

Principles of good scientific practice for writing scientific theses, University of Kassel, 4 June 2014

Preamble

According to Article 18 para. 4 HHG, the Senate is to issue regulations that provide students and examiners with directions and guidance regarding conduct in conjunction with assessed work (*Prüfungsverhalten*) which meets academic requirements. On 9 July 2012, the *Allgemeine Fakultätentag* (general faculty assembly), the *Fakultätentage* (faculty assemblies) and the *Deutscher Hochschulverband* (association of German universities) agreed on a common position paper, which is titled: "Good scientific practice for writing scientific theses". Section III of this paper contains eleven principles that describe requirements for writing scientific theses.

These rules primarily apply to the bachelor's thesis, master's thesis, doctoral thesis and professorial dissertation (*Habilitationsschrift*). Basically, these rules can also be regarded as suitable guidance for other assessed work (*Prüfungsleistungen*), though. The Senate is therefore of the opinion that they should serve as a benchmark for conduct in conjunction with assessed work (*Prüfungsverhalten*) which meets academic requirements at the University of Kassel as well. Hence, the following statute has been passed:

When writing scientific theses at the University of Kassel, the rules specified in the Annexe of this statute apply. Scientific theses in this sense are primarily the bachelor's thesis, master's thesis, Staatsexamen thesis (state examination thesis), doctoral thesis and professorial dissertation (*Habilitationsschrift*). These rules are also to be regarded as guidance for other assessed work (*Prüfungsleistungen*).

Annexe

"Good scientific practice for writing scientific theses" - Section III of the common position paper of the *Allgemeine Fakultätentag* (general faculty assembly), the *Fakultätentage* (faculty assemblies) and the *Deutscher Hochschulverband* (association of German universities) from 9 July 2012

Scientific theses in this sense primarily include the bachelor's thesis, master's thesis, doctoral thesis and professorial dissertation (*Habilitationsschrift*). They fulfil different purposes for the university. However, they have the following principles of scientific work in common.

1 Originality and independence

Originality and independence are basically the most important quality criteria of any scientific thesis. Depending on the qualification to be established with the work, the level of requirements regarding these criteria increases step by step.

The quality of a scientific thesis, however, is also measured – especially in the humanities and social sciences – based on the ability of the author to express someone else's train of thought and the content of preceding scientific work in his own words in the light of his own perception.

Only through this process documented with quotations and references does an author legitimately appropriate someone else's thoughts and results.

Particularly in the natural and engineering sciences, originality and independence show in experimental design, critical data analysis and evaluation, as well as in the ability to integrate results obtained in a differentiating manner in the scientific context.

2 Research and quotation

All theses require correct and thorough research, quotation and referencing. It must be consistently and unmistakably apparent to the reader what has been adopted from someone else's intellectual property. What has been borrowed literally or conceptually must be clearly recognizable.

3 Influences

In theses, all factors that may – from the viewpoint of an objective third party – raise doubts regarding the formation of a completely independent scientific judgement should be disclosed. It is also advisable to indicate any funding of the work through grants, third-party funds or economic benefits.

4 Attribution of statements

The principles of scientific work include that the author must carefully pay attention not to ascribe any statements to the cited authors that these have not made or not made in the rendered form.

5 Translations

If an author has translated foreign-language texts himself, he must indicate this citing the original source. Especially in the case of a non-literal translation, care must be taken not to ascribe content to the translated original text that its author has not expressed. When using translations from third parties, the author must also indicate this.

6 Subject-specific general knowledge

The established general knowledge of a discipline does not have to be supported or documented by quotations or references. What exactly is to be regarded as general knowledge must be assessed

from the perspective of the respective discipline. In case of doubt, the final decision is made by the institution that certifies the aspired qualification.

7 Plagiarism and data manipulation

Plagiarism, i.e. the literal and conceptual adoption of someone else's intellectual property without adequate identification, constitutes a violation of the rules of correct scientific work. The same applies to data manipulation. Plagiarism and data manipulation are generally considered attempts of deception relevant for the assessment.

8 The author's earlier theses and texts

The adoption of the author's own theses and texts violates the rules of good scientific practice if this adoption is not documented or cited in the thesis.

Examination regulations may forbid re-use of the same or a similar text by the same author. This particularly applies to dissertations.

9 "Ghostwriting"

The cooperation of the author with a third party who contributes texts or parts of text to a thesis which the author claims his own with the approval of the "ghostwriter", constitutes a severe violation of the rules of good scientific practice.

10 Multiple authors

In collective theses, each author's own contribution must be apparent for the reader. This excludes anyone claiming authorship who has not made any noteworthy contribution to a thesis. Honorary authorship or authorship by virtue of a hierarchically superior position, without any substantial contribution, constitute scientific misconduct.

11 Dual responsibility

The responsibility for compliance with the principles of scientific work lies primarily with the author of a scientific thesis. However, the advisors and/or examiners also have a certain responsibility. It is the advisors' task to inform the candidates beforehand about the principles of scientific work and explain these if necessary. It is also the advisors' responsibility to consistently pursue any doubts as to the compliance with the principles of scientific work regarding a thesis.

Insofar as examination regulations and the general examination law allow, the advisory function can (partially) be delegated. The ultimate responsibility of the examiner by contrast is highly personal and can never be delegated. The examiner can, however, seek advice in specific matters in order to be able to competently evaluate other branches of scientific work (e.g. regarding interdisciplinary projects).

These principles were adopted by the Senate in its meeting on 4 June 2014.