

Report of Expert Committee for Review of Appeal of Plagiarism Complaint against the VC of KFUEIT, Rahim Yar Khan

Background:

1. HEC constituted experts committee for review of appeal of plagiarism complaint against the Vice Chancellor of Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology, Rahim Yar Khan vide 3-1-268-P/QAD/HEC/2022/478 on March 13, 2023.
2. The committee was provided the transcripts of complaint, response of the accused and the report of the previous committee constituted by HEC.
3. The committee held five meetings to review the available evidence, establish the occurrence of plagiarism, and to review the research papers (published & retracted). The meetings were held on 17 March 2023(1st), 8 May 2023(2nd), 29 May 2023(3rd), 23 June 2023 (4th) and 10 July 2023.
4. The committee sought legal advice from the HEC legal advisor as well.
5. The complainant and the accused were asked to submit additional information via email (written statement) and were also given a personal hearing on 10 July 2023.
6. The summary of interaction and information provided by complainant and accused are listed below:

- a. Mr. Farrukh Iqbal (complainant) was given the opportunity to explain the committee about his point of view about the plagiarism matter and a few questions were asked by the members for further clarifications.

Mr. Farrukh Iqbal is a graduate from COMSATS University and completed his MPhil from UTP Malaysia (2015-2017). He further moved to Australia (RMIT) in January 2018 to pursue his PhD.

According to Mr. Farrukh Iqbal, he had no connection with Dr. Suleman Tahir, Mr. Numair Manzoor or any of the other colleagues of Dr. Suleman Tahir. He came to know about the plagiarized paper once he received a citation alert via ResearchGate back in 2020. He then immediately informed the journal about plagiarism. He also mentioned about the telephonic conversation between him and Dr. Bilal Tahir that they tried to bribe him for not highlighting this matter further. However, he did not listen to them and took the matter to the kind attention of HEC Pakistan. During the

in-person hearing (via Zoom), the committee observed the attitude of Mr. Farrukh Iqbal was highly arrogant and he was not happy due to HEC not taking strict action against Dr. Suleman Tahir.

- b. Dr. Suleman Tahir was also given the opportunity to explain his position on the complaint in addition to written statement, and the committee asked few questions to him regarding the matter.

According to Dr. Tahir, Mr. Numair Manzoor started his masters' research with him back in 2016. Dr. Tahir wasn't aware of the research work at NUST being carried out by his student Numair Manzoor. The committee asked him about the student's characterization data and the original source files (XRD, FTIR, SEM/EDX etc.) but he was not aware of anything related to his student's research work. Rather Dr. Suleman frequently mentioned Dr. Asad Mumtaz (Faculty Member at NUST and ex laboratory fellow of Mr. Farrukh Iqbal) that he is blackmailing him for not offering position at KFUEIT.

The accused, Prof Dr. Suleman Tahir, has categorially denied that the retracted paper was submitted with his consent.

Findings:

The findings of the committee are summarized below:

7. The experts in committee compared the thesis of Mr. Farrukh Iqbal, thesis of Mr. Numair Manzoor and the retracted papers (FUEL & Catalysts). Most of the data in retracted papers belongs to thesis of Mr. Farrukh Iqbal (figures) and very small data from Numair Manzoor thesis was part of the papers.
8. The accused, Prof Dr. Suleman Tahir, has categorially denied that the retracted paper was submitted with his consent; and his claim can't be verified as he had moved to KFUEIT before the paper submission date and according to him was not using the email ID of University of Gujrat.
9. The research paper was submitted in January 2020, after the appointment of Prof. Dr. Suleman Tahir as Vice Chancellor at KFUEIT, Rahim Yar Khan; so apparently the accused has not claimed any advantage / benefit for the said publication.

Recommendations:

10. In view of the facts listed above, the occurrence of plagiarism is established. The committee recommends the following penalties to all authors of the paper (Muhammad Suleman Tahir, Numair Manzoor, Muhammad Sagir, M. B. Tahir and Tasmia Nawaz) as per HEC policy (reference: HEC Plagiarism Policy 2007, Minor Penalty – paragraph 11)

- a. Warning
- b. Debar from Supervision of Postgraduate Students for a period of 3 years

Annexures:

- i. Email sent to complainant and accused.
- ii. Written Statements of complainant and accused.
- iii. Front Pages of the retracted papers along with weblink
- iv. Minutes of the meetings



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