



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

### **Plagiarism Policies in Finland**

*Full Report*

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### Plagiarism Policies in Finland

#### 1. Information sources

Information about Finland was collected through

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

Interviews were conducted in English in different ways: face to face, by telephone and via Skype with senior managers from the Higher Education sector, researchers into academic integrity and plagiarism and government representatives. The national level questions focused on national and institutional policies and procedures relating to plagiarism prevention and detection in Finland. Responses to the national interviews from four people have helped to furnish the background to the educational situation in Finland. Views and opinions from university students, academic staff and senior management participants added to this information. Where possible in the following report the *colour coded* voices of participants have been used to inform and enrich the narrative.

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

Table 1: Breakdown of questionnaire and interview responses								
Country	Student responses	Teacher responses	Senior Management and National	Student Focus Groups	Organisations and Institutions			
Finland (FI)	171	12	4	2	12			
Breakdown of student responses		Home students	Other EU students	Non-EU students	Not known	Bachelor, diploma	Master, doctor	Blank, other
Finland (FI)	171	161	4	4	2	142	14	15

#### 2. Higher Education in Finland

Finland has two distinct types of university, there are 16 traditional research-intensive universities and 25 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS, also known as polytechnics) (Finnish National Board of Education), but some mergers of universities are in progress at the time of writing this report. The differences between universities and UAS are in governance, mission and admissions criteria. The UAS are concerned with applied research and are required to engage in developmental research in conjunction with the commercial sector. Finnish and Swedish are the official languages used for teaching in Finland, but increasingly English language modules and programmes are being introduced to aid internationalisation.

There are just over 300,000 students in Higher Education in Finland. The number of females in HE is about 60% and when considering graduates from polytechnics this rises to 66% female. It was

not possible to find accurate figures for international students studying in Finland, but in 2011 about 5% of university degrees were awarded to international students (Statistics Finland).

It is common for Finnish students to work during their studies and this factor increases the time to graduation of many students. There are no study fees in Finland for home and EU students. Most HEIs do not charge fees for international students, but recently it has become possible for institutions to introduce a fee for non-EU international students. International students are made welcome and are encouraged to stay on in Finland after graduation in order to increase the “human capital” pool of skills to grow the economy.

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

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) is responsible for monitoring and assuring quality in higher education, covering both universities and UAS. Their audit manual (available in English) sets out the objectives and process for audit panels and visits to institutions. The focus of an institutional visit is to establish the efficacy of the institutional quality system based on a self-evaluation report prepared by the institution. A “quality label” is conferred for HEIs that meet the required standard. The audit report sets out key findings by the audit panel and, if required, sets further targets. A re-audit is scheduled for institutions where essential development is identified.

*“The audit manual does not mention plagiarism”* or academic integrity;

*“The HE evaluation committee is equivalent to UK QAA, but they have no interest in plagiarism. They audit institutions but just look at procedures. They do not evaluate outcomes of education”*;

*“I think they should add this kind of thing”*; (national interviews).

The teachers’ questionnaire asked respondents to comment on the typical assessment students were required to complete. It emerged that the amount of group working and team assessment varied between 10% and 90%. The question about breakdown of assessment types showed that courses had a mixture of different types of assessment, ranging from 75% to 10% by formal examination and 10% to 80% by project work, as summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Teachers’ responses (10) about assessment in Finnish HEIs**

Examinations	Assignments	Projects	other
75	15	10	
60	30	10	
60	20	20	
40	30	30	
40	30	30	
30	50	20	
30	30	40	
30	20	50	
10	70	20	
10	10	80	

This information is important because the varied assessment profile in different institutions and programmes will create different barriers and opportunities for plagiaristic behaviour.

One example of poor academic practice was highlighted during the interviews, *“there are teachers who don’t bother reading the student thesis and give an average or guessed mark”* (national interview). The same issue is not confined to Finland as the same point has arisen in discussion about other countries for the IPPHEAE research. There is no evidence of how widespread the

practice is of academics not reading student work, but even if software tools are used to detect matched sources, unless students' assessments or dissertations are thoroughly read there is no way of fairly assigning a grade or ascertaining whether the work is plagiarised. Quality Assurance procedures in higher education should be designed to be robust enough to detect cases like this of poor academic practice, for example through blind double marking and independent moderation. Feedback suggests that this type of practice is not always followed in Finnish HEIs.

