



National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (NPMCN)

Research Misconduct Policy

Pursuant to Section 7 (a) and (b) of the National Postgraduate Medical College Act
Cap N59 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, the Senate hereby makes this
Research Misconduct Policy for responsible conduct of research.

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College Registrar

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1.0 Preamble

The research ethics code of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (NPMCN) showed the rules and regulations required for responsible conduct of research, study, project work, assignment, case books, thesis and dissertation. Postgraduate students, resident doctors, researchers, faculty officials, fellows and members of staff of the college are expected to have the appropriate ethical and moral values, and therefore avoid research misconduct. The NPMCN will make every effort to prevent, discourage, punish culprits and stop research misconduct through training, mentoring and supervision. The outlined comprehensive policy provides information on what constitute “research misconduct”; including clear definitions, general principles, adjudication procedures and penalties.

2.0 Policy Statements

- 2.1. The NPMCN’s main responsibility is to create and maintain an academic environment that promotes ethical behaviour in scholarship and serves to prevent misconduct in research.
- 2.2. The NPMCN expects that all research that it supports shows impeccable research integrity and adheres to the highest standards of conduct.
- 2.3. The NPMCN will take all reported allegations of research misconduct seriously and will demand that they are fully, fairly and timely investigated, and that the outcome of the investigation reported appropriately.
- 2.4. The NPMCN shall administer appropriate sanctions on those found guilty of research misconduct, based on the seriousness of the offence; which will include but not limited to reprimand, probation, suspension, debarment, demotion and dismissal. If a criminal offence has been committed, then in addition, the case will be referred to the appropriate governmental agency.
- 2.5. The NPMCN shall adopt the procedures described herein in reporting, inquiring into, and investigating any reported research misconduct

3.0 Scope/Applicability of Research Misconduct

- 3.1. The Policy and Procedure shall apply to all resident doctors, diplomates, candidates, research fellows, faculty and members of academic staff who perform research, or have submitted case books, thesis, dissertation, project or assignment, based on research performed, for the award of postgraduate college degree or diploma.
- 3.2. The Policy and Procedure shall apply to all College fellows and academic members of staff who supervise resident doctors/candidates; or authors of manuscripts, proceedings, chapter in books, full books or any such documents; or involved in editorial work of journals / official publications of the NPMCN.
- 3.3. The Policy and Procedure do not supersede or establish an alternative to any existing governmental regulations, procedures, or policies regarding fiscal improprieties, conflict of interest, ethical treatment of human or animal subjects, or criminal matters, all of which remain in effect.

4.0 Types/ Forms of Research Misconduct Policy

Research misconduct policy covers a variety of research misconduct, The NPMCN shall be concerned with /will focus on the three main forms, namely,

- 4.1. Plagiarism
- 4.2. Fabrication
- 4.3. Falsification

5.0 Definitions of the Various Types of Research Misconduct

- 5.1. Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate attribution.
- 5.2. Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them. Failure to provide research data spreadsheets/records or detection of fabrication in provided research data spreadsheets/records shall constitute fabrication.
- 5.3. Falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record. Examination of provided research data spreadsheets/records shall be required to confirm falsification.

6.0 Applications of the Definitions of Research Misconduct

Research Misconduct to which this Policy applies includes but is not limited to the following:

- 6.1 Failure to obtain Postgraduate College/ Institutional ethics Committee approval before the performance of research on human and animal subjects.
- 6.2 Coercion authorship is where intimidation is used to gain authorship.
- 6.3 Honorary, guest, or gift authorship: when authorship is awarded to acknowledge friendship, to gain favour, or give the manuscript a greater sense of legitimacy.
- 6.4 Ghost authorship: when an assignment, course work, thesis, dissertation, or manuscript is written by other student or professional or commercial writer, who is not included as an author or is not acknowledged.
- 6.5 Mutual support authorship: when two or more researchers place their names on each other's manuscripts to enhance their productivity.
- 6.6 Misconduct related to research, misconduct inquiries, and or investigations.
- 6.7 Research misconduct by reviewers and editors of NPMCN journals and other College Publications.

7.0 NPMCN Policy on Plagiarism, Fabrication and Falsification

- 7.1. Definition of Plagiarism using Similar index and zero tolerance policy in core work areas:
Plagiarism involves copying of phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, or longer extracts from published or unpublished works including from internet without acknowledgement of the source. This contemporary definition of plagiarism using similarity index and zero tolerance for unintentional / intentional plagiarism in the core

areas of thesis/dissertation/monograph/manuscript will be endorsed and adopted by the NPMCN.

