkward practices marked by the omission of important quotations, but also serious mistakes seen in the verbatim slavish copying of texts produced by other authors without mentioning them ; accumulation of excerpts or long quotations more or less referenced and whose quantity exceeds the convention; abusive appropriation of assistant lecturers', colleagues' and students' works ; full copy of whole papers sent for publication in other contexts.
- Different types of plagiarists: negligent, casual, serial, systematic. Plagiarism may be carried out by an isolated individual or can be linked to the practices of laboratories or group of authors. In this respect, we also observe, with the development of the internet, a professionalization of plagiarism.

In view of the above-stated facts, it is not wise to attempt to give a precise definition or characterisation of plagiarism; but rather to draft proposals for the collective handling of complaints and conflicts which are likely to arise.

Generally, the anchoring of plagiarism in the habits of work leads its author towards misrepresentation or scientific dishonesty. This alienates the rights of others and at the same time constitutes an infringement of standards and academic bodies. Plagiarism and attempted plagiarism are serious infractions to university ethics and research integrity that can result in disciplinary sanctions, irrespective of the recourse to civil and criminal proceedings.

However, plagiarism appears as one of the numerous modalities of cheating in the University.

Forms of plagiarism include :

- The non mentioning, with precision and honesty, the source of each piece of information

during textual copying of documents; the use of results of theoretical or applied scientific research; translation of quotations from other authors; the use of data, graphs or others; the use of information published on the internet or disseminated through any other means – electronic, audio-visual, cinematographic as well as the use of computer software and applications or others.

- The non-mention in quotation marks of citations or their translation reproduced as they stand.
- The fact of summarising the original idea of an author in one's own words, without indicating the source.
- The re-use of a piece of work produced within the framework of a lecture or class without the prior consent of the teacher who is the author thereof.
- The use of the work of a third party which is presented as one's own, even if the person has given his/her approval.
- The buying of a piece of work on the web.

Enquiry about plagiarism or forgery:

On the basis of their diverse modalities, plagiarism is not all of the same gravity, especially from the standpoint of its impact on the award of certificate. Hence, we can distinguish two situations:

1°) concerning doctorate/PhD theses, Master's degree dissertations or end-of-course work, internship reports and other supervised projects, the principle of disciplinary procedure still applies. The consequence of plagiarism in these instances is particularly serious because the offenders are liable to severe sanctions.

Any work submitted by a student is consequently likely to be subjected to a tool for detecting similarities. The distinction between personal contributions and data and information copied from third parties should be clear. Juries for pre-defence reports and defence juries equally have the duty to check the authenticity of scientific productions and absence of cases of plagiarisms.

2°) In the case of continuous assessments (tutorials, practical work, personal work validating a master's or PhD/doctorate's course, etc) : teachers who suspect or discover proven cases of plagiarism can react gradually, depending on the severity of the misconduct detected. It is clear that the teacher, in his/her mission and role as trainer, should each time endeavour to understand the intent which is different from ignorance and methodological approximations. In this last assumption, which presupposes a deficit in training, a good attitude would consist in asking the student at fault to review his/her script in accordance with the rules for citing and using loans.

Any case of plagiarism detected or suspected by a stakeholder (instructor, Tutorials or practicals assistant, etc.) is reported to the official in charge of the teaching unit or research work who decides on the checks to be carried out or to be completed by the entire pedagogic team. The official assesses the scope of the cheating and decides on the procedure to be followed with regard to following scale:

- ✓ Summoning of the student by the teacher in charge of the course and automatic award of a

make of noughtfor the litigious task ;

- ✓ Summoning of the student by the official in charge of the course and award of a mark of nought for the continuous assessment ;
- ✓ Constitution of a file reporting on the specific case and its evidence; then forwarding of the file to competent faculty bodies (official in charge of offences and Head of faculty, etc.) for referral to the Disciplinary Council.

In case of a subsequent offence, the case shall be directly referred to the Disciplinary Council.

Once the disciplinary coucil has been notified, the relevant file shall be examined in accordance with the provisions of the legislation in force; especially, Decree N° 93/027 of 19 January 1993, including new provisions contained in this circular relating to presumption of innocence and protection of the rights of the accused before the final decision of the disciplinary council. In this regard and at no given point in time, should cases of plagiarism be resolved through the award of an unjustified absence or a failure in the test paper. Regulations on studies shall define the continuation of the procedure and academic sanctions. The accused student should be heard before any decision is taken by the disciplinary body; he/she has access to all the material of the case and, as the case may be, the disciplinary council shall determine the sanctions.

The Disciplinary Council is notified through a letter sent to its president. He/she receives, notably, the detailed report of events, as well as supporting documents, and forwards a copy of this report to the acused student. The chairperson of the Disciplinary Council appoints an inquiry commission made up of two members of the teaching staff and a student representative. One of the two members of the teaching staff is appointed rapporteur. The chairperson fixes the date of the sitting and convenes the competent members. In case of proven plagiarism, the extent of the impact of this plagiarism is assessed by the Disciplinary Council on the basis of the following elements: nature of the work and programme concerned (bachelor's or master's degree work, examination validating a master's course, a doctorate/PhD course, etc.), possible recidivism, intentionality, and qualitative and quantitative aspects of plagiarism.

Sanctions may be academic or disciplinary in nature. They may also be a combination of both. Academic sanctions are determined by the regulations on studies in faculties/schools. They can go as far as :

- Loss of credits for the current year;
- Requirement of 3 to 30 additional credits; and
- Cancellation of diploma/certificate if plagiarism is discovered after the issuance of the certificate.

The following disciplinary sanctions may be applied:

- Warning ;
- Reprimand ;
- Temporary suspension or final expulsion from the school/faculty or any public higher education institution.

Decisions of the disciplinary council are final and binding.

It is noteworthy here to mention that the argument of having acted in good faith does not mitigate the consequences of plagiarism on the reality of the assessment which consists in taking note of the fact that your competence cannot be ascertained nor recognised through results that do not belong to you. It follows that, in case of proven plagiarism, the rules in force necessarily apply; notably, with regard to the forfeiture of the unduly conferred title. The argument of good faith can only be considered in the assessment of the extent of the sanction.