It is common in Finland to invite scrutiny from international experts, for example Laurea UAS asked three international panels to evaluate their adoption of Learning by Developing (Vyakarnam et al 2008, Vyakarnam 2009, OECD 2010) and the Finnish Evaluation Council procedures include provision for international panellists on the institutional audit panels. This implies openness to critique and desire for constructive dialogue for national and institutional development that is not seen in all EU countries.

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

##### 4.1 National perspective

According to all the interviews conducted there are no *"figures collected for cheating or plagiarism"* in universities. Universities have rules about plagiarism but do not maintain statistics. The only Finnish organisation directly concerned with academic integrity is the National Advisory Board for Research Ethics (TENK). This organisation has focused on academic dishonesty for research and doctoral students rather than plagiarism in bachelor or master's level work. However this body produced new guidelines in 2012 for master's level research integrity (TENK 2012). The new system is being implemented across universities and UAS as this report is being prepared.

*In Finnish, the term research ethics (tutkimuseetiikka) is a general concept that covers all the ethical viewpoints and evaluations that are related to science and research. The scope and mandate of the Advisory Board is, however, narrower and refers to following an ethically responsible and proper course of action in research, as well as identifying and preventing fraud and dishonesty in all research. In English, this concept is usually referred to as research integrity, a term that emphasises the honesty and integrity that all researchers are required to adopt in their research activities. According to the internationally established practice, the name of the Advisory Board was changed to the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity in 2012 (TENK 2012 28-29)*

The guidelines set out four categories defining research misconduct

- Fabrication
- Falsification
- Plagiarism
- Misappropriation

The procedure for handling allegations is set out in the guidelines to ensure *"fairness and impartiality of the process"*. The responsibility for making decisions rests with either the rector or chancellor of the university, with no powers of delegation. TENK must be notified of a *"reasoned decision"* about any RCR (Responsible Conduct of Research) allegation the rector/chancellor has considered. TENK acts as the appeals forum for people accused of misconduct who are dissatisfied with the decision taken at the institutional level.

The above procedures apply to master's level and above. However concerning policies and procedures that can be applied at bachelor level, *"Tampere published a flowchart that other universities are now using with primitive penalty tariffs; these are faculty systems rather than*

*institutional level*" (national interview). *"Universities deal with it, normally the dean of faculty, or Rector in case of research"* (national interview), but cases can be sent to the National Advisory Board for a second opinion.

There is a legal subtlety regarding plagiarism in Finland in that *"plagiarism is not a crime, copyright infringement is a crime but it is very difficult to prove. The national copyright committee handles these cases, working under ministry of education"*. Plagiarism can be copyright theft but sometimes it can be deemed not to be copyright theft. The distinction seems to be where there is some disadvantage to the copyright owner and unfair commercial or academic benefit to the perpetrator. An accusation of copyright theft needs to first go through the police who will decide whether a prosecution is feasible. If not prosecuted by the police then cases can be referred to the Copyright Council. Cases can take a very long time to resolve, perhaps 2 years or more.

#### 4.2 Institutional viewpoint

Evidence emerged from the interviews that many cases of plagiarism are not being recognised and dealt with at university level at least. According to one source *"there are .. written guidelines in each institution. But at the practical level they cannot agree what is plagiarism"*. There is frustration that clear cases of plagiarism are not being dealt with appropriately: *"Yes there are policies, but the policies don't work"* (national interview).

The differences between plagiarism and academic dishonesty featured in all interview discussions with different views expressed by respondents. The two *"need to be separated, cheating is stronger than plagiarism when it is accidental"* (national interview); *"I don't know if any students can say they did not know"* about acknowledging sources (national interview); *"These are equally bad things to do; it really depends on the case, what has been done, cheating, fabricating results etc."*; *"It is possible to plagiarise almost accidentally, there could be a case where objectively a student used the same text, unintentional, but it would be very rare"* (national interview). There was acceptance from most respondents that plagiarism can be accidental, but some disagreement about how common that is and whether plagiarism and "cheating" are equally bad.

Sector-wide rules have been published on-line recently in Finland with step-by-step procedures for managing cases of cheating in doctoral degrees, *"the document sets out a one procedure only, the process for research"* (national interview). *"It is generally accepted that students are given second and third chances, they can carry on. We are very student-friendly, allowing students to correct mistakes. But cheating in an exam or falsifying data is treated differently. Falsifying – they have to do the research again from the beginning, exam cheating they get a warning, zero mark and another chance"* (teacher questionnaire).

