



Education and Culture DG  
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## ***Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe***

### **Plagiarism Policies in Germany**

*Full Report*

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### **Plagiarism Policies in Germany**

#### **1. Information sources**

Information about higher educational policies for academic integrity in Germany was collected through

- the three levels of on-line questionnaire (**students, teachers and senior managers**);
- **student focus groups**;
- structured interviews with **academics, university senior managers and individuals concerned with academic integrity and research** from national and regional independent organisations and institutions;
- Documentation and on-line evidence.

Interviews were conducted in different ways: face to face, by telephone and via Skype with senior managers from the Higher Education sector and researchers into academic integrity and plagiarism. Federal government representatives were asked to contribute to the research, but no responses to the questions were received. The national level questions focused on national and institutional policies and procedures relating to plagiarism prevention and detection in Germany. Responses to the national interview from fourteen people have helped to furnish the background to the educational situation in Germany. Views and opinions from university students, academic staff and senior management participants added to this information. Where possible in the following report the voices of the participants, *with colour coding*, have been used to inform and enrich the narrative.

This summary also draws on publications about research into quality assurance in Germany and some on-line material available on web sites and blogs. Many of the facts and statistics about German HEIs were taken from research carried out for the EUMIDA project (Bonaccorsi et al 2010). A draft copy of this report was sent for review to the German national level contributors in advance of publication and adjustments made according to feedback received.

A significant factor that distinguishes German higher education from that in many other countries is that there is no central control of education policy or funding. Education is managed federally, across the sixteen separate autonomous states (Bundesländer), which adds complexity to the educational system and to this investigation. For a comprehensive understanding of the national situation on plagiarism it would have been ideal to interview a representative from the educational unit in every state government department. However in practical terms for the purposes of the IPPHEAE survey it was deemed sufficient to ensure that the national a representative sample of German HEIs were surveyed, covering a number of states and HEI types. Data has been collected from state universities, Fachhochschulen and private universities in different part of Germany.

**Table 1: Breakdown of Survey responses**

Country	Student responses	Teacher responses		Senior Management and National	Student Focus Groups		Organisations and Institutions
Germany (DE)	51	9		16	4		20
	Breakdown of student responses	Home students	Other EU students	Non-EU students	Not known	Bachelor, diploma	Master, doctor
Germany (DE)	51	45	6	0	0	12	37
							2

The breakdown of survey participants is summarised in Table 1. Students completing the on-line questionnaire were from 11 institutions in different parts of Germany and Teachers represented 8 universities. The number of questionnaire responses was disappointingly low, but the national interviews and student focus groups helped to furnish more detailed information about the situation across Germany.

## 2. Higher Education in Germany

Germany currently has about two million students studying at higher education level, with approximately 50/50 gender balance. Each year German universities host a combined total of about 240,000 international students. There are over 400 German HEIs including about 200 Fachhochschulen (also known as universities of applied sciences, UAS or polytechnics) and 110 traditional Universitäten. The remaining institutions have either a specialist subject focus (art, pedagogy and theology) or are civil service training academies. Of all HEIs in Germany just 140 of the traditional universities have doctoral degree awarding powers (Bonaccorsi et al 2010). The universities are required to form associations with Fachhochschulen to co-supervise and award doctoral degrees, but the Fachhochschulen presidents are currently negotiating the rights to be able to award their own doctoral degrees (national interview).

National interviews revealed unusual factors currently influencing German university populations and funding, which will continue for some time to impact on class sizes in state-funded universities.

- “*Universities are under-financed regarding teaching infrastructure and number of students per teacher*” (national interview);
- “*Currently double the number of students will be entering higher education now compulsory military service has been abolished*” (national interview);
- Most bachelor level students do not pay a fee, but five of the sixteen federal states have recently introduced a modest fee, typically €500 per semester;
- The duration of compulsory education in Germany has been reduced from 13 to 12 years with effect from 2012, to comply with the Bologna process reforms;

The above dynamics will affect university admissions in 2013-14 at least and will continue to stretch the available infrastructure and resources. However during visits to university campuses the researchers observed great evidence of construction work for maintenance and significant extensions to campus facilities and infrastructure in all German state-funded universities visited for this research project.

When asked about HE student assessment methods in Germany one interviewee reported that universities “*used to have two oral exams, that's all there was, now it is assessment, assessment, assessment, but they don't have culture of doing exams here, there are not systems in place for managing and proctoring them*” (national interview). Another view was that “*universities do more controlling of students in exams; it is not the same level of control for preventing and detecting [academic dishonesty] in other work*” (national interview). Recently the assessment of law degrees (national interview) required changes to comply with Bologna which necessitated replacing a single final exam with many intermediate exams. This interviewee believed that this change negatively impacted on students and contributed to a culture of plagiarism.

The autonomy of universities and accreditation across the Bundesländer is far reaching, to the extent that “*it is .. quite difficult for a teacher to work in a state other than the one where he or she obtained his/her degree*” (Federkeil 2010 66), because within Germany nationally degree qualifications are not automatically recognised across state boundaries.

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

According to Federkeil (2003 64) “*for decades the German Higher education system cultivated the myth that all universities are of equal quality*”. Although some subject-based agencies were founded in the 1990s with responsibility for evaluation of HEIs, in 2003 there was “*still no coherent national policy regime of quality assurance in German higher education*” (Federkeil 2003 65). Almost a decade later there are still no centrally or federally administered agencies in Germany for monitoring or auditing of higher education quality, benchmarking and standards. In response to the need to coordinate activities across the Länder the Ständiger Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (KMK) was established in 1995, to bring together the state-based ministers for education. Their activities have included creation of recognition agreements for degree qualifications between states.

