INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

University of Vienna, Austria

THEMES

Academic Writing curriculum:

- *Does your university offer an academic writing course as a mandatory subject? Please indicate the level(s)?*

If the University offers academic writing courses depends on the specific curriculum of the study programme. The university offers more than 100 curricula, app. 35 of them are postgraduate courses. Not all of them contain a course for academic writing, but many of them do. In some curricula the courses are mandatory. In some, they are offered from the beginning on, aiming to equip students with the necessary competencies from an early stage on. In some, they are only introduced at the time of writing a Masters' thesis.

The university aims to introduce writing courses or courses on academic integrity as mandatory classes in all curricula.

- *Is the teaching of the course centralised in the whole university or it differs from faculty to faculty or within the programs?*

The courses are decentralized and depend on the faculty and their decision, who will teach the course.

- *Is there any centre for academic writing support services at your university? List the services offered by the centre?*

Yes, there is a Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). It offers the following services to students:

- Assistance program for academic writing: writing assistants support courses (early in a study programme) in which students have to write a lot in order to facilitate the development of competencies in academic writing and academic integrity – by giving feedback on texts, with individual counselling and by advising HE teachers on their writing tasks
- Walk-in counselling on academic writing (in cooperation with the University Library)
- Counselling on academic writing for students whose first language is not German
- Workshops on writing Bachelors' theses

- Writing marathon: students can work at the Center for Teaching and Learning for five days (42.19 hours) in which they are to produce and revise as much text as possible; option to continuously receive feedback
- Mentoring on writing: Mentors organise groups which focus on topics like doing research, revising a paper, peer feedback etc. thereby supporting their mentees over the course of a semester

All services are offered on a regular basis, once or multiple times each semester.

Faculty Training / Student services:

- *What learning management system does your university use? How long have you been using it and what was the main reason for choosing that specific system?*

The University of Vienna uses the e-learning platform Moodle that is offered university-wide to all HE teachers and students for e-learning. The university's Computer Center maintains the platform and offers support to all users – both on how to deploy Moodle as a resource for teaching and how to use it as an e-learning tool. The university has worked with different platforms over the years, but has chosen Moodle as common tool for all university members, since it offers a wide variety of services that lend itself to teaching and learning, i.e. enabling communication among users, providing data to users, streaming of lectures, offering multiple-choice tests and glossaries etc.

The university has been using Moodle for over 10 years.

- *Which plagiarism detection tool is used at our university? List main advantages of using the selected tool?*

The University of Vienna was the first Austrian university to use plagiarism detection software on all submitted Masters' and Phd theses – since 2008. About 5000 theses are being tested each year.

Currently, the university deploys two software tools, iThenticate and Ephorus, that are used in combination. That means that both tools check a thesis on similarities with other sources and they also issue separate test reports (stating the percentage of passages in the thesis that are identical with already existing texts).

The University is dedicated to using two independent software tools so that the checking of theses is not to be impaired in case one software solutions encounters any technical problems (i.e. server problems) or stops working.

- *What is the policy of using e-learning elements in teaching processes (courses, modules, etc.)? Is it an obligatory for some courses and who decides in which classes the elearning module should be implemented?*

HE teachers are encouraged to use e-learning, yet it is not mandatory. Teachers may decide for themselves if and how to use e-learning elements. E-learning is considered as supplement to class-room teaching which is able to support and enhance processes of teaching and learning. University staff is supported in offering and designing e-learning resources, by the university's Computer Center on technical matters and by the Center for Teaching and Learning on questions of media didactics.

Providing online resources (primarily on the e-learning platform Moodle) to students is especially relevant in the context of lectures which do not warrant attendance.

- *Which office is responsible for providing training for academic staff in terms of using blended learning methods or plagiarism detection tools? What are the services they offer to the faculty?*

1) The Center for Teaching and Learning offers a broad spectrum of support services to HE teachers:

- Workshops and trainings on specific topics (i.e. on designing OER, on copyright issues, on using Moodle, on specific didactic concepts using blended learning like 'flipped classroom')
- Open lectures on topics of blended learning
- Evaluation of study programs and guidance for further developing the study programs
- Development of e-teaching concepts and materials together with HE teachers
- Provision of e-tutors and e-multiplicators: students who are trained in giving guidance to HE teachers for developing e-learning concepts and who give technical support

2) The university's Computer Center offers technical support, both on using the e-learning platform Moodle and for operating and maintaining the plagiarism detection software.

3) The Bureau of the Study Praeses offers training for administrative staff on operating and maintaining the plagiarism detection software. Further, it provides guidance on difficult cases and informs on study law.

- *Please describe the student support (academic and other) services you are having supporting academic integrity. Which department is responsible for this component and what is the frequency of services and events in this regards?*

1) The Center for Teaching and Learning offers services to students – see above the services offered on academic writing.

2) The Postgraduate Center of the University of Vienna provides

- workshops to students on academic integrity and on how to work in a scientifically sound way,
- as well as individual counselling on writing Masters' theses.

This service is offered on the basis of student demand.

3) The University's Library offers trainings for students on how to use the library, on doing research, on copyright and plagiarism and on using e-resources. The trainings are offered on a regular basis, multiple times each semester.

4) Further, specific courses teaching students how to work in a scientific way, how to write academic texts and how to prevent plagiarism are part of most study programmes at the University of Vienna. In most programmes, taking such a course is obligatory. Additionally, study programmes guide students on the writing of their Masters' theses with specific seminars.

PR Campaign:

- *What is the "PR campaign policy" against plagiarism at your university?*

Academic integrity is perceived as core value by the university, embedded in all aspects of studying and researching at the University of Vienna. Academic dishonesty is seen as counteracting the very aspirations that science sets out for itself. Awareness-raising among students and teachers is the main goal of the university's PR campaign policy, since rules and regulations may serve to safeguard standards, but are not able to produce academic integrity in itself. The university aims to equip students with methodological competencies to work in a scientifically sound way, but also to impart a basic ethical stance.

Main elements:

- Guidelines on Good Academic Practice (What constitutes an instance of plagiarism? How to quote in a correct way etc.) are communicated to students from an early stage on.
- HE teachers need to sign that they know about the importance of teaching students on academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism and that it is considered their duty to do so.
- Each accusation of plagiarism is treated on a single-case basis.

Different subunits are involved in quality management regarding the safekeeping of academic integrity:

- There is the Center of Teaching and Learning focusing on academic writing, counselling of HE teachers and assisting them in developing blended-learning formats.

- The university's Ethics Commission is in charge of governing responsible research and scientific integrity of university personnel.
- There is an Ombudsperson for Good Scientific Practice that serves as contact point for researchers who detect cases of scientific misconduct.
- The Bureau of the Study Praeses informs scientific and administrative staff on study law, on using the plagiarism detection software and they intervene in cases when plagiarism is detected.
- The university is a member of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity to which complaints may also be directed.

Information on the services is available on the homepage of the university, of the subunits, and is also communicated through posters or flyers.

Students are primarily informed about academic integrity by their HE teachers in the courses. At the end of their Masters' studies, they are informed about the electronic plagiarism detection process to which each and every one of them is being subjected to. They are informed through written and online information, but may also seek counselling from administrative staff involved in the process.

- *According to your experience, what are the key messages that best inform students about plagiarism (informational meetings, small videos … etc.).*

Learning how to work in a scientifically sound way is a practice, so it is core that students are being trained on how to write, how to cite etc. within their curricula. Also, learning about academic integrity should not be a onetime thing, but should be embedded in university studies from an early stage on. Studies have shown that it works well to connect trainings on academic integrity with the concrete subject matters the students study, i.e. devise task on correct referencing on a topic that is relevant to students also content-wise.

For learning how to work in a scientifically sound way, information does not suffice, it needs training. But information and awareness-raising may contribute to conveying a culture of academic integrity at a university. In our experience means should be diverse to address different target groups in a variety of ways, i.e.:
- Events on topics of academic integrity to create an understanding of academic values and the importance of ethical standards
- Visual material such as short videos or posters that are visible throughout university and communicated especially at Bachelors' level
- Clear and transparent communication of consequences and possible sanctions in the case of cheating / plagiarism (on the university homepage, in class-room instruction)

- Informational material or meetings for HE teachers committing them to teach and convey academic ethics and methods of working in a scientific way to their students

University policies and resources:

- *Please describe main aspects of the plagiarism policy at your university.*
- Students are expected to uphold academic integrity and good academic practice (as defined in the general university law, in the University of Vienna's statues on study law and in the code of conduct).
- If students are accused of plagiarism, they may be asked to redo the work submitted, but they may also be subject to official proceedings – depending on the type of scientific work in which the plagiarised text has been found and on the time of detection (before, during or after grading) – please see below ("sanctions") for more detail.
- In case of a complaint, all involved parties are being questioned by the Bureau of the Study Praeses. In case students may disagree with the final decision made by the Bureau of the Study Praeses, they can lodge a complaint with the Federal Administrative Court.
- If official proceedings for nullification are initiated, two external evaluators are involved. Information is not made public, but only given to the persons involved.
- Recently, a policy counteracting ghostwriting has also been issued.
- The following aspects are considered in deciding on whether a student has plagiarized or not:
    o Length of plagiarised passage
    o Is the plagiarised text relevant for the main results of the paper?
    o Can we find intent?

- *How the policy is reflected in the curriculum and what are the sanctions you use in case of plagiarism?*

Plagiarism in Austria is not only a matter of universities, but it may involve legal consequences. The original author may press damages, in specific cases it is also a matter of criminal law.

The University of Vienna may issue the following sanctions:

1) Masters' and Phd thesis:

- If the plagiarised passage is detected before the paper has been graded, the Bureau of the Study Praeses may (in accordance with Study Directorate and HE teacher) determine that the student write the paper on a new topic (which is being given to him/her) or in a different subject matter of the study field.

- If the plagiarism is detected in the course of grading, the student receives a negative grade. He/she fails and has to rewrite the thesis. He/she must write on a new topic and may not be advised by the same HE teacher as before.
- If the plagiarised text is detected after it received a grade, a process is started that may lead to nullification of the grade and even to a withdrawal of the academic degree that has been awarded.
- There is no statute of limitations on plagiarism.

2) Bachelors' thesis or paper in a seminar:

- If a plagiarised passage is detected, it is considered an act of cheating, trying to obtain a better grade by fraud. In this case, the seminar/thesis is not graded, but receives an X – which stands for cheating. The student has to redo the work. In Austria, students are only allowed to take an exam for one class 4 times. The X counts as one attempt, so the student will only have 3 remaining attempts.

Other strategies, mechanisms, and practices the University has in place. Please describe

Since ghostwriting has become a more pronounced problem over the last couple of years, the university has issued a policy on ghostwriting. In case an advisor may have questions regarding the authorship of a paper, he/she may conduct a conversation with the student on the content of his/her paper. If the student is unable to provide sufficient information on the contents of his/her paper, the entire paper may be assessed negatively – but only if the teacher has addressed this possibility in the syllabus communicated to students. If the student admits to ghostwriting in this conversation, he/she will receive an X – not a grade – indicating cheating.