



Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in Malta

Full report

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Plagiarism Policies in Malta

1. Information sources

Sources for information from Malta included

- the three levels of the IPPHEAE on-line surveys;
- Structured interviews with academics, university senior managers and individuals concerned with academic integrity and research at Institutions such as: the University of Malta, the Directorates of Quality Assurance and of Research and Development of the Ministry for Education and Labour (MEL); information was also collected from the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE).
- Documentation provided and on-line evidence.

Interviews were conducted face to face and/or by telephone. Interview questions focused on national and institutional policies and procedures relating to plagiarism prevention and detection in Malta as well as on the educational system in Malta. The number of respondents to different elements of the survey and their affiliations are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of Survey responses								
Country	Student responses	Teacher responses	Senior Management and National		Student Focus Groups		Organisations and Institutions	
Malta (ML)	71	16	6		0		3	
Breakdown of student responses		Home students	Other EU students	Non-EU students	Not known	Bachelor, diploma	Master, doctor	Blank, other
Malta (ML)	71	67	4	0	0	70	1	0

2. Higher Education in Malta

The University of Malta (UOM) is the only Tertiary Education Institution in Malta. It has its origins at the Jesuit Collegium Melitense that was set up in 1592 to cater for non-Jesuit students that wanted to study Philosophy and Theology. After the expulsion of the Jesuit Order from Malta (1768), Grand Master Pinto used the income collected from selling the College property to establish a 'Pubblica Università di Studi Generali' in 1769, and a Collegio Medico in 1771 as one of the faculties of the University. During the period of British occupation, the University underwent a series of changes in its statutes and regulations, which brought the University in line with the Universities in the United Kingdom. The University at present is regulated according to the Maltese Education Act of 1988. Currently the University has 14 faculties, a number of interdisciplinary Centres and Institutes, and a School of Performing Arts. There are 11,000 students of which about 9% are international students. Maltese students, in order to gain entry to the University, must pass the Martication Certificate Examinations organized nationally by the University of Malta.

According to the Maltese NCFHE statistics of the last 10 years (up to 2011), there has been an 80% increase in the number of students (mainly females) enrolled in further and higher education institutions. Malta has had the fastest rate of increase as compared to other EU member country. The number of enrolled students 27,700 (average age 20) was by majority undergraduates (68%; level 6 qualification); 18% postgraduates (level 7) and 1% PhD (mainly males; level 8). A large



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number (58%) of high school graduates followed vocational rather than academic studies and were registered on a part-time rather than on a full time basis (1).

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

(a) Quality Assurance

Since August 2012, the consultancy agency for the Maltese Government on Further and Higher education is the NCFHE. NCFHE has replaced the former entities of the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) and the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC), which merged in 2010. As a single entity, NCFHE acts as an independent research and a consultative agency and has the authority to give licence to providers of Further and Higher Education as well as to audit, validate, rate and accredit programmes of study at national level. The Maltese Government regulations on licensing, accreditation and quality assurance were voted on September 2012 endorsing the 2012 European Regulations for Further and Higher Education including the European Standards for Guidelines and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training. As a result, education in Malta can be considered that it is now in line with the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.

The UOM is self-accredited and completely free to introduce new degree programmes or to end existing ones. As a result of the status of the UOM, the University is required to inform but it does not have to consult the Government. The status of the University is reviewed once every 5 years, a role which is expected to be undertaken together with NCFHE. This is part of the policy of the Maltese Government, which aims to encourage collaborations at institutional level in order to maintain an ongoing relationship with the national Institutions of Higher Education.