Therefore, the University institution has a role to play in the prevention and education of students with regard to plagiarism. Consequently, there is a need for institutions and teachers to educate students on the issue of dishonesty and its consequences, to guard them against laziness and serious consequences in case of plagiarism. Supervisors, both academic and non-academic, must guide students towards research in creative areas; invite them to avoid plagiarism and comply with the requirements of academic research and scientific ethics.

To this end, university institutions, as well as schools, are called upon to envisage all useful measures to popularize regulatory provisions on this issue and engage their teachers in the work of raising awareness and prevention of students to the dangers of plagiarism and all forms of cheating.

B. Cheating during admission or falsification of documents sent to a university institution by a student

Forging or attempting to forge documents or even to take part in such forgery shall constitute an offence.

Anyone (Students' records service, member of the admission board, etc) who has reasonable grounds to believe that a candidate (or a student) has falsified a document sent to a university institution or forwarded a forged document or frauded during admission, or attempted to have an undeserved mark for tests, has the right to forward to the official in charge of offences a written report on the incident, with supporting documents, when appropriate.

After review of the documents included in the file compiled by the official in charge of offences, the Head of the faculty/school shall decide whether or not to bring the case to the Disciplinary Council for opening of an inquiry.

The student concerned by the report may be present during the presentation of all the evidence to the Disciplinary Council and, if he/she so desires, be accompanied by someone as an observer.

The accused may be subject to one or more of the following sanctions:

- Cancellation of admission, registration or lectures taken or activities carried out for which the forged or fake document has been used as prior requirement;
- Prohibition of enrolment in any programme offered by the university institution for a maximum period of six (6) semesters ;
- Definitive ineligibility to any programme of the institution concerned.

The student who chooses not to appear before the council is considered as having admitted the allegations against him/her.

C. Responsibilities and procedure in case of an evaluation by a jury

The member of jury (dissertations, internship reports, supervised projects, research report) who has reasonable grounds to believe that the student is part of or has taken part in an academic offence shall suspend the evaluation of the research report, dissertation, thesis, and inform the official in charge of the field of study or training programme by forwarding his/her opinion accompanied with supporting documents. The person in charge of the programme sends the file to the official in charge of academic offences for continuation of the procedure.

The Head of school/faculty sets up an inquiry commission made up of three members of the teaching staff – who do not sit in the Disciplinary Council. This commission immediately conducts an inquiry and compiles, as the case may be, the charges for the Disciplinary Council.

If the evidence provided is deemed insufficient, the Head of school/faculty informs the official in charge of the programme so that the members of jury proceed with the evaluation.

In any case, the programme director must ensure the implementation of the resolutions taken by the body that has finally ruled on the inadequacy. In particular, he/she will ensure that the student makes the required corrections at the end of the evaluation.

If, after an investigation, the report establishes a situation which apparently constitutes a case of academic breach, the official in charge of academic offences informs the head of school/faculty who in turn refers the case to the Disciplinary Council for action, as soon as possible, in accordance with the institutional regulations governing studies and examinations.

The programme director, after receiving the opinion of the head of school/faculty concluding the referral of the case to the Disciplinary Council, invites the other members of the jury to suspend the evaluation.

When the investigation leads to the imposition of a sanction by the Disciplinary Council, the official in charge of the programme informs members of the jury of the end of the evaluation procedure and, where appropriate, of the recall of the research, dissertation report, etc. The indication "has been rejected without right of re-writing the work for committing an academic offence" is written on the student's file.

The specific case of young researchers

The most specific aspects of academic offences in master's degree dissertations or doctorate/ PhD theses are covered in Section IV on offences committed by researchers.

The student who is guilty of an offence in a research report, **a Master's degree dissertation or Doctorate/PhD thesis** may be placed on a probation accompanied or not accompanied with one or more of the following sanctions:

- Suspension from any activity at the university for a maximum period of six consecutive semesters ;
- Rejection of his/her research work without the right of rewriting it. This rejection has as consequence exclusion from the master or doctorate/ PhD programme for a seven-year period ;
- Definitive expulsion from the university or any higher education institution.

D. General Provisions

Confidentiality

Until a decision taken becomes final and binding, supporting documents and reports produced by teachers, members of the community, official in charge of academic offences, the Disciplinary Council, are confidential and access is restricted to those who are authorised to access them by virtue of their positions.

Continuation of studies

Until a contrary decision becomes final and binding, the student charged with an alleged offence has the right to continue his/her studies.

Probation – recidivism

The formal establishment of a repeated offence in principle presupposes prior probation. This can be accompanied by one or more sanctions. Probation is recognition that the student has committed a breach of the regulations. It can also be imposed without any other sanction; in which case, the teacher or the appraisal jury are called upon to award a mark to the student for the work concerned. The placing on probation without another sanction is recorded in the student's file and the student who is on probation should not commit any other infraction of the regulation; else, appropriate sanctions shall be meted out on him/her for all the offences, including the ones for which he/she has been put on probation.

Annual report

An annual report on the handling of academic offences is presented to the Rector/Vice-Chancellor by the Deputy Rector in charge of internal control – in collaboration with the Secretary General. The report is forwarded to the Board of Directors for remarks and recommendations.

The drafting of the report will lead to the setting up of a collaborative bank for plagiarism cases and help to define common references for all schools/faculties.

Proceedings for the treatment of an academic offence

Each university institution must explicitly explain all the procedures and stakeholders involved in the handling of academic offences committed by members of its community.

It is necessary, for greater coherence, to appoint within each school/faculty, the official in charge of academic offence cases committed by members of its community. The Head of the institution may also appoint, for this purpose, somebody to ensure the handling of cases relating to breaches of academic integrity for all schools/faculties, after agreement between them.

III. Recommendations to Heads of Institutions

A- Plagiarism preventive measures

Besides raising awareness on the ethical deviations in the area of research, in particular plagiarism, it is necessary to implement measures to avoid the development of such deviations. Policies put in place will centre around two aspects:

- Information and prevention,
- Control and sanctions.