As no statistics are maintained, it is not known how many bachelor and masters theses have been failed due to plagiarism when first assessed. Evidence about a specific case in 2002 was provided of a master's thesis at a Finnish research university that contained 50% plagiarised material. The award was not rescinded because the plagiarism was found after the award had been made, based on *"inadequate academic standards"* and *"in Finnish law there are no valid arguments for reversing the previous decision"*. However in a more recent case in 2011 a doctoral dissertation was rescinded after two of the five academic papers that formed basis of the thesis were withdrawn by the journal publisher due to academic misconduct (national interview).

Responses to question 5 from teachers and students (Annex FI-1) contained information about how plagiarism policies are viewed from teacher and student perspectives. (Qu S5d/T5e) 72% of teachers but only 49% of students thought that *plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students*, which suggests more could be done to make this information available.

Question 7 of the Student and teacher questionnaire 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.

Additional feedback from students to the question 7:

*Sometimes teachers don't recognize/care about plagiarism. When they do, they either warn about it then ask to rewrite it and if it's not corrected they may zero mark it or fail the whole module;*

*That would be too strict! [Fail the whole programme or degree]*

*Depends greatly on the teacher;*

*If the plagiarism has been continuous [sic] for long time;*

*I believe suspension comes if they do it again;*

Additional feedback from teacher questionnaire to question 7:

*All actions depend on the advisor. Cases are processed ad hoc;*

*Usually this results in the student simply attributing the sources [Request to rewrite it properly]*

*For repeated dishonesty [Suspended from the institution]*

*Happened once to a foreign student [Expelled from the institution]*

*Arguments between the teachers about whether [sic] to react to plagiarism or not [other]*

Assignment		Project or Dissertation		
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
15%	33%	4%	0%	<i>No action would be taken</i>
59%	67%	25%	75%	<i>Verbal warning</i>
29%	42%	37%	50%	<i>Formal warning letter</i>
64%	75%	44%	83%	<i>Request to re write it properly</i>
50%	67%	41%	42%	<i>Zero mark for the work</i>
39%	50%	33%	25%	<i>Repeat the module or subject</i>
44%	42%	39%	17%	<i>Fail the module or subject</i>
6%	0%	10%	8%	<i>Repeat the whole year of study</i>
8%	0%	19%	8%	<i>Fail the whole programme or degree</i>
8%	0%	13%	0%	<i>Expose the student to school community</i>
13%	33	23%	33%	<i>Suspended from the institution</i>
6%	0%	18%	0%	<i>Expelled from the institution</i>
6%	0%	9%	0%	<i>Suspend payment of student grant</i>
9%	0%	11%	0%	<i>Other</i>

It seems that the more draconian types of penalties are only applied in exceptional circumstances in Finland and the maximum suspension period is exclusion for one year (national interview). The additional comments about different perceptions suggest there is inconsistency of approach between academics within and between institutions towards cases of plagiarism. Confirming this evidence, in Question 5 (Annex FI-1, Qus S5I,T5q) 22% of students and 66% of teachers disagreed with the statement *I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism*, with 31% of students and just 8% of teachers agreeing with the statement.

#### 4.3 Previous research about Finland

A small amount of research has been carried out into student plagiarism in Finland, but some of the resulting publications are in Finnish. Previous studies include a meta-analysis of data from other studies, involving 865 students in total. Although these were not generalizable results it was revealed that about 67% of the Finnish student respondents admitted to have “cheated in their

studies” (Silpiö masters’ thesis 2011). The same author analysed data from 1600 students and found that 19% of respondents admitted to plagiarising by “copy-pasting from the Internet” and 23% of respondents admitted to resubmitting the same coursework for credit on two different courses, often known as auto-plagiarism. Although the questions were different, this compares to responses from 171 Finnish students for the IPPHEAE research, where just 25% of Finnish students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)*, 25% said they were not sure, 47% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 2% declined to answer. In response to the same question 25% of the teachers agreed and 75% disagreed that they may have plagiarised (Annex FI-1, Qu S5k, T5o).

A minority of teachers (42%) and student respondents (26%) said they had encountered cases of *academics plagiarising or using unattributed materials*. One respondent had personal experience of several cases of copyright theft and plagiarism involving research teams and others had come across cases in the media. *“Depends on the subject area and training, but yes there are cases of teachers with poor referencing practices”* (national interview), *“Teaching materials, yes, lack of knowledge and understanding about authors rights – they copy from text books without citing and references”* (national interview). A case was described of a fraudulent application for a research post, where the applicant was rejected but was appointed later at a different university (national interview). However such deliberate occurrences appear to be rare.

