



Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in the Republic of Cyprus (Cyprus)

Full report

Dr Angelika Kokkinaki

Dr Catherine Demoliou

Irene Glendinning



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Full Report

1. Information sources

Information about policies and procedures for plagiarism in the Higher Educational Institutes which are functioning under the control of the Republic of Cyprus was collected through

- the three levels of on-line surveys;
- structured interviews with academics, university senior managers and individuals concerned with academic integrity and research at national institutions and organisations;
- A focus group
- Information in web sites and web 2.0 media.

Seven interviews were conducted; all were face to face. The national level questions focused on national and institutional policies and procedures relating to plagiarism prevention and detection. Responses to the senior management questionnaire were collected from academics who were also serving as high rank administrators in their Universities (Department Heads, quality Officer, Deans, Vice Rectors) while the national survey was conducted with a very influential officer concerned with HE in Cyprus who has also served in other educational systems in two more EU member states. Perceptions and beliefs from university students, academic staff and senior management were collected from participants to online surveys and are presented in the current report, while in certain points excerpts have been included to introduce a sense of direct voices and evidence from country specific problems presented in this report.

Table 1 summarises the responses received to different elements of the survey.

Country	Student Questionnaire responses	Teacher Questionnaire responses	Senior Management and National	Student Focus Groups	Organisations and Institutions			
Republic of Cyprus	356	22	7	1	6			
Breakdown of student responses by domicile and award	Home students	Other EU students	Non-EU students	Not known	Bachelor, diploma	Master, doctor	Blank, other	
Republic of Cyprus	356	226	121	3	6	253	83	0

With regards to data In Table 1, we ought to point out two issues that will help us in our discussion. Question 25 in the online survey asked students to state their nationality. In Cyprus, such question is loaded with nationalist as well as political connotation. Among Greek-Cypriots, there are three groups: those who proclaim that their nationality is Greek and distinguish their citizenship the Greek-Cypriot, those who state their nationality to be Cypriot and those who describe themselves as Greek-Cypriot. In the table, we counted as home students those who described themselves as Cypriot or Greek Cypriot. We suspect that a large proportion of those who have stated their nationality to be Greek were in fact members of the first category, but we were not in a position to distinguish them from those students who are originally from mainland Greece and study in Cyprus. There were six students who selected not to state their nationality. It must be added, here, that

every year the government of the Republic of Cyprus, the United Nations as well as local private Universities offer scholarships to Turkish Cypriot students. At the time the survey was conducted, we have received questionnaires from six out of seven Universities functioning under the control of the Republic of Cyprus. In the Republic of Cyprus, the official language of instruction for state Universities is Greek and for private Universities is English. Thus it is not surprising that our sample included a fair share of students with other ethnic backgrounds. A senior official who has served at senior management in academia and is one of the ‘seven wise’ who compose the education advisory body appointed by the Cyprus government was also interviewed and included both in this report and the report for the Hellenic Republic due to his extensive experience in academic institutions in both countries.

Faculty from Cyprus Universities and HEI were asked to participate in the research, but the response rate was rather low. It should be noted that questionnaires were filled up by participants working in different fields, coming from different Universities and carrying different viewpoints. The teaching staff sample can be considered as opportunistic and may not be representative of the whole academia in Cyprus. The interviews provided insight information about plagiarism, academic integrity and the interweaving of politics in addressing such issues.

2. Higher Education in the Republic of Cyprus

At the time the survey was conducted, the Higher Educational Sector in the Republic of Cyprus was comprised of:

- 3 state Universities covering a wide variety of programs offering degrees at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral level
- 4 private Universities offering programs at undergraduate and postgraduate. During the last year, one more private University has been founded and at least three private Universities have started offering doctoral studies
- 5 state Higher Educational Institutes offering studies in very specific fields (Police Academy, Higher Hotel Institute, Forestry College, Mediterranean Institute of Management and School for Tour Operators)
- 25 private Higher Education Institutes Technological (Colleges, Institutes, Art, Drama, art schools etc) which were initially offering vocational and undergraduate studies. Rather recently, some HEI were recognized to offer graduate level studies, as well. Certain colleges maintain bilateral agreements with universities established in other EU member states, most commonly in the UK. These studies lead to degrees which are awarded directly by the affiliated foreign universities.

Statistical data about students at different institutes may be found at Table 2, based on data found at <http://www.highereducation.ac.cy/gr/statistika-stoicheia.html>.

Table 2. Students in Cyprus Higher Educational Institutes				
Universities and Other Higher Educational Institutes (HEI)	Students 2008-2009	Students 2009-2010	Students 2010-2011	Students 2011-2012
State Universities	7527	8831	10005	11344
Private Universities	10367	11012	11729	11961
State HEI	1249	814	596	642
Private HEI	11843	11576	9788	7825
TOTAL	30986	32233	32118	31772

During the academic year 2008-2009 the number of students at private HEI was historically high. Since then, one may notice that the number of students at private HEI has decreased. This is attributed to more strict invigilation of the procedure for admitting students from non EU-member states due to reported cases of migrants who were applying and admitted to certain colleges with questionable entrance criteria, came on a student visa and then started working illegally. One must also note that during the last few years, the number of Cypriot students selecting to complete their studies in Cyprus is steadily increasing, as shown in Figure 1.

