

Guidelines concerning the prevention of plagiarism

In the following we would like to give some guidelines concerning the prevention of plagiarism in PhD theses.

Please note that these guidelines are not a complete set of rules and that it is always necessary to follow the general guidelines concerning good scientific practice throughout the process of writing a thesis.

The latter can be found at <http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/university/profile/compliance/>

In cases of doubt, please consult with your supervisor.

1) What is plagiarism?

-> It is plagiarism to copy text (of whatever length) and/or figures from others and depicting those in a thesis without clearly giving reference and/or quoting (if copied text is used) the used material.

2) Is paraphrasing plagiarism?

-> Copying a text, e.g. one or several paragraphs and then slightly changing it (order of words, individual words etc.), i.e. paraphrasing does NOT prevent plagiarism!

-> Overall, the only way to clearly prevent plagiarism in the text, is to really write the thesis yourself. Close all books/articles while writing and use them later as references. If you write it yourself without first copying and then starting to change, it will automatically be sufficiently dissimilar to anything else.

3) How should I represent joint scientific work in my PhD thesis?

You have to specify the assistance you received, such as advice from fellow students, laboratory technicians, and other external sources, which leads to substantive changes of content or approach of your scientific work. Consider, that it has to be entirely clear which parts of the work are your own.

-> Experimental or computational results that are depicted in a PhD thesis that were not produced by the respective PhD student have to be clearly marked as such. Thus, every figure or table legend that belongs to a figure or table containing such results has to state that the data were produced by person x.

-> Text that has been part of a publication of such joint work cannot be copied and pasted into the PhD thesis without clear quotation/citation. Literal copying is only possible, IF the original text was completely written by the PhD student him/herself or if the text is put between quotation marks.

-> The same rules apply to using text from unpublished joint work that is part of a manuscript draft or submitted paper. Such text should be quoted and referred to as "author 1, author 2, author3, manuscript in preparation" or similar.

4) How can I avoid self-plagiarism?

-> The PhD student may use text that he/she had been writing him-/herself and which is part of a published paper, when citing properly and marking it clearly in the text. It might also be necessary to sort out any copyright issues with the original publisher.

5) Consequences of plagiarism

Committing plagiarism can have serious consequences such as the withdrawal of the admission as doctoral student or the withdrawal of the doctoral degree.