- 7.2. Levels of Plagiarism; Plagiarism will be stratified into the following levels in ascending order of severity for the purpose of its definition in the non-core work areas:
- i. Level 1: Similarity score of 0% to 20%
 - ii. Level 2: Similarity score of 21% to 40%
 - iii. Level 3: Similarity score of 41% to 60%
 - iv. Level 4: Similarity score of 61% and above

Since the core work areas shall not have any similarities, then the similarity index for thesis, dissertation, monogram, manuscript and any such document, is representative of the similarity score for non-core work areas which shall include introduction, literature review, methodology, discussion, tables, figures and images.. A similarity index of more than 10% from a single source or more than 30% total content should be investigated.

- 7.3. Every student submitting a thesis, dissertation, or any other such documents to the NPMCN shall submit an undertaking indicating that the document has been prepared by him or her and that the document is his / her original work and free of any type of research misconduct. The undertaking shall include the fact that the document has been duly checked through a plagiarism detection tool approved by the NPMCN.

- 7.4. The similarity checks for plagiarism shall exclude the following:

- 7.4.1. All quoted work reproduced with necessary permission and/or attribution;
- 7.4.2. All references, bibliography, table of content, preface and acknowledgements;
- 7.4.3. All generic terms, laws, standard symbols and standard equations;
- 7.4.4. It shall also exclude common knowledge or coincidental terms, up to fourteen consecutive words.

The core work shall be based on original ideas and shall be covered by zero tolerance policy on plagiarism, fabrication and falsification. In case plagiarism, fabrication or falsification is established in the core work claimed, then the NPMCN shall impose maximum penalty. The core work areas shall include abstract, summary, hypothesis, observations, results, discussion, conclusions and recommendations only and shall not have any similarities.

- 7.5. The NPMCN shall ensure that her students/resident doctors, faculty researchers and academic members of staff who are involved in research are aware of and are familiar with this policy and the importance of compliance. The approved policy shall be placed on the home-page of the College website.

- 7.6. **Interim Administrative Actions/Sanctions:**

During a research misconduct proceeding the NPMCN has the right to take any administrative actions/sanctions necessary to protect the health and safety of research subjects, funds or resources of sponsors, College reputation and academic integrity and to comply with any applicable governmental laws, regulations or policies.

7.7. **Plagiarism Checking:**

The NPMCN shall obtain subscription of a Plagiarism Check Software (PCS). It should be available in the NPMCN's Central Library. Any student, candidate, researcher, faculty and staff who wishes to submit his/her final thesis, dissertation, research paper, article, or any other such documents to the NPMCN or to some other agency, shall be required to submit the soft copy of the thesis/dissertation/manuscript to the librarian for the plagiarism check at a fee to be determined prior to final submission. The desk officer in charge shall supply the soft copy of the report generated on the PCS and softcopy of the document to Deputy Registrar, Academic and to the concerned person.

8.0 **Requirements for findings of research misconduct**

The principles of natural justice shall be followed while deciding on allegation of research misconduct. A finding of research misconduct made under this part requires that;

- 8.1. There be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community; and
- 8.2. The misconduct be committed intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly; and
- 8.3. The allegation be proven by a preponderance of the evidence.

9.0 **General Principles**

- A. **Responsibility to Report Research Misconduct:** The National Postgraduate Medical College to whom this Policy applies must immediately report any observed or suspected research misconduct to their Registrar/Faculty Chairman/Research Integrity Officer (RIO). Individuals may also make anonymous reports via calls or emails.
- B. **Responsibility to Cooperate with Inquiries and Investigations:** All students, resident doctors, faculty, researchers and academic members of staff and agents of the NPMCN are obliged to mandatorily cooperate fully with the College Registrar, Faculty Chairman and RIO and other officials in charge of allegations and the conduct of any proceedings under this Policy.
- C. **An inquiry is warranted:** When a specific and credible allegation that falls within the definitions of Research Misconduct is received within 6 years of commitment, the Respondent should be notified before the beginning of the investigation.
- D. Research Misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion.
- E. **Non-Exclusivity of this Policy:** The fact that proceedings are brought under this policy does not preclude additional proceedings before other Postgraduate Colleges, Universities, and/or under other policies or regulations.
- F. **Confidentiality:** The College President, College Senate, College Registrar, Deputy Registrar Academic, RIO, committee members and other College officials involved

in the conduct of proceedings under this Policy shall limit the disclosure of information to those who need to know in order to fulfil requirements of the Policy.

- G. Costs:** All costs incurred by the Office of the College Registrar, RIO, and the Faculty during research misconduct proceedings shall be borne by the Postgraduate College.