When asked about quality assurance in Germany most interviewees referred to the state accreditation agencies that are responsible for approving academic programmes leading to degree awards. In response to the Bologna process, in 1998 a system of accreditation was established in Germany by the KMK for the newly created bachelor and master’s courses. The system involves “*partly regional and partly professional accreditation agencies which themselves have to be accredited by the National German Accreditation Council*” (Federkeil 2010 67). The accreditation agencies are concerned with quality assurance at state level, but different agencies are perceived by some academics at least to be in competition with each other and moreover it was asserted that “*in Germany quality = quantity*” (national interview). Such comments raise questions about how effective these agencies have been in either ensuring comparability between programmes, universities and states or more generally in assuring, maintaining and raising standards. There appear to have been some internal developments in the polytechnics at least: “*some universities of applied sciences have developed [their own] quality assurance bodies and infrastructure but there is not a national or state body responsible for benchmarking and quality*” (national interview). However in one interview it was confirmed that the local state accreditation agency did maintain statistics on student admissions, attrition, retention and completion rates.

Transparency in assessment methods and mechanisms for comparing standards within and across German universities is of particular relevance to considerations about how cases of plagiarism are handled, especially when considering the degree of autonomy in the German system. Most responses suggested that there was no transparency between academics on assessment, but two respondents confirmed that there was always a system of cross-checking of marks for the final assessments, normally bachelor and master’s theses and that they believed this system was in place in every institution. However there appears to be no cross-checking of assessment in intermediate results in the form of “semester papers”.

Oral examinations are still used for some subjects, particularly law (national interview). The individuality and spontaneity of such assessment should reduce or remove opportunities for plagiarism. However this method is not appropriate for assessing all subjects and the resource implications preclude the use of this method where there are high student populations.

The teachers’ questionnaire asked respondents to comment on the typical assessment students were required to complete. From the nine respondents eight teachers said their courses included some group work, but five of these said 10% or less of student assessment was group-based. Of the remaining three responses two estimated 40% of work was group-based and one 50%. Only six teachers responded to the question about breakdown of assessment types. Their courses had a mixture of different types of assessment, with between 80% and 25% by formal examination, as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers' responses, assessment in German HEIs			
Examinations	Assignments	Projects	Orals
80%	15%	5%	
70%	10%	20%	
30%	50%	20%	
30%	50%	20%	
30%	30%	40%	
25%	35%	25%	15%

Although this breakdown was based on a small sample of responses from just 9 teachers, this evidence allows interpretation of some of the responses to questions about student plagiarism.

On establishment each university has to be approved by the state ministry of education. Degree regulations and every degree course have to be approved by the state ministry. However according to Federkeil “*the criteria for approval of degree courses are not concerned with quality ... there is no reference to professional standards or to programs contents*” (Federkeil 2010 66), therefore the system of oversight from education ministries cannot be considered to be an instrument of quality assurance compared to robust mechanisms in place elsewhere, particularly in the UK.

Federkeil (2010 68) reports on the early establishment of some consortia of universities including the Nordverbund in 1994 and some based on states, including the Zentrale Evaluationsagentur Niedersachsen (Central Agency of Evaluation Lower-Saxony ZEVA) set up in 1995. These consortia and agencies are concerned with evaluation of programmes rather than research and they are all regionally focused. There is no national compilation of results or any comparative critique in the publicly funded universities.

Some rankings have been conducted by private institutions, but Federkeil reports that in general their motivation and target readership concern providing information to potential students and their advisors rather than encouraging improvements to quality and standards. (Federkeil 2010 69).

A recent national initiative “*Excellence in University research*”, designed to raise standards of research outputs in Germany “*is based on number of the publications – that can lead to more plagiarism*” (national interview). The same respondent emphasised a serious requirement for improvements to teaching and learning infrastructure. Under a difficult financial regime, funding is very limited and “*project funding is short term and cannot lead to sustainable investment in infrastructure*” (national interview).

In addition to the high degree of autonomy of the Länder there is also great independence between and within HEIs. Several interviewees used expressions like “*the professor is god*”, to indicate that German academics make independent decisions on student grades and on how to deal with possible cases of plagiarism, for example “*A professor's rights as an individual are more important than the needs of the institution*” (national interview). It is not usual in German HEIs to have double independent grading or external scrutiny of assessed work, but second marking or internal moderation can be part of the process, particularly for failing students. “*Different institutes/departments/study programmes have their own approach to teaching and learning infrastructure*” (national interview).

However there are some activities for development of Higher Education, including scrutiny and accountability through the independently funded Centre for Higher Education (CHE). There is a system of ombudsmen/women responsible for overseeing research integrity at institutional level, but “*normally institutions do not have them*” (national interview).

The interviewees had some strong views on teaching and learning in Germany, summarised below:

- “*We do not do enough for quality of teaching and learning, too many students per instructor, no incentives for good teaching*” (national interview);
- “*We did not change from the old system set up decades ago*”(national interview);

- “Organisational when universities moved from research to mass teaching, and also Bologna reforms, there was not enough investment” (national interview);
- Almost “100% of teaching is done by professors but they are focused on their research results; PhD students also teach but on temporary three year contracts and need to produce PhD theses. Neither is focused or engaged in teaching” (national interview).

#### 4. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism in Germany

##### 4.1 Policies for plagiarism

It became clear from the research that that there are “*no statistics whatsoever*” for cases of student plagiarism in German HEIs, “*it is a non-issue in Germany; each professor is responsible for his own problems*” (national interview). However it was reported that there have been some unpublished student surveys conducted recently in which about 40% of respondents admitted that they “*regularly cut and paste from sources without citing and referencing*” (national interview). However the results from the IPPHEAE survey showed that only 10% of students and 11% of teachers that responded admitted they may have “*accidentally or deliberately*” plagiarised at some time previously (Annex DE-1, Qu S5k, T5o).

Student and teacher Question 7 asked: *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 3.

Table 3: Sanctions for plagiarism					
Assignment		Project or Dissertation		Sanction	Additional comments
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher		
12%	8%	2%	8%	No action would be taken	Exmatriculation, almost always
39%	42%	8%	8%	Verbal warning	
12%	8%	12%	17%	Formal warning letter	
25%	50%	18%	33%	Request to re write it properly	
47%	50%	39%	33%	Zero mark for the work	
45%	42%	24%	8%	Repeat the module or subject	occasionally
47%	50%	24%	33%	Fail the module or subject	why module? Lecture, seminar?
6%	0%	4%	0%	Repeat the whole year of study	
0%	8%	31%	17%	Fail the whole programme or degree	
6%	0%	6%	0%	Expose the student to school community	
4%	0%	10%	8%	Suspended from the institution	
6%	0%	24%	0%	Expelled from the institution	
6%	0%	2%	0%	Suspend payment of student grant	
16%	0%	16%	0%	Other	

There are differences in the responses to some questions between students and teachers. The teachers’ responses suggest that the more draconian penalties listed in the options appear not to be applied in German institutions.

The discussions for the NRW state agreement for Fachhochschulen explored whether to include a clause about expelling students found guilty of plagiarism in their theses, but it was agreed instead to require resubmission with a new topic (national interview).

Referring to the responses to part of question 5, summarised in Annex DE-1, reveals that 56% of teachers but only 38% of students responding agreed that their institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism. Regarding information being made available to students, 56% of teachers responded positively compared to just 28% of students. This suggests that, where there are policies in place, much more could be done to inform students.

Responses to questions in Annex DE-1 about penalties for plagiarism confirm that there is the perception in students and teachers of lack of consistency of approach. 33% of teachers and 22% of students who responded believed their institution had a standard set of penalties for plagiarism (Annex DE-1 S5e/T5g). When asked about whether the same procedures are used for similar cases of plagiarism just 8% of students and 22% of teachers agreed (Annex DE-1 S5f/T5q). The student responses rose to 28% when asked about consistency of procedures by teachers from student to student (Annex DE-1 S5m/T5r).

National interviews confirmed these responses about institutional policies for dealing with cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty: “*very few institutions have top-down strategy/policy for preventing and detecting plagiarism. Highly decentralised*”, “*they often appoint an ombudsman, following good scientific practice, but in reality they don't have any staff and nothing gets done*” and as there are “*no institution-wide policies they can't be effective. The whole culture starting with secondary education, culture is far too soft*”. Some states are responding by “*saying 'we don't like [plagiarism] and if you do it we'll throw you out'; students are not happy about this*” (national interviews).

The teacher questionnaire Question 6 asked who is responsible for monitoring and reviewing policies and procedures for academic integrity and plagiarism.

Monitoring: 22% Faculty or department level; 67% did not know; 11% no response.

Reviewing and revising: 22% Institutional quality manager; 11% faculty or department; 67% did not know

The above responses suggest lack of transparency of process or perhaps separation of what is seen as knowledge required for administrative duties from that for the academic role.

Question 15 for the teachers' questionnaire explored responsibilities for decisions and penalties about different forms of academic dishonesty, specifically plagiarism, inappropriate collusion and examination cheating. The responses suggested that cases of cheating by plagiarism and collusion are often handled directly by the academic staff member finding the problem, but examination cheating is likely to be dealt with by a departmental committee or the board of examiners. This suggests that plagiarism and collusion are considered by institutions to be less serious infringements than cheating in examinations.

#### *4.2 Staff development*

The IPPHEAE surveys include questions about whether more training is needed for staff and students concerning good practice about plagiarism. The responses regarding Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for academic staff about detection and prevention of plagiarism generated very interesting responses. One university professor (national interview) said that he believed it would be “*ridiculous to provide training for academics*” because that professors already had all the required expertise when they were appointed. Exploring around this topic with other German academics provided evidence that it is very unusual for German HEIs to provide any CPD activities for academic staff. One senior private university manager (national interview) referred to lack of any budget for such activities, but she and some other some interviewees did accept that it may be a good idea to provide development activities on this topic for academics in the form of workshops and discussion groups.

#### *4.3 Use of digital tools for aiding academic integrity*

HE institution responses and attitudes to student plagiarism in Germany at bachelor and masters levels were likened to “*an ostrich with its head in the sand*” (national interview). However there was evidence of raised concerns in some areas and a small amount of progress towards aiding the

detection of plagiarism. In the largest of the Länder, NordRhein-Westfalia “*rectors have recommended a policy for using software to detect plagiarism in universities*” (national interview). An agreement drawn up by the Landesrektorenkonferenz der Fachhochschulen in NRW in April 2012, which sets out a strategy for “*safeguarding good academic practice in all courses to which all NRW Fachhochschulen have agreed*” (HRK 2012). Under this agreement students are required to submit a digital copy of their final thesis and this must be checked for plagiarism. The agreement does not specify how the checking will be done.