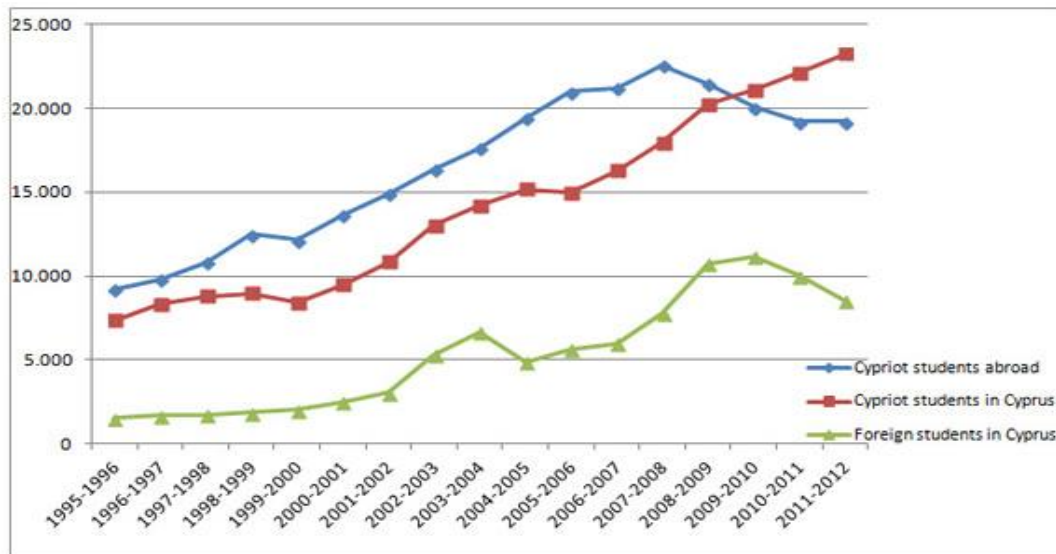


Figure 1. Cyprus students in Cyprus and abroad and foreign students in Cyprus [from: <http://www.highereducation.ac.cy/gr/statistika-stoicheia.html>]

3. Quality Assurance in Cyprus Higher Education - teaching, learning and assessment

The Ministry of Education and Culture has attributed great importance to HEI Quality Assurance, which is also a key aspect of the Bologna Process and the EU modernization agenda for Higher Education. Within this framework, the Ministry states that it has prioritized the establishment of the “Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education” (CYAQAAE), which is envisioned to be the authority body for quality assurance in higher education in Cyprus. CYAQAAE is expected to enhance internal and external quality assurance procedures in the Higher Education Institutions following the European Standards and Guidelines.

Currently, aspects of Quality Assurance for HEI are fragmented over several committees and councils, including:

- The Council of Educational Evaluation – Accreditation (CEEA)
- The Evaluation Committee of Private Universities (ECPU)
- The Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications of Cyprus (KYSATS) and
- The Advisory Committee for Tertiary Education (SETE)

A draft Law for the establishment of CYAQAAE has been sent to the Parliament, for over a year. It seems that opposition to the drafted Law comes predominantly from the State universities and HEI that –until now- were completely autonomous have already established and are following internal

Quality Assurance procedures and practices. Upon ratification of the Law by the parliament, the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education is expected to oversee:

- The periodical institutional and departmental evaluation of the public universities and the private universities with final license of operation.
- The periodical institutional and departmental evaluation and accreditation of the private universities operating under initial license of operation, as well as the evaluation and accreditation of their new programmes of study.
- The periodical institutional and programmatic evaluation and accreditation of the public and private institutions of higher education.
- The recognition of higher education qualifications and the provision of information on recognized institutions of higher education in Cyprus and abroad.
- The publication of the list of all the recognized institutions of higher education operating in the Republic of Cyprus and the programmes of study they have been authorized to offer.
- The evaluation and accreditation of all types of cross – border education.

Currently, CYAQAAE is not explicitly assigned a responsibility for the prevention, detection and deterrence of plagiarism. In principal, it would be helpful to set up a policy at national level. In practice, a number of burdens have been identified.

The evidence that follows was derived from the conducted interviews, the press and online resources. All interviewees agreed that their institutions did not have clear policy or well defined procedures for detection and deterrence of plagiarism. A very senior officer in HE issues has indicated that many of the faculty themselves were involved in cases of plagiarism. He added that

“The problem starts from further down the line. Let me offer you an example: I had participated in numerous electoral bodies for hiring or promotion of faculty. In some cases, I have pointed out that the applicant had plagiarised; I presented concrete evidence to that extent. Repeatedly, over and over again, I could easily identify members of the Electoral Body (obviously from the applicant’s supporting clique) who were presenting all sorts of excuses to brush off the issue. Pathetic excuses. At the end, many of the faculty members in question were elected or promoted. Finally, I was fed up: from a point onwards, I have declined participation in any electoral body”.

He made clear that he has encountered evidence with Electoral Bodies in Greece, primarily, whereas in Cyprus he has heard only rumors. In the words of another participant,

“Years ago, when I was still serving as a Head of Department at a private Institute, I was asked by the Dean of my School –an academic whom I admired a lot- to examine whether a certain faculty member could be transferred to our School. At that time, she was serving as an entry-level faculty at another School, yet she was conducting interdisciplinary work. I went through her CV, noticing that she would be able to make only marginal contributions to our School. Perplexed by the fact that my Dean had asked me to examine such a marginal case, not to mention that he had even made a mild suggestion to accept her transfer, I sought advice from a fellow academic with whom I could talk freely. Through him, I was informed that the faculty member was found guilty of plagiarism and she was effectively expelled from her School. When she got notice, she went in tears to the office of the vice Rector who was also one of the main shareholders of the Institute and asked him to intervene so that she does not lose her job. The vice Rector had some type of connection to her family. He had masterminded her transfer to our School. The decision had effectively been taken. When I confronted my Dean with the facts, he said “Everybody deserves a second chance”. I was speechless...”

There may be many different contributing factors towards such high tolerance within various cultural and organizational settings. In Cyprus, the society is tightly connected. In the words of one interviewee

“The conjecture is that between any two people in the world, there are six degrees of separation. For two Cypriots, there are two degrees of separation. If you do not know someone directly, you know another person who knows him or her”.

This tight interweaving of relationships mirrored within the academic community is not always detrimental to the prevention of academic misconduct. Knowing that one's acts are closely scrutinized by a fairly large group of people, one is extremely careful to act in a socially and -in our case- academically proper way. Cyprus Universities seem to accept that some of the ways they function are reflective of the overall social conduit. It needs to be pointed out, however, that Cyprus Universities compete not with other Cyprus entities but with other Universities in the EU and internationally.

It was also interesting to examine the views of teachers on the inter-relation between learning and plagiarism. A high ranking academic pointed out that students enter Cyprus Universities having been trained for a number of years to write essays in an encyclopedic matter; they are not aware of academic writing. In some fields, they get exposed to academic writing when they complete their final year thesis. The same academic pointed out that according to him plagiarism is not condemnable because it is a violation of intellectual property rights, but primarily because it interrupts the pursuit of scientific research. More specifically, a plagiarized document does not permit to the reader to retrieve and critically examine the scientific work of the resources.

Faculty and administrators have also expressed great concerns about the issue of authenticity regarding the composition of project work, graduate and postgraduate thesis. In the words of a faculty member:

“I am very concerned with a plagiarized thesis. Let me clarify. I do not care much about a thesis with plagiarism in the Chapter on Literature Review etc. I am concerned that the thesis I read is the product of a contractual agreement between my students and an author who is paid to write it up.”

In Cyprus, we could not identify an organized tutoring agency that undertakes to write a thesis, like in the case of Greece. It has been documented, however, that such agencies undertake work for Cyprus Universities i.e. the site www.anavasis.gr explicitly states that. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that Cypriot students studying abroad contact during their Christmas vacations faculty working at Cyprus Universities and they agree to receive assistance into completing assignment and projects in return of reimbursement. Off the record, a Cyprus professor recalled that during his doctoral studies in UK, he was approached by a rather affluent Greek student (from mainland Greece) asking for help in her MSc dissertation. He ended up practically doing the research design and writing the whole dissertation for her.

“I got enough money to cover my personal expenses for a year! She later became a prominent political figure in Greece!”

In the country report on Greece, it was mentioned that a number of MSc and PhD thesis accepted by Universities in UK and USA during the last ten years have been, in fact, written by experts in Romania and Czech Republic and other countries. The whole process was facilitated through the Internet.

It is evident that for a national policy on prevention, detection and deterrence of plagiarism to become successful in Cyprus, it must take under consideration existing burdens and realities. One may argue that the nature of assessment can have an impact on the extent of plagiarism; for example independent or group project and essays may encourage plagiarism, whereas examinations

would limit that aspect. However, there is evidence from our interviews that indicates that there are just as many problems with exam invigilation and with cheating. Although our interviewees were not directly asked about academic integrity, they did offer examples of academic misbehaviour to point out that plagiarism is just one of the issues that need to be resolved.

The questionnaires for teachers contained questions about group assessment and for the breakdown and types of assessments, i.e. examinations, assignments and project work. Table 3 contains a summary of the responses received.

Examinations	Assignments	Projects	Other assessment
30%-100%	15%-100%	0%-20%	Oral defence of thesis (10%)

4. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism in Cyprus

4.1 Research and development in academic integrity and plagiarism

In Cyprus, we have identified the following classes of documentation:

- Internal Regulations (published or posted by some Universities, Schools and/or Departments at their web sites)
- Code of Ethics (endorsed by some Universities and published on the web sites)
- Guides to avoid and limit plagiarism (through blogs and through some University web sites)
- Articles in traditional and electronic media.

No statistics on academic integrity were available at national or institutional level about higher education. Another notable shortcoming is the lack of academic research on the topic of academic integrity at large and more specifically on plagiarism.

Through this study, we have collected suggestions both on academic integrity and on plagiarism and we report on both of them.

4.1.1 Academic Integrity

Through interviews and questionnaires, the following suggestions have been collected regarding examination procedures and regulations. It was brought to our attention that examination rules and regulations should be clearly stated, preferably at institutional level. A practice that followed by a University was viewed as a best practice by faculty and high rank academic officials in other Universities in Cyprus. First year students at this University are required to undertake a number of orientation seminars and foundation courses and a tutorial on academic writing that informs them with ways to deter plagiarism. At the end, they have to undergo some tests to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the related topics. If they pass the test, they are allowed to get their student id, which is also a prerequisite for a range of services offered at lower prices (from transportation fees to food coupons), nationally.

Many of the faculty and senior officers interviewed raised concerns about the authenticity of the authors of dissertations at undergraduate or postgraduate level. A practice was also noted at one of the private Universities that requires from faculty to have regular face to face meetings with the student. The aim of such meetings would be to review the progress of the thesis and provide specific

advice for the improvement of the research output. It is also been examined whether to introduce a cap for the number of thesis undertaken by each faculty member and ultimately result into a workload balance. Others argue that the introduction of advanced control mechanisms for thesis would increase bureaucracy without having concrete results. Instead, they propose that good referencing and extensive reference lists would be a 'sine qua non' condition to award a very good grade.

4.1.2 Plagiarism

Responders to our survey (both faculty and students) agreed that students should receive more targeted education on plagiarism and ways to avoid it. Based on the information we retrieved, we noticed a lack of specific modules on research methods and academic writing in many programs.

Anti-plagiarism software was perceived favourably among the majority of faculty members interviewed; many teachers were aware of the technical inefficiencies of these software tools but they acknowledged their valuable contributions.

4.3 Strategies, policies and procedures for academic integrity in Cyprus

In Cyprus, written examinations are the most common mechanism of assessment. Although not explicitly asked through IPHEAE researchers, the issue of exam misconduct was frequently brought up in the conversation. A lack of standardized practice was noted.

At the time of this study was conducted, three Universities in Cyprus were engaged in Distance Learning: one state University Cyprus and two private Universities. The operating model of the state University differed from the other two, primarily on the fact that it encompasses synchronous learning and physical meetings that to some extent provide resilience against plagiarism. Four faculty members and one high rank academic interviewed in our study agreed that institutions involved in distance learning should take additional provisions. The issue is still largely unexplored and best practices have not emerged, yet. A suggestion has been recorded by a junior faculty member:

“For each homework assignment that contributes towards the grade, a synchronous learning session should be scheduled during which the lecturer will ask a sample from the class participants a number of well-targeted questions that can authenticate if students have done the work themselves”.

Many of the participants supporting Distance Learning programmes emphasized the special provisions for thesis and dissertations to safeguard authentication of authorship i.e. oral examination and a provision that failure of the student to answer questions in his/her viva in a satisfactory way should lead to overall failure for this module. It might be useful to describe again a case that was identified in the Hellenic Open University for two reasons. First, multiple synergies exist between HOU and the OUC and secondly, the context that nourished such academic misconduct is the same in both countries, perhaps even more so in Cyprus where a large number of the population hold identical names and surnames. In the words of a senior HE person:

“The Hellenic Open University uses a hybrid teaching methodology; they have 5 face-to-face meetings per semester for each course plus an in class. The meetings are not mandatory, but it is

found that students who do not attend them underperform and often fail, in comparison to those who do. With a stark exception! There was a student in the program 'Information Systems' who never attended a meeting, yet he was top of class. Until, another student caught for a relative minor academic misconduct revealed that this student was not doing the homework assignments or writing the exams himself. Upon further investigation, it was found that the student's cousin with an MSc degree in Computer Science and a job of Managing Director for a software house in Greece with exactly the same name and surname provided the solutions to any homework assignments and he was taking the final examinations himself since the data on his id card matched those in the HOU students' list. The offending student was forced to quit even though he needed three more courses to graduate! After this incident, HOU lecturers have a videoconference meeting with randomly selected students asking them to explain the logic and programming details of the solution to any homework assignment".

This incident puts into perspective the type of specific problems associated with academic misconduct in e-learning settings.

The issue of "outsourcing" assignments and getting papers done through paper mill sites seems to be rather common in e-learning courses and programs. In the words of another full-time faculty member of the Hellenic Open University in Greece and part-time faculty in the Open University of Cyprus:

"I recently became aware that our program can be a revenue generator for some. In one of the courses offered at both HOU and OUC an identical homework assignment was given to students from both Universities attending this course. I was surprised to see that a student in HOU and a student in OUC submitted the same exact solution to me. As investigations showed, a recent graduate of the HOU program had started an e-business to provide upon payment solutions to students' assignments as well as variations of solutions for the same assignment from the same university to muffle suspicions. It happened that he did not suspect that the assignment given to the OUC and HOC would be from the same lecturer."

From that point onwards, faculty members were asked to declare if they work for both Universities and in that case to ensure that no homework assignments are common. Tutors use special software to identify similarities in the software designed by the student to provide the solution to the assignment and students with "similar" solutions are required to go through an oral examination. Through a focus group organized with students of OUC, it was found that these measures enforce students to become more engaged in their homework assignments even when they receive outside assistance. Since many students of Greek nationality attended the OUC focus group, it is believed that this may be applicable to students at HOC.

Limitations of anti-plagiarism software are well understood by faculty who have been using it, but not so by novice users. There was an incidence of a faculty member at a Cypriot university who was basing his judgement solely on the similarity index provided by the software without having a look at the originality report. However, the overwhelming verdict is that anti-plagiarism software can be very useful and their use should be standardized in all Universities. At the time the survey was conducted, three out of six examined Universities were using anti-plagiarism software (Ephorus and Turnitin) and since that time the number of universities and institutions adopting anti-plagiarism software has been increased.

It should be noted, however, that one major limitation of anti-plagiarism software packages at least in the case of Cyprus where many students are required to write their thesis in Greek is the fact that translation of text from one language to another gets under the radar of anti-plagiarism software.

Furthermore, it is well known that detection capabilities of anti-plagiarism software are correlated with the number of resources found in their data repository (against which a submitted paper is checked). If there are few scientific documents in a given national language, the chances of detecting plagiarism are also limited.

4.4 IPPHEAE survey findings on policies and procedures

Evidence collected suggests that although it is not unusual for students to commit plagiarism, it is very rare for students in Cyprus to face accusations of plagiarism.

Question 7 of the student and teacher questionnaires asked about sanctions:

What would happen if a student at your institution was found guilty of plagiarism in their assignment or final project/dissertation?

The responses are summarised in Table 4.

Assignment		Project or Dissertation		Sanction	Feedback (S=student, T=Teacher)
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher		
20%	14%	11%	9%	No action would be taken	
51%	41%	23%	23%	Verbal warning	Suitable for the first occurrence of plagiarism in an assignment
36%	50%	34%	36%	Formal warning letter	After the first occurrence of plagiarism in an assignment
43%	50%	52%	55%	Request to re write it properly	Everybody deserves a second chance Especially proper for a dissertation. The highest possible grade should be 5 out of 10
52%	68%	43%	32%	Zero mark for the work	If the students ideas are not his own, there is no other way It all depends on how strict the professor is
29%	9%	34%	23%	Repeat the module or subject	If the student has not taken under consideration the first warning
16%	18%	31%	18%	Fail the module or subject	If the student has not taken under consideration the first warning
10%	0%	15%	5%	Repeat the whole year of study	
7%	0%	29%	18%	Fail the whole programme or degree	It is justified for the dissertation
10%	5%	15%	9%	Expose the student to school community	
8%	0%	14%	14%	Suspended from the institution	
8%	5%	22%	23%	Expelled from the institution	After repeated occurrence and if the student has not taken under consideration previous written warnings
7%	5%	11%	5%	Suspend payment of student grant	
5%	0%	6%	0%	Other	Punishments depend on the relation between professor and the student. The only appropriate punishment is to be decided by a Disciplinary Committee. All others aim to make a profit out the situation

Based on the responses in Table 4, faculty and students seem to consider a range of potential punishments for plagiarism. It is interesting to see that a noticeable percentage of faculty members would not take action if an assignment was found with plagiarism (14%) that drops to 9% even if a thesis is found to have issues with plagiarism. The three most widely accepted penalties are the same (albeit in slightly different order) for faculty and students, namely, zero mark, verbal and formal warning. In the case of plagiarism in a dissertation, a request to rewrite it properly was jointly viewed as appropriate penalty by the students and the faculty, alike. Students accepted as a possible sanction suspension of a scholarship or a grant, whereas no teacher was aware of this type of

penalty. The survey was not design to collect evidence on the frequency and the type of offences that could trigger a specific punishment, but we have collected information through interviews with faculty members and high rank administration. It is believed that sanctions are inconsistent and inappropriately light. A comment by a student in a questionnaire response is indicative:

“Punishments depend on the relation between the professor and the student.”

It is also interesting to note that procedures for applying sanctions are not consistent and faculty members are not always aware of them. Through an interview the Quality Assurance officer of a private university admitted that in that University most faculty do not report a case whereas others request very strict sanctions. The former group of faculty perceive that the University authorities maintain a pro-customer culture that does not encourage such acts. The latter, believe that because so many of their colleagues seem to be indifferent to such misconduct if they impose a strict punishment the message will finally get across and fewer students will attempt to cheat. When faculty members and administrators were asked regarding the existence of statistics that show whether plagiarism has increased or decreased in recent years, all interviewees agreed that no statistics on plagiarism were kept at their institution or at national level.

4.5 Use of digital tools

At the time this research was conducted, anti-plagiarism software tools were used by three universities in Cyprus, that is, two state universities and one public. The official language of instruction in state universities is Greek, in private ones teaching is in English. Both state Universities were using Ephorus on the grounds that it had competitive advantages in locating plagiarism in Greek. The third institution was University of Nicosia that was able to apply part of the grant from this research project to Turnitin licences for faculty and students. Initially, the Senate of the University was quite concerned by the way the software might be used. It had approved the use of the software on a pilot basis upon two conditions. First, both faculty and students would have access to the system and students could have the system’s assessment prior to their final submission of their work. Second, researchers would only publish results based on aggregated data and would not reveal in any way measurements on plagiarism at university level. Initial scepticism was soon overthrown by selective adoption by a number of schools and Departments. Among the early adopters were the department of English Literature, the Language Centre and the School of Business that institutionalized the use of Turnitin as a mandatory prerequisite for the approval of MBA thesis proposals and proposals for doctoral studies. Many faculty members at the School of Business also used Turnitin for their assignments as well as research output. The system was also enthusiastically adopted, at a later stage, by the Medical School that was instrumental in securing the necessary funding for the renewal of licences.

Based on interviews with program coordinators, high rank academics and interviews with faculty from all three institutions, we have identified a number of interesting points. Faculty who used anti-plagiarism software acknowledged its capabilities and potentials. A few faculty members who performed test runs of the software by uploading their own papers and/or other publications were hit by a strange revelation. Instead of getting model reports to showcase to their students, Turnitin identified issues with plagiarism.

That revelation had a major impact on the way they conduct their research or manage their research team. In the words of a Professor:

“So far, my doctoral students were not attending seminars or workshops on academic writing or research methods. I reasoned that in our field learning domain-specific techniques and tools were more important and useful. By using anti-plagiarism software on some of our publications, I realized, however, that we all need to update our academic writing skills”.

Table 5: Digital tools and other techniques for detecting plagiarism – number of responses	Student #	Teacher #
Software (Turnitin, Ephorus, no-named software)		13
Google, Internet	1	
Computers (ICT equipment, laptop), smartphones	4	
collection of reports and other projects by the administration	1	
Surveillance	1	
Charter		
Neither, nothing	2	3
Don't know	38	
Special purpose search engine hosted by the institution		1
Special purpose Organization – Company-Curator	1	

Faculty also expressed the view that incorporating anti-plagiarism software in their courses required some reorganisation on the way they have set up learning and organisational context of their modules. More importantly, however, they pointed out that it also demanded from the host institution to have in place policies and procedures on the topic of plagiarism and academic integrity, at large. Table 5 presents the answers given by faculty and students on existing tools and it is indicative of their level of awareness.

Student and teacher Question 9: *How are the tools you named above used?*

Table 6: Use of software tools – percentages	Student	Teacher
<i>It is up to the lecturers to decide whether to use the tools</i>	36%	27%
<i>For some courses students must submit their written work using the tools</i>	15%	22%
<i>Students must submit all written work using the tools</i>	15%	41%
<i>Students may use the tools to check their work before submitting</i>	16%	0%
<i>Other</i>	6%	23%

Although these responses suggest that teacher access to software tools is growing, there appears to be no systematic use and a certainly there is resilience among faculty and administrators to allow students to access digital tools in a formative way. A very junior faculty member strongly objected to the use of anti-plagiarism software by students using the following metaphor:

“If I allow a student to have access to anti-plagiarism software is like I allow a thief to test whether his keys can open the front door to my house”.

A very senior academic originally from Greece but currently working in Cyprus pointed out that faculty have to redesign homework assignments so that they do not encourage plagiarism:

“In a homework assignment that requires critical thinking, it is extremely easy to identify plagiarism”.

Students in Cyprus do not seem to have a thorough understanding on the way text matching software works, but they are convinced it can help them improve their skills. A great number of student respondents suggested its use for formative learning.

4.6 Making systems and procedures more effective

We collected many suggestions and comments when asked about ideas that would limit plagiarism in academia in Cyprus. The responses and sometimes their intensity suggest that current provisions for support and guidance as well as sources of advice are not sufficient. Table 8b summarises the common themes in the responses.

Cyprus' faculty placed the emphasis on pedagogical aspects. The suggestions by quite a few faculty members for a need for the type of student assignments that do not promote plagiarism align with the evidence collected through interviews: the same student assignments are given from year to year and this makes it possible for ready-made solutions to be provided and be easily accessible. Thus, good practices for the design of student assessment material among faculty should be promoted.

Several faculty members suggested the development of a course on research methodology and/or academic writing. Although it has not been directly suggested it seems that an open and free e-Learning course in Greek on anti-plagiarism could be a great contribution to all students attending Greek and Cyprus HEIs and an alternative that could take advantage of economies of scale.

Table 8b: Thematic summary of ideas for how to reduce student plagiarism	Number of Responses			
	Student	Teacher	Senior Man	National
Staff training or development, codes of practice/conduct		2	1	1
Student education about plagiarism, codes of practice/conduct	33	3	1	1
More transparent access to resources, good case studies, study aids	7			
Teaching academic writing skills, paraphrasing, use of sources	17	3		
Encourage respect for ethical issues			1	1
Find ways to eliminate the phenomenon that dissertations can be composed by others for money		1		
For each assessment method, to ask a random sample of students to answer questions orally	2			
An Academic Unit dedicated to academic writing support	1			
Introducing the issue in secondary education	1			
Student access to digital anti-plagiarism tools for text matching	1			
Better control	2	2	1	
Focus on learning, teaching critical thinking, philosophy, originality	1		1	1
Consistency in guidance and sanctions between teachers		1		
More control, prevention measures	5			
Innovative homework assignments	1			
Ensure students /staff understand the consequences, sanctions	4			
Do allow the use of Internet for assignments/projects	1			
Give better grades to students with proper citations and plenty of references	1			
More severe sanctions	2			
To allow students to have up to 35% of the text plagiarized	1			

Faculty also suggested the use of anti-plagiarism software with Ephorus and Turnitin the two more frequently mentioned software tools.

Overwhelmingly, students pointed out that they do not have access to any course or seminar on academic writing, nor are they informed about possible consequences related to plagiarism. In their responses, students provided many more elaborations on the kind of guidance and support that could improve their academic writing skills, including an introduction to the subject in high school curricula, online or regular seminars, personalized attention and guidance and an academic unit on academic writing etc.

In a separate set of questions, 48% of the teachers agreed that: “*one or more of my colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes*”. This is indeed a high percentage, but it is considerably less than the relevant percentage in mainland Greece that reached 61.6%. When faculty was asked whether they agreed with the statement: “*I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)*” only, 10% of the faculty agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. (Annex Cyprus-Teachers-1 Qu T5n, T5o).

When asked: *do you believe your institution/faculty has a robust approach to the detection of student plagiarism*, senior management respondents from Cyprus elaborated on the fact that there were provisions related to plagiarism and admitted some points that need further improvement. This was reinforced by the faculty whose nearly two thirds (63%) of faculty agreed with the statement above (Annex Cyprus Teachers Qu T5c). Similarly, 67% of the faculty stated their belief that their institution was serious about *plagiarism detection* (Annex Cyprus-Teachers Qu T5d).

When asked about *policies, procedures and penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty* and whether these are made available to students (Annex Cyprus-Students-1 Qu 5), the majority of student and faculty responses were positive (Students: 51.3% agreed, 19.5% disagreed); (Faculty: 58.3% agreed, 8.3% disagreed). It is remarkable; however, that one in five teachers (20.8%) stated that they did not have access to such information. Regarding the consistency in applying such policies and procedures, teachers expressed their uncertainty with relation to whether that *the same procedures were followed* (43.5%) as well as whether procedures *are applied consistently among students* (45.8%). With regards to following the same procedure, the second most popular vote on behalf of teachers was negative (30.4), but in relation to consistency the second most popular answer was positive with 33.4%. Similarly, students (41.8%) were not certain if their teachers were following the same procedures. The second most popular answer was positive with 38.1% (Annex Cyprus-Students 5-l). Most students (37.8%) believed their teachers were consistent in applying the policy/procedures, 31.6% were not certain and 25.8% disagreed. (Annex Cyprus-Students T5r). Encouragingly, 79.2% of teachers and 74.4% of students responded positively to the statement: *it is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism* (Annex Cyprus-Students Qu 5o, Cyprus-Teachers 5t).

5. Perceptions and Understanding of Plagiarism

5.1 Support and guidance

One way of showcasing academic integrity is to ask students to sign some form of statement about integrity and honesty. In some countries and institutions this can take the form of a formal ceremony, but in other institutions can *be* part of the student enrolment or when students are submitting an assessment. Student and faculty responses as to when *students are required to sign a declaration about originality and academic honesty* are summarised in Table 6.

Student	Teacher	When
21%	4%	On starting their degree
27%	40%	For every assessment
12%	12%	For some assessments
8%	28%	Never
16%	16%	Not sure

It should be noted that the above results show a difference of opinion/perceptions between students and teachers about this issue, as expressed in percentages. The relative order of the answers, however, is the same. The limited number of teachers that completed the questionnaires might be a contributing factor for such difference.

Student *Question 2: I became aware of plagiarism...*

43% of students said that they became aware of plagiarism before they started university, 38% during their undergraduate degree and 5% during their Masters or PhD studies. 14% said they were still not sure about this.

Student *Question 3: I learned to cite and reference...*

21% of students said that they had learnt about conventions regarding writing before university, 38% during their bachelor degree, 5% during their postgraduate doctoral studies. 14% said they were still not sure about this.

Table 7 summarizes the answers to Student Question 6 and Teacher Questions 2 and 3 about awareness-raising: *students become aware of plagiarism and of other forms of academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating) as an important issue through:*

Plagiarism		Academic Dishonesty		
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
46%	40%	24%	24%	Web site
44%	48%	43%	40%	Course booklet, student guide, handbook
37%	28%	31%	28%	Leaflet or guidance notes
36%	60%	28%	64%	Workshop / class / lecture
16%	4%	24%	12%	I am not aware of any information about this
11%	16%	5%	12%	Other

The responses in Table 7 confirm that information about plagiarism and academic dishonesty is made available to the majority of Cyprus students through the web, student guides or workshops. Table 7 also shows that a significant proportion of students and teachers are not aware of any information about the two issues.

The responses to student Question 12, teacher Question 14: *Which of the following services are provided at your institution to advise students about plagiarism prevention? (Answer all that apply)* are summarised in Table 8. The main channel for educating students about plagiarism and academic dishonesty appears to be through tutors, in class and through course handbooks and study guides. The responses confirm that in most participant institutions, there is no special services and/or guidelines to support students in developing academic integrity and academic writing skills.

The senior management respondents stated that their institution provided guidelines (but not training) to teachers on dealing with cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. They also agreed, however, that control and follow up of procedures was not appropriate as well as that it is important to have in-service development.

Table 8: Services and student support for discouraging plagiarism

Student	Teacher	Service or provision
19%	12%	Academic support unit
58%	72%	Advice in class during course/module
28%	36%	Additional lectures, workshops:
70%	84%	Advice from tutors or lecturers
34%	12%	Guidance from the library
27%	16%	University publisher
14%	12%	Academic writing unit/Study skills unit

5.2 Responses about plagiarism

59% of student participants agreed with the statement that *the previous institution [where] I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution*, with 16% disagreeing (Annex Cyprus Students S5q).

All participants were asked to reflect and comment on the question *what leads students to decide to plagiarise?* They were asked to select the 10 most prominent contributing factors; their responses with distinct differences between the two groups are summarised in Table 9. The results for the top three of the reasons suggested for student plagiarism, were: *They think the lecturer will not care (67%)*; *they don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment (81%)*; *it is easy to cut and paste from the Internet (68%)*.

Table 9: Reasons student plagiarise – student and teacher questionnaires

Student	Teacher	SM/National	Possible reason for plagiarism
21%	8%		<i>They think the lecturer will not care</i>
59%	92%	1	<i>They think they will not get caught</i>
55%	40%	2	<i>They run out of time</i>
57%	72%	1	<i>They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment:</i>
17%	16%		<i>They don't see the difference between group work and collusion</i>
57%	64%	1	<i>They can't express another person's ideas in their own words</i>
42%	44%		<i>They don't understand how to cite and reference</i>
52%	24%		<i>They are not aware of penalties</i>
46%	44%	1	<i>They are unable to cope with the workload</i>
32%	12%		<i>They think their written work is not good enough:</i>
35%	32%		<i>They feel the task is completely beyond their ability</i>
65%	72%	1	<i>It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet</i>
21%	12%		<i>They feel external pressure to succeed</i>
35%	40%	1	<i>Plagiarism is not seen as wrong</i>
31%	40%		<i>They have always written like that</i>
14%	16%	1	<i>Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments</i>
25%	28%		<i>Their reading comprehension skills are weak</i>
23%	4%		<i>Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood</i>
19%	36%		<i>There is no teacher control on plagiarism</i>

From the perspective of faculty, the most popular answers included *they think they will not get caught* (92%), *they do not want to learn anything, just pass the assignment* (72%) and *it is easy to cut and paste from the Internet* (72%). This set of answers was also popular among students, only the order is different.

Table 11 summarises responses to student Question 10 exploring their understanding of basic academic writing conventions: *What are the reasons for using correct referencing and citation in scholarly academic writing?*

78%	<i>To avoid being accused of plagiarism</i>
62%	<i>To show you have read some relevant research papers</i>
67%	<i>To give credit to the author of the sourced material</i>
72%	<i>To strengthen and give authority to your writing</i>
25%	<i>Because you are given credit/marks for doing so</i>
1%	<i>I don't know</i>

From the responses summarized in Table 11, it is alarming to see the large percentage of students (78%) who think that the purpose of referencing and citation is to defend themselves against accusations of plagiarism or to give authority to their work. A small number (25%) consider citations as a way to get a better grade in their paper. It is interesting to note that two students who voted “other” wrote “to prove the effort invested” and “to demonstrate the extent of the conducted work”. Overall, however, the great majority of student participants appear to have a good grasp of why referencing and in-text citations are required.

The research (Table 12) also showed that a referencing style convention had been in effect in most Cyprus institutions that responded, with the majority of students (53%) expressing their confidence about referencing and citation. The percentage (37%) of students who stated that they were not certain about referencing and citations, suggests that more training is required. Finding good quality sources and paraphrasing were the aspects of academic writing that were considered as most difficulty by student (Table 13). Results also showed that all other aspects of academic writing are problematic to at least one out of three students in Greece.

Yes		No		Not sure		Question
student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
72%	79%	12%	17%	15%	4%	<i>Is there any referencing style students are required or encouraged to use in written work?</i>
62%		10%		27%		<i>Are you confident about referencing and citation?</i>

Student Question 13: *What do you find difficult about academic writing?*

73%	<i>Finding good quality sources</i>
28%	<i>Referencing and citation</i>
37%	<i>Paraphrasing</i>
24%	<i>Understanding different referencing formats and styles</i>

The survey also included questions that explored respondents’ understanding about what constitutes plagiarism. Students (Qu. 15) and teachers (Qu. 19) were presented with scenarios of

plagiarism and were asked to identify whether each case was representative of plagiarism as well as to suggest whether some “punishment” should be applied. The aim was to try to establish people’s perception of plagiarism and of its severity as indicated by the punishment they suggested for each case. Tables 14 and 15 summarise the responses from students and teachers, respectively.

Although all six cases (a-f) could be identified as plagiarism, some (c, f) could be construed as poor academic practice or perhaps patch-writing due to poor language skills (b, e). However given that 40% of the paper is identical to other work in all case scenarios, it is expected that the matter will be investigated for plagiarism leading to possible sanctions.

It is commendable that the presented scenario (a) (Tables 14, 15) was correctly identified as plagiarism by the overwhelming majority of faculty and students. Moreover, both agreed by majority that such cases ought to be punished. The percentages of students and teachers who positively identifying possible plagiarism examples from the remaining options, particularly cases (c), (f) for students, was much lower. This would suggest that students’ confidence in understanding academic writing conventions may be misplaced and that faculty may have plagiarized, unintentionally. There were differences between the two groups regarding the application of punishment. The percentage of students opting for “punishment” in cases (b-f) was significantly lower than those of teachers. The considerable percentage of teachers who failed to identify primarily case (d), but also cases (c, f) as plagiarism is worrying because the participants took part in this survey voluntarily, making it more likely that they are more informed and/or more sensitive on plagiarism issues.

Student Question 15, Teacher question 19: Examples of possible plagiarism:

Table 14: Student responses to possible cases of plagiarism					
Qu	Is it plagiarism?			Punishment?	Assuming that 40% of a student's submission is from other sources and is copied into the student's work as described in (a-f) below, indicate your judgement on plagiarism
	Yes	No	Don't know		
a	90%	3%	7%	82%	word for word with no quotations
b	74%	5%	21%	58%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	44%	24%	33%	29%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	66%	8%	26%	61%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	56%	9%	35%	51%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	34%	29%	38%	25%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
Table 15: Teacher responses to possible case of plagiarism					
Qu	Is it plagiarism?			Punishment?	Assuming that 40% of a student's submission is from other sources and is copied into the student's work as described in (a-f) below, indicate your judgement on plagiarism
	Yes	No	Don't know		
a	100%	0%	0%	93%	word for word with no quotations
b	89%	0%	8%	85%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	64%	12%	24%	43%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	96%	0%	4%	100%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	84%	8%	8%	71%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	44%	28%	28%	36%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

6. *Examples of good practice*

A good practice regarding prevention of plagiarism was identified during an interview with a faculty from a University. Part of the orientation program for first year students at CUT was to attend a seminar on academic writing and ways to deter plagiarism. Only when students successfully complete their orientation program, they are given their student ids. As the student id is instrumental for having access to a large number of services at reduced prices, students are highly motivated to go through and acquire the necessary skills and competences. This extra-curriculum seminar could be institutionalized for the students at the beginning of their academic year and gradually enhance it with more advanced/specialized topics.

7. *Discussion*

This report presents evidence on plagiarism and academic misconduct in Cyprus. Methodologically, we used quantitative and qualitative methods as well as secondary data from publications and online media. The results obtained appear to emphasize aspects of harmonisation and consistency of standards that need to be addressed immediately so that the HE institutions in Cyprus attain alignment with the principles stated in the Bologna Process.

