Information for students

Use of PlagScan plagiarism check software at the University of Bremen

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Which faculties are using the software?
PlagScan can be used by the entire teaching staff. Use of the scanning software is not mandatory for
.teaching staff, though they have the choice of taking up this offer. An explicit declaration of consent
.is required from students for this. This declaration must be submitted along with their work.

What documents can be scanned?
All written student work and theses may be scanned with the software – provided the author has
signed a declaration of consent to this effect. The author’s personal information (name, address,
student registration number etc.) will be removed prior to the scan.

What happens to the data?
By giving consent to the storage of their work on the University of Bremen’s servers, students can
contribute to the establishment of a database that will in future make it easier to uncover plagiarism.
For this reason, we ask all students to agree to this storage, which will take place solely to search for
plagiarism.

If students agree, the scanned work will be stored in the database so that it is available to compare
with future assessment. The server belongs to the university and cannot be accessed externally.

Consent to storage on the server may be withdrawn at any time by sending a message to the
relevant teaching staff.

All matters relating to data privacy have been discussed with the University of Bremen Privacy Officer
and set out in the Usage and Privacy Plan. Further information is also included in the agreement
between the University of Bremen and PlagScan GmbH on privacy and data protection.
What sources are used for the scan?

In addition to the university’s database, which we will progressively expand by using PlagScan, the software will also use literature that is openly accessible on the Internet and indexed by the search engines Yahoo and Bing, specially indexed academic content and open access journals. Furthermore, the database also incorporates documents that other clients and cooperating publishers have released for use.

How are the results of the plagiarism scan used and what consequences could there be?

Teaching staff usually only use the software when they have reasonable suspicion of plagiarism and are required to assess the plausibility of the electronically generated check report, consider the results in the subject’s context and coordinate potential consequences with the relevant committees (examination committees). The check report points out suspected plagiarism, categorises it according to a traffic light system and calculates the proportion of suspected plagiarism in a document. The report is only ever cause for the relevant teaching staff to examine a document more closely.

It is the assessor’s job to judge whether any suspected plagiarism is actually plagiarism and whether academic fraud has been attempted. It may also be relevant to consider as part of this whether any fraud was intentional and how significant it is for the academic quality of the assessed work. If fraud is intentional and significant, assessment pieces will receive a fail grade based on a corresponding decision of the relevant examination committee (Section 18.1 AT BPO/MPO). Inaccuracies, incorrect citation etc. can be penalised by lowering grades, including down to a fail grade. It is up to the specific, individual assessor to determine the final grade for pieces of assessment.

Plagiarism checks are carried out confidentially. Teaching staff are bound to confidentiality through their professional obligations as well as Section 7 of the Good Academic Practice Regulations (Ordnung zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis, in German).