Awareness raising and prevention encompass a series of actions including:

- regular organisation of awareness-raising seminars or conferences aimed at educating young researchers on the expectations with regard to publishing, as well as the risks that plagiarists are exposed to ;
- development of guides and guidelines for the presentation of work (book, article, thesis, dissertation, report, etc.) and the dissemination of explanatory documents on referencing. These documents aim at giving a high readability to such works and facilitating the control of information by readers. They also help to better identify the work that are carried out within the institutions ;
- compliance with the code of ethics with regard to borrowings, quotations, and the exploitation of various sources ;
- Insertion on the first page of the productions of young researchers, a commitment of non plagiarism, the wordings of which is defined in the charter of the institution. The signing of this declaration is intended to certify the original character of the work carried out ;
- Development of an ethical charter on training and research, and its adoption by all lecturer-researchers ;
- Development of a guide to good research practices for all higher education institutions in Cameroon ;
- Training of university researchers in responsible behaviour – training in code of ethics, scientific integrity and good research practices. This training covers both doctorate/PhD programmes and trainings for top-level scientists ;
- Absorption of doctorate/PhD researchers into the staff of a school/faculty through a charter defining their respective rights and duties. This agreement makes it possible to make the doctorate/PhD a full-fledged professional experience in its own right and concerns, inter alia, the working conditions necessary for the advancement of research and its quality assurance.
- Definition, in the by-laws of each laboratory, the duties of the thesis supervisor in the training of doctorate/PhD students².

² Train them in the concepts and methods of the discipline ; inform them of the legal and regulatory instruments to comply with ; train them in a critical analysis of scientific data ; train them in the drafting of articles, journals, conference reviews ; help them to access the scientific community, collaborations, conferences ; prepare them to present papers in the language commonly used in their discipline ; encourage them to undertake trainings in English when the subject so requires ; encourage them to follow trainings to prepare their career.

As mentioned above, the acquisition of similarity detection technologies necessarily involves costs and their deployment must be adequately planned. Therefore, awareness-raising and prevention must form the core of the strategy.

All doctorate/PhD theses must be subjected to anti-plagiarism checks either through computer devices for detecting similarities, or any other appropriate means. Such checks will also be conducted on Master's Degree, end-of-course dissertations and on other research work, using random sampling, as well as in all cases of suspected plagiarism. Defence, authorisation, recruitment, promotion juries and advisory commissions should check that scientific productions that are submitted to them are void of plagiarism.

B- Specific cases of plagiarism committed by students

Plagiarism committed by students is not just a simple issue of indiscipline that could be likened to examination cheating. It is necessary to assess the scope of the phenomenon that seems to be driven by irreversible behavioural shifts, induced by changes on the Web. Since the duty of school/faculty officials towards society is to ensure that diplomas/certificates issued formally correspond to a set of knowledge and know-how acquired in the course of studies, it is crucial to put in place integrated plans to fight any form of plagiarism. Moreover, the issue of evaluations should not be left in the hands of the teacher alone.

In fact, evaluation constitutes, like any other measurement tool, the basis for the reliability, validity and robustness of qualifications and certificates. The uncontrolled development of plagiarism is likely to invalidate the very foundations of knowledge transfer and validation. This academic infraction risks may in the long run change the rules of the social system because it compromises the fairness of our educational system, and does not permit to distinguish between students who acquired the competencies taught and those who borrowed the appearance of such skills. Also, It is an occasion to remind school officials that plagiarism in dissertations and theses constitutes a breach of the system and therefore falls directly under their responsibilities. Consequently, it is urgent for those in charge of university institutions to admit this reality and adhere to the following suggestions when circumstances so permit:

- 1) set up multi-disciplinary committees made up of researchers from various institutions, and who are anxious to understand the evolution of the concepts of values, standards, customs, and code of ethics. The mission of such a committee would be to go beyond repressive measures to apprehend plagiarism as a social phenomenon that needs to be explained in all the functional dynamics and in which the student is also considered in his/her social, economic and technological reality. If these new prospects would enable a better understanding of this phenomenon, they could also lead to better structuring of prevention mechanisms and, ultimately, the characterisation of misconducts in relation with the institutional vision of academic integrity.
- 2) Develop integrated anti-plagiarism processes in order to ensure a fair treatment of all the members of the community. These processes will include :
 - Informing students through institutional awareness campaigns about the dangers of plagiarism;
 - Developing a training module for students in documentary research and the use of scientific information ;

- acquisition of specific detection tools and training teachers ;
 - Procedures for the analysis of the files of plagiarists;
 - sanctions relating to detected offences;
 - Definition of a clear and precise regulation to qualify the deviations to integrity: it is important to know how to distinguish the types of breaches– slavish copying, cheating, plagiarism, fraud – to be able to assess in all fairness and impose a just sanction.
- 3) Use all available means to stop the spread of the phenomenon³, including the purchase of computer devices to check plagiarism.

However, this solution cannot systematically be considered for a number of reasons:

- Software available in the market is just a means among many others, with flawed and non-exhaustive results.
 - Similarity detection services are offered by private firms, but not all of them guarantee the protection of work entrusted to them. From a legal point of view, the exercise consists in exporting a document written by a member of the community and re-importing the result of its analysis.
 - The cost of these technologies and their transferability to all disciplines.
 - The additional work load for teachers who are now responsible for detecting cases of plagiarism in homework and supervised work, given the high enrolments. This solution would entail the involvement of more markers⁴, hence the mobilization of additional resources.
 - The need to consider all important factors⁵ before the deployment of a detection device. Its putting in place should be gradual and a two-semester pilot phase is necessary for its validation and adoption across the entire institution.
- 4) Encourage the development of detection tools by laboratories and engineering schools.

Rather than multiplying individual approaches in the acquisition of plagiarism detection software, university institutions should envisage the pooling of their financial and human resources to have this type of tools developed by the departments of information systems, computer science and linguistics. Top technical competencies are available in engineering schools or computer departments of our universities. If a clear mandate were collaboratively given to them, a few months would surely be enough for them to develop such tools. The ultimate objective is to adopt a national, sub-regional and even regional perspective to set up a common reservoir of indexed work.

- 5) Take into consideration the international dimension of the labour market which is

³ "In the era of globalisation, the e-generation knows quite well how to use all the means put at its disposal by businesses that blossom everywhere on the Web : free or paid for download of theses and dissertations, automatic translation of dissertations submitted in foreign languages, access to online library articles, search by keywords of texts published on the web related to their theme, access to services of coaches specialised in the writing of dissertations and theses, etc."

⁴ Institutions could envisage per school/faculty to train somebody who would serve as focal point and adviser to end users. This person should have the skills of a librarian in terms of rigorous processes to be put in place (entries, filing, statistics, etc.), and should know the subtleties of disciplines of the school/faculty to which he/she is attached to decipher the first results of analyses.

⁵ Principles, benefits and limitations of similarity detection, issues to be envisaged before subscribing to a similarity detector, interests of end users, stakeholders, documents to be processed, procedure for the collection and review of documents, organisation of communication and flow of information relating to analyses, etc.

henceforth accessible to our graduates.

In order to show respect to international partners, the regulation on studies for each institution shall clearly mention the possibility to submit all students' work to detectors breaches. This indication will encourage any student who is doubting whether he/she is using bibliography resources well to use the tools put at his/her disposal by the school/faculty.

- 6) Systematize students' undertakings attesting that the documents produced are authentic and comply with methodological requirements regarding the copyright of work quoted or which would have been used.

Finally, unless the writing of dissertations or theses is abandoned to invent another form of assessment, the criteria of which would have to be agreed upon, the use of dedicated tools and the guidance of lecturers are indispensable. The following remarks can serve as motivation to convince the most reluctant stakeholders to act.

- (i) It may be difficult, if not impossible, to cancel a thesis or a certificate once it has been issued. Consequently, any lecturer who does not use all existing means to detect plagiarism before the issuance of these documents may be accused of serious carelessness/gross negligence if a case of plagiarism is later on discovered.
- (ii) A **plagiarist** can always appeal the decision to cancel a thesis on grounds of plagiarism, by claiming that he/she acted in good faith. This argument, which is legally admissible, can be circumvented by the requirement for the student to use a similarity detection tool. When good faith is established and plagiarism is proven, the provisions mentioned above in such circumstances still apply.
- (iii) A Head of a university faculty/school who would not equip his lecturers with all means of effective control of plagiarism detection is guilty of altering the public image of his/her institution among graduates and employers. But, given that the reputation of the entire system could be affected, compliance with preventive provisions must be imposed to all.

IV. Breach of integrity in researchers' work

The provisions of this guideline apply to all stakeholders of university research mentioned below:

- Lecturer- researchers of higher education institutions
- Support staff in laboratories, research assistants, and post-doctorate students.
- Thesis, end-of-course project or professional project supervisors in universities.
- Dissertation supervisors or professional project supervisors within non-university institutions (internship supervisors within enterprises, socio-professional partners)
- Part-time lecturers working in various practical and research laboratories and in pedagogic teams,
- PhD/Doctorate Students, research masters, professional masters, and students who are completing their cycle in professional schools when writing the final professional internship report or their end-of-course project.

The scope of these guidelines extends to professional, artistic, scientific and technical productions (writings, reports, projects etc.) of all the trades dedicated to university research. In the interest of simplicity, the term "researcher" will be used in this text.

A. Code of ethics

As a prelude to the treatment and prevention of academic offences committed by researchers, it is necessary to define the standards governing integrity and explain procedures in cases of suspected breaches of integrity. Ethical standards are defined in the document on standards relating to university research and cover the following aspects : research planning; pre-eminence of quality over quantity; promotion of research results; transparency in matters of conflicts of interest and obligation of secrecy in the area of expertise; contractual relations with third party; keeping and handling of research data; communication of information; management of incidents encountered during research; interpretation of research results; scientific publications; respect of the veracity of sources; researchers facing political, economic, ethical and societal demands; behaviours within the framework of collective work, supervision of Doctorate/PhD students, etc.

B. Forms of breach of integrity committed by researchers

Behaviours which violate a legal standard, as well as any act or omission which violates a duty of care and which constitutes deception or injury to the scientific community or society, constitute breach of integrity. The fact of encouraging someone, especially subordinates, to violate integrity, or the fact of consciously tolerating behaviours inconsistent with the principles of integrity shall themselves constitute offences.

A non-exhaustive list of integrity offences in the scientific field is given below.

Concerning scientific knowledge

- Invention of research results
- Falsification of core data intentionally, presentation of intentionally misleading treatment of the

results of the research, misleading presentation and processing of research results, arbitrary appraisal of data, exclusion of core data without mentioning it nor giving justifications for it.

- Deleting recorded core data before the expiry of the prescribed retention period or after becoming aware of the desire of a third party to consult them.
- With holding data.
- Refusing to grant duly authorised third parties the right to consult core data.
- Concealing conflicts of interest, financial arrangements or collaborative procedures which could, were they known, influence the evaluation of scientific results.
- Accepting agreements that do not guarantee the researcher's independent judgement, restrict his/her freedom to publish (especially negative results) or impose a greater right of say in his/her publications than what is reasonably useful.
- Accepting sources of funding or money orders that the University would have previously identified as ethically incompatible with the role of researcher or teacher.
- Subjectively presenting divergent views.

Concerning research work

- Copying of core data and other data without the prior consent of the competent project official (data piracy).
- Undermining or blocking the work of other researchers, be they of the same research group or not, especially by discarding or rendering research material, instruments, core data or other recorded works unusable.
- Breaching the obligation of secrecy.
- Neglecting the duty to monitor.
- Repeating the works or discoveries of a third party, without their authorisation or citation of authors and sources, or any other form of violation of intellectual property rights.

Concerning dissemination and publication

- Publishing under one's own name the results of works and discoveries of third parties: plagiarism. It constitutes a violation of the personality of the original author (creative work), an ethical misconduct (does not enable the reader to access the source of knowledge), a dishonesty to the academic system (risk of stealing the job or status of another person who has less publications).
- Intentionally making wrong quotations from existing or supposed work by third party.
- The fact of obtaining the status of co-author of a publication without making any significant contribution to the work or granting this status to someone who could not legitimately claim it.
- Deliberate omission of the name of people who significantly contributed to the project.
- Deliberate omission of significant contributions of other authors on the same topic (incomplete bibliography).

