



Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in Luxembourg

Executive Summary

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ES 1 Background

- ES 1.1 From the different perspectives the survey explored the effectiveness of policies and procedures implemented nationally and in higher education institutions in Luxembourg that concern aspects of academic integrity and specifically plagiarism and academic conduct. The research focused on the provision at bachelor and master's level rather than doctoral studies and research.
- ES 1.2 Luxembourg has only one university that is relatively new, having been founded in 2003. Unlike most other EU countries where anonymity was assured for both individuals and institutions participating in this survey, it is impossible to provide anonymity for the single university in Luxembourg. This may be part of the reason behind lack of engagement with the on-line survey.
- ES 1.3 The report relies mainly on the interviews conducted with two senior academics, one national representative and narrative responses from the one student respondent. However the author visited Luxembourg on three occasions during the project, which provided interesting supplementary background information and insights into the development and maturity of systems for academic integrity at the University and also within associated research institutes (public research centres) in Luxembourg.

ES 2 Findings

- ES 2.1 The lack of statistics made it impossible to be precise about the scale of student misconduct and plagiarism, but participants all believed the number of cases to be high and perhaps increasing.
- ES 2.2 According to national interviewees there is no quality monitoring organisation in Luxembourg.
- ES 2.3 Student assessment at bachelor and masters levels is typically through examination, but examples were provided of innovative assignments at masters level that were individualised, which helped to discourage plagiarism.
- ES 2.4 There are no standard policies for academic integrity in Luxembourg other than the recently created Luxembourg Policy for Ethics in Research (Blessing 2012), which applies to doctoral level and research.
- ES 2.5 There were differences between the academic and student views on how suspected plagiarism cases are handled in Luxembourg:

According to a senior academic interviewee: At present after the teacher decides there may be a case to answer: *“the detecting teacher writes report with evidence to director of*

the programme. When the director does not feel they are competent to deal with the case then the vice-dean is asked to help, they then take the decision” (national interview).

According to the student participant *“at the current institution I study at plagiarism seems not to be taken very seriously and frequently simply lowering the mark for inappropriate referencing would be the maximum penalty”* (student questionnaire response).

- ES 2.6 In October 2012 the University of Luxembourg ran a one day Research Ethics event, with international invited speakers, presenting about various aspects of academic integrity as it related to research. The attendees appeared to be researchers, doctoral students and senior managers rather than academics concerned with undergraduate and master’s teaching. Questions and discussion between speakers and the audience were encouraged.
- ES 2.7 There are plans to develop and implement a national code of conduct for academic integrity and ethical practice in Luxembourg (national interview).
- ES 2.8 There was some evidence from all three national participants that some digital tools are being applied to help with the detection of plagiarism cases in Luxembourg. Ephorus was specifically mentioned by one national participant, but the student participant was not aware of the use of such tools.
- ES 2.9 There were welcome signs that more student training events, perhaps in the form of workshops, were being developed for master’s level and above. However studies elsewhere (Carroll and Appleton 2001, Carroll 2005, Morris 2012, Neville 2010, Park 2003) show that it is critical that all students receive appropriate initial guidance combined with on-going support, which is linked to their study programme and assessment requirements, preferably in a holistic and cohesive manner. According to one respondent, there *“never can be enough information about different types of plagiarism”* (national interview).
- ES 2.10 The multilingual nature of Luxembourg society combined with the diversity of the student population in the University generates specific difficulties that can affect the propensity for plagiarism: *“English has added to plagiarism. If students feel uncomfortable about writing in any language then they are more likely to plagiarise”*. There is a sense in which some students believe that *“English does not belong to anyone”* (national interview).
- ES 2.11 Two respondents talked about *“teacher dialogue for bringing issues into the open”* and a *“culture of discussion”*, *“When facing a problem colleagues bring in their own practices and present to a group of people in this programme. It is absolutely transparent, everything is shared”* (national interviews). Clearly this forum provided an effective means to share good practice and new ideas, but it was not clear how widespread this practice was.

ES 3 Recommendations

ES 3.1 Nationally and institutionally

- ES 3.1.1 It is recommended that Luxembourg develops a set of policies for upholding all aspects of academic integrity to be applied consistently throughout the university and within research institutes. The Policy on Ethics in Research provides an excellent basis for the much wider ranging policy. The policy needs to incorporate:

Guidelines for the whole academic community on assuring academic integrity;

Ethical approval processes (workable and proportional for all levels);

Procedures and responsibilities for detecting, handling and reporting cases of suspected academic misconduct at all levels;

Sanctions and penalties to be applied consistently for different cases and levels;

Policies to encourage good academic practice and specifically for discouraging plagiarism and cheating;

A programme of student and staff development in the area of academic integrity;

Resources for students and staff to promote good practice, either developed or through links to existing resources;

Institutional licenses for digital tools for text match to aid both detection of plagiarism and formative learning of academic writing;

A system for accountability including recording statistics and auditing process and decisions;

Regular audits and reviews of the whole system.

- ES 3.1.2 The University may wish to study some examples of resources, systems and policies developed elsewhere (Carroll and Appleton 2001, CU Harvard Style Guide, JISC Electronic Plagiarism Project, Morris 2012, Neville 2010, Park 2004, Rowell 2009, Tennant and Rowell 2010, Tennant and Duggan 2008).
- ES 3.1.8 Should institutions wish to conduct a more comprehensive survey about academic integrity and plagiarism in Luxembourg, the tried and tested on-line IPPHEAE surveys are available to use for this purpose.

ES 3.2 Individual academics

- ES 3.2.1 Institutional changes generally take a long time to develop, agree, approve and implement. However in the short term it is possible for individual staff working and department heads within faculties to begin to establish and encourage improvement towards good and consistent practices that will be incorporated in the longer term policies. This lower level activity is important because:

It will ensure that there is minimal delay to the process of change;

It is probable that important differences in requirements for different academic subjects will emerge from this pilot exercise that must feed into the final institutional policies that will not be understood otherwise;

The priority focus needs to be about improvements to the student experience and standards of teaching, learning and assessment;

Effective management of change should not be based on top-down delivery.

- ES 3.2.2 Individual academics have a responsibility for upholding standards and quality in all aspects of academic activity, including teaching, setting assessments, grading of work, providing support, guidance and advice to students. This list of activities naturally extends to aspects of academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Given a supportive regime at institutional and national levels, it should be possible for academic staff to
- a) support students to improve independent study, research and writing skills;

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

ES 4 Conclusions

The University of Luxembourg is a young institution that is already developing a reputation for research. The identity of the institution is still forming alongside its processes and systems. It is hoped that this report and associated recommendations are received well and found to be instructive for guiding the way forward in the area of institutional and national academic integrity.

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