Directive concerning the citing and referencing of sources of information in written work submitted by students

LEX 1.3.3

1 January 2013, status as at 1 January 2017

The Direction of the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne,
based on Article 3, par. 1, point a, of the *Ordonnance sur l'EPFL et l'EPFZ* of 13 November 2003 (RS 414.110.37),
hereby adopts the following :

Preamble

Embarking on a field of study involves gathering information by consulting the scientific works available concerning the subject. The quality of the student's work very often depends on the quality of the information collected. It is important to start from the scientific state of the art. In fact, it is normal that a large part of a written work should be based on what others have already created or discovered. The resulting written work, whatever its nature, must however comply with the following rules in order to avoid any form of plagiarism.

Section 1 General provisions

Article 1   Field of application

This directive applies to all written work (including computer programs) that students, PhD students or participants in continuing education programmes (hereinafter: the student) submit for evaluation or divulge, in one way or another, to a restricted or wider audience.

Article 2   Definitions

The terms used in the present directive correspond to the following definitions:

Source: any information from which the author has drawn inspiration for the writing of their work;

Citation: word-for-word repetition of certain passages from a source;

Copying of the substance from a source: copying all or part of the content (notions, concepts, ideas, methods, results, experiments, discoveries presented in existing works) of a source, but described according to a personal structure and wording;

Borrowed material: any citation or copying of the substance from a source;

Source reference: indication in a written work of the source of all borrowed material, by a reference to the contact details of the source.

Article 3   Responsibility

As author of a written work, the student is considered responsible for its content and form.

Section 2 Rules

Article 4   Borrowed material and personal contribution

[1] All written work must make a clear distinction between:

    a.   material originating from other works (Art. 5) and
    b.   the student's personal and original contribution.

[2] All material originating from elsewhere must be recognisable as such in the written work thanks to a reference to the source.

[3] If the material originating from elsewhere is not clearly indicated in the work, the student allows the reader to think that it is their personal and original contribution. This amounts to cheating (plagiarism Art. 8).

Article 5   Forms of borrowed material

[1] All written work must then clearly distinguish concerning the borrowed material (Art. 4 par. 1a) between:

    a.   citations (Art. 6) and
    b.   substance borrowed from a source (Art. 7).

[2] If a copied passage is not mentioned as being a citation (Art. 6 par. 1 c), the student allows the reader to think that he has retranscribed borrowed material in his own words. This amounts to cheating (plagiarism Art. 8).

Article 6   Rules concerning citation

[1] The copying of a passage from an existing work, as such or translated, is authorised under the following conditions:

    a.   the copied passage serves as a comment, reference or demonstration;
    b.   the use of the copied passage justifies its length;
    c.   the quoted passage is clearly indicated (e.g. in brackets, italics or by a separate paragraph);
    d.   the source is referenced (before or just after the quotation, or by a footnote)[1]. This source reference is necessary even if the passage is taken from a previous personal work.

[2] It is forbidden, even if the rules stated in par. 1 are respected, to :

    a.   use a quotation altering the original text or making editorial adaptations;
    b.   cite a complete work - only extracts may be copied;
    c.   copy an illustration (figure, picture, video, graph, data graphics) without the authorisation of its author (or publisher) in cases where this illustration constitutes an original work in itself (protected work);
    d.   copy all or part of a computer source code:
        • unless the software user licence permits it, or if
        • the legal exception applies (Art. 21 of the Loi sur le droit d'auteur)[2].

Article 7   Rules concerning substance copied from a source

[1] Copying the substance from a source is authorised on condition that the written work makes reference to the source.

[2] The reference must allow the reader to clearly identify the source. This rule also applies if the copied elements are taken from previous personal works.

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[1] The student can obtain information concerning the rules applicable from the EPFL http://library.epfl.ch/info/
[2] http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/rs/231_1/a21.html

Article 8   Plagiarism

[1] Plagiarism consists of representing oneself as the author of all or part of the work or results in fact originating from one or several other person(s), by failing to respect the rules concerning the citing and referencing of sources as defined under Articles 6 and 7.

[2] The act commonly referred to as « self-plagiarism » consists of copying all or part of a previous personal work without citing it or referencing the source, and consequently presenting this work as a new contribution.

[3] Plagiarism or self-plagiarism, whether committed intentionally or by omission, is a form of cheating, which gives rise to the launching of an internal disciplinary procedure[3].

Section 3 Coming into force

Article 9   Coming into force

The present directive nullifies and replaces the Code of Ethics of 6 June 2007 and comes into force on 1st January 2013, status as at 1 January 2017.

On behalf of the EPFL Direction:

President: General Counsel:
Patrick Aebischer   Susan Killias

Comment: this Directive has been reviewed as part of the 2017 reorganisation. No modifications were made to this directive as a result of the review.

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[3] https://www.epfl.ch/about/overview/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2.4.0.2Disciplinary_Rules_Regulations_ang.pdf