“*Some institutions are purchasing software*” for digital checking of work, but there are misunderstandings about the capabilities of the software tools, “*they expect software to tell them whether it is plagiarism, [they think] the tools don't work*” (national interview). However the converse is also true with some teachers believing that the outputs from the tools are comprehensive and diagnosing plagiarism.

Some academics appear to be apprehensive at the prospect of introducing systematic text matching for student work: “*many academics think we cannot put students and scientists under general suspicion and should only act where there is strong suspicion of cheating*” (national interview). Such sceptics would need to be convinced that there was a good reason and clear benefits for introducing a more invasive system before any consistent progress can be made towards addressing plagiarism in student work or research publications. The teacher and student survey contained two questions about “digital tools”, responses are summarised in tables 4 and 5.

Feedback from the questionnaires confirms the information from the interviews, that use of software is patchy in Germany as part of a strategy for managing plagiarism. The difference between student and teacher responses suggests institutions are not capitalising on the deterrent effect of having digital tools. 4% said there were no digital tools in use, 29% of students did not respond to this question and 43% said they did not know about this. However 44% of the teachers were aware software tools were being used (Table 4). In most cases where tools are in use it is not a systematic part of the institutional submission procedures (Table 5)

Several institutions said that copyright legislation prevented them from implementing software tools with external repositories for text matching, because students owned the copyright on their own work. However one institution said they had successfully systematically incorporated such tools into their submission system.

Student and teacher Question 8: *What digital tools or other techniques are available at your institution for helping to detect plagiarism?*

<b>Table 4: Software Tools</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Software for text matching (Turnitin, Ephorus, Docloc, unnamed)	17%	44%
VLE, Platform	0%	11%
Internet, Google	4%	22%
Trained eye of lecturer, proof reading	4%	0%
Nothing	4%	11%
Don't know	43%	11%

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

<b>Table 5: Use of software tools</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
<i>It is up to the lecturers to decide whether to use the tools</i>	41%	44%
<i>For some courses students must submit their written work using the tools</i>	2%	0%
<i>Students must submit all written work using the tools</i>	8%	11%
<i>Students may use the tools to check their work before submitting</i>	2%	0%
<i>We upload the student work centrally to Turnitin</i>		X

#### 4.4 Encouraging a culture of academic integrity

Personal honour or honesty statements are often used in the United States to reinforce a culture of academic honesty and integrity, but less common elsewhere. One private German institution visited for the research had a system for voluntary declaration of honour that students could adopt, involving a formal ceremony and celebration where students would make a public statement about their commitment to academic integrity. A more usual approach in some institutions to have a formal statement included on documentation that students are required to sign, either on enrolment to their course or with submission of assessments. The responses to Question 4 summarised in Table 6 suggest there are some instances of this type of formality, but that it is not applied in most institutions.

Question 4 of the student and teacher questionnaire asked when *students are required to sign a declaration about originality and academic honesty...*

Table 6: Students signing a declaration		
Student # (%)	Teacher #(%)	When
13 (25%)	0(0%)	On starting their degree
5 (10%)	1(11%)	For every assessment
21 (41%)	6(67%)	For some assessments
4 (8%)	1(11%)	Never
4 (8%)	1(11%)	Not sure

Students were generally confident that they understood the technicalities of academic writing, but there was less certainty about plagiarism:

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

27 students (53%) said that they still were still not sure about this and 17 (33%) said they *learned about plagiarism before they started bachelor degree*.

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

28 (55%) said they learnt this *before they started bachelor degree* and 19 (37%) said *during bachelor degree*, only 2 respondents said they were still not sure.

### 5. Perceptions and understanding of Plagiarism

#### 5.1 Student support and guidance

There appear to be few external guidelines available for institutions or individuals about how to avoid or prevent student plagiarism, other than some “*general statements about research conduct and ethics*” (for example DRZE web site for Ethics in Life Sciences). It was reported on-line a case emerged of “*a textbook warning about taking material from the German Wikipedia – while itself plagiarizing Wikipedia in at least 18 places*” (Weber-Wulff and Graf-Isolen 2012), which does not set a good example or send an appropriate message to students or researchers.

The questionnaires asked students and teachers what information is available for students. Responses from both students and teachers confirmed that the main source of information is through the web site or in class. However, teachers demonstrate more confidence than students that information is available. The responses suggest that information about academic dishonesty more generally has a lower profile compared to plagiarism.

Student Question 6, Teacher Question 2/3 addressed the question about awareness-raising: students become aware of plagiarism and of other forms of academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating) as an important issue through:

Table 7: Ways that students become aware about plagiarism and academic dishonesty			
Plagiarism		Academic Dishonesty	
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher
31%	44%	16%	11%
18%	22%	14%	0%
22%	33%	18%	11%
29%	78%	29%	44%
27%	11%	35%	33%
	X		
<i>Only my students get information about this (translated)</i>			

The responses to Question 6 (table 7) indicate that some respondents are aware of information available about plagiarism and academic dishonesty, but a significant minority of students is not aware of any information on plagiarism (27%) or academic dishonesty (35%).

Student Question 12, Teacher Question 14 asked: *Which of the following services are provided at your institution to advise students about plagiarism prevention?* The responses are summarised in Table 8. These results show that usually the academic tutor or lecturer is responsible for discouraging plagiarism and that this guidance is normally conveyed during scheduled classes and lectures. However some responses from students and teachers suggest that other facilities including library services, additional lectures and special study support units have been made available in some institutions.

Table 8: Services and student support for discouraging plagiarism		
Student	Teacher	Service or provision
14%	11%	Academic support unit
35%	67%	Advice in class during course/module
27%	33%	Additional lectures, workshops:
39%	33%	Advice from tutors or lecturers
8%	11%	Guidance from the library
4%	0%	University publisher
10%	0%	Academic writing unit/Stud skills unit

Other evidence emerged from the research of activities for discouraging academic misconduct and introducing measures towards prevention at bachelor and master's level: “*Some people are running courses teaching people how to write, it's not enough, but it is a first step; DFG (Federal government) has some recommended policies, but they don't even have procedures for research ethics in Germany*” (national interview); “*I know of one university that started with an office to help students be better writers*” and “*there is a national body for science – financing research, but they are not just concerned with plagiarism, but also research integrity, such as faking results*” (national interview).

## 5.2 Plagiarism in the media

Every respondent in interviews and student focus groups talked about cases of high-profile individuals accused of plagiarism in doctoral theses, including German national government ministers, reported on wiki blogs including three cases of a higher doctorate (Habilitatioin) (VroniPlag Wiki and GutenPlag Wiki). Some of the doctorates were rescinded, including that of the national minister for education Annette Schavan, who resigned from her post in 2012. However in some cases the doctoral awards were upheld by the awarding institutions, despite overwhelming

evidence of non-original content, but decisions on some cases are still under consideration. The general mood reported in institutions and in government circles, appears to be to see accused individuals as victims and the so-called “whistle-blowers” as aggressors (national interviews; VroniPlag Wiki; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 14/06/2012, Mainka and Reiff-Schönfeld 2012). This perception was reinforced in September 2013 by government recommendations discouraging responses to anonymous “whistle-blowers” who have been investigating and making known cases of plagiarism. It is clear from interviews and focus groups for this research that these cases are helping to raise awareness about plagiarism particularly in the higher education sector across Germany, but also on a global scale (Michalska 2013).

### 5.3 Reasons for student plagiarism

It was important to gain some insight through the survey of what participants understood by plagiarism in order to be able to validate and interpret responses to certain questions. A question was included in all four levels of survey to determine whether any differences existed for reasons for plagiarism in different part of Europe. The responses are summarised in tables 9 and 10.

Student Question 14, and teacher Question 17: *What leads students to decide to plagiarise?*

Table 9: Reasons student plagiarise – student and teacher questionnaires		
Student	Teacher	Possible reason for plagiarism
53%	67%	<i>They think the lecturer will not care</i>
57%	67%	<i>They think they will not get caught</i>
55%	44%	<i>They run out of time</i>
37%	44%	<i>They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment:</i>
4%	22%	<i>They don't see the difference between group work and collusion</i>
67%	56%	<i>They can't express another person's ideas in their own words</i>
63%	56%	<i>They don't understand how to cite and reference</i>
37%	22%	<i>They are not aware of penalties</i>
22%	22%	<i>They are unable to cope with the workload</i>
18%	22%	<i>They think their written work is not good enough</i>
10%	11%	<i>They feel the task is completely beyond their ability</i>
59%	67%	<i>It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet</i>
31%	22%	<i>They feel external pressure to succeed</i>
25%	33%	<i>Plagiarism is not seen as wrong</i>
29%	44%	<i>They have always written like that</i>
25%	11%	<i>Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments</i>
20%	33%	<i>Their reading comprehension skills are weak</i>
6%	0%	<i>Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood</i>
25%	44%	<i>There is no teacher control on plagiarism</i>

The most common reasons for plagiarism selected by students studying in Germany were *difficulties in expressing concepts in their own words* (67%) and 56% of teachers also believed this was a factor. Other reasons selected by students were *not understanding how to cite and reference* (63%) and the ease of *copy and paste via the internet* (59%). Most teachers (67%) also selected the copy/paste option and 67% of teachers chose *not getting caught* and *lecturers not caring about plagiarism*. *Running out of time* was one of the most common reasons selected in previous research (Park 2003), which in this survey was selected by 56% of students and 44% of teachers from Germany.

Some different responses to this question were captures from the interviews with national and institutional level participants and from the senior management questionnaire that are summarised, colour coded, in Table 10.

Additional responses from interviews about reasons for plagiarism:

<b>Table 10: Reasons student plagiarise – National and Senior Management survey responses</b>
<i>Priorities, families</i>
<i>Not at school to learn</i>
<i>Qualifications important, need to get good grades</i>
<i>Give it a try, will save time – other things more important for me</i>
<i>Nobody told them not to do it</i>
<i>Not aware it is not good for themselves not to write well</i>
<i>Everybody is doing it – national sport</i>
<i>Under pressure</i>
<i>Based on general behavior, attitude (like not paying taxes)</i>
<i>If own work is not so good as copied work, will plagiarise</i>
<i>Sloppy work, ignorance and intent...</i>
<i>Students think they will not get caught. - Culturally based: In East Asia, it is an appreciation of the author to take the text ...</i>

#### 5.4 Understanding academic writing conventions

Several questions were included in the questionnaires for students and teachers as a means of determining how consistently respondents understood concepts relating to plagiarism. Responses in Tables 11 and 12 provided some encouragement that student respondents had been advised about acknowledging sources in academic writing and there is a clear message that respondents saw the connection with plagiarism.

Student Question 10: *What are the reasons for using correct referencing and citation in scholarly academic writing?*

**Table 11: Reasons for referencing and citation**

65%	To avoid being accused of plagiarism
57%	To show you have read some relevant research papers
20%	To give credit to the author of the sourced material
75%	To strengthen and give authority to your writing
6%	Because you are given credit/marks for doing so
6%	I don't know

Student Question 11, Teacher Question 10a:

**Table 12: Referencing styles**

yes	No	Not sure	Question			
student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
41%	22%	27%	56%	25%	11%	<i>Is there any referencing style students are required or encouraged to use in written work?</i>
55%		16%		24%		<i>Are you confident about referencing and citation?</i>

Although 55% of student respondents said they were confident about academic writing conventions, 40% said either they had difficulties or were not sure about this (table 12). When asked about

difficulties with academic writing 55% of students said their main difficulty was locating and identifying good quality sources, but the other options were selected by some students (table 13).

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

<b>Table 13: Difficulties with academic writing</b>	
55%	<i>Finding good quality sources</i>
31%	<i>Referencing and citation</i>
33%	<i>Paraphrasing</i>
20%	<i>Understanding different referencing formats and styles</i>

The following analysis provides further evidence to verify whether the confidence of students and teachers about academic writing protocols is justified. Students (question 15) and teachers (question 19) were asked to identify possible cases of plagiarism based on a brief scenario, and suggest whether some “punishment” should be applied. The answers are summarised in Tables 14 (student responses) and 15 (teacher responses).

**Student Question 15: Examples of possible plagiarism, with 40% matching text**

<b>Table 14: Student responses to possible cases of plagiarism</b>					
Qu	Is it plagiarism?			Punish ment?	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	96%	0%	2%	75%	word for word with no quotations
b	65%	8%	25%	47%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	37%	27%	33%	24%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	51%	20%	25%	37%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	30%	22%	45%	22%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	8%	57%	20%	8%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

**Teacher Question 19: Is it plagiarism?**

<b>Table 15: Teacher responses to possible case of plagiarism</b>					
Qu	Is it plagiarism?			Punish ment?	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%	33%	word for word with no quotations
b	100%	0%	0%	33%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	100%	0%	0%	33%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	100%	0%	0%	33%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	67%	0%	33%	0%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	44%	33%	22%	0%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

All six scenarios (a-f) in the question may be categorised as plagiarism, but some could be construed as poor academic practice or perhaps patch-writing due to poor language skills could account for some matching. Given that the scenario says 40% of the paper is identical to other work, it is difficult to justify why a student should be given academic credits without some investigation. Focusing on Question S15d in Table 14, although 51% of students correctly said that this was a case of plagiarism, it was of concern to see that some students were either unsure (25%) or convinced that this was acceptable practice for writing and assessed work (20%). It is notable to recall that in Student Question 11 (Table 12) 55% of the same student respondents said they were confident about referencing and citation; their responses to question 15 cast some doubts on their understanding.

The responses by teachers to these questions suggest that many of the participants are lenient with regard to non-original content in student work in that although all recognised clear cases of plagiarism only 33% believed there may be a need for some form of sanction for the plagiarism described in scenarios (a) and (d).

Referring again to Annex DE-1 Question 5 responses 72% of students and 67% of teachers agreed that *students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues*. However 69% of students and 67% of teachers indicated that they did not *understand what penalties are applied to students for ... plagiarism*. 67% of students and 44% of teachers said they would like to have more training on *avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty* (Annex DE-1 Qu S5b/T5p). The high number of “don’t know” answers to different parts of question 5 suggests that more could be done to inform students about systems and processes that affect them.

Despite some reluctance both from some senior academic staff interviewed and teachers responding to the survey to engage in more training the feedback suggests that many teachers in Germany would benefit from some form of professional development about possible responses for discouraging student plagiarism. The responses from students and teachers suggest that implementation of sanctions, applied consistently, combined with more guidance and support for academic writing skills may have a deterrent effect on student plagiarism.

### 5.5 Is plagiarism always cheating?

The question of whether *plagiarism is always cheating* generated some differences of opinion: “*I don't think there is a difference between cheating in exams and plagiarism, but I know it is a different consciousness*”; “*Plagiarism is not always cheating - but it's about professor's consciousness to decide about student's intentions*”; “*I think it is all the same, it is all cheating. Plagiarism is cheating*”; “*I have a hard time understanding unintentional plagiarism*”. “*Things might look like plagiarism but without intention of plagiarism, writing by omission or not remembering. However taking paper into exams is more subtle*”; “*Exam cheating – one point in time, but plagiarism is continual*” (national interviews).

When asked further about whether they experienced a difference in teaching international students, (for example from China or India), who have never before been asked to write in an academic style, again responses differed: “*yeah, we need to work on foreign students, but we don't see many of them here*”; “*There are some issues with exchange students plagiarising, but they are all doing it*” (national interview). “*Turks and Russians have a different culture, but they know perfectly*” about how to use academic sources (national interview). “*We have about 15% of foreign students, I am not aware that plagiarism is more prevalent in foreign students*” (national interview).

Lower down the educational spectrum, it was asserted that “*this is a big issue in secondary education. It is known to be a general phenomenon that homework is always copied*” (national interview).

## 6. Examples of good practice

The interviews revealed some enlightened individuals in Germany who are either working within their own institutions or actively campaigning in various ways to highlight good practice and discourage plagiarism. These pioneers have been trying for some time to influence the situation in Germany and to raise awareness about the shortcomings of the current approaches and impacts on quality and standards of German education.

The development of the NRW regional policy measures provides an excellent example that other German states should learn from. Some contributors to this research have provided leadership and support including presentations, seminars and workshops within German institutions over the last-12 years. Several unsuccessful attempts were reported at institutional, regional and national levels to try to influence strategy and policy in higher education.

*“There are a few universities”* in Germany where it is understood “*that prevention and detection [of plagiarism] has also to do with Quality Assurance in Higher Education, also quality of learning outcomes and quality*”, “*some ‘lighthouses’ are engaging more and more*” (national interview).

Question 20 of the teacher questionnaire asked: *please provide any suggestions or ideas on how to reduce student plagiarism (you may describe any examples of good practice followed at your institution concerning plagiarism detection and prevention)*, which provided an opportunity for additional feedback from the teachers. The responses from 6 participants are provided below.

- *Dealing with written sources and techniques of academic work must be anchored more strongly in academic teaching;*
- *Dealing with written sources and techniques of scientific research should be addressed at school;*
- *Universities need to be staffed so that the university teachers have enough time to read the written work of their students closely and already given at the level of seminar papers detailed feedback;*
- *High school teachers have good scientific practice violations from 1 Semester, punish consistently;*
- *Curricula must be designed so that the professors can know their students personally;*
- *More education in the introductory courses;*
- *Workshops (Writing Science);*
- *Admit students with better written skills;*
- *Mount skills reconnaissance;*
- *Better activities - more own opinions, more recent literature use;*

(Good practice suggestions from the teacher questionnaire).

## 7. Discussion

In common with most other countries in Europe, the lack of statistics to show trends in plagiarism in Germany makes it impossible to know how extensive the incidence of plagiarism is and how it is being handled by individual academics within institutions. Even if this information was available, Germany has a number of compounding problems that would make it difficult to take any quick actions to put in place workable systems to improve academic quality and student writing practices.

The federal system and distributed governance of education means that there is no central authority that can make a decision, 16 separate states must deliberate and vote on any actions. The lack of any quality assurance monitoring agency, combined with the strong culture of individual academic

autonomy would make implementation of any system of oversight difficult to complete and enforce. However that is not a valid reason for not trying to make a difference.

Several activists within the academic community in Germany have been making strong representations for some time about what could and should be done to tackle academic dishonesty and improve the quality of higher education in Germany. Perhaps the most high profile person is Debora Weber-Wulff, who has been actively researching on plagiarism, running a blog (copy-shake-paste), comparing the effectiveness of different software tools, running supportive workshops and providing keynote presentations in Germany and beyond for over 10 years. In November 2011 she presented a set of proposals to the German national government at the Bundestag (Weber-Wulff 2011). However to date no progress has been made.

A national government response in September 2013 attempted to marginalise the Vroniplag team of academic bloggers who have been highlighting plagiarism cases, by insisting that anonymous claims would not be taken seriously. This action by the government suggests that the important impact from the exposure of high-profile cases has not been fully understood. The actions of the so-called "whistle-blowers" have been viewed by some people as vindictive rather than constructively helping to raise academic standards. A more balanced response would be to see their actions as public spirited and to ensure that they are given protection and immunity from intimidation and dismissal.

The evidence presented here from the four levels of the IPPHEAE survey points to the need for serious action in Germany to increase transparency and accountability.

## 8. Recommendations for Germany

### 8.1 Nationally

8.1.1 The well-considered recommendations set out below that were presented to German national representatives at the Bundestag on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011, *Public technical discussion on the theme of the quality of scientific work* (Weber-Wulff 2011), provide an excellent basis to begin the recommendations from the IPPHEAE project for Germany.

#### *"Introduce a three-pronged programme*

- 1: *Educate people – set up a central body to educate teachers about how to avoid plagiarism*
- 2: *Transparency, open access, digital submission of dissertations, will expose some shocking examples*
- 3: *Mode of controlling – federal body chose a sample from last 5 years to identify where the problems are, introduce a QA process*" (Weber-Wulff 2011).

8.1.2 A difficult task for Germany would be to implement a national (or a centrally supported federal) infrastructure for transparent and accountable standards and quality assurance in Higher Education that will underpin and support any systems introduced for assuring academic integrity. There are good examples elsewhere on which to model a system for Germany (for example UK's QAA), but clearly the federal system and strong culture of academic autonomy in Germany will present major obstacles to implementation.

8.1.3 Financial and practical support for encouraging the use and development of digital text matching tools in HE institutions would help to highlight the importance of policies for discouraging plagiarism.

8.1.4 The effectiveness of digital toolsets would be enhanced by national support for developing an openly accessible German language corpus of theses and research papers for matching and translation by the software tools.

8.1.5 Germany hosts some of the most well-informed, active and effective whistle-blowers in the world, in the domain of academic integrity and plagiarism. These people should be embraced, supported and consulted as part of the process of establishing a national strategy.

### 8.2 *Institutionally*

8.2.1 A national participant suggested that "*there needs national debate and discussion:*

- [Plagiarism] *should be banned;*
- *Every university should develop a policy, clear communication to students and professors about it;*
- *Invest in infrastructure and provide lessons to help students to be better writers, homework, thesis;*
- *Universities need to reduce the number of students per teacher;*
- *HE ethics system has to deal with this, it needs to change;*
- Digital tools are "*not the solution*", they "*can help to put the right solution in place but that's only part of it*" (national interview).

8.2.2 Another point made by the same contributor was that "*trying to detect [plagiarism] is the wrong way – Universities should start to invest in infrastructure. From the first semester tell students what the institution expects and how homework, papers, theses should be produced and how to handle citations, referencing and academic integrity*".