- Incorrect indications on the progress towards the publication of their own work (for example, “manuscript submitted” whereas the manuscript has not yet been sent; the indication “printing of the publication in progress” meanwhile the said manuscript has not yet been validated).
- Intentional omission of any reference to his/her past works (for example, publishing in a different language an article that has already been published in another language) – self-plagiarism.

In case of scientific expertise of third parties’ services

- The fact of consciously dissimulating conflicts of interest.
- The violation of the obligation of secrecy (confidentiality).
- Inaccurate criticism, whether intentionally or by carelessness, of projects, programmes or manuscripts.
- Making baseless judgments with the aim of gaining advantages for self or for third party.

One of the most serious integrity-related offences is researcher’s plagiarism; the reality of which tends to be hidden or minimised. The seriousness of such misconduct should be weighed against the noble mission assigned to these stakeholders: develop, transfer and apply knowledge for the advancement of society. Given the pressure to publish, which has now become an activity of mass production in a context where exchanges and flow of scientific productions are increasingly important, we now observe across the world an increased number of plagiarism cases reported or discovered in articles submitted to journals, communications, theses and books.

Although heads of institutions and teachers seem to be aware of the plagiarism issue among students, they should also be sensitised about the phenomenon of misappropriation of another person’s work by stakeholders of university research. Indeed, the development of ICTs and the Internet have triggered changes, not only in students’ working method, but also in researchers’ working methods and publications – ease of copying on the one hand and ease of tracking on the other hand, possibility of reassessing archived publications, etc. Consequently, double talk or double standards in the handling of issues – impunity or covering up when it concerns researchers, sanction when plagiarism is committed by students – is puzzling and detrimental to the rigorous actions implemented. Plagiarism, associated with the lack of appropriate answers leads to multiple consequences within academic institutions: continued cheating, replication of cheatings, suspicion within and towards the academic community, risk of fierce revenge, risk of spreading unverified facts, judicialization of professional relationships, crises at the level of disciplinary communities and institutions, etc.

In the rest of this document, in this document, guidelines for an institutional response have been outlined to help the stakeholders of our university community to stamp out the effects of plagiarism.

V. Procedure in the case of suspected breach of integrity

A. General information

This procedure deals specifically with cases of suspected plagiarism. However, it could also serve in educating and sanctioning, as the case may be, all forms of academic integrity offences which are not covered in the present institutional framework. Nowadays, the recurrence of these other forms of offence borders on the banality, hence the urgent need to look into them.

Legal avenues are also reserved when integrity offence also violates a legal standard.

Ethics Commission

Plagiarism charges should be dealt with accordingly, given the seriousness of the consequences suffered by victims (people and institutions). Therefore, it is advisable, at the institutional level, to set up an “integrity commission” in charge of examining all cases of integrity offence, following complaints or at its own initiative. The action of the said commission should be envisaged as a matter of urgency, within purpose fully tight deadlines, both for hearings of the various parties involved and all necessary material checks. It should also be envisaged in full respect of parties, alleged plagiarists, plagiarized and informers, whose anonymity and presumed innocence should always, in all circumstances, be ensured within the framework of the initiated investigation.

The Ethics Commission is made up of integrity delegates. To this end, each institution is entitled to an integrity delegate, chosen by professors. The delegate's mandate shall last for two years renewable. An alternate delegate is appointed for the same duration, chosen amongst associate professors.

B. Plagiarism reporting

A complaint for plagiarism may be raised by anyone who discovers it; not only by the person who has been plagiarized. **Only written and non-anonymous complaints will be considered.** Plagiarism reporting must be formal and backed up with sufficiently substantiated argument. It may, particularly, when it is introduced by a victim, include claims and, if possible, propose forms of reparation (right of reply, publication of information on plagiarism to the same readers, an attestation in the publication medium, etc.).

Institutions should develop guides of good practices targetting not only potential plagiarists and their victims, but also witnesses. These guides should indeed explain how to organise the various levels of intervention: direct summoning of the plagiarist, summoning the person who reported the plagiarism if different from the plagiarised, informing and summoning possible third party bodies (journals, conference, association, editor), asking for help from one's own institution, referring to the hierarchy of the plagiarist, requesting a mediation body, publishing on the web or via blogs or specialised websites, filing legal complaints, etc.

Far from being a letter addressed directly to the alleged plagiarist for accountability, and still less to the press for the settling of scores, reporting a case of alleged misconduct is a specific letter addressed to the right addressee and comprising the following elements:

- Immediate reference to facts concerning the plagiarism case, backing them up with maximum elements and drawing up a table that contrasts the original texts and the plagiarized ones.

- Clear indication of the consequences of plagiarism.
- Specific demands for balanced remedies with regard to the damage caused.
- Copies to the heads of bodies affected by the plagiarism.

The plaintiff can contact the offence representative of his/her school/faculty to get information on the procedure before any possible reporting of the offence.

The plaintiff can also refer the case to the following bodies:

- For published chapters or articles: the Scientific Committee or Editorial Committee that exist in every good journal and not only the Editor-in-chief.
- For conferences: the scientific officials of the conference, but also, chairs and vice-chairs of the association in charge of the congress, as required.
- For books and book chapters: the editor, with a copy to the institutional bodies of the alleged plagiarist.
- For doctorate/PhD theses: university bodies, the *CCIU* and the Integrity Commission of the plagiarist's institution, where it exists.

Anyone who suspects or detects a case of plagiarism in an article, book, communication in a congress or any other scientific publication should report it to the Rector's office. The Rector's office refers the plagiarism report, as soon as possible, to the ethics commission and Head of school/faculty to which the respondent is attached.

The duty of any member of the university community who is suspecting a violation of scientific integrity is to report it so that the misconduct should be stopped as soon as possible in the interest of science and academic system. To keep silent about a violation of ethics constitutes, in itself, an ethical mistake. The protection of the person who reports the offence is ensured by the Head of the school/faculty.

C. Arbitration within a Department

Before reporting any case to the Rector's office or legal authorities, it is necessary to first bring these cases to the knowledge of the basic academic units, for arbitration or a simple factual analysis to cool down the debate between protagonists and, if possible, prevent conflict escalation. Consequently, in case of suspected dishonesty within a Department, the alert must first be issued to the person responsible for the work concerned. The laboratory director or Head of Department should be informed and endeavour to solve the problem internally.

