

DIR Directive on Plagiarism

Directive on Plagiarism and Other Types of Academic Fraud in Academic Theses

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1. Purpose

This Directive is intended to provide instructions to supervisors on how to deal with plagiarism and academic fraud in academic theses (bachelor's theses, master's theses, dissertations).

At the same time, this Directive serves as a basis for the information obligation of supervisors towards the students (cf. 4.1. for more information) as well as towards the officer responsible for study matters (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 (hereinafter referred to as "Supervisors"), and it defines procedures to be followed in case plagiarism or academic fraud is discovered.

This Directive does not apply to plagiarism and academic fraud in courses, where the work in question is not an academic thesis. These cases are covered by the Directive on the Conduct of Examinations and Dealing with Cheating and Fraud.

3. Definitions

3.1. Plagiarism

A work is considered to be plagiarized if texts, contents, or ideas produced by someone else are being passed off as the author's own work. This is the case especially when parts of texts, theories, hypotheses, findings, or data are incorporated into a work verbatim or in paraphrased or translated form without identifying these elements as quotations and referencing the original sources and authors (§ 51 [2] line 31 of the Universities Act 2002).

If a student reuses material from previously submitted and graded or published texts without indicating that it is a citation, this is also considered plagiarism (self-plagiarism).

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).

3.2. Academic Fraud

Students are considered to have committed academic fraud if they use unauthorized aids, if they pass off texts written by a third party as their own in a written paper or in an exam (ghost-writing), or if they present fabricated or falsified data or findings (cf. § 51 [2] line 32 of the Universities Act 2002).

4. Regulations

4.1. Information obligation

The supervisor has the obligation to inform the student about all necessary requirements of a thesis and guide the student. Furthermore, the supervisor has to explain plagiarism and other forms of academic fraud and all legal consequences according to this text to the student.

4.2. Use of plagiarism detection software

All bachelor's theses, master's theses, and 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 student work.

All cases of suspected plagiarism or other types of academic fraud 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, 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:

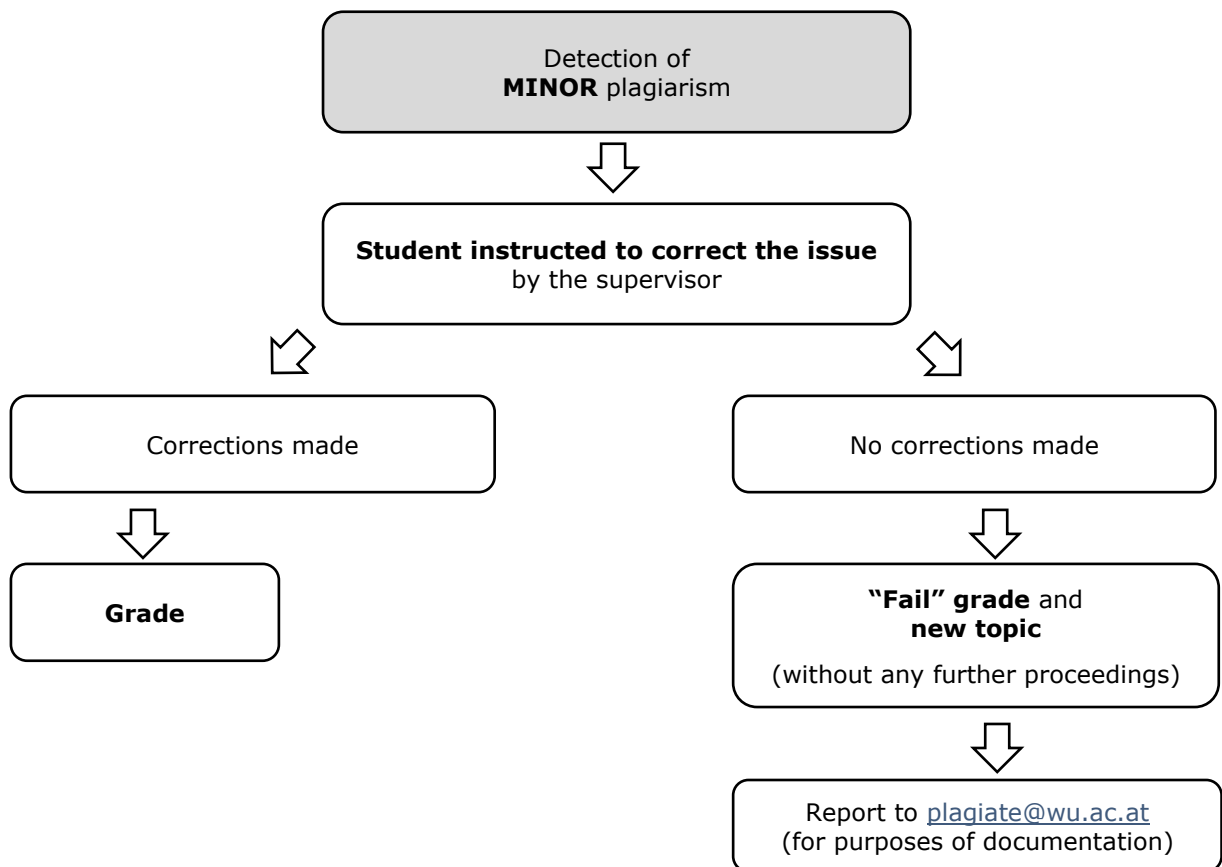


Fig. 1

If the issue in question is deemed an instance of **major** plagiarism based on the criteria specified in subsection 4.3. or **academic fraud** (cf. 3.2.), the thesis shall be given a failing grade and the student shall be required to choose a new topic. In addition, the supervisor is also entitled to withdraw his or her supervision of the thesis. The facts will be determined in a hearing in the Study Regulations office. If the student is found to have committed major plagiarism or academic fraud, the Rector’s Council shall suspend the student from his or her studies at WU for a period of up to two semesters.

The procedure is illustrated below (Fig. 2):

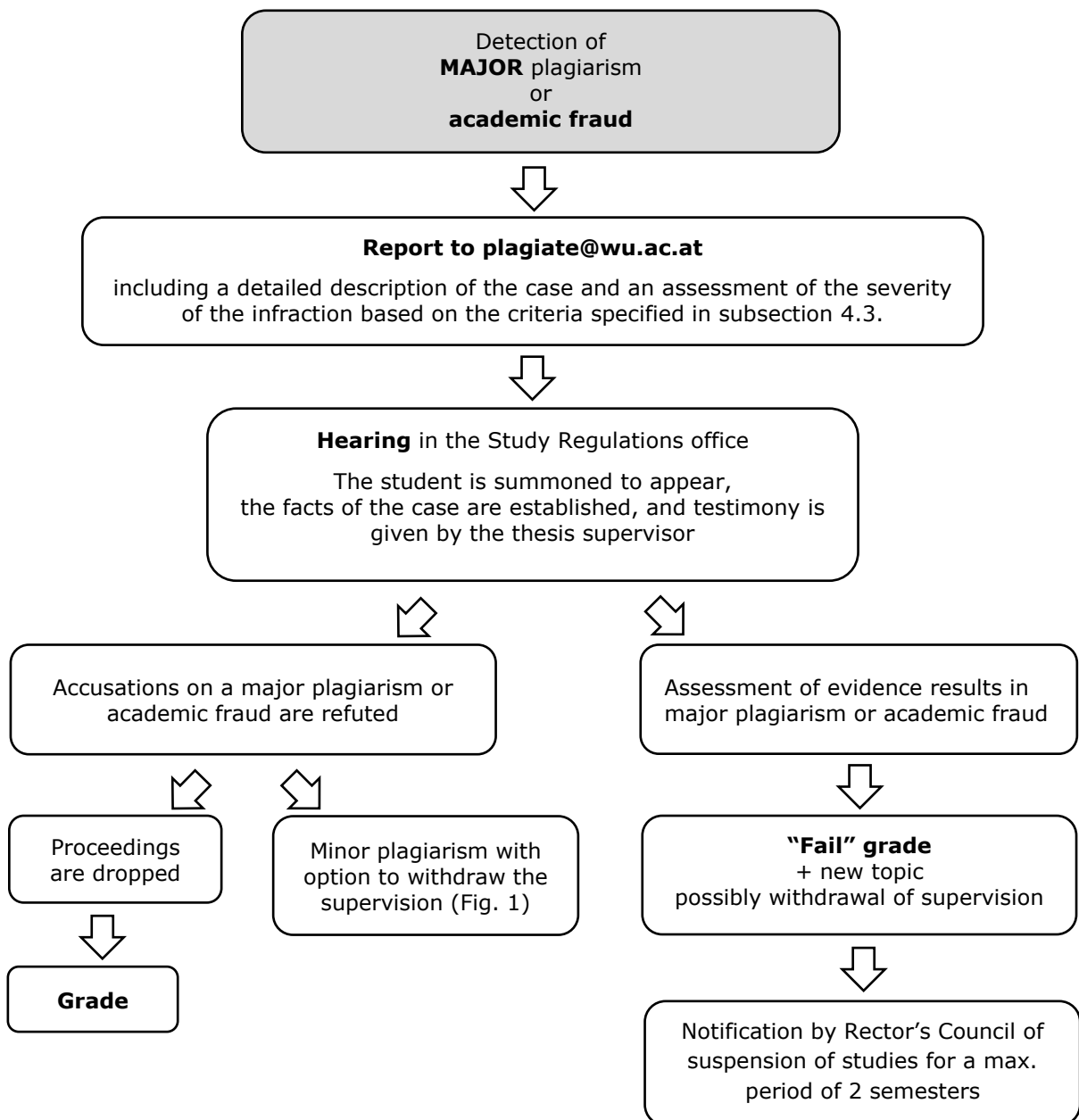


Fig. 2

4.5. What happens during the hearing?

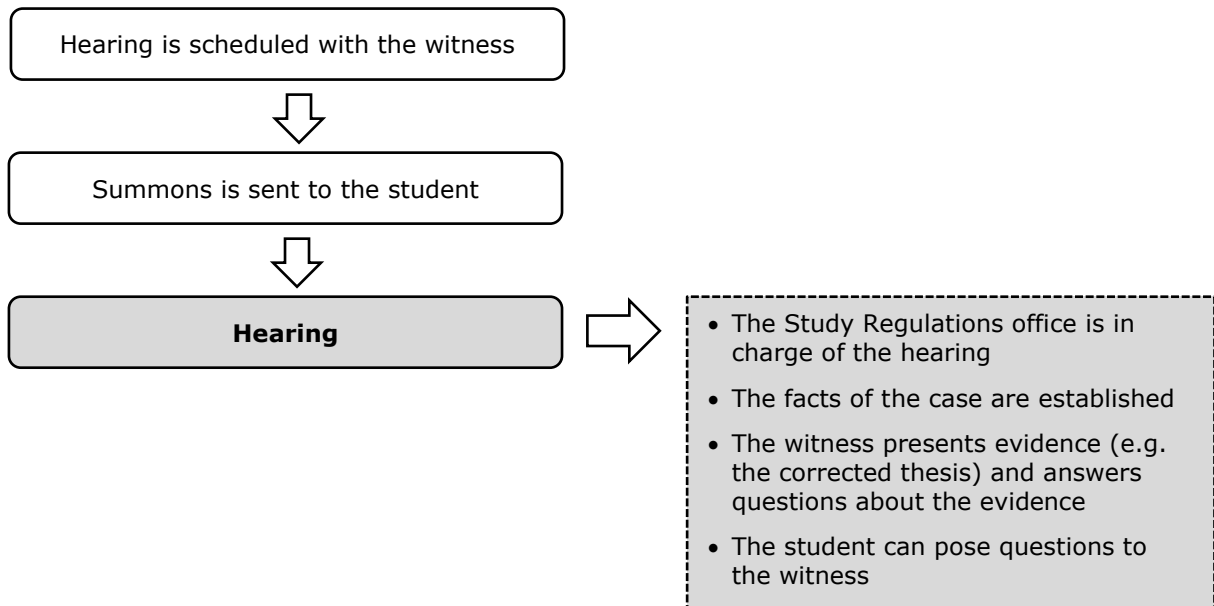


Fig. 3

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

If plagiarism or academic fraud is detected after the work has already been graded, a report must be made to the officer responsible for study matters (plagiate@wu.ac.at). The grade for the work may be declared invalid (§ 73 [1] line 2 Universities Act 2002).

If a student's academic degree is found to have been attained fraudulently after graduation because it was based on a plagiarized or on a wholly or in part ghostwritten work, the degree shall be revoked by the Vice-Rector for Academic Programs and Student Affairs (§ 89 Universities Act 2002).

4.7. Are there any legal consequences beyond the study regulations?

Copyright infringements can lead to consequences under civil law (authors are entitled to claim injunctive relief, removal of the infringing material, and compensation).

Having work written wholly or in part by a third party can also lead to consequences under criminal law.

5. Invalidation of Previous Regulations

This directive shall replace the "Directive on plagiarism and academic fraud and the resulting legal consequences issued by the Vice-Rector, Academic Programs and Student Affairs," German version published in WU Bulletin no. 2 dated October 12, 2016.

6. Legal Basis

§ 19 (2a) of the Universities Act 2002:

The statute may in particular contain provisions concerning measures taken in cases of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty in written term papers and exams, bachelor's papers, as well as academic theses and artistic submissions. In addition, the rectorate may decide, by official notification, on a suspension from the studies for up to two semesters in cases of severe and deliberate plagiarism or severe and deliberate forms of academic dishonesty in theses (bachelor's papers, as well as academic theses and artistic submissions).

§ 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 and 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.

§ 51 (2) of the Universities Act 2002:

31. A work is considered to be plagiarized if texts, contents, or ideas produced by someone else are being passed off as the author's own work. This is the case especially when parts of texts, theories, hypotheses, findings, or data are incorporated into a work verbatim or in paraphrased or translated form without identifying these elements as quotations and referencing the original sources and authors.

32. Students are considered to have committed academic fraud or fraudulent artistic work if they use unauthorized aids, if they pass off works made by a third party as their own in a written paper or in an exam (ghostwriting) or in the production of an artistic work, or if they present fabricated or falsified data or findings.

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

The officer responsible for study matters has to annul, by official notification, the result of an examination or thesis if such result was obtained by fraudulent means, in particular by the use of unauthorised aids.

§ 89 of the Universities Act 2002:

The officer responsible for study matters shall revoke and recall the notification of award if it subsequently transpires that a title has been obtained by fraudulent means, in particular the use of counterfeit certificates or by fraudulent academic or artistic work.

for Academic Programs and Student Affairs / Littich, Edith
Vice-Rector

7. Document Details

All fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

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¹ Examples of short/long titles:

- Short title = category and keyword, e.g. WUPOL Software
- Long title or subtitle = designation provided by the organizational unit, e.g. "Regulation on the use of WU Software"

² No more than 60 characters; do not use any diacritics, special characters, and spaces