8.2.3 Software for matching can only be effective if there is access to a substantial body of student work on a shared repository in different languages. Some respondents reported problems with intellectual property rights when student work is stored on digital repositories. However this obstacle is not insurmountable, because some German respondents reported they have already found a solution.

8.2.4 It is important to students that any decisions made on sanctions and penalties for alleged academic misconduct and plagiarism are applied fairly and consistently. The institution needs to develop clear procedures for fair handling allegations and maintain oversight of the system by requiring accountability for decisions, recording cases and outcomes. There are many examples of institutional systems that could be adopted and adapted for use in Germany (Carroll and Appleton 2001, Macdonald and Carroll 2006, Park 2004, Morris 2011, Neville 2009).

### 8.3 *Individual academics*

8.3.1 Most students responding to the survey said they would like to have more advice and guidance on aspects of academic writing. They would also benefit by having access to clear policies and guidance about sanctions and consequences for academic misconduct.

8.3.2 Although it is not common in some institutions for academic staff to engage in staff development, it is clear from responses that most of the teachers who responded would welcome and benefit from collegiate discussions about plagiarism and how to make effective use of software tools.

- 8.3.3 Last but not least, academic staff need regularly to examine how they assess student learning and explore new approaches that encourage students to engage in critical appraisal, improve their scholarship and discourage them from plagiarism.

## 9. Conclusions

The federal system in Germany and absence of a joined-up quality assurance infrastructure for higher education in Germany present major impediments to progress in establishing country-wide strategies for responding to student plagiarism (workable policies and systems for detection, penalties and prevention). However, in common with other European countries, there is a much larger challenge to face in Germany, namely that of overriding or overturning deeply rooted traditions and culture of individual and institutional autonomy. In any event, this significant paradigm shift is a prerequisite for Germany for progression towards compliance with European Educational Frameworks and Quality Assurance standards.

The reported historical underinvestment in teaching and learning infrastructure, coupled with the projected dramatic increase in the higher education student population over the next few years, does not provide an ideal springboard for major changes, but it does make it imperative that some action is taken now. Further, apparent complacency and inertia of the majority of academics and senior management in Germany has proved to be a barrier to those people who have already attempted to bring about positive change by raising awareness of the global threats to academic standards. Germany is not alone in some of these issues.

It is of additional concern that in Germany and across many other parts of Europe more emphasis is placed on academic research and its contribution to institutional reputation than valuing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly the influence of teaching and learning on the student experience. Institutions need to consider the reality that most academics will not invest in improving teaching and learning resources and approaches unless these are seen to be important to the institution and due rewards provided, either financial or in the form of commendations.

Attempts to silence whistle-blowers about plagiarism and research misconduct may prove counter-productive and will not advance the process of improving academic standards in Germany.

It is important to the well-being of Europe-wide academic integrity that Germany as one nation ensures that all its higher educational institutions fully grasp the significance of the growing threat of student plagiarism to academic standards and takes swift action to adopt best practice and begin to implement. Strategists and policy makers should be reassured to know that informed and skilled support is readily available both within Germany and from elsewhere across the world to help with the process of establishing a system for assurance of academic quality and integrity for all levels of education.

In order to facilitate the necessary changes it would help if the German government, nationally and federally, could provide funding to help every HE institution progress to where they need to be in quality terms: “*every university needs* [funding]” (national interview), there is “*funding for improvements to teaching and learning methods, but this funding very small compared to research excellence funds. Of course there should be funding provided, at state level*” (national interview).

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Annex DE-1: Responses to Question 5 (1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly agree)

Qu	Negative (1,2)		Don't know		Positive (4,5)		Statement
	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
s5a t5a	16%	11%	8%	22%	72%	67%	<i>Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues</i>
s5b t5p	20%	22%	6%	22%	67%	44%	<i>I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty</i>
s5c t5b	4%	22%	55%	22%	38%	56%	<i>This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism</i>
t5c		44%		22%		33%	<i>I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention</i>
t5d		22%		33%		44%	<i>I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection</i>
s5d t5e	14%	11%	55%	33%	28%	56%	<i>Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students</i>
t5f		22%		22%		56%	<i>Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff</i>
s5e t5g	12%	56%	61%	11%	22%	33%	<i>Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula</i>
s5f t5h	28%	56%	41%	11%	26%	33%	<i>I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty</i>
s5g t5i	22%	67%	67%	11%	6%	22%	<i>Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism</i>
s5h t5m	4%	22%	65%	56%	26%	11%	<i>The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty</i>
t5j		34%		44%		22%	<i>The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism</i>
t5k		33%		33%		33%	<i>There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country</i>
t5l		67%		22%		0%	<i>Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs</i>
s5i t5n	24%	33%	39%	33%	31%	33%	<i>I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes</i>
s5j	48%		20%		28%		<i>I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution</i>
s5k t5o	62%	67%	20%	22%	10%	11%	<i>I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)</i>
s5l t5q	28%	44%	61%	22%	8%	22%	<i>I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism</i>
s5m t5r	35%	55%	31%	11%	28%	22%	<i>I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student</i>
s5n t5s	18%	43%	43%	22%	33%	33%	<i>I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures</i>
s5o t5t	12%	11%	31%	11%	53%	67%	<i>It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism</i>
s5p t5u	18%	0%	35%	11%	45%	78%	<i>I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism</i>
s5q	18%		43%		6%		<i>The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution</i>
s5r	8%		16%		72%		<i>I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism</i>