Universities that participated in this research do have some general principles for deterring plagiarism, listed in a variety of documents. However, they do not seem to have coherent policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty. They also seem to lack of effective communications policy because a significant proportion of faculty and student are not aware of the policies. Furthermore, no co-operation on these issues between the various Universities at national level (through a supervisory body or a thematic network) has been identified.

Software tools that identify text similarities are used in almost half the Universities at the time period the study was conducted and the number of HEI adopting such tools is growing.

As a side effect of this research, anecdotal evidence was collected regarding breaches of academic integrity including inventive incidents of collusion, cheating and falsified impersonation. Examining the extent and severity of such cases in Cyprus universities was not within the scope of this survey. A future study to probe these aspects further may be necessary in view of the reported incidents.

8. *Recommendations for the Republic of Cyprus*

8.1 *Nationally and internationally*

The recommendations presented in this section take under consideration the limited financial resources currently available to the Government and the Universities of the Republic of Cyprus.

- 8.1.1 When the Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and accreditation in Education is founded, it would be good if it considers establishing policies and procedures on anti-plagiarism and academic integrity to apply to all HEI in the Republic. This documentation may be an adaptation of already existing policies and procedures, internationally.
- 8.1.2 There is a plethora of valuable information on plagiarism in the English language that can be accessed from the internet. With relatively minimal investment, resources can be translated in Greek and made available to all HEI students.
- 8.1.3 The IPPHEAE survey results indicate that the adoption of digital tools can be useful and there are indicators showing their adoption process is accelerating. A collective body, such

as CYAQAAE or a consortium of Universities would have higher negotiation power to set more favourable contractual terms than each University, at isolation.

Irrespective of the software package selected, there need to be:

- a) Clear policy statements about when and how tools should be used and accessed by teachers, students and administrators;
- b) Guidance for teachers about how to interpret and make use of the outputs for helping to detect cases of plagiarism, and information about the limitations for what the tools can achieve;
- c) Guidance for teachers on how to use the tools formatively to support student learning;
- d) Clear guidance for students on how software tools can help them and particularly what they do not show;

- 8.1.4 It is important that any reforms introduced are applied across all levels in higher education, not just for graduate level programmes and research.
- 8.1.5 Web 2.0 technologies and social media may be used as platforms that allow and encourage people to raise issues and disseminate good practices on anti-plagiarism.
- 8.1.6 Interested HEI stakeholders (Ministry, CYAQAAE, Research Promotion Foundation etc.) may wish to conduct a more comprehensive survey about academic integrity and plagiarism in Cyprus. They are welcome to reuse the instruments of surveys used by IPPHEAE, which are freely available on the website as well to refer to the collected data and resulting analysis as a benchmark.

8.2 Institutionally

- 8.2.1 At national level, the recommendations described in 8.1.1-8.1.6 require central co-ordination. Encouraging more local responses to changing culture and attitudes may contribute to faster and more sustained changes at institutional level. Institutional recommendations need to echo each of those outlined above at national level.
- 8.2.2 The IPPHEAE survey results suggest that it would be useful to stage courses for professional development for academic staff within institutions in order to update people on how research practices have changed in the last 12-15 years, and promote some good practice examples of assuring high standards in academic integrity.
- 8.2.3 Institutional leadership and support needs to be established to encourage academic teaching staff to highlight cases of student cheating and plagiarism.
- 8.2.4 To help progress made at national basis, each institution or region could develop procedures for dealing internally with cases of academic dishonesty in students in a consistent manner employing a set of fair sanctions. There are many examples that can be used for guidance, for example the AMBeR project report and tariff (Tennant and Rowell 2010, Tenant and Duggan 2008).

8.3 Individual academics:

- 8.3.1 At individual level, academics have a responsibility for promoting standards and quality in all aspects of academic activity, including teaching, setting assessments and examination papers, grading of work, providing support, guidance and advice to students. This list of activities naturally extends to aspects of academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Given a

supportive regime at institutional and national levels, it should be possible for academic staff to:

- a) support students to improve independent study, research and writing skills;
- b) develop innovative assessments that challenge students and make plagiarism or cheating difficult;
- c) respond to suspected cases of student plagiarism and cheating according to policies that are fair, transparent and easy to apply.

9. Conclusions

This report presented findings on plagiarism in Cyprus, it identified gaps and challenges in promoting and implementing policies, procedures, competences and attitudes among multiple stakeholders in HEI in Cyprus.

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Written by
Angelika Kokkinaki, 8th October 2013

Reviewed by

Catherine Demoliou, 11th November 2013

Irene Glendinning 12th November 2013

Annex Cyprus Republic 1: Responses to question 5: (1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly agree)

Table 16: Student and teacher responses to questionnaire Question 5 (percentages) (S n=129; T n=8)

Qu	Disagree (1,2)		Don't know		Agree (4,5)		Question
	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
S5a T5a	13%	16%	11%	28%	71%	43%	Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues
S5b T5p	13%	33.3	11%	16.7	72%	37.5	I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5c T5b	7%	20%	25%	12%	64%	68%	This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism
T5c		25%		12.5%		62.5%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention
T5d		32%		29%		38%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection
S5d T5e	35%	8%	22%	33%	19%	58%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students
T5f		21%		33%		46%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff
S5e T5g	8%	25%	76%	25%	41%	50%	Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula
S5f T5h	25%	21%	43%	25%	24%	50%	I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5g T5i	13%	8%	57%	38%	27%	54%	Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism
S5h T5m	9%	21%	37%	42%	52%	37.5%	The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty
T5j		12.5%		50%		33.4%	The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism
T5k		33.3%		54%		12.5%	There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country
T5l		50%		42%		8%	Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs
S5i T5n	23%	4%	31%	38%	38%	54%	I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes
S5j	30%		25%		24%		I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution
S5k T5o	21%	54%	26%	25%	43%	8%	I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)
S5l T5q	17%	46%	42%	38%	38%	12%	I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism
S5m T5r	26%	30%	32%	44%	38%	26%	I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student
S5n T5s	16%	21%	40%	46%	40%	33%	I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures
S5o T5t	7%	13%	17%	8%	74%	79%	It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism
S5p T5u	9%	0%	33%	18%	56%	82%	I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism
S5q	19%		22%		28%		The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution
S5r	5%		41%		80%		I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism