



Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in the Hellenic Republic (Greece)

Executive Summary

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Lifelong Learning Programme



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ES 1 Background

- ES 1.1 Data was collected by on-line questionnaires at three levels (students, faculty and senior officials in academia) and by structured interviews with senior management and national representatives in Greece. The research also drew on documentary evidence available in the form of press articles, blogs and web sites.
- ES 1.2 From the different perspectives the survey explored the effectiveness of policies and procedures implemented nationally and at Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Greece and concern aspects of academic integrity and specifically plagiarism and academic conduct. The research was focused on relevant aspects at bachelor and masters levels rather than doctoral studies and research.

ES 2 Findings

- ES 2.1 The lack of statistics in the Hellenic Republic made it impossible to be precise about the scale of student misconduct and plagiarism.
- ES 2.2 The Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQAAA) was established in 2005 with a mission to assist the Hellenic Higher Educational Institutions to implement procedures aiming towards (a) quality assurance and improvement of their output, (b) transparent implementation of relevant procedures, (c) performing research on relevant matters and (d) informing the State and its HEIs on developments at international level. Currently, the HQAAA is focusing on promoting internal and external assessment procedures. HQAAA has not published any data on plagiarism.
- ES 2.3 Interviews with a national expert and high rank academics highlighted aspects of academic misconduct and some of the existing deficits in policies for preventing and responding to breaches of academic integrity in tertiary education. More specifically, the major concerns among high ranking officials are:

ES 2.3.1 Cases of plagiarism by faculty are not addressed appropriately. Some high ranking officials seem to be rather accommodating in covering up documented cases of plagiarism committed by their colleagues.

ES 2.3.2 It is common knowledge that projects, postgraduate thesis or even doctoral dissertations can be outsourced to individuals or organizations either nationally or internationally.

ES 2.3.3 Identified cases of plagiarism amongst students are not treated according to the level of severity of plagiarism conducted. Furthermore, students who are active



in political youth and/or student organizations may enjoy preferential treatment when they are identified with academic integrity issues.

- ES 2.4 Blogs that identify cases of faculty plagiarism or academic misconduct and highlight the lack of appropriate action to tackle these incidences provide insightful details on certain plagiarism cases.
- ES 2.5 This research revealed that 40% of the student respondents believe they may have plagiarised *accidentally or deliberately*. However, they believe that either sanctions are not applied consistently or are inappropriate. Furthermore, some cases of plagiarism were not recognized as such as indicated by the responses of some of the faculty that participated in the survey.
- ES 2.6 A very small percentage of teachers (15%) admitted that *they may have plagiarized intentionally or unintentionally*. However, a remarkable *62% of faculty believe that their colleagues may have plagiarized or used material in class without referencing the resources*. These findings lead to the conclusion that additional training for students and faculty should be implemented.
- ES 2.7 The vast majority of Greek Universities do not use digital tools to reduce plagiarism. Licences for such software may be a burden for Greek Universities that have experienced severe budget cuts in recent years. However free anti-plagiarism software is available and could be used to assist formative learning for students. Understanding the limitations and potentials of these tools by the faculty is critical to initiate discussion on setting policies and procedures to complement the outcome of such tools. Irrespective of the software package selected, a number of issues need to be addressed:
- ES 2.7.1 Develop clear policy statements about when and how tools should be used; these policies should be available to teachers, students and administrators;
- ES 2.7.2 Guidelines for teachers about how to interpret the reports of anti-plagiarism software and make use of the derived similarity indices to enable proper detection of cases of plagiarism; Raise awareness on existing limitations of such software tools;
- ES 2.7.3 Develop guidelines for teachers on how to use the tools formatively to support student learning;
- ES 2.7.4 Provide clear guidelines for students on the ways they may use software tools to get assistance for avoiding plagiarism and become aware on the issues that are not brought forward by software tools.
- ES 2.9 On questions about consistency of application of policies and procedures most of the teachers disagreed that *teachers follow the same procedures* (62%) and *are consistent between students* (62%). The responses from students to the same questions seem to be more balanced (Annex HR-1 Question Students 5l, Teachers 5q, Students 5m, Teachers 5r).

It must be noted that the vast majority of teachers (84%) and students (87%) agree that: *it is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism* (Annex HR-1 Qu S5o, T5t).

- ES 2.10 Faculty and students ranked the factors that contribute to plagiarism. The most popular were: “Students do not care to learn anything, they want only to pass the course”, “They believe they are not going to get caught”, “They cannot express another person’s ideas in their own words” and “It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet”.
- ES 2.11 A significant percentage of students and teachers responders (52% of students and 43% of teachers) received guidance in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues (Annex HR-1 Qu S5a, T5a). Despite this, 90% of students and 46% of the teachers agreed that they would like to have more training, with 5% and 39% respectively disagreeing (Annex HR-1 Qu S5b, T5p).
- ES 2.12 The low number of students and teachers who identified with high certainty clear cases of plagiarism examples suggest that students and more alarmingly faculty may plagiarise without even realizing it. The low number of respondents opting for “punishment” reflects the prevailing culture in Greece.

ES 3 Recommendations

ES 3.1 *Nationally and internationally*

- ES 3.1.1 The Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQAAA) could establish policies and procedures on anti-plagiarism and academic integrity to apply to all HEI in the Hellenic Republic. This documentation may be an adaptation of already existing policies and procedures, internationally.
- ES 3.1.2 There is a plethora of valuable information on plagiarism in English, a selection of which may be translated into Greek for HEI in Hellenic Tertiary Educational Institution that have as official language of instruction the Greek language.
- ES 3.1.3 The IPPHEAE survey results indicate that the adoption of digital tools can be useful provided that they are utilised in an appropriate setting and that all parties understand the limitations and values that they bring to strategies for academic integrity. There are licensed programs but also freeware solutions and/or add-on services with various degrees of detection capabilities that may be employed. It should be also mentioned that a collective body or a consortium of Universities may be able to negotiate better contractual terms than each University, separately. Irrespective of the software package selected, there need to be:
- Clear policy statements about when and how tools should be used and accessed by teachers, students and administrators;
 - Guidance for teachers about how to interpret and make use of the outputs for helping to detect cases of plagiarism, and information about the limitations for what the tools can achieve;

c) Guidance for teachers on how to use the tools formatively to support student learning;

d) Clear guidance for students on the capabilities and limitations of software tools.

ES 3.1.4 It should be emphasized that reforms should be applied to all levels of studies at higher education, not only to doctoral level programmes and research.

ES 3.1.5 In the cradle of Democracy, it is essential to allow and encourage people to raise issues related to national educational matters in a way that cases brought forward by 'whistle-blowers' are investigated and appropriate action is taken. Social media can be very powerful, in this respect. Within the broader concept of Open Government, Open Education could also be promoting the principles of equality, respect and continuous improvement.

ES 3.1.6 Interested HEI stakeholders (Ministry, HQAAA etc.) may wish to conduct a more comprehensive survey about academic integrity and plagiarism in Greece. They are welcome to reuse the instruments of surveys used by IPPHEAE freely available on the website as well refer to the collected data and use the analysis results as a benchmark.

ES 3.2 Institutionally

ES 3.2.1 At national level, the recommendations described in ES.3 require central co-ordination. Encouraging more local responses to changing culture and attitudes may contribute to faster and more sustained changes at institutional level. Institutional recommendations need to echo each of those outlined above at national level.

ES 3.2.2 The IPPHEAE survey results suggest that it would be useful to stage a serious programme of professional development for academic staff within institutions to update people on how research practices have changed in the last 12-15 years and to promote some good practice examples, which can assure high standards in academic integrity.

ES 3.2.3 Institutional leadership and support needs to be established to encourage academic teaching staff to report cases of student cheating and plagiarism.

ES 3.2.4 If not immediately achieved on a national basis, each institution or region should develop a set of fair, proportional sanctions and related procedures for consistently dealing internally with cases of student academic dishonesty. There are many examples that can be used for guidance, for example the AMBeR project report and tariff (Tennant and Rowell 2010, Tenant and Duggan 2008).

ES 3.3 Individual academics:

ES 3.3.1 At individual level, academics have a responsibility for promoting standards and quality in all aspects of academic activity, including teaching, setting assessments and examination papers, grading of work and providing support, guidance and advice to students. This list of activities naturally extends to aspects of academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Given a supportive regime at institutional and national levels, it should be possible for academic staff to:

a) support students to improve independent study, research and writing skills;



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

ES 4 Conclusions

The difficulties in promoting and implementing quality assurance and academic integrity at HEI in Greece are underlined in this report; they are intensified by the economic crisis, but they are not unsurpassed.



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

Table 16: Student and teacher responses to questionnaire Question 5 (percentages) (S n=129; T n=8)							
Qu	Disagree (1,2)		Don't know		Agree (4,5)		Question
	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
S5a T5a	27%	21%	16%	36%	52%	43%	Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues
S5b T5p	5%	39%	5%	15%	90%	46%	I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5c T5b	10%	14%	60%	7%	21%	79%	This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism
T5c		15%		15%		69%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention
T5d		31%		0%		69%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection
S5d T5e	35%	8%	30%	31%	19%	38%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students
T5f		15%		62%		23%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff
S5e T5g	8%	23%	57%	23%	25%	66%	Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula
S5f T5h	45%	15%	30%	23%	19%	54%	I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5g T5i	13%	8%	62%	31%	21%	62%	Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism
S5h T5m	12%	23%	64%	31%	21%	46%	The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty
T5j		8%		54%		31%	The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism
T5k		31%		62%		8%	There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country
T5l		54%		46%		0%	Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs
S5i T5n	25%	0%	35%	39%	37%	61%	I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes
S5j	48%		14%		16%		I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution
S5k T5o	18%	62%	33%	15%	40%	15%	I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)
S5l T5q	25%	62%	40%	23%	29%	15%	I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism
S5m T5r	27%	46%	37%	39%	36%	15%	I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student
S5n T5s	17%	23%	52%	46%	29%	31%	I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures
S5o T5t	5%	8%	5%	8%	87%	84%	It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism
S5p T5u	6%	0%	31%	15%	57%	65%	I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism
S5q	16%		24%		44%		The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution
S5r	2%		24%		75%		I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism