Information on the use of plagiarism detection software

The University of Trento has acquired appropriate software (Compilatio.net), with a view to preventing the plagiarism of texts. This software assists teaching staff to check that citations and bibliographical references are inserted correctly in theses and texts and that the definitive written work produced by students intending to graduate, as well as masters’ and doctoral students, are authentic and the product of their own intellectual creative effort.

Ethical practice prohibits the partial or complete self-attribution of words, ideas, research, discoveries and visual images made by others, in whatever language these are officially presented, or the failure to cite sources.

The Code of conduct and ethics for students of the University of Trento provides, in addition to other specific forms of conduct, for the prohibition of plagiarism of the work of others.

The University of Trento Code of ethics expressly provides that “All research activity is based on the correct recognition and attribution of intellectual achievements. University members must therefore avoid every form of plagiarism or the improper use of the intellectual activity of others. […] With particular regard to the writing up of theses and texts, including the undertaking of examinations, it is the specific responsibility of individuals to uphold these rules, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and dishonest conduct. It is furthermore the duty of all university staff to flag every case of plagiarism or the improper use of the intellectual activity of others of which they may become aware”.

Under the Code of conduct, “plagiarism consists in the improper reproduction of the intellectual activity of others in the elaboration of a written text of any kind, where such intellectual activity is not cited in the sources of the written text, or the unacknowledged appropriation of ideas, concepts, presentation, data or any other information reproduced in written work (including digital versions), or the oral expressions of others, without having expressly and correctly indicated the sources or having obtained the express consent of the author or inventor”.

The law on copyright (law no. 633 of 22 April 1941) protects intellectual property of the creative kind. Theses are intellectual works and as such are protected by the same law, which confers a range of exclusive economic and capital rights in the work (distribution, communication, reproduction, translation, etc.) as well as moral rights (rights to authorship and integrity of the work, etc.).

Article 70 of law no. 633/41 provides as follows: “1. The summary, citation or reproduction of extracts or parts of works and their communication to the public are free to use for the purposes of criticism or discussion, within the limits justified by these purposes and so long as they do not constitute competition in the economic exploitation of the work; if used for educational purposes or scientific research, such use must occur for the purposes of illustration and not for commercial ends. […] 3. The summary, citation or reproduction must always be accompanied by a mention of the title of the work, the author(s) name, that of the editor and, if the work is a translation, that of the translator, where these are indicated in the copied work”.

In addition, law no. 475 of 19 April 1925, on the prohibition of the false attribution of the work of others by prospective graduates and those wishing to obtain diplomas, offices, appointments and public positions provides under art 1.1 that “whosoever, in the course of examinations or selection procedures prescribed or required by authorities or public administrations for the conferral of degrees or any other rank or scholastic or academic title, for recognition of qualifications to teach and the exercise of professions, for the issue of diplomas or licenses, presents as their own work dissertations, studies, publications, technical projects and in general, work that has been produced by others, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of three to twelve months […]”.

Those writing theses, likewise any other work produced in order to complete academic examinations or for the purpose of research, should be aware of their own and others’ rights but
also of the obligations imposed by ethical considerations and the law. This means that in the course of academic examinations, in theses for graduation in first degrees, masters’ degrees and doctorates, attention must be paid to the methodology of structuring and drafting of the text, including the use of citations, data and images and their insertion into the text, so as to avoid the risk of incurring the disciplinary measures, civil sanctions and criminal penalties that are provided for by law. Theses must consist of original work and be the product of personal endeavour.

Rights and duties of PhD students can be found at the following link https://www.unitn.it/en/ateneo/52919/rights-and-duties-of-doctoral-students. One of the duties is “University members must avoid any form of plagiarism or improper use of another’s intellectual activity. Any plagiarism or improper use of intellectual work is even more serious if it results from negligence or abuse of a hierarchical or academic position. With particular regard to the drafting of theses and written work, as well as in the performance of the exams, it is the specific responsibility of the individual university member to respect these rules and avoid all forms of plagiarism and dishonest conduct. It is also the responsibility of each university member to report any case of plagiarism or improper use of another's intellectual work of which he or she becomes aware”.

The software supplier warrants that the work uploaded on its platform is not visible to third parties, but only to the teaching staff with responsibility for academic examinations and theses, thus protecting the privacy of the information. The files are stored in a Compilatio.net data bank with the sole purpose of permitting University teaching staff to make a comparison with texts already in the database, in order to verify potential analogous material and thus prevent plagiarism. Any resulting indication of similarity does not constitute conclusive proof of plagiarism. Such an evaluation is for the teaching staff to make.

Since the service is offered via the internet, the software supplier and the University of Trento are not liable for any cases of online piracy which may arise through unauthorized access to and improper use of material uploaded into the data base.

Within the meaning of (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), the personal data supplied will be used by the University of Trento solely for the institutional purposes set out above, in accordance with the principles of fairness, lawfulness and transparency.