



## Information Sheet on the Treatment of Plagiarism

### a) What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is understood as the use or imitation of other people's work, either wholly or partially, without acknowledging the source and the author. In principle, plagiarism is an infringement of copyright law. Short passages from another author may be quoted; however, this is subject to the requirement that the quotation is marked as such and the source is cited. The following provides a further definition of what constitutes plagiarism (c.f. unijournal 4/2006, article by Prof. Ch. Schwarzenegger):

- a) The author submits a piece of work under his or her own name that he or she commissioned another person to write (ghost writer).
- b) The author submits the work of another person under his or her own name (complete plagiarism).
- c) The author submits the same piece of work (or part thereof) for different examinations or course assignments (self-plagiarism).
- d) The author translates foreign language texts, or parts of foreign language texts, and submits these as his or her own work without acknowledgement of the source (translation plagiarism).
- e) The author uses extracts from another's text without citing the source. This also covers the use of text and parts of texts from the Internet without citation of the source.
- f) The author uses parts of another's text and makes slight changes by altering a few words or their order (paraphrasing) without acknowledgement of the source.
- g) The author uses parts of another's text, paraphrases them and does indeed cite the relevant source, not, however, in the context of the part of the text, or parts of the texts, used (for example: concealment of the plagiarised source in a footnote at the end of the work).

It is a fundamental principle of academic ethics that the ideas, words, and theories of others should be attributed in the form of a citation, even if they are only used in the form of a summary or an analogy. Individual disciplines have their own particular conventions and regulation regarding citations and these should be adhered to when submitting academic texts. This requirement is, as a rule, waived for what is termed 'textbook' knowledge, i.e. common knowledge that may be presupposed in a particular discipline. However, if the *presentation* of this 'textbook' knowledge is derived from another author (e.g. from a particular textbook), then this must be attributed.

### b) Recognition and prevention of plagiarism

It is often possible to recognize plagiarism as a result of differences in style between various parts of a written text (breaks in style) or where the level of argumentation does not correspond with the student's intellectual level. Where an electronic version of the work is available, special (anti-plagiarism) software can be used to detect plagiarism. Additional help is available from the Dean's office of the individual faculties.



The following measures help to prevent plagiarism in student work:

- Students must submit all written work electronically so that it can be checked for plagiarism using appropriate software.
- The author must sign a declaration at the end of every piece of written work stating that he or she is the sole author of this work.
- Students are informed by lecturers, institutes or deans' offices about the disciplinary consequences of plagiarism.

### c) Procedure in the event of plagiarism

Where a case of plagiarism is uncovered there are two possible procedures; these can either be instituted individually or cumulatively:

- a) As a rule faculty regulations foresee the revocation of any performance assessment attained by illicit means by either annulling the course credits obtained or by rescinding any certificates or diplomas issued on the basis of such an assessment. Such measures are not subject to any further regulations with regard to time frame (c.f. § 36 of the General Rulebook of the Faculty of Arts with regard to Bachelor's and Master's degree programs of 1.11.2005). Consequently, any students found guilty of plagiarism will be treated in the same way as students who failed a performance assessment.
- b) In addition, disciplinary procedures may be instituted in accordance with the disciplinary code (DC) of the University of Zurich: According to § 7 lit. a of the disciplinary code anyone who submits a piece of work of which he or she is not the author violates University regulations and makes him or herself liable to disciplinary sanctions. Plagiarism also falls under this definition. According to § 8 of the disciplinary code a range of disciplinary measures may be imposed. The measures deemed appropriate and suitable in individual cases will be primarily decided on by the University Disciplinary Officer.

#### **Course of a disciplinary procedure**

Disciplinary proceedings will be instituted upon submission of an appropriate report by a faculty member to the President, who will then forward the matter to the University Disciplinary Officer. The University Disciplinary Officer will then inform the person concerned that disciplinary proceedings have been instigated against him or her (§ 12 DC). Further investigation of the matter is the responsibility of the University Disciplinary Officer (§ 16, para. 1 DC).

Upon conclusion of the investigation the University Disciplinary Officer will submit a written report to the Disciplinary Committee and in the case that the sanctions required exceed his or her competence submit an appropriate recommendation (§ 19 para. 1 DC).

#### **Disciplinary measures**

According to § 8 DC the following disciplinary measures may be taken:

- Written warning



- Suspension from seminars and lectures or from use of particular University facilities for a maximum of one semester
- Suspension from the course of studies and/or examinations for a period of between one and six semesters

The nature and severity of the disciplinary measures imposed will depend upon the extent to which the interests of the University have been brought into disrepute or jeopardised by the offence, combined with consideration of the nature of the violation, the motives for it and the conduct of the accused (§ 9 DC).

**Statute of limitations**

The statute of limitations runs for six months from the time the plagiarism is discovered (§ 10, para. 2 DC).

More detailed information about the procedure and responsibilities is contained in §§ 12-25 DC.

*Issued by the University of Zurich's Teaching Committee on 30 April 2007*