Plagiarism Policy

Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, Saarland University. Revision: 2020-01-15

Introduction

An academic thesis in the pursuit of an academic degree involves **original scientific** work, setting it into the context of the state of the art, and reporting about it.

Scientific means that you obtain and present your results based on the methods and norms of science. For further detail, please also refer to the guidelines of good scientific practice at Saarland University [1].

This document concerns the originality aspect. **Original** means that the work you report

- truly has been produced and conducted by you (you are the *origin* of the work).
- is *novel*, i.e. you contributed something new to the state of the art.

To testify to the originality of your work, you need to sign a statement of originality [3, Annex A] and hand it in together with your thesis. In this statement you assure that you indicate clearly throughout your thesis which parts constitute, refer to, or build on the work of others. A violation of this rule is called **plagiarism**, i.e.

> *the complete or partial imitation of the work of another author without citing that work's source and author [2].*

Note that the work of others does not only comprise scientific findings per se but also their exposition (this includes figures, introductions, discussion of related work, etc.).

The following subsections help you to understand what plagiarism is and give advice on how to avoid it. They are based on the Citation Etiquette [2] of ETH Zürich.

Instances of Plagiarism

You may not:

- use the exact words of or ideas from another author (text, figures, argumentation, etc.) without citing the source clearly.
- use text from the internet without citing the URL and the date you accessed it.
- re-use your own written texts or parts of them in a situation where novelty is required (for further details, see the section on self-plagiarism below).
- translate and use a foreign-language text without citing its source.
- submit work under your own name that has been written for you by someone else (a 'ghost writer').
- use an extract from another author's work, paraphrase it and indeed cite the source but somewhere other than in the context of that extract (for example, the source is hidden in a footnote at the end of a paper).

Properly referring to work by others

- **Your own work:** Differentiate clearly between your own work and that of others: always name the author(s) of work that is not your own. This applies to texts, computer codes, tables, graphics and data, even if they come from the web.
- **Citing:** Cite all of your sources fully and verifiably, such that anyone can check them.
    - Put the citation as close to the cited material as possible so that it is clear which part of the text is cited.
    - It is common to mention the name(s) of the original author(s) at least on the first citation of the work, e.g. Miller [1], [Miller et al. 1997], etc.
    - If you cite a specific part of a large body of text, also use page numbers in your citation to enable the reader to find the cited part.
    - Follow the common citation rules of your discipline. When in doubt, ask your advisor.
- **Quoting:** Place borrowed text in quotation marks and cite its source. (for further details, see below).
- **Paraphrasing:** If you have rendered the text of others in your own words or summarized it, cite its source.
- **Secondary sources:** Identify a citation as a secondary source if you have taken it from another author without looking at the original source yourself. Prefer primary over secondary sources.
- **Bibliography:** At the end of your thesis list all of the sources you have used. If you cite web resources, mention the URL and the date of retrieval.
- **General knowledge:** Anything which may be regarded as general or basic knowledge does not require a source citation. If the exposition is taken from another author, e.g. from a textbook, however, the source must be cited.

Note the difference between **quote** and **cite**: To quote means to literally copy text and to cite means to indicate the source of material you refer to.

Reusing text from your own previous work

Self-plagiarism is a self-contradicting [5] and therefore ill-defined term because plagiarism is defined to be the imitation of *another* person's work (see above). Typically, self-plagiarism refers to reusing your own work on different occasions that each require novelty [4]. Reusing own text in scenarios where novelty is a subordinate concern may therefore be acceptable.

From your own theses

Reusing your own text from one thesis to another is typically not acceptable because every thesis must be new work. However, individual parts of a thesis do have different demands on novelty. For example, the discussion of certain related work that is common to your MSc and PhD thesis or the discussion of some well-established mathematical foundations do not need to be novel (but their exposition definitely has to be of your origin). Citing a previous thesis in such a case may be in conflict with the requirement that a thesis should be self-contained. Hence, in such a situation, it may be acceptable to reuse your own text from previous theses. When in doubt, don't do it and talk to your advisor.

From your own publications

In our field it is common that students publish their work in the form of conference or journal articles before submitting their thesis. It is widely accepted that the thesis consists of this previously published material to a significant extent and therefore does not only contain entirely new material. Reusing your own original text from a previously published article in your thesis does not constitute plagiarism and is acceptable.

You need to clearly indicate which part of the thesis builds on which of your publications, for example by adding a note at the beginning of the respective chapter or by adding a separate section to the preface of the thesis.

From multi-author publications

It is common in our field that research is performed in collaborations which typically result in multi-author publications. If a part of your thesis is based on such a joint publication, it is, in addition to the rules laid out above, mandatory that you declare what was your contribution to the joint work, where you collaborated with whom and where you rely on the contributions of your co-authors. Refer to [7; page 23] for a good example of such a declaration. We recommend that you start each part of your thesis that is based on joint work with a paragraph that attributes the contributions and specifies what publications this part is based on.

Only under these circumstances is it acceptable to re-use the material of a joint publication in your own thesis without explicitly quoting it.

We encourage you to coordinate your declaration with your co-authors and your advisor before submitting your thesis. By recommending your thesis for acceptance, your doctoral advisor confirms your attribution of contributions. It is in the responsibility of the advisors to establish consent among their students with respect to the attribution of contributions.

Sanctions

In case of a PhD thesis, our doctoral regulations [3] permit under §16 that the faculty board can bring forward a resolution to revoke a doctoral degree if it was acquired by deception which includes plagiarism.

In case of BSc or MSc theses our examination regulations [6] stipulate that the submitted thesis is graded as "failed" §18(3). In case of severe deception (such as plagiarism) the student can lose their right to take examinations.

References

[1] Principles of good scientific practice at Saarland University. Accessed 2019-05-03.

[2] Citation Etiquette. ETH Zürich. Accessed 2019-03-21.

[3] Doctoral Degree Regulations for the Faculties of Natural Science and Technology at Saarland University. Accessed 2019-03-21.

[4] Self-plagiarism. Wikipedia. Accessed 2019-03-21.

[5] Christoph Meinel. ‚Selbstplagiat' und gute wissenschaftl. Praxis. Accessed 2019-08-27.

[6] Examination Regulations for Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes in Faculty 6. Accessed 2019-08-20

[7] The Semantics of Multicopy Atomic ARMv8 and RISC-V. Christopher Pulte. Accessed 2019-10-31