According to one interviewee *“it is a really weird situation for me and colleagues when we find cases of plagiarism there is nothing we can do about it”*; *“the general pattern is that university officials don’t admit it is plagiarism and take the side of the student against the teacher”* (national interview). There are some documented cases from Finland where cases of plagiarism have been raised by researchers and teachers, but no action was taken by the institution, in some cases there were suggestions of intimidation, silencing or side-lining of the academic “whistle-blower” (Moore 2008, Moore 2010).

#### 4.4 Use of digital tools

The teacher and student survey contained two questions about “digital tools”, responses are summarised in Tables 4 and 5.

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>(number of responses)</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Software for text matching (Urkund, Turnitin, Grammarly.com, unnamed)		76	9
VLE, Platform - Optima		1	
Internet, Google, website		4	3
Nothing		4	1
Don’t know		32	
Proof-reading, forms, rules, classes		8	
Tools are being introduced		1	

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>	50%	67%
<i>For some courses students must submit their written work using the tools</i>	22%	25%
<i>Students must submit all written work using the tools</i>	9%	8%
<i>Students may use the tools to check their work before submitting</i>	12%	25%
<i>Other: All theses, and just theses are submitted via tools</i>		



It is clear from the responses that software tools for aiding detection of plagiarism are being adopted and applied by at least some universities in Finland. The feedback from teachers and students also confirms that some students are making use of software to pre-check their work before submitting. However the emphasis appears to be only on checking the final thesis.

Although digital tools can be useful, as discovered in some other countries, implementing software tools is not without problems:

*Only now they have required a plagiarism detection system Urkund to be applied systematically. This does not work;*

*What's going wrong is that some teachers have 100% reliance on the tools. Some have not checked the results;*

*It is possible for students to avoid the check by changing one letter or (in Finnish) the ending of a key word, which makes Urkund not match;*

*Students have learnt how to avoid detection, it is easy to do;* (national interviews).

The perceived over-reliance on use of a tool that can be easily circumvented raises some concerns. It would be prudent for the current project to take into account the concerns expressed in the IPPHEAE research.

#### 4.5 Education about academic integrity

One way of highlighting academic integrity is to ask students to sign some form of statement about integrity and honesty. Question 4 of the student and teacher questionnaire asked when *students are required to sign a declaration about originality and academic honesty...*

Student	Teacher	When
15%	0%	<i>On starting their degree</i>
18%	0%	<i>For every assessment</i>
11%	0%	<i>For some assessments</i>
16%	75%	<i>Never</i>
38%	25%	<i>Not sure</i>

The teachers' responses suggest this is not a practice employed in Finland, but a few of the students appear to have encountered this type of approach.

Given that education of students about good academic practice is a key element of a preventative strategy, it is of concern to hear that *"It is not common to have courses for all students [in academic integrity] – it is not a must; academic writing yes, research ethics no"; "It is commonly known, so they should be doing something about it"* (national interviews).

There were suggestions that some cases of the most serious form of plagiarism may not be recognised by some academics: *"Regarding ghost-writing, paper mills etc., ... there is no knowledge, public awareness about this. There are suspicions when a student is not progressing on research and then produces really good paper"* (national interview).

## 5. Perceptions and Understanding of Plagiarism

### 5.1 Support and guidance

Most students said they found out about plagiarism early in their education, but information about academic writing conventions seems to have come later for some:



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

83% of students said they *learned about plagiarism before they started bachelor degree*, 13% *during their bachelor degree* and 1% *during masters*; only 3% said they were *still not sure about plagiarism*.

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

51% of students said they learnt this *before they started bachelor degree*, 42% said *during bachelor degree* and 1% *during masters*; 7% said they were *still not sure*.

Student Question 6, Teacher Questions 2 and 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:*

Plagiarism		Academic Dishonesty		
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
47%	33%	27%	33%	Web site
47%	75%	30%	67%	Course booklet, student guide, handbook
31%	17%	16%	8%	Leaflet or guidance notes
72%	92%	28%	83%	Workshop / class / lecture
17%	0%	13%	0%	I am not aware of any information about this
				Other: From other students, degree regulations

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. The main channel for education of students about plagiarism and academic dishonesty appears to be through tutors in classes and through course handbooks and web-based resources. The responses suggest that the provision of specific and dedicated services and information for supporting students in academic integrity, perhaps through the university library or an academic support unit, is uncommon in Finland.