University programme accreditation/validation is integrated within the University mechanisms of internal quality assurance (i.e. policies, regulations and procedures). University policies are approved by the Senate and legalized (i.e. become "a Legal Notice") by the Ministry for Education and Labour. Special attention is paid to students' work assessment in one of such policies that contains a reference to plagiarism. In this policy named "The University Assessment Regulations" (2) plagiarism is defined as follows:

"(i) the unacknowledged use, as one's own, of work of another person, whether or not such work has been published, and as may be further elaborated in Faculty or University guidelines, provided that in the case of work by two or more students that is substantially identical, plagiarism shall be deemed to have occurred even if the original source remains undetermined;"

This policy also covers various opportunities for monitoring student plagiarism, cheating and collusion and for administering punishment. Additional tools used by the University of Malta for the management of student plagiarism include:

- A resource pack for students on "How to avoid plagiarism" (3)
- The University of Malta "Plagiarism and Collusion Guidelines" for Students, Academics and Faculties/Institutes/Centres/School (4)
- the "Student Charter" where it is stated that a student is expected to "submit original, referenced work which is your own and never resort to cheating, plagiarism, collusion and fabrication or falsification of data." (5)



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- Special references to plagiarism and penalties in the policies of the various Faculties for the writing/execution of thesis/dissertation, i.e. *“You are not to engage in plagiarism - defined as the unacknowledged use, as one’s own, of work of another person, whether or not such work has been published. Those who are caught plagiarizing or cheating in any other way will have their dissertation marked as Fail and the case will be referred to the University Disciplinary Board”* (6).
- The software tool “TURNITIN” for the use by faculty for checking for plagiarism in students’ assignments/thesis. Students are allowed to run their work through TURNITIN only once (7).

The IPPHEAE survey showed that plagiarism is monitored by faculty who are responsible to refer the student to the Faculty Assessment Disciplinary Board (FADB) that issues an oral or written reprimand if the case that plagiarism is considered to be minor (i.e. less than 8 credits are assigned to the assignment) or it is the student’s first offence. In the case that plagiarism is considered to be major or it is a second or subsequent offence, the FADB must report in writing to the Registrar, and the case referred to the University Assessment Disciplinary Board (UADB) appointed by the Senate. The UADB may give directions to the FADB on the procedures to be used and if there is a breach of regulations, on the penalty to be imposed after taking into consideration the student’s history of cheating and any extenuating circumstances. Policies on plagiarism prevention and procedures for dealing with plagiarism/cheating/collusion are monitored, reviewed and revised by the UOM quality management officer with the input of faculty and members of the Assessment Disciplinary Boards.

(b) Teaching and Learning

Teaching at the UOM is more of the traditional type as students resist the more learner-centred approaches and want to be told what they should know for their exams so that they can pass the course/module. The following comment of a faculty is a good representation of students’ attitude:

“I believe students know that the system works in this country by listening to their lecturers, and then repeating more or less verbatim what they were told in exams. I do not set exams for this reason”.

Although different types of assessment may be used for the various subjects taught at the UOM, the preferred way of assessing students is via formal exams. When teachers were asked to break down the type of assessments that they use, formal exams had a representation as high as 95% in some subjects (range 20-95%). Exams are based on the lecture and lecture notes and/or on the contents of the textbook assigned for the course. Furthermore, formal exams normally carry a greater weight (at least 50%) towards the final grade of the module/course. Course work (i.e. written assignments) is the next in popularity method of assessment (range 10-80%) and it carries on average, a 30% weight. This is followed by the undertaking of projects (the least preferred method; range 5-50%) that has about 20% weight.

The IPPHEAE survey showed that the preferred method by UOM faculty is to give students individual assignments (range 75-85% of total) rather than by assigning collaborative work (range 20-30% of total). According to faculty’s comments, active learning is not so popular to students who prefer the traditional method of a lecture with handout notes. There are some faculty, however, who have



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adopted successfully active learning in their teaching but they are the exception rather than the rule as indicated by the comments of one of them:

"I do not lecture in the conventional way that other teachers lecture in this country. Many students object to my approaches here (in other contexts my approach is called student/learner centred), and I have had complaints - even students accusing me of being dangerous to the country's education system - but on the whole, the brighter students get the message, and on the whole they do ok."

