

Plagiarism

Information Notice for Students

(adapted from "Information notice on dealing with plagiarism" issued on 30 April 2007 by the Teaching Committee, University of Zurich)

Decreed in November 2008 by the Rector, ETH Zurich

A. What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the use or close imitation of the work of another author without citing that author. It is a copyright infringement. Short passages of another author's work can be cited, but must be identified as quotations and correctly cited. The following characteristics as outlined by Prof. C. Schwarzenegger (see unijournal 4/2006) further define plagiarism:

- a) The author submits a paper in his/her name that in actual fact s/he commissioned another person to write ("ghostwriter").
- b) The author submits the work of another author in his/her name (full plagiarism).
- c) The author submits the same paper (or extracts of the paper) for different seminars or exams (self-plagiarism).
- d) The author translates texts, or text extracts, from another language and submits them as his/her own work without citations (translation plagiarism).
- e) The author uses extracts of another author's work without citing that author. This also includes passages from the internet.
- f) The author paraphrases texts (i.e., changes them as deemed fit) from another author and does not quote them.
- g) The author uses extracts of another author's work, perhaps paraphrasing them, and cites the work, but not in the context of the passages used (e.g., the plagiarized source is only listed in a footnote at the end of the paper).

Good scientific conduct demands an appropriate citation when using other persons' ideas and theories, even if they are paraphrased in the paper concerned. Certain subjects have particular citation principles that must be followed when writing up a scientific paper. This requirement is usually not imposed in the case of basic knowledge (e.g., taken from reference books) that presupposes a general knowledge of the subject in question. If, however, structural elements from a reference book are used, this must be cited.

B. Procedure in the event of plagiarism

In accordance with Art. 2, Lit. b of the ETH Zurich Disciplinary Code (RSETHZ 361.1), plagiarism violates the disciplinary code and must be immediately reported to the Rector, the responsible prorector, and any other responsible persons. The Rector instigates the necessary disciplinary procedures.

Course of disciplinary proceedings

In the case of an ETH lecturer notifying the Rector and the responsible prorector, disciplinary proceedings are initiated. The director of studies of the study programme in question and the examiner, if s/he has not noted down the case, are also informed about any violations relating to performance assessments. In the case of violations relating to doctoral studies, the dissertation supervisor is also informed. The persons involved must treat the matter confidentially.

In the case of minor misconduct, the Rector decrees the disciplinary measure(s), following a hearing with the concerned person, or can decide against taking any measures. In the case of serious misconduct, the Rector asks the Disciplinary Committee to convene. This committee decides whether or not to investigate the case, whether other persons should be consulted, or whether to refer the case back to the Rector. If the Disciplinary Committee decides to take disciplinary measures, the Rector decrees such measures and informs the person concerned in writing.

Detailed information on disciplinary proceedings is specified in the ETH Zurich Disciplinary Code (RSETHZ 361.1 / www.rechtssammlung.ethz.ch).

Disciplinary measures

According to Art. 3 of the ETH Zurich Disciplinary Code, the following disciplinary measures can be imposed:

- issuing a reprimand
- declaring performance assessments as failed
- suspending the person from courses or from using ETH facilities for a maximum of three years
- threatening to suspend the person from ETH Zurich
- suspending the person from ETH Zurich for a maximum of three years
- divesting the person of an academic title if acquired illicitly.

The type and severity of the measures imposed depend on the respondent's fault, his/her motives and previous conduct, as well as the extent and importance of the interests of ETH Zurich harmed or jeopardized by the offence.