For more efficiency, it is especially important to explain the facts and nature of the misconduct: both to allow a proper investigation of the files, and to open, where appropriate, the possibility of adversarial appeal. On the contrary, the risk is that the result of the mediation may not be accepted (suspected influence, conflicts of interest, cronyism or the protection of the most powerful parties). In such cases, the risk would be twofold : failure to resolve the conflict in question, and more seriously, total lack of respect.

If mediation is not possible, an intervention of the institution can be sought. Lastly, if an informal solution cannot be found between protagonists within an academic institution or ***if the case reveals genuine allegations of plagiarism***, the case should be referred to the Rector's Office for forwarding

to the ethics commission which is the body in charge of the management of all individual complaints.

D. Procedure before the ethics commission

When the complaint is not admissible, the ethics commission informs the Rector's Office of the reasons for its inadmissibility.

When a complaint is deemed admissible, the ethics commission of the institution invites the protagonists as soon as possible. Depending on the case, it envisages the following provisions for its investigation:

1. If the report of the cheating clearly proves to be unfounded, the commission proposes its closure to the Rector's Office and Head of school/faculty in a detailed and reasoned report.
2. If the report of cheating appears to be founded and, in the conditions set below, a conciliation is proposed to the various parties. The ethics commission may propose an agreement to the people involved: the respondent and the potentially wronged person who reported the misconduct, and may validate such agreement, when all the following conditions are met:
 - ✓ The infringement of possible public interests is less important, and
 - ✓ The behaviour held against the respondent cannot be considered as a criminal offence, and
 - ✓ The agreement does not provide for the payment of any financial benefit.

The ethics commission informs the Rector's Office and Head of faculty/school about the signing of the agreement and closure of the proceedings.

3. If a more important investigation appears necessary, an *ad hoc* commission of inquiry is set up to review the facts and then outline findings and recommendations.

In the case where the ethics commission proposes the closure of the case:

- If the Rector/Vice-chancellor, after securing the opinion of the Head of school/faculty, also believes that the report on cheating is unfounded, he/she endorses the proposed closure.
- On the contrary, if he/she thinks, after securing the opinion of the head of school/faculty, that an investigation is necessary, he/she redirects the report of cheating to the ethics commission with the instruction to set up an *ad hoc* commission of inquiry.

It is essential to promptly examine any reported case, as the case may be, to propose arbitration. These are requirements pertaining to the protection of victims' rights, restoration of scientific integrity and ethics and, ultimately, the protection of the image of the institution concerned and our higher education system.

E. Commission of inquiry

Appointment of members of the commission of inquiry

The ethics commission appoints an *ad hoc* commission of inquiry offering all guarantees of impartiality. The commission, which is specific to each case, comprises an appointed chairperson, assisted by three or four members with, if possible, the following profiles:

- A legal expert (doctor of law, lawyer, etc.) experienced in the preparation of case files. Indeed, it must already be anticipated that respondents have a legal counsel. It is advisable that this member should not be an expert in property law because he/she may influence other

members of the commission by virtue of his/her background.

- A specialist in the discipline concerned but who is not working in the same school/faculty. Given that in general, the “professional” plagiarist may have committed all forms of scientific misconducts (bogus data, improved analysis...) this member, an expert in the discipline, could help to make the difference between genuine plagiarism and a mere oversight.
- A plagiarism and scientific misconduct specialist, or else, a specialist of ethics and academic ethics.

When members have accepted their terms of reference, the membership of the commission of inquiry is submitted to the Rector/Vice-Chancellor and Head of school/faculty of the respondent, who has five days to request the change its composition. After the approval by the Rector/Vice-Chancellor and the Head of school/faculty, either expressly or in the absence of an opposition within five days, the membership of the commission is validated by the chairperson of the Ethics Commission.

Investigations of the commission of inquiry

Ahead of the work of the commission of inquiry, the ethics commission, possibly assisted by the *legal services* of the institution, prepares a file with properly referenced items. Institutions must always remember that, in case of an appeal, the lawyers will ask to be removed from the file, all the data whose collection is not recognizable. Therefore, it is important that the items of the file be well prepared to enable the commission of inquiry perform quality work.

The commission of inquiry analyses only facts. To this end, the documents needed to make a decision on the plagiarism charge should be placed in the case file. However, all elements relating to exchanges between the protagonists will be excluded. Indeed, illustration of poor relations between stakeholders would prevent the facts on which a decision should be made. The role of the commission of Inquiry is not that of a court, and in addition, since its work does not fall within the framework of an administrative investigation, it does not have to hear the protagonists, nor listen to the particular circumstances that either party would like to mention. Its role is to establish the facts and make recommendations to the representative.

Since plagiarism is a scientific offence, it should be recalled that scientific issue is not a legal issue. The commission of inquiry should work from the point of view of a “logic of consequence” (impact of the offence on the protagonists and knowledge), and should not adopt a simple “logic of cause” (alleged offences).

Classification of plagiarism

Plagiarism has various and complex configurations and, it is not its length that determines its seriousness, but the proven intentionality of its author. To copy a simple note of a few lines without precise bibliographical references is to appropriate what has sometimes required hours of work and investigation. What is generally considered by the respondents as the result of “mere carelessness” should be classified by experts into various categories, including:

- 1) Unmasked textual copying (e.g. copying without quotation marks and without citing the source, translating without quoting the source, etc.)
- 2) Make-up using coarse techniques (e.g. paraphrases, jumping over or inversion of lines, replacing of words, etc.)

- 3) Camouflage using sophisticated techniques on the form (e.g. model without sources followed in one's development, etc.)
- 4) Substance of texts copied using sophisticated techniques (e.g. resumption of the argumentative style of an important author, etc.)

Duration of an inquiry and modalities for work

An investigation of this nature lasts for one to two months, taking into account the workloads of experts, and a reasonable time for the review of documents provided (with or without the detection software). On the contrary, a longer investigation places protagonists in a very uncomfortable situation and each of them should be psychologically protected.