One reason for the majority of faculty sticking to traditional teaching and learning methods could be the fact that themselves have been undergraduates/graduates at the same University. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that they are following tradition rather than venturing into modern ways of teaching. Another reason that most faculty and University administrators support formal exams, is because students have fewer opportunities for plagiarizing. Even though the IPPHEAE survey showed that 50% of the faculty and 36% of students also believe that it is possible to design coursework to reduce students' plagiarizing, this is not what is practiced. Faculty and administrators did admit, however, that exams provide more opportunities for students to cheat. Part of the UOM policy for prevention of cheating and collusion during exams is to assign administrative staff rather than faculty as exam invigilators, thus reducing questions and/or student favouritism by faculty. Furthermore, when a university student gets caught cheating during formal exams, a collateral damage is imposed, i.e. the student fails two study-units rather than one: the one he/she was caught cheating and another one that was successfully completed during the same semester. In addition, when the latter is reassessed, it is considered as a first sit and the previously held credit does no longer count.

4. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism in Malta

The small size of Malta and the fact that there is only one public University (the UOM), and no private Universities, have contributed to an open acknowledgement by faculty and University academic administration of the existence of plagiarism and academic dishonesty in tertiary education, and especially amongst undergraduate students. This in turn, has aided in the development of a UOM policy for research integrity, which can be found in the "University Assessment Regulations" document (discussed above). In contrast, government officials from the Ministry of Education and Labour and the NCFHE, when interviewed, were more reserved in admitting and/or discussing the possibility that plagiarism could be a problem in tertiary education. Some gave the impression that they were not aware that the University has to inform the Ministry about cases of plagiarism or that national statistics on plagiarism are kept. There was a strong feeling of belief that the UOM was capable of dealing adequately with the phenomenon of plagiarism and with plagiarism detection, prevention and administering penalties.

Government administrators (the Maltese Ministry of Education and Labour) felt that there is no need for any national policy on plagiarism to be imposed by the Ministry or other national QA bodies since the UOM is self governed. Indeed a greater proportion of faculty in Malta as compared to other EU member countries surveyed, agreed that the University is taking a serious approach to plagiarism prevention and detection (average $50 \pm 6\%$ vs. $30 \pm 5\%$). Furthermore, about 22% of faculty knew with certainty (strongly agree) that there was no national policy or national monitoring of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, whereas in other EU countries surveyed, only a 12% of faculty were certain; the majority (more than 50%) of faculty in other EU countries were "not sure".



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These results suggest that the UOM faculty have a greater trust in the University to deal with plagiarism than their European counterparts.

Only a proportion of the UOM students and faculty (60% and 62%, respectively), stated that they were aware of the existence of a University policy and procedures that deal with plagiarism. A 15% of UOM students stated that they were “not sure”. The percentage of unsure students more than doubled (>30%) in most of the other EU countries surveyed. In addition, only half of each UOM group (faculty or students) were certain that documentation about policies were available and could be accessed by students and/or faculty. This was surprising since the UOM policy on plagiarism and academic integrity (“The University Assessment Regulations”), the guidelines as well as other documents for students on how to avoid plagiarism and collusion (1-4), are available in the Web for access by all members of the University. Furthermore, in the beginning of each academic year, the policy document on plagiarism is sent to each student as a reminder. It would appear that the UOM is more effective in communicating its policy on plagiarism to students and faculty as compared to the rest of the EU member countries. It is also possible, however, that the study year of students who participated in the survey may have distorted the picture. First year students (28% UOM vs. 42% in English speaking EU member countries) may not be exposed as yet to academic writing and/or citing and referencing or to the relevant policies on plagiarism prevention and punishment. More effective ways to promote such information to first year students may be needed.

When officials from the Ministry of Education were questioned, it was evident that they were aware that even in the new “National Curriculum Framework for All” prepared in 2012 (8), there is no specific reference to an early acquisition of skills on how to avoid plagiarism. They did acknowledge, however, that nowadays even student in primary education know how to download a lot of material from the internet for their assignments. Furthermore, they acknowledged that one of the students’ learning outcomes in the National Curriculum: “the engagement with digital literacy as a means of retrieving data as well as representing and communicating ideas”, could be mistaken as promoting plagiarism by some. Some but not all were convinced, however, that students, especially those in secondary education are advised by teachers not to plagiarize in assignments and not to use information without acknowledgement of the source. The students’ prior knowledge of plagiarism (before entry to UOM) was confirmed by the survey results, which showed that indeed more than 50% of students of the UOM knew about plagiarism before starting University. Half of the students (51%) who participated in the survey stated that they had become aware of plagiarism through Course booklet/student guide/handbook. About 30% of them said the same for academic dishonesty. This was in disagreement with the opinion of faculty who thought that students became aware of plagiarism (34%) and academic dishonesty (37%) through the Workshop/class/lecture. The Web was next in the choice of either faculty or students as the source of awareness of plagiarism.

