Plagiarism
Requirements and sanctions

At its meeting on November 7, 2011, the University Commission for Studies and Teaching adopted the paper „Gute wissenschaftliche Praxis bei schriftlichen Arbeiten von Studierenden an der Universität Bielefeld“. The paper was acknowledged (with approval) by the Rectorate on November 22, 2011, and by the Senate on December 14, 2011. According to this paper, “in the context of written student work, plagiarism is defined as a deliberate and significant deception regarding the authorship of the work and the use of sources — specifically, the false claim that the work was written independently and that only the stated sources were used”.
Plagiarism generally results in consequences. Therefore, the following section outlines the different forms of plagiarism and the potential sanctions associated with them.

Manifestations of Plagiarism:

- Differentiation between plagiarism and technical errors (no intentional and/or significant deception)
- Quantitative extent of plagiarism (what percentage of the work was plagiarized?)
- Number of plagiarized sources or authors (Was only one source/author or several sources/authors plagiarized? Is a strategy recognizable?)
- Positioning of the external text (decisive argumentative position or secondary argument?)
- Type of coursework or examination in which plagiarism occurred (coursework, module examination, Bachelor's thesis, Master's thesis, dissertation)
- Repeated case of plagiarism

Sanctions under Examination Regulations:

- Without sanction (only technical errors of minor importance - “careless mistakes”)
- Reduction of the grade (as part of the normal assessment, more likely for serious technical errors, not for “genuine” plagiarism)
- Formal warning (in the case of “genuine” plagiarism, more likely only in the case of coursework, no further consequences under examination law in the specific case, but important for any further plagiarism, which would then qualify as a repeat case, should therefore also be documented)
- Assessment of an academic achievement as “not achieved” (depending on the extent of the plagiarism, it may no longer be possible to speak of a “genuine effort” to complete the academic achievement, see Sec. 15(4) of the Examination Regulations (BPO))
- Assessment of an examination with “insufficient” or “failed” (see Sec. 31(1) s. 1 BPO)

Further sanctions:

- Deregistration with a blocking period for re-enrollment (up to two years) (see Sec. 31(2) s. 1 and 2 BPO, and Sec. 63(5) of the Higher Education Act (HG)).
- Loss of the right to take the examination (determination that the examination has been definitively failed) (see Sec. 31(2) s. 3 BPO; Sec. 64(2) no. 9 in conjunction with no. 4 HG)
- Imposition of a fine (see Sec. 63(5) HG)
- Taking of a statutory declaration (see Sec. 63(5) HG)

Identification of plagiarism and determination of sanctions:
The determination of whether plagiarism has occurred is a decision that must be made on a case-by-case basis by the respective lecturer as part of the assessment and evaluation of the work.
The sanction is to be assessed depending on the type and severity of the form of plagiarism. The deciding authority is granted a margin of discretion, which is subject to judicial review. In this context, it is important to ensure that correct facts are assumed, that equal treatment is applied and that decisions are not made arbitrarily. Decisions regarding examination-related sanctions are generally made by the faculty; decisions on more severe sanctions are made by the Chancellor (or the relevant administrative units) in coordination with the faculty.
In any case, it is advisable to hold a meeting with the students concerned. For intended sanctions, a (written or oral) hearing is mandatory. Furthermore, all meetings and sanctions should be documented, especially to identify repeat offenses.

- In general, the information in the original German version of this document is legally binding. -