10.0 Guidelines for Reporting a Case of Research Misconduct

- 10.1. Research misconduct can be reported by any interested party. This includes, but not limited to, fellow resident doctors, supervisors, proposal/dissertation assessors, faculty officials, academic staff of the training institutions etc.
- 10.2. The person reporting (called the Complainant) shall submit a duly signed document addressed to the RIO (College Registrar, Deputy Registrar Academic, Faculty Chairman) The report should:
 - 10.2.1. State the name and institution of the researcher
 - 10.2.2. Highlight the perceived area of research misconduct
 - 10.2.3. Contain all the related research records/materials available to the complainant
 - 10.2.4. Be done in a polite, safe and confidential manner
- 10.3. Anonymous complaints via calls, mails or WhatsApp may be considered BUT must be sent to the appropriate quarters.
- 10.4. Non-submission of research records will not negate the consideration of any report.
- 10.5. The College Registrar shall direct the respective Faculty to investigate and submit a report on the allegation(s) for consideration by the Senate.
- 10.6. The Senate shall decide on the need for further investigations.
- 10.7. The Disciplinary Committee of the Senate shall be the body that can consider the submission of the Faculty Board or the Editorial Board and recommend appropriate punishment to the Senate.

11.0 Suggested penalties for various types of research misconduct

Administrative actions/penalties may include; letter of reprimand, rustication, withdrawal of degree, removal of the responsible person from the particular project, special monitoring of future work, suspension without salary, salary reduction, initiation of steps leading to possible rank reduction, termination of employment, or restitution of funds as appropriate.

- 11.1. Research Misconduct 6.1; Failure to obtain ethics approval; letter of reprimand, removal from project, cancellation of project or automatic zero for project.
No injury to research animals and subjects, Injury to research animals and subjects substantiated; cancellation of project, automatic zero for project, rejection of the thesis or dissertation.
- 11.2. Research Misconduct 5.2 and 5.3; Fabrication and or Falsification;
Cancellation of project, automatic zero for project.
- 11.3 Research Misconduct 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7;
Letter of reprimand, removal from project, cancellation of project, automatic zero for project.

11.4 Research Misconduct 5.1; Plagiarism;

- a. Level 1 Plagiarism (Similarity score of 0% to 20%): When the similarity is due to use of quotes, phrases and sentences of others without the authors writing in their own words or is not of such nature that directly affects the original findings of research; then there shall be no penalty;
 - i. Student / Candidate; Should be allowed to revise thesis/dissertation using his/her own words and re-submitting after reducing similarity score to 10% and below.
 - ii. Faculty/Academic member of staff; published proceedings, articles, monographs, chapters in books and books shall be advised to revise the work with the aim of reducing similarity index to acceptable level.
- b. Level 2 Plagiarism (Similarity score of 21% to 40%): When the plagiarism is a result of negligence or without intent to cheat and the similarity score is 21% to 40%;
 - i. Student / Candidate; may be allowed to resubmit the work with proper citations within 3 to 6 months after reducing similarity score to below 10%.
 - ii. Faculty / Academic member of staff; published proceedings, articles, monographs, chapters in books and books shall be warned to be more attentive and proactive.
- c. Level 3 Plagiarism (Similarity score of 41% to 60%): When the plagiarism is a result of inappropriate citations; copying of large numbers of consecutive words and or paragraphs;
 - i. Student /Candidate; shall be debarred from submitting a revised thesis / dissertation for a period of one year and shall be allowed to resubmit the work with proper citations, similarity score of below 10% and with a letter of reprimand not to repeat the misconduct again otherwise registration in the programme will be cancelled.
 - ii. Faculty /Academic member of staff; published proceedings, articles, monographs, chapters in books and books shall be barred from submitting manuscripts to the journal for 2 years. The supervisor shall not be allowed to supervise new undergraduate/postgraduate students for a period of 2 years.
- d. Level 4 Plagiarism (Similarity score of and above 61%) and Plagiarism in core work areas: When the plagiarism is deliberate, planned, massive and blatant, involving copying of many paragraphs, figures, images and artwork or copying another thesis/dissertation partly or completely; in core work areas;
 - i. Student / Candidate; registration in the programme shall be cancelled.
 - ii. Faculty / Academic member of staff; published proceedings, articles, monographs, chapters in books and books shall be disqualified from submitting manuscripts to the journal for 5 years. The supervisor shall not be allowed to supervise new undergraduate / postgraduate students for a period of 3 years.

12. Appeal

The respondent shall have the right to appeal a finding of research misconduct to the College Registrar within thirty days of receipt of the final report.

13. Record Retention

The College Registrar shall keep a complete file of the misconduct proceedings for seven (7) years beyond completion of the case. Thereafter the documents shall be kept in an archive.