

Guidelines on Ensuring Good Academic Practice for Students at the University of Potsdam (Plagiarism Guidelines)

of October 20, 2010

In accordance with Section 62 para 2 no 2 of the Brandenburg Higher Education Act of December 18, 2008 (Law and Ordinance Gazette I p. 318), last amended by Section 16 of the Act of April 03, 2009 (Law and Ordinance Gazette I p. 26, 59), on October 20, 2010, the Senate of the University of Potsdam has adopted the following guidelines:¹

§ 1 Scope of Application

(1) These guidelines are the implementation regulations for Section 18 of the General Study and Examination Regulations for Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree Programs – Non-Teaching-Oriented (BAMA-O) of September 24, 2009 (Bulletin UP 9/2009, p. 160), last amended on October 20, 2010 and Section 18 of the General Study and Examination Regulations for Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree Programs – Teaching-Oriented (BAMALA-O), last amended on January 21, 2010 (Bulletin UP 23/2010) regarding procedures in case of academic misconduct by students in the preparation of written work relevant to examinations as part of their studies at the University of Potsdam. It serves to further substantiate the legal provisions and regulations pertaining to examinations.

(2) The provisions on the invalidity of graduation in the study and examination regulations of the University of Potsdam and on the revocation of academic degrees remain unaffected.

§ 2 Academic Misconduct, Plagiarism

- (1) Academic misconduct of a student exists if he or she submits a paper for the purpose of an examination and willfully or with gross negligence
- a) makes false statements according to Part I, Section 1 para. 1 of the “Self-Monitoring in Research and Academia – Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice at the University of Potsdam” of February 14, 2002 (Bulletin UP 2/2002, p. 17) or
 - b) violates the intellectual property rights of others through plagiarism or in any other way.

(2) Passages from another work may be cited provided that the citation is marked and the source is indicated. For the purposes of this guideline, “plagiarism” is defined as the complete or partial use of another person’s work without indicating the source and the author. Plagiarism exists in particular if

- a) a student submits a paper prepared by another person by order (“ghostwriter”) as his or her own under his or her name,
- b) a student takes another person’s work and submits it under his or her name (complete plagiarism),
- c) a student submits the same paper (or parts thereof) for various exams or seminars without further acknowledgment (self-plagiarism),
- d) a student translates foreign-language texts or parts of foreign-language texts and submits them as his or her own without acknowledging the source (translation plagiarism),
- e) a student takes parts of text from another person’s work without indicating the source through a citation, in particular when using parts of text from the Internet without acknowledging the source,
- f) a student takes parts of text from another person’s work and only slightly adapts or rearranges the text (“paraphrasing”) without identifying the source through a citation,
- g) a student takes parts of text from another person’s work, at most paraphrases them and cites the corresponding source but not in the context of the taken part(s) of the text. This applies, for example, if the plagiarized source is only mentioned in a footnote at the end of the paper.

(3) Academic misconduct also includes the intentional involvement (complicity, instigation, aiding and abetting) in academic misconduct of other students of the University of Potsdam.

§ 3 Preventive Measures

(1) In its enrollment documents, the University of Potsdam informs students at the beginning of their studies about the regulations regarding good academic practice in line with its rules and regulations on “Self-Monitoring in Research and Academia” of February 14, 2002 (Bulletin UP 2/2002, p. 17) and informs about the appropriate writing and citation techniques for the chosen course of study (clarification strategy).

(2) When assigning topics for written papers, the teaching staff of the University of Potsdam is advised to choose a contemporary topic so that plagiarism is made difficult or impossible (avoidance strategy). Section 5(3) of the German Basic Law remains unaffected.

¹ approved by the President of the University of Potsdam on November 18, 2010.

(3) The teaching staff of the University of Potsdam is to use the software programs approved or provided by the University of Potsdam to detect plagiarism; students are informed about this in a leaflet (deterrence strategy).

§ 4 Affirming Academic Conduct

At the end of written coursework and examinations that are not carried out under supervision, the student must affirm that the work was written by herself/ himself and no sources or aids other than those specified were used.

§ 5 Procedure and Sanctions

The procedures specified under Section 18 para. 3-5 of BAMA-O and BAMALA-O shall apply:

"(3) If the candidate submits a written examination achievement which was completed under conditions amounting to academic misconduct on the part of the student then the following procedure is to be implemented:

1. 1. The relevant achievement is given a grade of "insufficient".
2. The affected teaching staff member informs the chairperson of the Examining Board and can reject the submission of additional work by the same candidate.
3. The examination achievement graded as "insufficient" is recorded in the campus management system with a note indicating academic misconduct.
4. 4. If such academic misconduct is repeated, or in cases of serious and deliberate academic misconduct, the Examining Board can prohibit the affected candidate from completing further examination achievements. The Examining Board makes its decision after having heard the candidate. A severe case of deliberate academic misconduct exists in particular if
 - a) more than half of the work is based on plagiarism or other academic misconduct,
 - b) the candidate attempts to obstruct, by means of dishonest behavior, the investigation into the academic misconduct,
 - c) the academic misconduct causes a disadvantage to another student in the submission of their own examination achievement,
 - d) the academic misconduct was committed for commercial reasons or to acquire illegal financial gains, or
 - e) the candidate has abused an employment relationship with the University of Potsdam.

5. Upon application by the candidate or the chairperson of the Examining Board, the specific case shall be presented to the Ombudsman or to the Commission for Academic Misconduct in accordance with the guidelines enumerated in "Self-Monitoring in Research and Academia – Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice at the University of Potsdam". Section II, no. 2.1 and no. 2.3. Subsections 1 and 2 a) through e) of the guidelines "Self-Monitoring in Research and Academia – Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice at the University of Potsdam" also apply. The results of the investigation will be submitted to the Examining Board with a recommendation as to a decision and further actions.
6. Depending upon the severity of the infraction, the Examining Board can impose further sanctions, with the ultimate measure of declaring the examination achievement irrevocably failed.

(4) So as to be able to investigate any suspicion of academic misconduct, examiners are entitled to require students to submit written examination achievements that were not completed under supervision in electronic form as well.

(5) Students must be notified without undue delay and in writing of any decisions made pursuant to subsection 3, the reasons for such decisions, and instructions on how to appeal them."

§ 6 Data Protection

(1) The legal provisions on data protection must be observed. When using technical devices to detect offenses, it must be ensured that the investigation is carried out without providing personal data until the time when the respective liability has been proven.

(2) Any violation according to Section 2 may be documented and stored by the responsible examination office of the university as long as the students concerned are enrolled at the university.

§ 7 Effective Date

(1) These regulations take effect on the day following their publication in the Bulletin of the University of Potsdam.

(2) They shall only apply to achievements within the meaning of Section 1 performed after the effective date.