All types of exchanges, including mails between experts, should be secured to reduce the risk of leakage. A special focus will be put on data security. With regard to the submission of heavy files, it will be advisable to use protection techniques such as **Dropbox** and **secret code**.⁶

At the end of the investigation, the Chairperson of the commission of inquiry drafts a report which he/she forwards to the Chairperson of the Ethics Commission. This report notably contains the enclosure slip of all documents included in the file during investigation; the list of inquiries carried out; reports on the hearing of the parties involved; results obtained through the use of the similarity detection software; when appropriate, specific findings on the existence or not of a fraudulent behaviour and formal recommendations following the proven facts. It may also propose an extension of the investigation, either to other fraudulent situations that the review of documents would have revealed, or to the collaborators of the respondents. In fact, it is not excluded that direct collaborators of researchers charged with plagiarism have equally adopted deviant behaviours by imitation or habit. In any case, the commission of inquiry proposes sanctions against the respondents or modalities for reparation

The ethics commission in turn forwards this report to the Rector/Vice-Chancellor or Head of School/faculty through a memento accompanied with an informed opinion on the sanctions or compensations proposed, as the case may be. The report could also be forwarded to other parties involved (plagiarised, alleged plagiarist and possibly, scientific associations of which the parties are members, etc.) if they were informed of the existence of the complaint or involved in the investigation procedure.

External *ad hoc* commission for serious cases

For serious cases, an *ad hoc* commission comprising personalities outside the institution is mandated to establish the material truth.

The setting up an internal inquiry commission is generally preferred by heads of institutions – "dirty linen is not washed in public". However, and though it can perform an honest and objective work, its findings may be tainted with the doubt of partiality and its members exposed to "political" pressure from their colleagues. Therefore, for serious cases, it is necessary to involve external experts. The commission gives its opinion to the ethics commission for referral to disciplinary bodies, if need be, and in accordance with the legislation in force.

⁶ The data of any case put on Google Drive, an American company, belong – legally – to the President of the United States of America.

F. Responsibility of the Rector's Office and Head of School/faculty

Upon reception of the report of the ethics commission, the Rector's/Vice-Chancellor's Office may file the report on cheating or take one or more measures amongst the following:

- Disciplinary sanctions provided for by the regulation governing university staff.
- Referral to the Disciplinary Council of the university.
- Any other measure that could help to redress the misconduct, such as: inform the publishing house or magazine that a publication has suffered a scientific integrity offence; reveal the existence of the offence to authorities and the scientific and academic world; publicly acknowledge the contribution of third party to a publication or discovery.
- Reduction, suspension or cancellation of research allowances provided by the university when the offence was committed within the framework of a project supported by the University, and/or supervision and monitoring measures for work performed by the author of the offence.
- Information of partners who have financed the research project, if need be.

The decision to close the case is communicated to the potentially wronged person who reported the offence and respondent, when the latter was informed of the existence of the report of the cheating.

Any other decision of the Rector's/Vice-Chancellor's office is communicated to the respondent and the potentially wronged person who reported the cheating. The Rector's/Vice-Chancellor's office informs the Dean and the Ethics commission.

Within the limits of his/her competence, the Dean ensures that the procedure does not hinder researches and courses in progress. He/she also takes measures likely to minimise the risks that offences similar to the ones reported should not repeat themselves.

G. Confidentiality

At the start of the procedure, everybody, members of the commissions, parties concerned and any other person involved in the procedure is bound by the obligation of discreteness. This obligation protects the protagonists, as well as the university from possible interrogations of the media.

In principle, all procedures are confidential. The university institution, through the Rector's/Vice-Chancellor's Office, decides the time, the nature and content of a possible publication of facts and findings of a procedure.

H. Breach of academic integrity suspected or proven by a competitive entrance examination jury, a recruitment or promotion commission

When a competitive examination jury, a recruitment or promotion commission suspects a candidate of serious integrity offence, a report is sent to the Ministry of Higher Education for referral to an ethics commission within a university institution that has close links with the respondent or the area of science in which he/she is working.

The researcher is summoned through a registered mail with an acknowledgement of receipt 15 days at least before the meeting of the ethics commission. In any case, he/she benefits from all guarantees provided for by the legislation in force. All the rights of defence are expressly accorded to him/her, before the making of decisions and sanctions, when appropriate. He/she may be assisted by

a counsel of his/her choice. After hearing him/her, the commission drafts minutes of the hearing and forwards a report containing its findings and recommendations to Ministry of Higher Education.

The following measures are taken after hearing the persons concerned:

In case of proven plagiarism which does not have any influence on the content and scientific value of the scientific production: postponement of the defence of the researchers, pronouncement of first-degree sanctions to candidates for the promotion competitive examinations within the remit of higher education institutions.

In case of established plagiarism that has an influence on the content and scientific value of the production concerned, the above-mentioned juries and commissions take the following measures:

- Refusal to recruit or promote the candidate into the rank applied for,
- Refusal of the defence,
- Demotion, if plagiarism is discovered after promotion.

The report is submitted to the Rector/Vice-Chancellor and Head of School/faculty, when it concerns a student, so that appropriate disciplinary measures should be taken.

The file presented to a competitive entrance examination, recruitment, or promotion will be returned to the institution that issued the certificate/diploma so that adequate measures concerning the legality of the said certificate/diploma are taken.

In case of proven plagiarism in a research or thesis defended abroad, the competent commission (recruitment, promotion, competitive entrance examination, etc.) shall inform the Ministry in charge of higher education which reserves its rights to withdraw the equivalence.

In case of refusal to recruit or promote a candidate following a proven case of plagiarism, the concerned will be banned from sitting for any subsequent competitive entrance examination organised by the Ministry of Higher Education for five (5) consecutive years.

In addition to the measures mentioned above, commission and jury reports are sent to Ministry of Higher Education for appropriate disciplinary measures when it concerns lecturers

I. Remedies and challenges

The researcher can file an internal administrative appeal against the decisions taken in accordance with the provisions of this circular. He/she can also challenge the decisions taken against him by appealing against them on grounds of abuse of authority, before the administrative courts.

The academic or professional measures provided for in this circular do not preclude the application of the law on intellectual and artistic property and the legislation in force.

In any case, the interest of the victim of plagiarism will be taken into consideration and his/her rights to legal proceedings and claim for compensations will be preserved, and this, in addition to the sanctions provided for by the legislation in force.

The defendant and the potentially aggrieved person who reported the cheating may request the disqualification of the bodies before which they are appearing (Delegate in charge of offences, members of the ethics commission.)

The challenge for disqualifications must be submitted within a period of five days to the

jurisdiction after taking cognizance of the membership of the bodies. It should be reasoned.

Anyone considered as being potentially biased because of family relationships or conflict of interest (for example: close friendship, financial or organizational dependence) with the respondent or person who reported the offence should recuse himself/herself. It is also the case if there are other circumstances that are likely to create a suspicion of impartiality of a member of a competent court.

In the event of successful challenge:

The Delegate is replaced by his alternate, appointed according to the provisions of this guideline; the disqualified member of the ethics commission is replaced by a person chosen according to the modalities defined above. The Dean is replaced by a Vice-Dean, the Director by the Deputy Director or else, by the Dean of the Faculty having the closest connection with the respondent and the field of science in which he/she is working; the Deputy Rector/Deputy Vice-Chancellor is not replaced- the commission decides in his/her absence.

J. Management of self-plagiarism cases

The characterization of cases of plagiarism is complex. Due to the specific nature of the issues raised, self-plagiarism is not comparable in seriousness and should be handled differently from plagiarism.

K. Mediation commissions in case of plagiarism

Alongside the above-mentioned investigation procedure, institutions can set up thematic and inter-university mediation commissions whose main objective would be peer regulation and training. The mediators would be active and operational members in the area of research and the mediation bodies would be joint and debate bodies, representing the scientific community concerned. Instead of a Committee of Wise Men, the mediation body should be structured as per stakeholders to avoid potential conflicts of interest and in the interest of independence. Its membership could be made up of the following categories: editors, teacher-researchers, heads of school/faculty, deans, young researchers, external experts or other disciplines. We should avoid inviting only officials currently in office.

L. What should be done when plagiarism is discovered after the defence of a Doctorate/PhD thesis?

If the plagiarism of a PhD/doctorate thesis is discovered when the fraudster is serving in a position of teacher-researcher in a Cameroonian university, efforts should be made to ensure that the position that was unduly occupied by the fraudster is opened to other applicants. Besides, a request for his/her withdrawal from the proficiency list for the different ranks obtained is sent to the CCIU at the end of the investigation procedure initiated within the institution concerned.

However, the CCIU can neither cancel a PhD/doctorate thesis on grounds of plagiarism nor challenge the issuance of the said PhD/doctorate for two main reasons:

- It is not a disciplinary body, and
- The title of "Doctor" is conferred by a university and thus by a jury which is solely responsible for its decisions.

M. Funding of the cost of the system

Investigation procedure and discussions with the parties involved require a lot of time and

resources (missions to hear parties or witnesses, similarity detection software, access to bibliographical databases, etc.). Assessment and remote consultation procedures should be encouraged as far as possible.

Institutions should study the internal or collective modalities for funding the mechanisms put in place to ensure their independence, rigour and sustainability. Several methods can be envisaged and would be implemented progressively during the deployment of the mechanisms. External grants (administrations and partners for the development of education and research, etc.) can also be solicited to enhance the response capacity of the mechanism.

N. Communication, Transparency – Responsibility of Institutions

Institutions have the duty to ensure that cases are not spread to avoid a situation of double penalty for the people at fault: a sanction and rumour that would spread.

When it comes to theses of complacency or plagiarism of collaborators, the greatest criticism that can be made against a higher education institution is the opaqueness surrounding the investigation. Cases of misconduct should not be downplayed out of fear of media, but should be handled within the framework of a transparent process dissociating the findings (assessment of documents and assessment of evidence), from judgment and expected results clearly explaining the reasons and grounds for the decision taken. For decisions to be accepted by all, they should be documented and must not only be based on the argument from authority.

Transparency does not presuppose a public investigation, but a process whereby the steps are clearly defined, as well as criteria and modalities for management. One of the main objectives is to appease the university community and limit bloody battles among colleagues as soon as a case of integrity offence is revealed. A transparent mechanism makes it possible, in particular, to avoid additional clashes in which each person is called upon to take sides or distrust others without having access to information or an argued view point of view on the issues under discussion.

Once a year, university institutions should provide all their collaborators with a compiled table of the number of cases investigated, number of sanctions taken and type per faculty or department, if possible.

In order to ease collective learning of the community, mediation or integrity bodies organise a regular publication of their decisions and characterisations of cases (making them anonymous where appropriate) to enable the collective development of experience in the management of plagiarism cases. Furthermore, this publication ensures that the work of the bodies concerned is properly carried out.

In order to avoid that the accused, once sanctioned, goes to present himself/herself in the media as a victim of political witch-hunting, institutions should institute a protocol against defamation co-signed by the collaborator sanctioned and the head of the school/faculty concerned.

The Ministry of Higher Education is informed on an annual basis of all cases handled and their outcome. A summary is done in such a way as to:

- Increase the actual knowledge of the phenomenon ;
- Illustrate the complexity of the topic and the various configurations ;
- Document all aspects (concrete, factual and emotional) of potential conflicts ;
- Harmonise the implementation of conflict resolution modalities at the national level.

Conclusion

This guideline, in addition to the characterisations of integrity offences which are indeed complex tasks, has two major objectives, namely:

- Raise the awareness of the university community on academic integrity offences with a focus on plagiarism;
- Propose measures to manage complaints and minimise the risks of conflicts due to scientific dishonesty.

The mechanism to be put in place is a combination of various tools and actions, including:

- Knowledge of the scope and depth of scientific misconducts in working habits;
- A major awareness raising operation;
- The establishment of charters within university institutions;
- The investigation of plagiarism cases and elaboration of a motivated opinion;
- The setting up of mediation bodies and enforcement of disciplinary sanctions for cases of proven misconduct.

All these actions will contribute to individual responsibility, cleaning up collective practices, exemplary conduct towards students and research partners and appeased relations within the academic community.

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