All UOM students are trained to cite and write references in a specific reference style as well as to paraphrase during a course/module on Research Methods and this is part of the UOM policy on Teaching and Learning endorsed by Parliament. The IPPHEAE results showed that the majority (74%) of students have acquired the skills of how to cite and reference during their undergraduate years. About one third (36%) of students also stated to have received formal training in scholarly academic writing and plagiarism issues, and this was verified by faculty who stated that students are given feedback on plagiarism and taught how to paraphrase for at least one of their assignment. Not unduly the attitude of faculty towards students, however, is that of mistrust. According to the IPPHEAE survey more than 60% of the faculty stated that students are required to sign a declaration about the originality of any work submitted. The percentage of Maltese students having received



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training was about 10-15% lower than that estimated for the Western EU-member countries but by about that much higher than that obtained for students from Eastern EU-member countries. In contrast, faculty formal training on plagiarism detection and prevention has not been part of the UOM's policy. As stated by the UOM administrators interviewed, the University is currently thinking of setting up an induction course on plagiarism for faculty, to be administered by the "Teaching and Learning Unit" of the University.

Half of the UOM faculty (50%) and about a third of UOM students (36%) agree that it is possible to design coursework to reduce students' plagiarism. Advice from faculty or from a tutor during a course on how to avoid plagiarism, were the most popular answers given by both students and faculty in Malta when they were asked about the services for plagiarism prevention. This was also the case for the English speaking EU-countries surveyed. A large percentage of the UOM students and faculty (40-43%; Table 2) agreed that they would like to have more training on plagiarism avoidance and on academic dishonesty. More feedback through practice on assignments was specifically suggested by the UOM students as a way to learn how to avoid plagiarism. However, in contrast to students (0%), about one quarter of the UOM faculty disagreed with the notion of receiving such training (Table 2). Similarly, the opinions of faculty from Universities from other English speaking countries surveyed, were split regarding this matter (Table 2).

TABLE 2.				
Q. I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty				
	Maltese Students	EU English speaking students	Faculty in Malta	EU English speaking faculty
Strongly Disagree:	0.00%	4.00%	12.50%	11.20%
Disagree:	7.50%	20.40%	25.00%	32.20%
Not sure:	19.40%	16.40%	0.00%	15.80%
Agree:	40.30%	35.60%	43.80%	31.60%
Strongly Agree:	26.90%	22.10%	12.50%	7.20%
Not applicable:	6.00%	1.60%	6.20%	2.00%

When some UOM faculty were questioned informally as to why they might disagree to such training, it became apparent that a statement of agreement would have meant that they admitted to having had plagiarized/been dishonest in the past. However, almost a quarter of the faculty who responded to the survey admitted that they may have plagiarized. This notion was also shared by the UOM students, 20% of which were strongly convinced that faculty plagiarize. This percentage was comparable with that obtained for other English speaking and western EU-countries but higher (by 10-15%) than that obtained for most of the Eastern countries surveyed. The majority of the students answered instead that they were not sure, most likely because they may have been afraid to "accuse" their teachers of plagiarism or agnostic about the meaning of plagiarism.

Research on the reasons for plagiarizing, showed that the UOM students and faculty agreed overall on the most likely reasons that may lead students to plagiarism (Table 3). The ease of "cutting and pasting from the Internet" and thinking "you are not going to get caught" were highly scored by students and even higher by faculty. More students than faculty chose the "Not been able to express another person's ideas in own words" reason for plagiarizing. Apparently, this reason is also the most often used one by students in their defense when they are brought to the UADB for plagiarism. In comparison, the students from other English speaking EU-countries chose more often



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the “run out of time” reason for plagiarizing. This reason was third in the choice of faculty from these countries (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Percent scores for the top 5/10 most common reasons given for plagiarizing				
Q. What leads students to decide to plagiarize?	% of total scores given			
	UOM students	English speaking EU-students	UOM faculty	English speaking EU-faculty
They can't express another person's ideas in their own words:	9.20	7.74	9.52	7.89
It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet:	8.85	8.20	11.90	9.80
They think they will not get caught:	8.14	8.15	11.11	9.88
They don't understand how to cite and reference:	7.96	7.54	7.14	7.01
They run out of time:	6.73	8.50	5.55	8.13

Although Maltese is the national language and 100% of the Maltese people speak it, it is English that is used instead as the co-official language in secondary and tertiary education. According to the Ministry of Education and Labor spokesmen, the language should not be an excuse for Maltese students to resort to plagiarism but it could be for foreign students with poor English.

From the feedback comments of faculty, like these below, it would seem that there are faculty who share the notion that students will not have to plagiarize if they are taught how they can be creators of original things by questioning, looking at things from a different angle/perspective and coming up with a renewed/different alternative to what they were looking at.

“I also tell my students that if they cheat, they are probably going to get away with it with me, but in the end, they are only cheating themselves because they are shortchanging their own learning process. I am not interested in being a gate keeper for the rest of society's ideas of who is a bright student or not, however, by ensuring that all my students who get distinctions and credits are indeed the absolute originators and creators of their work. i dont buy into the idea of originality in the sense that originality, creativity, and authenticity are or can be attributed to private individual according to some innate talent or intelligence that they may have”.

5. Dealing with plagiarism cases

According to the UOM administrators, minor cases of plagiarism are dealt by the faculty and may differ in the severity of punishment administered (issue an oral or written reprimand, a fine of 150 euro and/or reduce the mark and/or give a zero with or without the possibility of reassessment or upon reassessment getting no more than a mark of 45%) (1). Furthermore a number of factors may be taken into consideration as for example the nationality of the student, the student’s language skills and whether it is the student’s first offence or not. As discussed earlier, more severe cases or in the case of second or subsequent offences they are dealt by the UADB. All records are kept and



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the Rector is informed via a copy of the decision of the UADB. Keeping good records and following procedure during cases of serious plagiarism and/or cheating, is specifically emphasized by the UOM, as there have been cases where the University was taken to court by students.

Further information about penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty is contained in the UOM policy for a project/thesis/dissertation. If plagiarism is detected after a piece of work has been published or an award has been conferred by the UOM, the results/award can be annulled and/or the award can be withdrawn. In the case of a B.Sc./M.Sc. dissertation the student may be allowed to redo this but he/she must choose another subject for the thesis. In the case of a PhD thesis, however, the student is expelled and banned from the University for up to 10 years. All cases of plagiarism/academic integrity which result in the expulsion of a student have to be reported to the Maltese Ministry of Education and Labour.

During 2012, the UADB of the University of Malta dealt with 24 cases of plagiarism and 65 cases of other incidents like collusion, cheating during exams etc. During the same year another 24 cases of plagiarism were dealt with internally at the Faculties/Institutes/Centres. According to the UOM administration, many of the plagiarism cases reported concerned Eastern Europeans and students from the Middle East. Both faculty and University administrators admitted that there are also additional cases of plagiarism and cheating between undergraduates as well as graduates, but these remain unreported. Plagiarism incidents may not be reported to the UADB because faculty are either embarrassed, afraid for the effect it will have on their image or afraid of a litigation against them by the student. Some faculty may choose to deal with the case themselves privately or even ignore it. The percentage of plagiarism incidents in students' assignments as reported by faculty ranged from 0 to 20%.

More students than faculty (44.8% vs. 37%) admitted that they were not sure whether penalties for plagiarism were administered according to a standard formula or whether penalties apply differently for cases of plagiarism vs. cases of dishonesty. More than 50% of faculty and students were also not sure as to whether the student's special circumstances were taken into consideration. These results suggested that plagiarism detection and punishment is neither well known to the wider UOM community nor it is applied in a consistent manner. Because of this, students may get the impression that they can get away with plagiarism. Access through a web based archive of plagiarism cases, where anonymity is preserved, may provide the means of students getting informed about the consequences of plagiarizing and resort less to it. Furthermore, such a database may encourage faculty and help them deal with plagiarism in a consistent manner.

When students and faculty were asked to choose the type of penalty (10 choices out of 14) to be imposed if a student were to be found guilty of plagiarism in an assignment or in a final project/dissertation, the answers varied (Table 4). The responses of UOM students and faculty followed almost the same trend as those from other English speaking EU countries that participated in the survey. Overall both, students and faculty, chose more lenient punishments for plagiarizing in assignments than in dissertations. More severe penalties, such as those in 8 to 14 (Table 4), which deal with suspension/expulsion/humiliation etc. were chosen considerably fewer times by both groups as compared to the penalties 1 to 7 (Table 4). However, faculty were more willing than students to impose such penalties, i.e. 9, 11 and 12. This is not surprising considering that students would be the recipients of the punishment.

The penalties chosen most often by students for plagiarizing in assignments were in order of decreasing frequency: *'rewrite'*, *'repeat the module/subject'*, *'zero mark'*, *'formal warning'*, *'verbal warning'* and *'no action'*. Those chosen by faculty were *'zero marks'*, *'the request to rewrite'* and *'warnings'* (verbal and in writing) (Table 4). For plagiarizing in project and/or dissertation, students were overall less lenient in the penalties that they gave. *"Fail the module/subject"* for plagiarism in dissertation was chosen more frequently by UOM faculty than by faculty from other English speaking countries surveyed. It is of interest to note that *"Expose the student to school community"* was not chosen at all by the UOM faculty and was chosen less frequently (<2.0%) by faculty from English speaking countries.

TABLE 4: Percent frequencies of penalties chosen by students and faculty for plagiarism								
Penalty	Assignment				Project or Dissertation			
	% of total scores				% of total scores			
	UOM students	English speaking EU-student	UOM faculty	English speaking EU-faculty	UOM students	English speaking EU-student	UOM faculty	English speaking EU-faculty
1. No action would be taken	9.0	4.7	6.1	3.3	2.1	1.4	3.6	1.4
2. Verbal warning	11.8	12.4	15.4	12	8.9	4.3	1.8	6.1
3. Formal warning letter	13.1	9.8	10.8	9.8	16.7	13.4	5.4	9.1
4. Request to re write it properly	16.7	13.4	13.8	13.7	13.6	8.2	12.5	11.8
5. Zero mark for the work	14.0	14.1	15.4	18.6	8.1	11.8	8.9	13.8
6. Repeat the module or subject	14.9	10.0	12.3	11.4	14.9	9.4	14.0	12.0
7. Fail the module or subject	3.2	10.8	12.3	11.7	8.3	12.5	17.8	13.2
8. Repeat the whole year of study	2.3	3.4	3.1	3.1	9.1	6.5	8.9	5.2
9. Fail the whole programme or degree	2.3	3.5	3.1	3.7	3.8	9.9	8.9	8.2
10. Expose the student to school community	3.6	3.6	0	1.1	7.7	4.9	0	1.7
11. Suspended from the institution	2.7	4.5	3.1	4.4	6.0	8.0	10.7	7.0
12. Expelled from the institution	3.2	3.5	1.5	3.4	4.7	8.1	5.4	6.3
13. Suspend payment of student grant	3.2	3.2	0	0.6	3.4	4.8	0	0.7
14. Other	0	0	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.8	1.8	3.2

Digital tools

In the last couple of years the UOM is using the TURNITIN digital tool to aid faculty with the detection of plagiarism. Teachers are encouraged to use the tool and students are allowed to submit their work once for a pre-check on plagiarism before handing it in. Only 53% of the students named TURNITIN as a tool although there were another 10% who used the general word "a software". Furthermore, 81% of the UOM faculty were wrong with regard to the TURNITIN capabilities and only 67% knew that it was supported institutionally suggesting that perhaps further faculty training may be required to realize the full potential of this tool. Additional comments from students and faculty on how to reduce students' plagiarism are shown in Table 5 and Table 6, respectively. It is interesting to note that most of the students suggestions were the provision of training on academic writing, increase awareness and access to software tools to check for plagiarism, suggesting that present arrangements/provisions were not enough. Faculty also agreed on training on academic writing but

were not very keen to making plagiarism detection tools available to students. It is of interest that one of the faculty made a strong point on replacement of traditional ways of student assessment (i.e. exams, essays) with continuous assessment based on student's performance and activity in class, as the means of reducing plagiarism.

Table 5: Student feedback on how to reduce student plagiarism	Number of responses
Advice on academic writing skills, using examples, walk-throughs, building confidence	13
Increase awareness of plagiarism	7
Student access to Turnitin for checking work prior to submission	7
More training on citing and referencing	6
Always tell students when submitting assignment titles that plagiarism is not accepted.	1
Provide sources for information and for understanding the assignment	4
Teach students to think	1
Double check for references	1

Table 6: Faculty feedback on how to reduce student plagiarism	Number of responses
Inform students of benefits of properly paraphrasing and citing the work of others; have study units on writing skills	3
Encourage and Train lecturers to detect and report plagiarism	3
Should be compulsory to submit assignments/dissertation through a centralized system before it reaches examiner.	2
Warn/advice students beforehand that you are going to check the assignment/dissertation for plagiarism.	2
Sensitize students to believe plagiarism is theft/dishonesty	2
Making plagiarism detection software available to students	1
Reduction of reliance on exams and essays as proof of student learning. Emphasis on continuous assessment based on student performance and activity in class/workshop/tutorial rather than supposed gaining of knowledge through lecture/book/essay dissemination. Emphasis on educational experience rather than intensive exam/essay type assessment. emphasis on student directed activity rather than teacher centred lectures/classes.	1

5. Perceptions and understanding of Plagiarism

Students understanding of basic academic writing conventions are shown in Table 7. Although 45% of students said that they were confident in using the citation and referencing system required at UOM, only a quarter of students chose the answer that correctly justified the use of referencing and citation (Table 7). Furthermore, only a quarter of students were confident of their understanding about the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism.

Table 7: Students' preferred reasons for referencing and citation in scholarly academic work	
Reason	% preference
To avoid being accused of plagiarism	18
To show you have read some relevant research papers	21
To give credit to the author of the sourced material	25
To strengthen and give authority to your writing	25
Because you are given credit/marks for doing so	10
I don't know	1.0

When students were questioned about difficulties regarding academic writing, "paraphrasing" and "finding good quality sources" were chosen more often followed by "understanding different referencing formats and styles" (Table 8).

Table 8: Student difficulties with academic writing	
Difficulty	% scores
Finding good quality sources	27
Referencing and citation	15
Paraphrasing	28
Understanding different referencing formats and styles	25
Other	5

The latter along with the fact that 74% of students stated to have acquired the skills of citation and referencing during their undergraduate years with 45% been confident in using the reference style at UOM, suggest that students may require more training in citing at the correct place within an academic text rather than using the correct style.

Results from the survey questions that explored students' and teachers' views on what constitutes plagiarism and how serious a case is for administering "punishment" are shown in Tables 9 and 10, respectively. All case scenarios (a-f) can be categorized as plagiarism, as 40% of the coursework is stated to be identical to another work.

Table 9. Percent (%) student answers to what constitutes plagiarism					
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	Is it plagiarism?				Punishment? YES
	Yes, Serious	Yes	No	Don't know	
a. word for word with no quotations	90%	10%	0%	0%	96%
a. word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations	21%	51%	25%	3%	70%
c. word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations	6%	38%	35%	21%	74%
d. with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations	25%	42%	25%	8%	58%
e. with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations	6%	39%	39%	16%	40%
f. with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations	3%	12%	33%	52%	9%

Table 10. Percent (%) UOM faculty answers to what constitutes plagiarism					
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	Is it plagiarism?				Punishment? YES
	Yes, Serious	Yes	No	Don't know	
a. word for word with no quotations	89%	11%	1%	0%	98%
b. word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations	31%	54%	14%	1%	81%
c. word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations	7%	53%	17%	23%	44%
d. with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations	49%	41%	9%	1%	86%
e. with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations	15%	57%	25%	3%	63%
f. with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations	3%	36%	27%	34%	26%



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The results (Table 9, 10) show that both, student and faculty who responded to the questionnaires followed the same trend in their choice of answers although students' chose "No plagiarism" more often than the teachers in all six cases. It is of interest to note that the inclusion of the correct references and citation when only some words were changed was neither considered serious (by both students and faculty) nor as a punishable case. Furthermore, although some cases (i.e. case c, Table 10) were considered to be plagiarism, the percentage of answers for punishment did not tally. These results are significant especially with regard to students' and more seriously to faculty's perception of the originality of work and the use of citations and referencing. It would appear that not only students' but also faculty's perception of plagiarism are wrong which also makes one question the faculty's expectations from students about the originality of the work. It should be noted that 36% of the faculty and 40% of student were not sure if translation across languages can be used to avoid detection of plagiarism, which raises concern about the lack of awareness/understanding in teachers regarding this type of misconduct.

6. Discussion

It is clear from the feedback received during the survey, that the UOM have recognized that plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty do take place. They have truly committed themselves and taken extra steps to discourage plagiarism and academic dishonesty by setting up policy and procedures for informing the students about plagiarism, monitoring plagiarism using the software tool TURNITIN, and administering punishment through the appropriate assessment bodies. The system of detection appears to be working since quite a few cases are been reported every year. However, there seem to be several cases that remain unreported indicating that the subject may be "taboo" for some faculty. The faculty's reluctance may not be due to their inexperience in detecting plagiarism but rather due to considering this an embarrassment to their teaching capabilities. Some may also be discouraged since they need to have their case well documented before going public so that any litigation actions by the students is not likely to occur.

The results at all levels, however, indicated that both faculty and students may need further support: faculty to receive more training on how to detect plagiarism, the use of the TURNITIN software as well as of student-centered teaching and learning methods that will help students to become free thinkers and produce original work using the resources available. Students also need support in developing their skills for academic writing as early as possible so that they do not have to resort to plagiarism.

7. Recommendations for Malta

Nationally:

Ensure that Maltese students are introduced to the ethical considerations and notion of avoiding plagiarism during early education and before they enter the University.

Provide funding for research and development of good practice in teaching and learning to support academic integrity;

Institutionally:



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Continue to ensure that academic misconduct within the UOM is identified and dealt with according to the UOM policy; encourage academic faculty to report on academic misconduct.

Provide compulsory training opportunities for students so that academic writing, citation and referencing skills are embedded in a systematic way that can help them avoid plagiarism.

Ensure that students are taught the ethics of academic honesty and provide assignments for students to develop their own creative thinking.

Draw students' attention to the sites where the various policies on academic dishonesty are publicized to increase their awareness of the consequences of academic misconduct.

Encourage the use of software tools by faculty for plagiarism detection (e.g. TURNITIN) and also for demonstrating to students how to develop their writing without plagiarizing;

Provide opportunities for faculty development of academic integrity and for training in current teaching and learning methods to take a student-centered approach and empower students for original thinking.

Individual academics:

Support and guide students in the development of academic writing skill and proper use of academic sources through citations and referencing;

Take the appropriate action in the case of detecting academic dishonesty like plagiarism, collusion and ghost-writing;

Promote the type of assignments that will empower students to original academic writing.

8. Conclusions

The research in Malta involved a relatively small sample of people. However, the openness of the UOM administrators regarding plagiarism and their awareness and care to reduce it have revealed a very well set up system which is active and supported by the government. Representatives from all levels were supportive of the need to reduce academic misconduct per se and improve the standards of the Higher Education System of the country.

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