

DIR Plagiarism

Directive on Plagiarism and Other Types of Academic Misconduct in Connection with Academic Theses

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Please note: This translation is provided **for your information only**. In case of discrepancy, the German original shall prevail.

1. Purpose

This directive is intended to provide instructions to thesis supervisors on how to deal with plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct in connection with academic theses (bachelor's theses, master's theses, dissertations).

At the same time, this directive serves as a basis for the information obligations of supervisors towards the students (cf. 4.1. for more information) as well as towards the representative for study regulations and academic legislation (cf. 4.4. fig. 1 and 2).

2. Scope

This text is aimed at all faculty members who supervise and grade theses written by students at WU Vienna University of Economics and Business (hereinafter referred to as "Supervisors"), and it defines procedures to be followed in the event that plagiarism or other academic misconduct is discovered.

This directive does not apply to academic misconduct in courses, e.g. in connection with seminar or homework papers (no academic theses). These cases are covered by the Directive on the Conduct of On-Campus Examinations and Dealing with Cheating and Fraud.

3. Definitions

3.1. Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs whenever text, ideas, or artistic works are used and presented as one's own, in full or in part. In particular, this is the case when someone uses parts of texts, theories, hypotheses, findings, or data in their work in the form of a direct copy, paraphrase, or a translation without appropriately acknowledging and citing the source and the author (§ 2a [3] item 4 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education [*Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz*]).

Transferring material verbatim from another language to claim it as one's own work, i.e. without quoting the original author, is also considered plagiarism (translated plagiarism).

Authors must also appropriately acknowledge and cite any of their own previously graded or published texts (self-plagiarism).

3.2. Other types of academic misconduct

Academic misconduct also occurs when someone

- Uses unauthorized assistance from another person when writing a thesis or when someone commissions a third party to write a thesis for them (ghostwriting)
- Fabricates or falsifies data or research results

- Uses unauthorized aids, including unauthorized uses of artificial intelligence applications (§ 2a [3] of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education)

4. Regulations

4.1. Information obligations

The Supervisor has the obligation to inform the student about all the necessary requirements that a thesis must meet and to provide guidance to the student. Furthermore, the Supervisor has to explain plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct and the applicable legal consequences according to this text to the student.

4.2. Use of plagiarism detection software

At WU, all bachelor's theses, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations are routinely subjected to mandatory plagiarism detection. The use of plagiarism detection software is intended as a complementary measure in addition to the Supervisor's evaluation of the contents and form of the student's work.

All cases of suspected plagiarism or other types of academic misconduct must be investigated and reported to plagiate@wu.ac.at following the procedures specified in subsection 4.3. below.

4.3. How can the severity of plagiarism be determined?

The procedures for dealing with plagiarism depend on the severity of the misconduct. The severity of plagiarism is determined by the Supervisor based on the following aspects:

- The quantity of the plagiarized material in absolute terms and in relation to the volume of the whole thesis
- Plagiarism of entire arguments and ideas or only individual formulations
- Planned and systematic plagiarism (premeditation) or just careless citation practices
- Concealed plagiarism/translation
- Repeated instances of academic misconduct in the same thesis

4.4. Which procedures and legal consequences apply?

If the issue in question is deemed an instance of **minor** plagiarism based on the criteria specified in subsection 4.3. Above or another type of minor academic misconduct, the student shall be given an opportunity to correct the issue within an appropriate period of time. If the student fails to make the requested corrections, the thesis shall be given a failing grade and the student shall be required to choose a new topic. In justified cases, the Supervisor is entitled to withdraw the supervision without giving the student an opportunity to correct the issue.

Fig. 1 below illustrates this process:

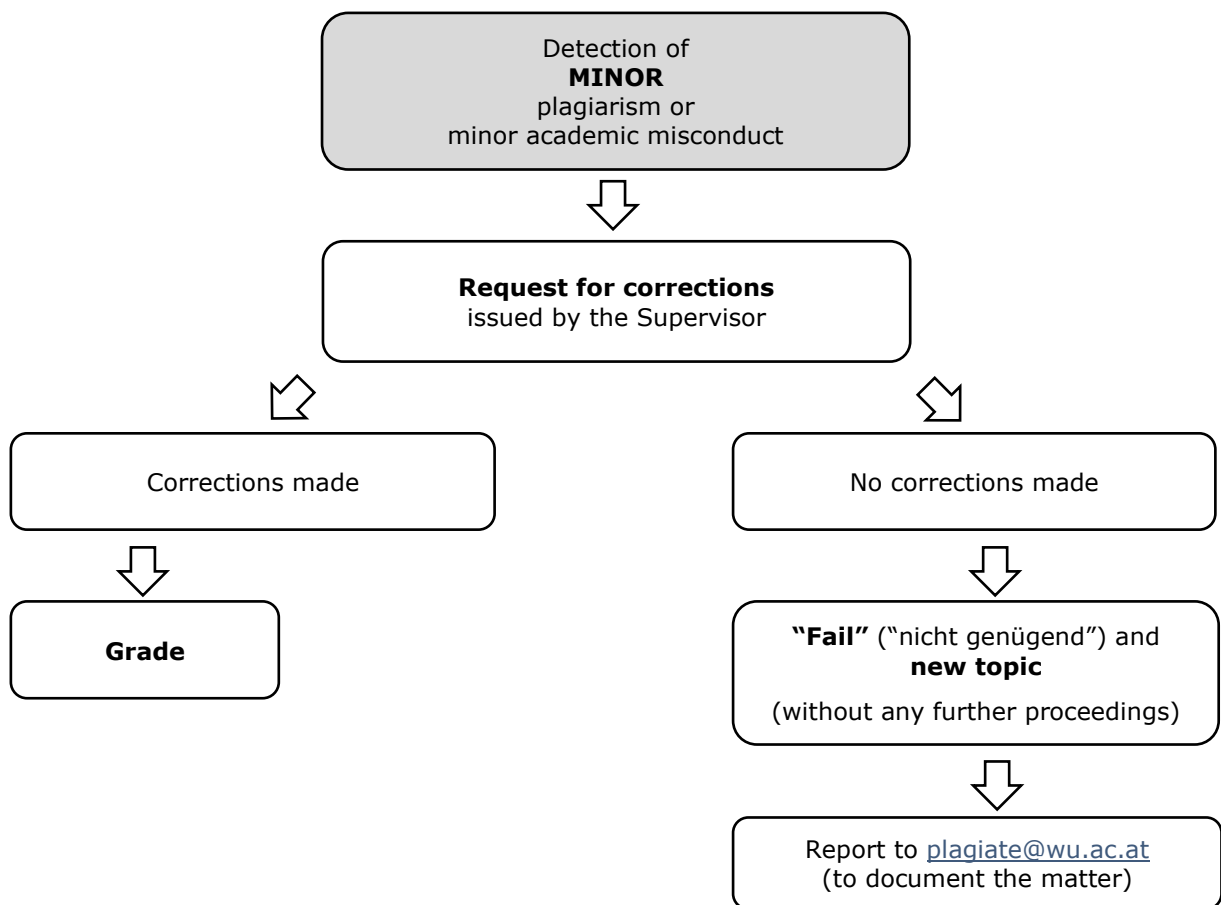


Fig. 1

If the issue in question is deemed an instance of **major** and **intentional** plagiarism or ghostwriting based on the criteria specified in subsection 4.3., the thesis shall be given a failing grade and the student shall be required to choose a new topic. In such cases, the Supervisor is also entitled to withdraw supervision. The facts will be determined in a face-to-face hearing held in the Study Regulations office. If necessary, the Vice-Rector for Academic Programs and Student Affairs, acting in their capacity as representative for study regulations and academic legislation, can suspend the student from their studies for a period of up to two semesters.

The procedure is illustrated below (fig. 2):

