



Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in Latvia

Executive Summary

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Lifelong Learning Programme

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ES 1 Background

- ES 1.1 The survey of Higher Education (HE) in Latvia was conducted between June 2011 and June 2013 using on-line questionnaires (students, teachers and senior managers) and national level interviews. The purpose was to check the existence and to explore the effectiveness of policies and systems for assuring academic integrity at bachelor and masters level studies in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of this country.
- ES 1.2 The research findings for the Latvia were based on responses from 26 survey participants from 6 Higher Education Institutions: 16 students, 7 teachers, 2 senior managers and one expert from a national institution.
- ES 1.3 In Latvia are 56 HEIs, 6 of which are universities. In 2012 in Latvia there were about 97,000 students studying in higher education. The structure of students according studies level is following: 81.7% are bachelor's level or Colleges programmes students, 15.7% master's level students and 2.6% doctoral level students.
- ES 1.4 The number of international students in Latvia is comparatively low – only 2.8% from total number of students. 48% of foreign students are residents of EU member states, 31% of Commonwealth of Independent States and the other 21% are residences of the other countries over the world.
- ES 1.5 Institutional and individual academic autonomy of HEIs in Latvia is legally preserved. According legal regulation of functioning of these institutions, HEIs and members of academic community, including students, have to follow the legal regulation on academic integrity and intellectual property protection.
- ES 1.6 Organisation of external evaluation of studies quality and HEIs ability to create, implement and regularly improve the internal quality assurance system in Latvia is delegated to the State Service of Education Quality (SSEQ).
- ES 1.7 No statistical data was available and no official research has been conducted on state level about cases of academic misconduct or plagiarism.

ES 2 Findings

- ES 2.1 51% of students and 4 of 7 teachers participating in the survey agreed that their institution had policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism.
- ES 2.2 Student participants from Latvia were asked about consequences of plagiarising in their assignments: 88% expected only a verbal warning and 38% said there would be zero mark for the assignment. For plagiarising in their projects and final works 56% of students expected to fail the whole programme or degree, 44% said there would be a request to rewrite it properly and 25% would expect to be expelled from the institution.
- ES 2.3 To date only one university was found to use the specialised software tools for text similarities search. Teachers in other universities in Latvia use some open code software tools or information search in internet tools by keywords.



- ES 2.4 38% of student participants believed that decisions on use of digital tools for checking similarities in student written work have been made by lecturer and 4 of 7 teachers participating in the survey agreed with this.
- ES 2.10 68% of student participants said they became aware of plagiarism and learned to cite and reference *“before they started their undergraduate/bachelor degree”* studies.
- ES 2.11 Students from HEIs in Latvia selected *“Web sites”* (63%) and (56%) *“Workshops, classes and lectures”* as the most important sources of information about plagiarism avoidance. When asked about sources of information for other forms of academic dishonesty 44% of students chose *“Workshops, classes and lectures”*.
- ES 2.12 When asked their views on reasons for plagiarism 13 students from 16 selected the same three choices from a list of proposed reasons: *“They think they will not get caught”*, *“It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet”* and *“They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment”*. All teacher participants chose the answer *“It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet”* and senior managers provided the following answers: *“It saves efforts”* and *“Because plagiarism is the easiest way to perform the tasks assigned”*.
- ES 2.13 Answering the question *“What are the reasons for using correct referencing and citation in scholarly academic writing?”* 75% of students chose the answer *“To give credit to the author of the sourced material”* and 63% chose the answer *“To avoid being accused of plagiarism”*.
- ES 2.14 13 of 16 student participants and 6 from 7 of the teacher respondents were unable to identify a clear case of plagiarism provided in a set of scenarios, which suggests both teachers and students in Latvia may be inadvertently committing plagiarism.
- ES 2.15 14 students of 16 participating in the survey provided suggestions on how to deter plagiarism in students' written works. Most interesting was following proposal: *“It is necessary to define precisely what plagiarism is and the penalties should be applied. It is insufficient to provide information about university regulations, but also it is necessary regularly remind students requirements laid in these documents. It is necessary diversification of information for first-year and latest year students, clarification of reasons why students do it (intentionally or unintentionally) and act accordingly. In case of potentially unintentional plagiarism shall be required rewriting of the work and not applied other penalties. Requires more samples what from university point of view is considered as plagiarism and what does not and consultations how to write properly (not all students are able to remember all things after single explanation)”*.

ES 3 Recommendations

ES 3.1 Nationally and internationally

- ES 3.1.1 The creation of repositories for collection and storage of students' written works should be financially supported by the state. This activity requires much time, efforts and financial resources, therefore precludes provision of financing by HEIs from their own resources.
- ES 3.1.2 Legal regulation for encouraging the development and use of digital text matching tools in HEIs should be strengthened. Moreover all HEIs around the country should be required to collect and upload student work for checking against other work in the repository. This will help to safeguard against students resubmitting work prepared by students in other HEI.



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ES 3.1.3 In the longer term the Latvian language repository should be extended to connect to a wide range of other resources, to enable matches against papers in other languages and Internet-based resources.

ES 3.1.4 The national agency for quality and standards (SSEQ) should develop clear guidelines for institutions on what constitute effective policies for upholding academic integrity. They should include scrutiny of institutional policies in the institutional accreditation and audit procedures.

ES 3.2 *Institutionally*

ES 3.2.1 It is recommended that HEIs prepare, adopt and made accessible to students and teachers procedures for fair handling allegations, maintaining oversight and punishment of plagiarism as well as procedures for hearing student appeals.

ES 3.2.2 HEIs in Latvia are advised to organise discussion with participation of academic staff and motivated students about improving students' teaching and training on correct academic writing, citing and referencing and understanding essence of formal requirements. They are advised to make more visible information about policies and procedures for plagiarism prevention and punishment, about services available for students on plagiarism avoiding and intellectual property preservation.

ES 3.2.3 HEIs in Latvia are advised to start collecting students' written works in institutional repositories or, at least, save the work in digital form. This will provide the future possibility to upload them for sharing when a joint repository for storage of students' written works from all HEIs in the country has been created and implemented.

ES 3.2.4 The HEIs are advised to become more engaged in academic staff development, because most of the teachers who responded said they would welcome and benefit from training and discussions about intellectual property rights, plagiarism recognition and prevention and training for students to motivate them to avoid plagiarism.

ES 3.2.5 The HEIs in Latvia are advised to develop policies and procedures for consistent and fair handling of allegations of academic misconduct, including maintaining oversight on the penalties applied. The academic community should be familiarised regularly about results of such monitoring and invited for discussion on this issue.

ES 3.3 *Individual academics*

ES 3.3.1 Teachers are advised to provide advice and guidance on aspects of academic writing, on requirements for citing, end referencing, policies and guidance about sanctions and consequences for academic misconduct and sources of such information, services, available inside institution on these issues and internal divisions or individuals responsible for provisions of these services.

ES 3.3.2 Teachers are requested to be more principled when applying penalties according regulations and precisely follow procedures of punishments, because according the survey 81% of students think they will not get caught and 63% believe there is no teacher control on plagiarism.





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ES 3.3.3 Teachers are recommended to pay more attention on consulting students on proper academic writing because 50% of students participating in the survey expressed interest in having more teaching and training on these issues.

ES4 Conclusions

The low response rate to the survey makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions from this small sample about how plagiarism is being addressed and effectiveness of policies for academic integrity in Latvia. The above recommendations have been drafted to serve as guidance at national, institutional levels and for individual academics, based on what has been found to be effective elsewhere.

The establishment of a national policy in 2010 to reduce plagiarism is an excellent starting point. The SSEQ has an important role to play in providing oversight and leadership for the country as a whole in respect of academic integrity and quality. The autonomous HE and research institutions need to ensure that they have strong, proportional and fair policies and procedures and that these are operating as intended.

To some extent the apparent culture of denial and secrecy about plagiarism, based on fear of reputational damage, may be hampering progress on developing sound strategies for addressing cases of plagiarism and academic misconduct. A more open discussion between academics and managers across educational and research institutions in Latvia is advocated in order to establish a common understanding and purpose and to share ideas and resources. This in turn should ensure that academic standards and practices in Latvian institutions are aligned with those in other countries in Europe and beyond.

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Annex LV-1: Responses to Question 5

| Table 16: Student and teacher responses to questionnaire Question 5 (Latvia) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|---|-------------|---|-------------|----|-----------|---|-------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| Statement | 1. Strongly Disagree | | 2. Disagree | | 3. Not sure | | 4. Agree | | 5. Strongly Agree | | 6. Not applicable | |
| | S | T | S | T | S | T | S | T | S | T | S | T |
| Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing (s5a;t5a) | 2/ 13% | 0 | 2/ 13% | 0 | 5/ 31% | 3 | 6/ 38% | 2 | 1/ 6% | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism (s5c;t5b) | 0 | 0 | 1/ 6% | 1 | 7/ 44% | 2 | 6/ 38% | 3 | 2/ 13% | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention (t5c) | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | 3 | - | 1 | - | 0 |
| I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection (t5d) | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | 2 | - | 2 | - | 1 | - | 0 |
| Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students (s5d;t5e) | 2/ 13% | 1 | 2/ 13% | 0 | 8/ 50% | 2 | 3/ 19% | 2 | 1/ 6% | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff (t5f) | - | 1 | - | 0 | - | 2 | - | 2 | - | 2 | - | 0 |
| Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula (s5e;t5g) | 2/ 13% | 1 | 3/ 19% | 0 | 8/ 50% | 3 | 2/ 13% | 2 | 1/ 6% | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty (s5f;t5h) | 1/ 6% | 1 | 5/ 31% | 2 | 7/ 44% | 0 | 2/ 13% | 3 | 1/ 6% | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism (s5g;t5i) | 1/ 6% | 0 | 2/ 13% | 0 | 12/ 75% | 1 | 1/ 6% | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism (t5j) | - | 0 | - | 1 | - | 3 | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country (t5k) | - | 0 | - | 1 | - | 3 | - | 3 | - | 0 | - | 0 |
| Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs (t5l) | - | 1 | - | 0 | - | 5 | - | 1 | - | 0 | - | 0 |
| The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty (s5h;t5m) | 1/ 6% | 1 | 0 | 0 | 10/ 63% | 4 | 4/ 25% | 1 | 1/ 6% | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes (s5i;t5n) | 1/ 6% | 0 | 2/ 13% | 2 | 3/ 19% | 3 | 6/ 38% | 1 | 4/ 25% | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution (s5j) | 0 | - | 1/ 6% | - | 4/ 25% | - | 6/ 38% | - | 5/ 31% | - | 0 | - |
| I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately) (s5k;t5o) | 1/ 6% | 1 | 6/ 38% | 3 | 6/ 38% | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2/ 13% | 1 | 1/ 6% | 0 |
| I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty (s5b;t5p) | 1/ 6% | 0 | 1/ 6% | 2 | 4/ 25% | 0 | 7/ 44% | 1 | 3/ 19% | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism (s5l;t5q) | 4/ 25% | 2 | 2/ 13% | 2 | 5/ 31% | 2 | 5/ 31% | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student (s5m;t5r) | 3/ 19% | 1 | 3/ 19% | 2 | 4/ 25% | 2 | 5/ 31% | 2 | 1/ 6% | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the required procedures (s5n;t5s) | 0 | 0 | 1/ 6% | 1 | 11/ 69% | 1 | 2/ 13% | 2 | 1/ 6% | 1 | 1/ 6% | 2 |
| It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism (s5o;t5t) | 0 | 1 | 4/ 25% | 0 | 2/ 13% | 1 | 7/ 44% | 3 | 3/ 19% | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism (s5p;t5u) | 0 | 0 | 4/ 25% | 1 | 4/ 25% | 0% | 8/ 50% | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution (s5q) | 1/ 6% | - | 1/ 6% | - | 2/ 13% | - | 4/ 25% | - | 1/ 6% | - | 7/ 44% | - |
| I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism (s5r) | 1/ 6% | - | 3/ 19% | - | 4/ 25% | - | 6/ 38% | - | 2/ 13% | - | 0 | - |