Student	Teacher	Service or provision
18%	0%	Academic support unit
65%	67%	Advice in class during course/module
30%	17%	Additional lectures, workshops:
57%	83%	Advice from tutors or lecturers
36%	42%	Guidance from the library
5%	8%	University publisher
15%	42%	Academic writing unit/Study skills unit

## 5.2 Why do students plagiarise?

Important questions were included in the survey to establish different views about what constitutes plagiarism and the underlying reasons why it occurs. The responses to the question about why students plagiarise are summarised in Tables 9 and 10. 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.

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

Student	Teacher	Possible reason for plagiarism
27%	50%	<i>They think the lecturer will not care</i>
71%	67%	<i>They think they will not get caught</i>
74%	67%	<i>They run out of time</i>
48%	50%	<i>They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment:</i>
11%	25%	<i>They don't see the difference between group work and collusion</i>
54%	50%	<i>They can't express another person's ideas in their own words</i>
60%	50%	<i>They don't understand how to cite and reference</i>
24%	17%	<i>They are not aware of penalties</i>
43%	33%	<i>They are unable to cope with the workload</i>
33%	33%	<i>They think their written work is not good enough:</i>
31%	17%	<i>They feel the task is completely beyond their ability</i>
73%	92%	<i>It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet</i>
23%	0%	<i>They feel external pressure to succeed</i>
33%	50%	<i>Plagiarism is not seen as wrong</i>
22%	25%	<i>They have always written like that</i>
22%	8%	<i>Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments</i>
19%	33%	<i>Their reading comprehension skills are weak</i>
23%	8%	<i>Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood</i>
14%	42%	<i>There is no teacher control on plagiarism</i>
		<i>Other: They think everyone is doing it.</i>

The responses to the national level interviews and in the senior management survey summarised in Table 10 provide some different perspectives on student plagiarism.

<i>Lazy students</i>
<i>Foreign students, exchange students not aware of Finnish standards</i>
<i>Pressure to graduate fast for job opportunity, hurry to get degree</i>
<i>If no monitoring and advice given then students will plagiarise more</i>
<i>It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet</i>
<i>Financial work/study balance for international students particularly</i>
<i>Lack of skills/knowledge/concepts (staff and students)</i>

There was reasonably good correspondence between responses from students and teachers, the main reasons for plagiarism were believed to be: the Internet makes it easy to do, time pressures and the belief they will not get caught. Most other reasons suggested were seen as relevant by some people. Additional suggestions included understanding and skills, particularly international students coming from different educational cultures and (from a teacher) the perception that other students are plagiarising.

An additional factor to consider is provided in responses to Question 5 (Annex FI-1, S5p, T5u), with 75% of teachers and 55% of students agreeing that translation across languages can be used to avoid detection of plagiarism. This reflects similar strong positive responses to this question in some other countries.

It has been suggested in interviews for other EU countries (UK, Ireland) that when students are included as members of academic disciplinary panels they are generally much harsher in their views about punishment than the staff panel members, but the following observation suggests that at least some Finnish students may have a different view:

*I interviewed some bachelor students and asked them about how they thought about students getting credit for plagiarising text. They said they would not do it themselves but it would not bother them if other students got credit for doing this. Student culture is very interesting (national interview).*

### 5.3 Students' understanding about academic writing concepts

Tables 11, 12 and 13 summarise responses to questions about different aspects of academic writing. Question 10 of the student questionnaire explored students' understanding of basic academic writing conventions: *What are the reasons for using correct referencing and citation in scholarly academic writing?*

64%	<i>To avoid being accused of plagiarism</i>
66%	<i>To show you have read some relevant research papers</i>
68%	<i>To give credit to the author of the sourced material</i>
56%	<i>To strengthen and give authority to your writing</i>
15%	<i>Because you are given credit/marks for doing so</i>
5%	<i>I don't know</i>

Table 12 confirms that most student respondents appeared to have a good grasp of why referencing and in-text citations are required and it appears that a referencing style convention is applied in most of the subject areas and institutions that responded. It is worth noting that although 57% of students were positive, 40% of student respondents expressed lack of confidence or uncertainty about referencing and citation.