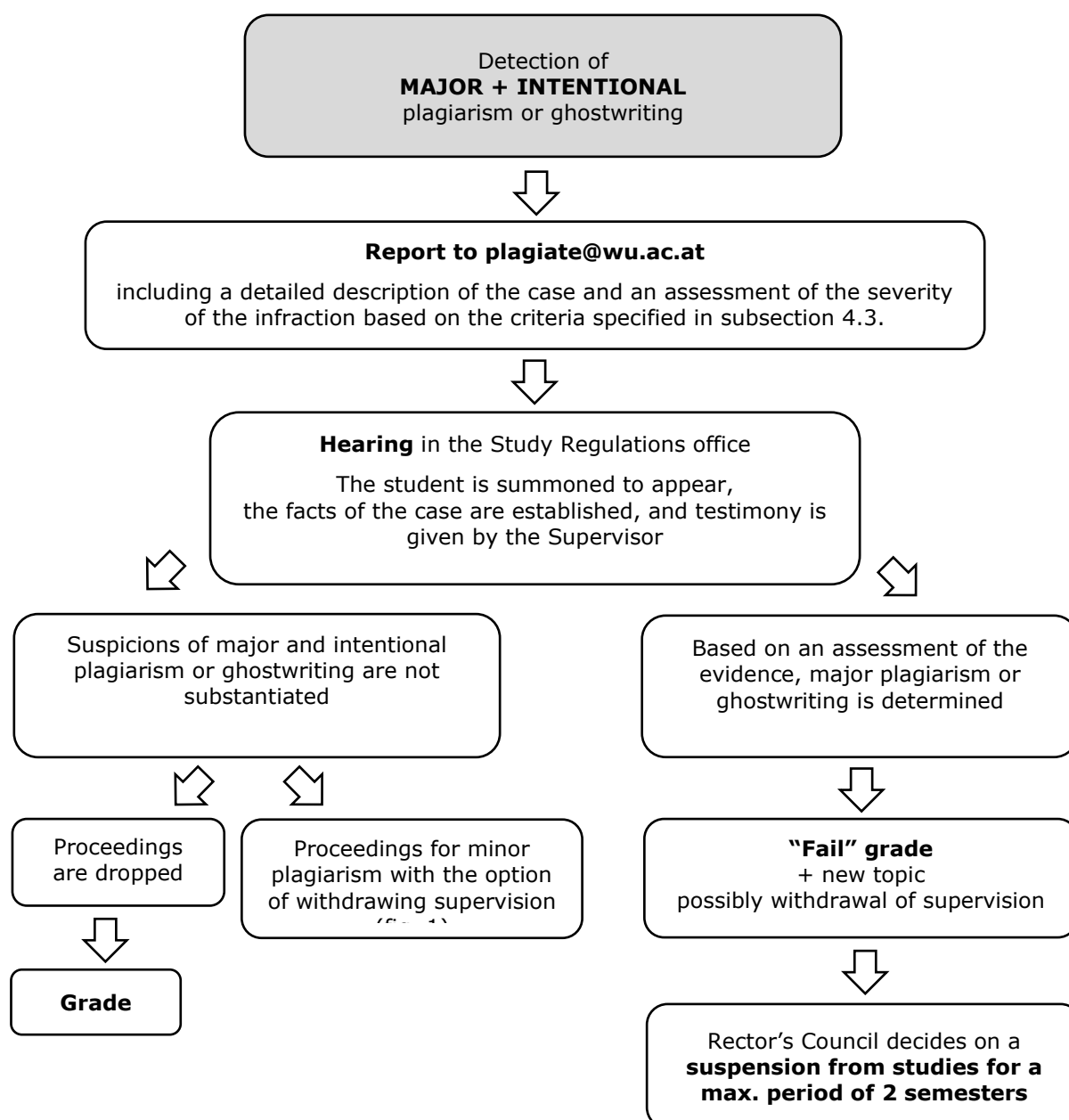


Fig. 2

4.5. What happens during the hearing?

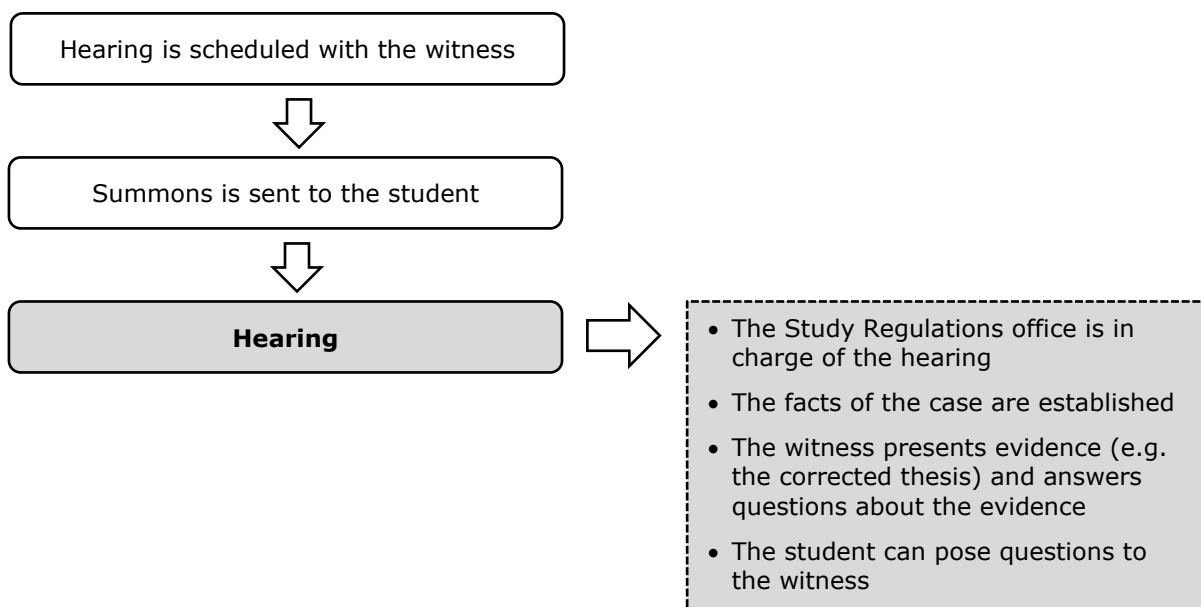


Fig. 3

4.6. What steps are to be taken when a case of plagiarism is detected after grading?

If plagiarism or another type of academic misconduct is detected after the work has already been graded, a report must be made to the representative for study regulations and academic legislation at plagiate@wu.ac.at. The grade for the work may be declared invalid (§ 73 [1] line 2 Universities Act 2002).

