

## Attempts at deception and plagiarism – a guide for students of geography

The University of Bonn's policies on good research practice state: "As a research university, the University of Bonn is committed to research and research-guided teaching. Good research work is based on the basic foundation of intellectual honesty, both towards oneself and others, and requires compliance with the fundamental principles of good research practice." (The Rector of the University of Bonn, 2014).

In this respect, good research practice and techniques of academic work are key components of the academic training given to students. Honesty in dealing with the sources used is the primary foundation on which science and research are based and must therefore be demanded of all students from their first semester onward.

This handout contains important information for students about plagiarism and tells them what teaching and advice is available on the topic of good research practice and the basics of academic work.

### What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is understood as any unlawfully attempt to use texts, ideas, findings, etc. of another person, whether in whole or in part, and pass them off as your own academic work. In other words, any adoption of someone else's ideas that is not precisely identified as such will be plagiarism as it does not tell the reader who the actual author was. It is irrelevant whether plagiarism is intentional or unintentional, i.e. as a result of imprecise academic work—it will always be deemed an offense, specifically that of deception.

Plagiarism can take various forms (the list below is based on an information sheet for students about plagiarism produced by ETH Zurich, issued in November 2008 by its Rector):

- **Full plagiarism:** submitting the work of another author in your own name
- **Self-plagiarism:** (repeatedly) submitting your own work (or parts of it) for multiple examinations
- **Translation plagiarism:** a piece of work for which a text in a foreign language (or parts of it) is translated and not identified as another author's work by citing your sources
- **Text plagiarism:** using another author's texts or passages of text word for word without citing your sources
- **Unacknowledged paraphrasing:** reproducing the sense of another author's texts or passages of text without citing your sources

### Other forms of deception:

- **Ghostwriting:** a piece of work that you commission another author to write and then submit under your own name
- **Data falsification:** "tweaking" data and research findings that you or someone else has obtained to serve your own research objectives
- **Copying:** from other students during a written examination

- **Using banned aids:** in written examinations, e.g. books, notes, electronic devices (unless stipulated otherwise by the examiner)

**Important:** Students should be aware that every institute uses a plagiarism software to detect plagiarism.

### **What are the consequences of plagiarism?**

If plagiarism has been clearly verified in the sense of the definitions described above (the examiners can also use the technical verification options of the above-mentioned plagiarism software), this information is handed to the examination office. The case will then be thoroughly examined again. According to §23 (1) of the examination regulations for bachelor's and master's degree programs of the Institute of Geography, an examination performance whose result was "influenced by deception or the use of unauthorized aids" is graded "insufficient" (5.0). The attempt at deception will be put on record and a corresponding note will be written in the transcript of records. The examination office also sends a written notification of the failed examination attempt and cheating. The repetition options remain for the corresponding module examination.

However, in particularly serious cases of attempted cheating, the examination board has the option of immediate de-registering (see §13, paragraph 8 of the examination regulations) - this compulsory de-registration is then carried out by the student secretariat. In addition, § 23 (4) of the examination regulations stipulates: "Anyone who intentionally violates a provision of these examination regulations related to cheating on examination is acting in an improper manner. The administrative offense can be punished with a fine up to 50,000 euros. The responsible administrative authority for the prosecution and punishment of administrative offenses according is the Chancellor of the University of Bonn." Especially in the case of plagiarism that occurred unintentionally due to technical errors (missing or incomplete citations, etc.), it is advisable to consult the departmental student advisory service regarding courses offered in the techniques of scientific work.

### **How can you avoid plagiarism?**

To prevent yourself from running the risk of plagiarism in the first place, you will need to familiarize yourself with the basic principles of academic working right from the start of your studies. This includes learning the techniques of academic working and, in particular, the rules on citation, as they will help you distinguish other people's ideas clearly and distinctly from your own. You will learn the basics of academic working in the advanced modules B2 and B4.

You can find the [Department of Geography's rules on citation here](#).

Additional information on [good research practice at the University of Bonn can be found here](#).

Students who are unsure about scientific writing should always contact their lecturer and degree program management and ask for advice.

## **Additional information**

### **Examination Office B.Sc., B.A. Minor and M.Sc. Geography**

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### **Examination Office Master Georisks**

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### **The Ombudsman for Investigating Cases of Suspected Research Misconduct**

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## Literature

The Rector of the Rhenish Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn (ed.): Examination regulations for the bachelor's degree program "Geography" of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the Rhenish Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn from September 7th, 2020. In: Official announcements, 50th year (48/2020).

The Rector of the Rhenish Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn (ed.): Examination regulations for the consecutive Master's degree program "Geography" of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of the Rhenish Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn from September 7th, 2020. In: Official announcements , 50th year (49/2020).

The Rector of the Rhenish Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn (ed.): Guidelines for ensuring good scientific practice at the Rhenish Friedrich Wilhelm University of Bonn from September 1, 2014. In: Official announcements, vol. 44 (26/2014 ).

The Rector of ETH Zurich (ed.) (2008): Information for students on the subject of plagiarism. Available at: [https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/mavt/process-engineering/ltr-dam/documents/Studium/Information%20for%20students/beilage\\_Merkblatt\\_fuer\\_studierende\\_zum\\_thema\\_plagiate.pdf](https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/mavt/process-engineering/ltr-dam/documents/Studium/Information%20for%20students/beilage_Merkblatt_fuer_studierende_zum_thema_plagiate.pdf).