Student Question 11, Teacher Question 10a:

yes		No		Not sure		No response / n/a		Question
student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
70%	75%	4%	8%	22%	8%	4%	8%	<i>Is there any referencing style students are required or encouraged to use in written work?</i>
57%		18%		22%		3%		<i>Are you confident about referencing and citation?</i>

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

65%	<i>Finding good quality sources</i>
43%	<i>Referencing and citation</i>
34%	<i>Paraphrasing</i>
42%	<i>Understanding different referencing formats and styles</i>

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 purpose of this question was to try to establish what behaviour different people viewed as plagiarism and whether they believed some sanction should be applied in such cases. Tables 14 and 15 summarise the responses from students and teachers respectively.

Student Qu 15, Teacher Qu 19: Examples of possible plagiarism, with 40% matching text

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	88%	1%	6%	68%	word for word with no quotations
b	61%	5%	30%	33%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	29%	26%	41%	11%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	56%	9%	30%	36%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	29%	11%	54%	11%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	10%	44%	42%	2%	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%	67%	word for word with no quotations
b	83%	0%	17%	58%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	41%	25%	25%	8%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	92%	0%	8%	58%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	83%	0%	17%	42%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	41%	42%	8%	0%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

All six cases (a-f) above 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. However 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. It was of concern to see the number of respondents, students and teachers, who were unsure whether some these examples would be acceptable practice for assessed work. In Student Question 11 (Table 12) 57% of the same student respondents said they were confident about referencing and citation, but their responses to this question cast some doubts on their understanding. It is interesting that the some teachers who responded appeared to believe that the addition of references to the work removed the problem of lack of originality in the student's submission. Several of the teachers who believed these were cases of plagiarism thought that no sanction was required, either as a deterrent or as a means of penalising poor scholarship.

#### 5.4 Training and skills development for students and teachers

Students (75%) and teachers (100%) agreed that students received training in “scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues” and 56% of students said they would like more training compared to only 25% of the teachers. Most teachers' responses contrast with views from the national interviewees, three believed strongly that there should be “*more training and guidance*” for both teaching staff and students. Another view was that “*a lot of training is taking place at the moment*”

and there may be already enough training for students, but there should be training for staff on recognising cases of plagiarism and interpreting results from the software tools, because *“they are the ones who detect or use the software”* (national interview).

The idea for continuing professional development featured in three of the national responses, one view seeing the current problems with plagiarism as an *“adaptive challenge”* that should be driven from *“top university level or above”*, *“leading changes for the whole [academic] community”* (national interview). A second suggestion was to develop *“new guidelines” for universities and polytechnics* and *“take care to have continuing education”* (national interview). The specific needs of the Finnish UAS were also considered compared to the universities:

*“UAS are quite new 15-20 years, previously they were vocational colleges and a lot of teachers trained 20-30 years ago when these were not issues. The world has changed. In research universities it is more systematic, especially for people who worked in education and focus more on writing for research, they have more knowledge and awareness. Perhaps there could be less plagiarism in research universities, but it is everywhere”* (national interview).

The ease of access to information, seen by students and teachers as a primary reason for the prevalence of plagiarism, combined with new ways that scholars write and study in our connected world, provide reasons enough for teachers to need to explore new options and techniques for assessing and guiding students, with institutional if not national level support.

## 6. Examples of good practice

The National Advisory Board on Research Ethics in Finland *Good scientific practice and ethics guidelines* (TENK 2012) (national interview) are very welcome. Although this board and the associated guidelines are primarily concerned with academic conduct relating to master’s theses, doctoral, post-doctoral and research level activities, this is a good starting point for establishing academic conduct policies and principles that could be applied more generally at lower levels of education, particularly for bachelor and master’s degree.

*“Most teachers in Finland teach about research writing, but it is not systematic for all students”* (national interview) and it appears from wider discussions with participants that the majority of Finnish students are motivated and applying appropriate conventions and practices in their academic writing.

A national level discussion has been taking place about the use of electronic tools as part of a one-year project *Plagiarism management and detection software services development*. A seminar was held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013 with representatives from all universities and UAS in Finland invited to attend. The agenda covered a range of important issues, including defining plagiarism, student guidance, use of digital tools and the role of national agencies for monitoring plagiarism.

The recent move by UAS to purchase licenses for Urkund, implement the tool sector-wide and use systematically for submission of theses is an encouraging sign there is some appreciation that action needs to be taken to address any incidence of student plagiarism in Finnish Higher Education.