If a graduate's academic degree is found to have been attained through plagiarism or another type other types of academic misconduct in the thesis, the degree shall be revoked by the Vice-Rector for Academic Programs and Student Affairs, acting in their capacity as representative for representative for study regulations and academic legislation. Official notifications of the conferral of an academic degree can only be revoked and retracted due to plagiarism in a bachelor's, diploma, or master's theses within a period of ten years from the date when the bachelor's, diploma, or master's thesis in question was graded (§ 89 of the Universities Act 2002).

5. Invalidation of previous regulations

This directive replaces the Directive on Plagiarism and Other Types of Academic Fraud in Academic Theses (*Richtlinie zu Plagiaten und anderem Vortäuschen wissenschaftlicher Leistungen im Rahmen von Abschlussarbeiten*), WU Bulletin issue 52, no. 341, dated September 18, 2024.

6. Legal basis

§ 2a (2) to (4) of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (*Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz*):

(2) Good scientific or artistic practice means compliance with legal regulations, ethical standards, and the current state of the art of the respective subject in the performance of the tasks and the pursuit of the objectives of the respective educational institution. Certain forms of non-compliance with good scientific or artistic practice constitute scientific or artistic misconduct.

(3) In any case, the following shall be qualified as scientific or artistic misconduct:

1. Obstructing or sabotaging other people's research or artistic activities
2. Using unauthorized aids, including the misuse of artificial intelligence applications
3. Making unauthorized use of another person's assistance in the preparation of a written paper, the completion of an exam, or the preparation of an artistic submission, or using work commissioned from a third party (ghostwriting)
4. Taking over texts, ideas, or artistic works in whole or in part and presenting them as one's own, in particular if someone uses parts of text, theories, hypotheses, findings, or data by copying them directly, paraphrasing them, or translating them without appropriately acknowledging and citing the source and the author (plagiarism) or
5. Fabricating or falsifying data or results.

(4) In their by-laws, educational institutions pursuant to § 1 (1) must include detailed regulations on integrity in academic and artistic studies, teaching, and research, on good academic or artistic practice, and on academic or artistic misconduct. In addition, the by-laws may also include provisions concerning the measures taken in cases of academic or artistic misconduct, especially in written seminar papers and exams, bachelor's theses, and academic theses and artistic submissions. The appropriate decision-making official of the educational institution pursuant to § 1 (1) may choose to suspend the student in question from their studies for up to two semesters in cases of severe and intentional scientific or artistic misconduct. Complaints against the official suspension notification may be filed with the Federal Administrative Court.

§ 34a (1) to (3) of the By-Laws of WU:

(1) Plagiarism and academic fraud in relation to written seminar papers and examinations, bachelor's and master's theses, and dissertations must be reported to the Vice-Rector for Academic Programs and Student Affairs.

(2) In the case of plagiarism and academic fraud in relation to bachelor's and master's theses as well as dissertations before a thesis or dissertation is graded, the Supervisor is entitled to resign from supervision.

(3) In the case of severe and intentional plagiarism or severe and intentional academic fraud in relation to theses pursuant to (2), the thesis is to be graded "fail". The Rector's Council can exclude, by official notification, the student concerned from studying for a maximum of two semesters.

§ 73 (1) item 2 of the Universities Act 2002:

The assessment shall be annulled by an official notification of the officer responsible for study matters if, in the case of an examination, academic thesis or artistic submission, the assessment was obtained by fraudulent means, in particular through major scientific or artistic misconduct within the meaning of § 2a (3) items 2 to 5 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

§ 89 of the Universities Act 2002:

(1) The body responsible for study matters shall revoke and recall the notification of award if it subsequently transpires that [the] academic degree or the academic designation has been obtained by fraudulent means, in particular

- a. the use of counterfeit certificates,
- b. the use of counterfeit documents, or
- c. major scientific or artistic misconduct within the meaning of § 2a (3) items 2 to 5 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

In the case of extension programmes, the certificate of completion shall be declared invalid and revoked if it subsequently transpires that the degree has been obtained by fraudulent means, in particular

- a. the use of counterfeit certificates,
- b. the use of counterfeit documents, or
- c. major scientific or artistic misconduct within the meaning of § 2a (3) items 2 to 5 of the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

(2) The notification of award can only be revoked and recalled due to plagiarism in a bachelor's, diploma, or master's thesis within a period of ten years from the date when the bachelor's, diploma, or master's thesis in question was graded.

7. Document details

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