The project on the use of digital tools and associated dialogue across the HE sector is a great step forward in moving to a consistent national system for Finland. It is clear that this project is being informed by previous and current research and will be evidence-led.

Three seminars were organised in Universities of Applied Sciences, including on-line input from Jude Carroll, to promote good practice in prevention and management of cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

The few researchers in the field of academic integrity have persisted in their endeavours to raise awareness and introduce more systematic reforms, with no funding and very little support from the sector. There have been at least five master's theses around the subject of plagiarism in Finland, but these are not available in English language.

A blog *Plagiointitutkija* (Plagiarism researcher) has been maintained for several years, documenting recent cases of plagiarism in Finland (the website is [plagiarismi.fi](http://plagiarismi.fi)). This channel helps to provide a focal point for awareness-raising and support for whistle-blowers in Finland.

## *7. Discussion*

The lack of any statistics about cases of student plagiarism in Finnish HEIs makes it impossible to know how much plagiarism is occurring, how much is being found and how much is being ignored, either through lack of understanding or through deliberate policies of overlooking it. The evidence from the IPPHEAE survey suggests that even when plagiarism is located in student work there is no consistent response within or between institutions. There are also questions about how Finnish teachers and students understand what constitutes plagiarism, based on responses to the scenarios (teacher question 19, student question 15).

In Finland overall TENK records very few official cases of plagiarism or cheating, perhaps 2-4 cases per year. In 2011 over 700 academic dishonesty cases were recorded in Sweden, which has very similar numbers of HE students to Finland. The difference is that in Sweden there is a nationally defined policy and procedures for dealing with all accusations of academic dishonesty. All HEIs are required to maintain statistics on such cases and report these annually to the quality agency the Högskoleverket (replaced by Universitetskanslersämbetet after 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013). The number of cases in Finland should be expected to be similar or perhaps rather higher than in Sweden, given the suggestion from interviewees that policies for managing plagiarism may not be consistent across all Swedish institutions.

However the positive news is that a project has been funded to investigate and implement the use of electronic tools for plagiarism detection in Finland and many universities and UAS are beginning to adopt some digital tools. The constructive discussions taking place at the time of writing this report provide encouragement that great steps will be made in the near future to improve the situation in Finland. It is anticipated that the evidence collected for the IPPHEAE research can help to inform the Finnish project.

Also encouraging was that 92% of teacher responses and 61% of students agreed that it was possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism (Qu S5o,T5t). There is some evidence that some action is already being taken through innovative pedagogical approaches such as Learning by Developing at Laurea UAS and implementation of MIT's CDIO (Conceive, Design, Implement, Operate) at Metropolia UAS. Such approaches to learning can have a direct impact on plagiarism by restricting students' capacity to copy material because of the active nature of the assessment.

The most disturbing factor to arise from the research is the evidence about plagiarism cases being suppressed and those raising cases being silenced. It is difficult to determine the underlying reasons for this culture. Perhaps it could be accounted for as sense of shame for an institution to admit to having cases of student plagiarism. The IPPHEAE project findings about the ubiquity of plagiarism should help to expose the myth that finding plagiarism damages the reputation of a university.

## 8. Recommendations for Finland

### 8.1 Nationally

It is welcomed that the national body TENK has produced clear procedures for handling allegations of misconduct, including plagiarism, at master's level and above. However there are some caveats, based on experiences elsewhere:

There need to be policies procedures covering academic misconduct in all assessed work in higher education, not just master's level and focusing on the thesis;

Making the responsibility for academic conduct decisions rest with the rector potentially makes the process overly formal and potentially slow to resolve;

Many UK institutions have now moved away from this kind of formal judicial practice and devolved responsibility to specially trained Academic Conduct Officers (ACO), normally departmentally-based;

There needs to be a focus on understanding underlying reasons for plagiarism and academic misconduct and adopting a preventative approach by educating teaching staff and students;

Software tools to aid education of students as well as to support detection of plagiarism can be a powerful resource if applied appropriately and understood well, but this depends on the quality and properties of the tools and the skills of those using them. Some questions have been raised by Finnish participants about both factors in relation to the software tools being used in Finland.

The apparent culture of fear associated with finding plagiarism and the unfair treatment of whistle-blowers in some institutions is the most distressing finding in all the research across Europe for this project. Unfortunately some examples of this practice were reported in other countries and not confined to Finland. There is no place for this type of cover-up anywhere in Europe, but particularly in such a liberally-minded country as Finland.

Ideally similar policies, procedures and equivalent tariffs should be common to all universities, not just in Finland but across Europe.

### 8.2 Institutionally

The recommendations set out below taken from research carried out into plagiarism in Finland, presented in a master's thesis, provide a good starting point for the IPPHEAE recommendations for Finland.

*“..the following should be considered to be included in a University-wide plagiarism policy:*

- Aims and objectives for the plagiarism policy*
- Responsibilities for administration, teachers, library/informatics and students*
- Plagiarism statement*
- Definitions of student plagiarism and student cheating*
- Means to be applied in deterring plagiarism*
- Process definition and clearly written instructions for processing plagiarism cases*
- Plagiarism tariff*
- Creating statistics on student plagiarism and cheating*



- *Defining how students should learn to avoid plagiarism. Providing guidance to students on academic writing*
- *Educating staff and students on plagiarism and the plagiarism policy*
- *Monitoring the implementation of the plagiarism policy.* (Silpiö 2012)

### 8.3 Individual Academics

A culture of openness and dialogue about academic integrity and related phenomena needs to be cultivated between academics across institutions and encouraged by senior academic leaders in Finland. There is clear need for a serious programme of academic and student staff development about how to raise academic standards through ensuring that cases of academic dishonesty are consistently recognised and appropriate measures taken to discourage or penalise.

## 9. Conclusions

The provision for managing student plagiarism in Finland has improved greatly since the investigation began two years ago and recent developments are welcome. However Finland is taking the first small steps on a long journey and academic misconduct is evolving in parallel.

With the relatively new phenomenon in mind of language translation plagiarism, some software tools are being gradually enhanced to detect cases of cross-language plagiarism. By combining automatic language translation software with access to different language repositories within the scope of the search tools, the digital tools will increasingly become more proficient in finding matches.

The reported problems with the ease of “fooling” Urkund particularly relating to the Finnish language characteristics need to be investigated. There are many ways students can find to by-pass digital matching tools, it does not take them long to find these techniques if they are determined to cheat.

Although not widely accepted by respondents in Finland the phenomenon of ghost-writing and use of “paper mills” is still rising elsewhere and is more difficult to detect and prove than plagiarism; often the software tools do not help to detect such cases.

It is to be hoped that those who have been actively researching in Finland are given space and funding to allow them to build on their findings and to ensure the whole academic community inside and external to Finland, can benefit from their expertise.

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**Annex FI-1: Responses to question 5: (1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly agree)**

<b>Table 16: Student and teacher responses to questionnaire Question 5 (percentages)</b>							
Qu	Negative (1,2)		Don't know		Positive (4,5)		Statement
	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
s5a t5a	12	0	12	0	75	100	<i>Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues</i>
s5b t5p	25	75	17	0	56	25	<i>I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty</i>
s5c t5b	2	25	19	0	78	75	<i>This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism</i>
t5c		35		0		68	<i>I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention</i>
t5d		33		8		58	<i>I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection</i>
s5d t5e	6	25	43	8	49	66	<i>Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students</i>
t5f		25		8		66	<i>Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff</i>
s5e t5g	4	33	62	0	33	67	<i>Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula</i>
s5f t5h	37	25	26	8	33	58	<i>I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty</i>
s5g t5i	15	8	63	50	20	42	<i>Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism</i>
s5h t5m	2	25	32	9	63	67	<i>The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty</i>
t5j		50		8		42	<i>The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism</i>
t5k		33		25		42	<i>There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country</i>
t5l		42		33		25	<i>Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs</i>
s5i t5n	40	17	32	42	26	42	<i>I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes</i>
s5j	58		19	0	20		<i>I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution</i>
s5k t5o	47	75	25	0	25	25	<i>I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)</i>
s5l t5q	22	66	45	25	31	8	<i>I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism</i>
s5n t5r	11	33	46	25	39	42	<i>I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student</i>
s5n t5s	6	41	36	25	56	33	<i>I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures</i>
s5o t5t	7	0	28	8	61	92	<i>It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism</i>
s5p t5u	12	0	30	25	55	75	<i>I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism</i>
s5q	41		22		27		<i>The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution</i>
s5r	13		14		72		<i>I understand the links between copyright, intellectual property rights and plagiarism</i>