

# Chapter 3

## Comparison of Institutional Strategies for Academic Integrity in Europe and Eurasia



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**Abstract** This paper presents and compares selected results based on questionnaire responses from higher education teachers and students across 38 countries in Europe and Eurasia, conducted between 2010 and 2019. The research explored national and institutional perceptions and approaches to academic integrity, particularly focusing on plagiarism and academic misconduct by students.

Ideally, all higher education institutions should have an overarching strategy for managing academic integrity breaches by students. Policies, procedures and sanctions relating to academic integrity should be fair, consistently applied and transparent. This should be backed by national oversight, guidance and support. If there is no institution-wide consciousness, involving the whole community, about the importance of detecting and deterring academic misconduct by students, then certainly standards and quality of the education and research provision are at risk.

The results presented here demonstrate that many of the countries and institutions that were the subject of this study fall far short of the ideal described above. We suggest what can be done to improve the situation in those countries and present evidence of a few signs of progress since the research was conducted.

**Keywords** Academic integrity strategy · Policies and procedures · Higher education · Europe · Eurasia

## Background

Publications about strategies and policies for academic integrity often refer to a “western” approach, but all the research on this topic confirms that there are great disparities in how academic integrity and academic conduct are perceived and

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managed. These disparities are not just between countries, but often between higher education institutions within one country and sometimes across different parts of the same institution (Glendinning, 2016; Foltýnek et al., 2017; Tennant & Duggan, 2008; Tennant & Rowell, 2010).

The globalised nature of higher education means that students relocating to study in a different country bring with them educational traditions and cultural norms they learned from their earlier education, which may not always be compatible with the expectations of their new situation. It is useful to understand the differences in both perceptions and expectations in different parts of the world so that appropriate guidance can be provided, adjustments can be made and experiences shared.

The observed differences reflect varying perceptions about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable academic conduct and practice. This also impacts on differences in how students are supported and guided, what sanctions are applied and how they are levied and decided, which in turn influences how graduates perceive ethical and unethical conduct in their personal and professional lives. As access to higher education has expanded substantially over the last 20 years throughout the world, the role of higher education in shaping values of integrity and ethics in public and private life has never been more important.

Three research projects, based on the same data collection instruments, were conducted between October 2010 and December 2019, to compare approaches to academic integrity in 38 different countries across Europe and Eurasia. The research was supported by funding from the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The results for the first two projects have been published already, firstly as study of 27 European Union countries (IPPHEAE, n.d.); secondly a study of six countries in south-eastern Europe (SEEPPIAI, n.d.). Results from the third project, covering Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Türkiye, are due to be published shortly (PAICKT, n.d.).

The objectives of the studies were to

- identify and analyse policies and practices with regard to plagiarism and academic integrity
- identify gaps and challenges, but also examples of good practice and success stories that can be shared
- propose guidelines to serve as a reference basis for promoting capacity building in higher education and/or peer learning

This paper compares selected results from all three projects as a single data set. A sub-set of these results were presented to the participants of a (virtual) workshop in June 2021 at the 6th ENAI Conference on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism. The selected data comprises questionnaire responses from students and teachers to questions about institutional strategies and policies. The comparison not only highlights differences in national situations, but also differences between teachers' and students' responses.

## Limitations

The first project IPPHEAE was very much focused on “policies for plagiarism”, which was our priority in 2009 when the project was conceived. During the first project we made connections with the global community of researchers in this field. We discovered the benefits of adopting a more positive approach, referring to academic integrity when possible rather than plagiarism and academic misconduct. For the subsequent research we wanted to compare results across projects, therefore we maintained some of the same questions, including many questions referring to plagiarism. However, we added some new questions, for example, about contract cheating and institutional strategies. We also refined the wording and format of several questions to make them clearer for participants and easier for us to analyse. Any differences in wording between the three projects are explained in the analysis.

When interpreting the results, it must be understood that the three phases of the data collection cover a period of 9 years, therefore responses are not contemporaneous across countries. The situation in some of the countries in the earlier studies has certainly improved since that time. However, we believe that this comparison is still valuable.

## Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted for the research, focused on the higher education sector in the 38 countries under study. We were specifically interested in strategies and policies adopted by different countries nationally, regionally and institutionally relating to student plagiarism, academic (mis)conduct and academic integrity. Although the initial project set out to explore bachelor and taught master’s degrees, the data collected in all three projects also included some information about research degrees and misconduct by academics.

The research instruments were

- On-line questionnaires, translated into most (but not all) languages of the countries under study, (using the BOS (now Jisc) online survey platform), with separate questions for students, teachers and managers;
- Student focus groups, using semi-structured prompts, where possible, were facilitated by a trained student researcher;
- Semi-structured interviews with teachers, managers and representatives of national and regional HE organisations.

Ethical approval for all the research was granted in three stages by Coventry University.

The research teams visited many of the countries under study and provided workshops and presentations on academic integrity for participating institutions, to academics, managers, administrative staff, students or mixed audiences.

This analysis focuses just on the questionnaire responses from academics/teachers and students about policies in higher education institutions. Citations indicate which of the analysis has been published in previous research reports, and which statistics are previously unpublished.

For clarity, what we mean by a strategy, relates to whether there is an overarching approach towards integrity or misconduct at either national or institutional level and if so the nature of that strategy – for example, is it morality or ethically focused, educative or punitive. Strategies may be included in institutional mission statements, aims and objectives. Policies relate to how the strategy is framed and monitored within formal regulations. Procedures are about method of delivery at the operational level.

## **Analysis: Reasons for Plagiarism**

When designing an institutional strategy for academic integrity it is important to understand why students resort to cheating. This intelligence can help to inform the decisions about what approach would be most appropriate for the institution and what activities to prioritise. A question included on all three questionnaires listed a set of possible reasons for plagiarism, largely derived from earlier research on the same topic and from personal experiences of the researchers. Participants were asked to select as many reasons as they wished, answering the question “what leads students to decide to plagiarise?”, focusing on what they believed to be the most common reasons. Some of these reasons are about lack of skills and knowledge (suggesting more guidance and education is needed on academic writing etc.), some reasons are about attitudes of students and their teachers (implying that guidance is needed to reinforce ethical values across the academic community) and others are about deliberate actions to gain an unfair advantage (where a combination of rigorous sanctions, with education and personal support could be considered to deter misconduct). In reality, most institutional responses are likely to include a mixture of these elements. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 summarise responses from teachers and students (new analysis).

It is noteworthy that when taken as a single dataset, students’ responses reveal some differences in viewpoints from the academic/teachers’ responses (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2). Although there is broad agreement (79% teachers, 62% students) overall about the ease of “cut and paste” culture providing the opportunity for plagiarism, the most popular reason from students in the PAICKT study, was “they think they will not get caught”, selected by 69% of students (unpublished analysis), which concerns the attitudes of both students and their teachers.

Although inappropriate collusion between students is seen as a major problem in some countries, when considered overall, only 22% of teachers and 13% students selected this option, compared to 41% of teachers and 7% of students from the United Kingdom (unpublished analysis). There are other notable discrepancies between teacher and student responses, including “they run out of time” (40%

**Table 3.1** Reasons for plagiarism: teachers, 33 countries, n = 1173 – new analysis

#	%	Reason for student plagiarism	Category
925	79	It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet	Opportunity
858	73	They think they will not get caught	Attitude
685	58	They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment:	Attitude
584	50	They can't express another person's ideas in their own words	Skills
581	49	Plagiarism is not seen as wrong	Attitude
559	48	They think the lecturer will not care	Attitude
552	47	They don't understand how to cite and reference	Skills
465	40	They run out of time	Expediency
398	34	They are not aware of penalties (or consequences)	Understanding
384	33	Their reading comprehension skills are weak	Skills
381	32	They have always written like that	Skills
319	27	They are unable to cope with the workload	Expediency
263	22	They don't see the difference between group work and collusion	Understanding
258	22	They think their written work is not good enough	Expediency
256	22	There is no teacher control on plagiarism	Opportunity
177	15	Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments	Expediency
167	14	They feel the task is completely beyond their ability	Attitude
101	9	Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood	Expediency
90	8	They feel external pressure to succeed	Expediency

**Table 3.2** Reasons for plagiarism: students, 38 countries, n = 5356 – new analysis

#	%	Reason for student plagiarism	Category
3312	62	It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet	Opportunity
2970	55	They think they will not get caught	Attitude
2885	54	They run out of time	Expediency
2681	50	They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment	Attitude
2418	45	They can't express another person's ideas in their own words	Skills
2356	44	They don't understand how to cite and reference	Skills
2121	40	They are unable to cope with the workload	Expediency
2014	38	They are not aware of penalties (or consequences)	Understanding
1770	33	Plagiarism is not seen as wrong	Attitude
1690	32	They think the lecturer will not care	Attitude
1602	30	They have always written like that	Skills
1567	29	They think their written work is not good enough	Expediency
1519	28	They feel the task is completely beyond their ability	Attitude
1379	26	Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood	Expediency
1317	25	Their reading comprehension skills are weak	Skills
1223	23	Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments	Expediency
1199	22	They feel external pressure to succeed	Expediency
991	19	There is no teacher control on plagiarism	Opportunity
719	13	They don't see the difference between group work and collusion	Understanding

teachers, 54% students), “plagiarism is not seen as wrong” (49% teachers, 33% students) and “they think the lecturer will not care” (48% teachers, 32% students).

The reasons for plagiarism shown in these two charts have been each categorised as one of the following: student /teacher attitudes, opportunities, expediency (resorting to plagiarism as a way of coping), lack of skills and understanding. Although the overall most common reason selected by both 79% of teachers and 62% of students is about opportunity, by aggregating the reasons selected by participants according to category, the most common reasons for teachers and students relate to students’ attitudes. The second most popular reasons for students are about expediency, but the second category for teachers is about lack of students’ skills.

An additional reason for plagiarism added to the list of options for SEEPPAI and PAICKT, after “other” feedback from the earlier IPPHEAE participants, was “they are lazy or have other priorities”. This option was selected by 34% of students and 43% of teachers who were given that option. This option was categorised as “attitude”.

This analysis, particularly where teacher and student perceptions differ, helps to highlight the importance of effective communication between students and teachers about understanding and avoiding plagiarism. This knowledge will also help to inform the institution on appropriate support measures that may help to reduce misconduct. As plagiarism is typically the most common form of student cheating, appreciating the reasons for plagiarism in different parts of the world should help to inform local institutional strategies and perhaps influence national priorities for addressing all forms of academic misconduct.

## **Analysis: Strategies**

In addition to exploring what was happening within institutions, the research explored whether there was an overarching national or institutional strategy relating to academic integrity and if so, to ascertain the basis for the strategic direction. Sadly, very few of the countries studied had anything that could be identified as a national strategy.

From the 27 European Union countries studied for IPPHEAE, (this was prior to July 2013 when Croatia joined the EU), the only evidence of interventions or data relating to academic integrity at national level came from UK, Sweden, Slovakia and Austria. Since that time there have been some developments and progress at national level on academic quality and integrity in many other EU countries, including Lithuania, Slovenia and Czechia, but much more attention is needed in every country studied.

The six SEEPPAI countries, together with the five Eurasian countries researched for PAICKT, had all been the subject of earlier studies by the Council of Europe, European Commission and other organisations, (such as IIEP/UNESCO, Transparency International), many relating to anti-corruption strategies. Although none of the Western Balkan countries studied under SEEPPAI had any relevant

strategy at the time of the data collection 2016–17, it is encouraging that Montenegro has since developed a national strategy for academic integrity (CoE News, 2018), which is now being implemented.

In the most recent research, we found strong evidence of developments at national and institutional levels in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan relating to integrity in higher education. Kazakhstan provided a very interesting example of a government-led Academic Integrity League, consisting of a network of universities all pledging to promote integrity and share intelligence (PAICKT, n.d., p. 45).

These developments were the direct result of earlier projects and interventions. However, the comparison between student, teacher and manager responses in all five PAICKT countries, together with interview data, suggested lack of commitment, superficiality and selectivity in the way the changes are being accepted and implemented by some people and institutions.

Should there be an institutional strategy? We believe that every institution needs to be clear to staff and students what stance it is adopting relating to academic integrity. In our institution, for example, we are clearly promoting a positive strategy of providing education about and towards academic integrity, throughout the student journey, backed by consistently applied institutional procedures and strong but fair sanctions, including mandatory extra training for students who make mistakes.

## **Analysis: Policies**

The research was looking for evidence of policies in different countries and institutions, initially focusing on plagiarism and later more broadly and positively asking about academic integrity. We were keen to discover whether any national and institutional policies were working as intended and whether related procedures and responsibilities were consistently understood and applied.

In certain countries, particularly Finland, France and Poland, there was a focus on integrity in postgraduate education and research, with far less concern about conduct by undergraduate students than in, say, United Kingdom. However, the recommendations to all countries surveyed was to start developing students' appreciation of academic integrity and associated skills much earlier in their education.

Few educationalists and researchers would disagree that the policies and procedures relating to academic conduct should be fair, consistently applied and transparent to all parties involved. In addition, anyone involved in designing and implementing the policies must be accountable for their actions and subject to the highest standards of academic and ethical conduct.

This then leads to a question about what is included under the term “academic integrity policies” within an institution. Our view is that academic integrity is central to an institution's processes for quality and standards because without integrity in education and research, there is insecurity on standards and quality is compromised. Therefore, academic integrity cannot be a separate set of policies, it must permeate every crevice of the institutional quality cycle. However, not everyone

agrees on whether to integrate policies on ethical, research and academic conduct policies or keep them separate.

In some institutions, most notably in Germany, it is common for universities to have no central policies for academic integrity. Instead, the responsibilities are devolved to individual professors, who serve as judge and jury on academic (mis)conduct by students, resulting in the potential for vastly varying outcomes and experiences for students (Glendinning, 2013).

The evidence collected indicated that national policies in several countries would benefit from guidance in approaches to academic integrity. For example, in Türkiye and Kazakhstan, and several other countries, every higher education course is required to specify what similarity percentage (so-called plagiarism percentage) threshold was acceptable for students work, when submitted via text matching software. This demonstrates a fundamental lack of appreciation of how to deploy and interpret outputs from text-matching software, (briefly - there should be zero plagiarism, which is not the same as zero similarity – academic judgement is needed).

## **Analysis: Penalties/Sanctions/Outcomes**

There has been very little research into institutional approaches to consequences (penalties/sanctions/outcomes) for academic (mis)conduct. One exception is the AMBeR project. This was a national survey in 2006–7 of UK HE providers about outcomes from academic integrity procedures that involved a census of 168 UK HEIs 2006–7, with an excellent response rate of 91%. The survey identified 25 different types of penalty and found huge inconsistencies in penalties awarded for same type of conduct within and between UK HEIs. Analysis of the data led to the identification of different approaches to deciding penalties, which were categorised into 3 “clusters” with lists of possible penalties (Tennant & Duggan, 2008). The research team went on to create a metrics driven Plagiarism Reference Tariff (PRT) – tool for deciding penalties, largely based on the student’s status, the nature of the assessment and the type of misconduct. The PRT was then reviewed and tested in 9 HEIs starting in 2010 (Tennant & Rowell, 2010).

More recently a small study was conducted by Simon Bullock of QAA involving interviews with representatives from 32 UK higher and further education providers (QAA, 2021 – with restricted access). The study found that some universities (e.g. Bradford, Chichester) have selected an AMBeR style points-based system to decide on the outcomes. Others, such as Swansea, use centrally maintained guidance to ensure outcomes are proportionate and consistent.

The QAA research found that it is common for institutions to use a scale of severity to categorise different types of misconduct and to determine the outcomes and sanctions. At Coventry University we have a scale of outcomes table, using a five-point scale from “poor academic practice” to “very serious” academic misconduct. The outcomes include a mandatory educational element to ensure students



understand what they have done wrong. In addition, the Coventry sanctions progressively increase in severity when students face further upheld allegations.

The QAA study found that leniency is applied when deciding outcomes for students studying below higher education level, acknowledging that these students are still learning about academic writing and conduct prior to joining higher education programmes (QAA, 2021). Institutions in the study reported that they provide training about academic integrity for both staff and students as a way of deterring academic misconduct and ensuring that any cases are identified and consistently managed (QAA, 2021).

It is worth pausing to consider what purpose the outcomes /sanctions serve. Here is our view on why sanctions are needed and what they should be designed to achieve:

- Deterring student malpractice
- Identifying and providing missing skills and knowledge
- Correcting inappropriate conduct
- Upholding standards and quality
- Maintaining fairness and proportionality
- Ensuring student grades reflect genuine learning and achievement
- Punishment, justice

Different institutions may choose to prioritise specific aspects from the above list when deciding on their strategies and associated policies and design their sanctions and procedures accordingly.

It is important for institutions to keep records of all upheld allegations and the outcomes to ensure that:

- Repeat offenders are identified and suitably sanctioned
- Problem areas in the institution are identified and help is provided for tutors, for example with assessment design
- Trends in number and types of cases are monitored, so that additional targeted measures can be applied

The risks arising from lack of monitoring and inadequate policies and procedures include students repeating the same mistakes, litigation, reputational damage, devaluation of qualifications, professional/graduate incompetence. All these risks and factors need to be taken into account when considering the overheads associated with policies and procedures for academic integrity.

There is a risk in making procedures or sanctions too stringent, difficult, time-consuming or complicated to implement, because they are likely to be ignored or by-passed by academics, in favour of what they see as fair and workable. This is exactly what we found in Sweden, where there is a very formal semi-judicial process, chaired by the rector, irrespective of the level of seriousness or gravity of the student's actions and based on the student's "intent" to cheat (Glendinning, 2013; Bjelobaba, 2018, p. 133).

If academic staff take matters into their own hands, as it happens in many countries and institutions, without following any formal processes, then there will be no

accountability or record of the actions, no opportunity to identify and address students who are repeatedly or systematically cheating, plus inconsistencies and unfairness in student outcomes and lack of due process. The findings about Germany and Sweden imply that institutional policies and related procedures are important for consistency and fairness, but should be designed to be supportive of students and efficient to operationalise.

## Evidence from the Questionnaires

Across the three projects we collected 1173 questionnaire responses from higher education teachers and 5356 responses from students. When separated by country, response counts ranged from zero (teachers in Denmark, Sweden, Luxembourg, Spain) to 633 (students studying in Poland). Where the analysis in this section is divided according to countries, it is based on a subset of the 38 countries using percentages rather than response counts, to avoid presenting misleading results (low counts from Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovenia). However, where the analysis is based on combined statistics, all available data has been included.

### Evidence: Penalties/Sanctions/Outcomes

Figure 3.1 summarises responses from teachers to a question about penalties (outcomes) for students who have plagiarised in their assignment. The 13 options provided are listed in order of lowest consequence (no action, verbal warning), getting increasingly more serious (expulsion, financial penalty). As the chart makes clear, there is a distinct dividing line after the first seven options, with very few respondents selecting the more severe bottom six options. The most common sanctions are “zero mark”, followed by “rewrite the work” and “verbal warning” while the least common option was a fine or financial penalty.

Figure 3.2 shows teachers’ responses to a similar question, but this time about consequences for plagiarism in the final dissertation. This chart shows a very different picture, with rather more teachers selecting the bottom six options, especially fail degree and suspension. Rewriting the work is now the most common choice, followed by zero mark in second place.

These two questions demonstrate that the sanctions do appear to vary according to the scale and importance of the work undertaken by the student, the sanctions appear to increase for assessments with higher stakes. It is also good to see reductions in the “no action” and “verbal warning” responses for final dissertation compared to assignments, but these are still relatively high.

According to the responses, countries where expulsion can apply are Austria, France, Latvia, UK, Kazakhstan and North Macedonia. Teachers from every

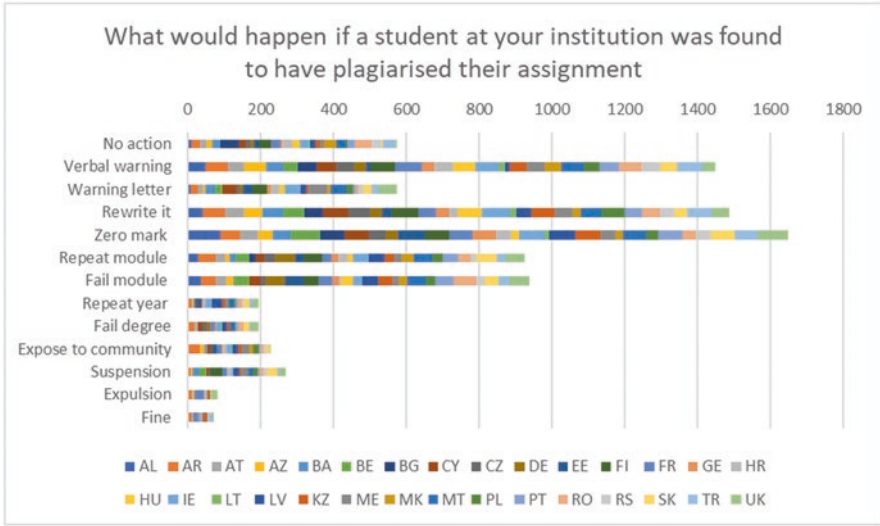


Fig. 3.1 Teachers’ responses on outcomes for plagiarising in an assignment, 30 countries n = 1167, based on percentage of respondents in each country

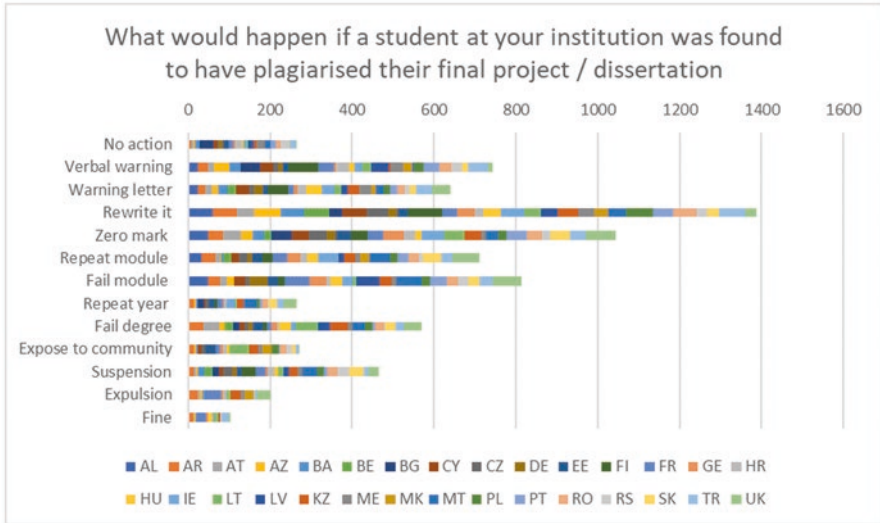


Fig. 3.2 Teachers’ responses on outcomes for plagiarising in the dissertation, 30 countries, n = 1167, based on percentage of respondents in each country

country except Ireland, Albania and North Macedonia chose suspension. Participants from just 13 countries, including France, Türkiye, Armenia and Hungary, selected “fine or financial penalty” for plagiarism in the final dissertation.

It would have been interesting to find out how often and under what circumstances each of these penalties could be applied, but the questionnaire was already far too long and there was no easy way to express these questions.

### Evidence: Consistency

The questionnaire set out several statements for teachers to determine how fair and consistent the experience and outcomes were for students accused of academic misconduct, using a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). These results have been published for the three separate studies, but this analysis of the combined results is new.

Figure 3.3 summarises teachers’ responses about consistency in use of procedures, with 46% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, 17% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 36% with neutral answers (not sure, not applicable or did not answer).

In response to the statement “I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student”, 37% of teachers disagreed and 25% agreed with the statement, with 38% neutral responses.

A statement about whether penalties for plagiarism are decided using a standard formula, yielded 18% negative, 44% positive and 38% neutral responses.

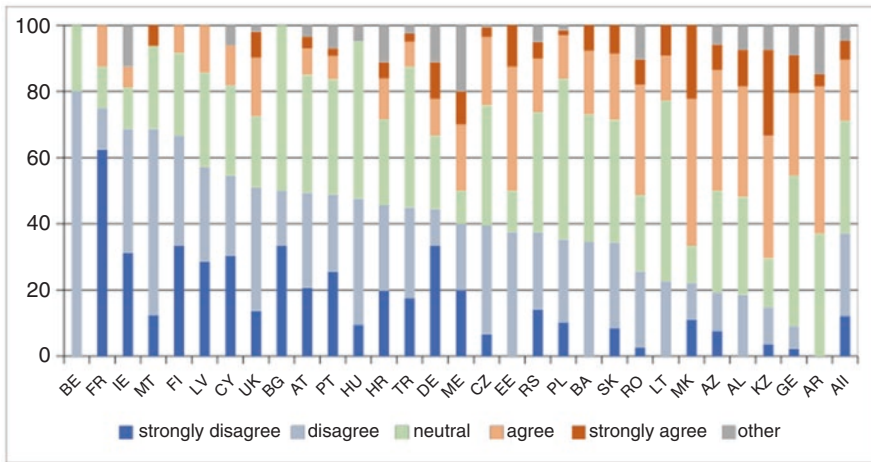


Fig. 3.3 Teachers’ survey responses: I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism (30 countries, n = 1167), sorted on negative responses, using percentages

In response to the question about whether “student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism”, there were 21% negative, 26% positive and 53% neutral responses from teachers.

The low number of positive answers from teachers, combined with negative and uncommitted responses to these four questions, suggest a low degree of consistency of outcomes and process when students in these countries face allegations of academic misconduct. Students’ experiences can vary according to preferences of individual lecturers, whether or not to pursue an allegation or impose some form of sanction themselves, or refer to a formal process, if there is such an option. The high level of uncertainty, suggests low transparency in what processes are followed as well as lack of consistency, leading to inequalities, unfair outcomes for students and inconsistent benchmarks of quality and excellence in education.

## Evidence: Perceptions

Another element of consistency is whether everyone has the same view of what constitutes plagiarism and what penalty should follow such conduct. All the questionnaires for teachers and students, included a set of six scenarios A to F. Part i of each scenario had four answer options: *serious plagiarism*, *plagiarism*, *not sure*, *this is definitely not plagiarism*. Part ii asked whether a penalty should be applied (yes or no) for this scenario. For the purposes of this paper, we will just focus on Scenarios A and D. Scenario A described an assignment with 40% of the work copied word-for-word from other sources, with no acknowledgement, or quotation marks. Scenario D was the same as A, other than changing a few words. The expected results for both scenarios were (a) serious plagiarism and (b) yes to penalty, because 40% of the assignment was not original and the sources used had not been acknowledged, therefore the submission was highly plagiarised and not a reliable measure of the student’s own achievement, even if a few words had been changed.

Overall analysis of responses from 5356 students from 38 countries (Table 3.3) in response to Scenario A, 88% of students thought it was either serious plagiarism (66%) or plagiarism (22%) and just 2% of students thought it was not plagiarism, with 10% not responding. Responding about Scenario D, only 56% of students thought this was serious plagiarism (18%) or plagiarism (38%) and 10% of students believed this was not plagiarism. On the question of a penalty for Scenario A, 64% of students chose yes and 8% chose no. For Scenario D, 35% selected yes and 30% selected no. (Missing responses were a combination of “not applicable” and no response).

The same questions were answered by 1173 teachers from 33 countries (excluding Denmark, Greece, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden); for Scenario A, 94% of teachers said this was either serious plagiarism (77%) or plagiarism (17%) and only 1% thought it was not plagiarism, with 5% not responding. For Scenario D, 78% of teachers thought this was serious plagiarism (33%) or plagiarism (45%) and 4%

**Table 3.3** Scenarios to check perceptions on plagiarism and penalties

Dataset	Scenario	Serious plagiarism	plagiarism	Not sure	Definitely not plagiarism	Penalty needed	No penalty	# countries
5356 students	A	66%	22%	6%	2%	64%	8%	38
1173 teachers	A	77%	17%	2%	1%	70%	3%	33
5356 students	D	18%	38%	28%	10%	35%	30%	38
1173 teachers	D	33%	45%	13%	4%	52%	15%	33

thought this was “definitely not plagiarism”. Regarding penalties, for Scenario A, 70% of teachers selected yes and just 3% said no; for Scenario D, 52% said yes and 15% said no.

The responses to this question demonstrate a fundamental lack of understanding about the definition of plagiarism by some of the students and teachers that took part in the survey, with many participants believing that changing a few words in copied text, removes the need to acknowledge the source or somehow lessens the seriousness of plagiarism. The rise in the number of people selecting “not sure” is also indicative of failure to appreciate the principles of academic writing.

## Evidence: Accountability

Assigning responsibility for making decisions about whether a student has breached academic integrity, and if so, what the consequences should be, is an important part of ensuring a fair and consistent experience and outcomes. If either decision is made by an individual, (teacher, administrator, dean or other), then there is potential for inconsistencies to arise, unless clear procedures and guidelines are followed. The decision-maker may have conflicts of interest, particularly if they are responsible for teaching and assessing the student, or if there are any family or social ties, in which case they should cede the responsibility to someone without a conflict. In addition to the need to declare conflicts of interest, it can help to appoint a committee or panel for making decisions, rather than depending on the views of an individual. However, whether it is a specially designated individual role or a panel, everyone involved in making such decision should have regular training to ensure they understand what is required of them, what the regulations demand and how to interpret and consistently respond to the evidence presented. Both QAA (2020, 2021) and TEQSA (n.d.) have freely available guidance about how to design policies that factor in accountability.

Questions about decision-making responsibilities were included on questionnaires for teachers. However, the wording and options on these questions were improved in the light of responses to the IPPHEAE questionnaire, which made the comparison across the three projects particularly difficult. To bring the three questionnaires into some form of common format complicated the analysis, but the results (Table 3.4) provide some useful evidence about practices in the 33 countries covered by the teacher data.

The responses (Table 3.4) show that over half the decisions on whether to uphold a case of either plagiarism (51%) or exam cheating (65%) are taken by an individual, compared to only 35% and 22% respectively of such decisions taken by a panel. With regards to penalties, decisions taken by individuals are 39% for plagiarism and 52% for exams, compared to 45% and 34% respectively for decisions taken by a panel.

A final important question that was included in just SEEPPAI and PAICKT teacher questionnaires asked: “*Is any training provided for people involved in making decisions on academic misconduct and penalties?*”. Providing training for the decision-makers is central to bringing about consistency of approach and outcomes. We have provided the analysis for SEEPPAI and PAICKT countries separately (Table 3.5), because the comparison provides an interesting insight. Overall, only 12% of SEEPPAI teacher respondents said that training was provided, compared to 47% of the PAICKT respondents. On exploring the data in more detail, it emerged that there is substantial evidence that training is provided in all five PAICKT countries (Table 3.5) with a particularly strong positive response to this question in Georgia (64%) and Kazakhstan (52%).

**Table 3.4** Teacher data – who makes the decisions whether to uphold and the penalty (n = 1173)

Decision	What for	Individual	Manager	Special role <sup>a</sup>	Panel
Case upheld	Plagiarism	36%	13%	5%	35%
Case upheld	Exams	54%	6%	12%	22%
Penalty	Plagiarism	19%	18%	5%	45%
Penalty	Exams	31%	17%	9%	35%

<sup>a</sup>The Special Role option was only included in SEEPPAI and PAICKT teacher questionnaires (n = 486). Percentages have been calculated accordingly

**Table 3.5** Is training provided for the decision-makers?

PAICKT teachers (n = 234)		SEEPPAI teachers (n = 252)	
Country	Yes	Country	Yes
Armenia	44%	Albania	11%
Azerbaijan	36%	Bosnia and Herzegovina	31%
Georgia	64%	Croatia	11%
Kazakhstan	52%	Montenegro	20%
Türkiye	25%	North Macedonia	11%
		Serbia	7%



## Discussion

The overwhelming message from this research is the need to continue to promote academic integrity, through effective strategies, at national, regional and institutional levels. This has never been more important. National and regional strategies should guide and recommend an overarching institutional approach, combining a means to reduce academic misconduct, ideally through education and training for the whole community, and to ensure equitable and fair outcomes for students who make mistakes, whether deliberate or accidental.

Comparing the results for these 38 countries highlights weaknesses in national and institutional responses to plagiarism and academic integrity in Europe and Eurasia. There is a clear requirement for institutions to ensure that their responses to misconduct, through transparent and accessible strategies, policies, procedures and guidance, are consistently applied and operating as intended. An important part of deterrence measures is the need for students to appreciate the consequences to their future of breaching academic integrity rules. It is in the interests of everyone to provide appropriate education and training for students in study skills and academic writing, preferably starting before they reach higher education level, but to have extra support available for any higher education student who clearly needs it.

The research findings tell us that motivations and drivers of student cheating behaviours vary according to local cultures and contexts. Teachers and higher education leaders need to gain a clear appreciation of how students experience the study environment, what leads them to plagiarise, inappropriately share answers, cheat in an examination, or use an essay mill. Effective dialogue and communication between teachers and students will help to provide the answers to these questions and ensure that the most appropriate institutional strategies, policies and procedures relating to academic integrity are developed and implemented.

Teachers' responses indicate that policies on responsibility and accountability for decision-making relating to academic integrity breaches are not always appropriate or clear. It is particularly important to avoid situations where conflicts of interest may arise, but the evidence suggests this aspect is often overlooked. Where individual academics are responsible for taking decisions on whether to uphold an allegation and what sanctions to apply, unless standardisation measures are in place, the outcomes for students are likely to be highly inconsistent and inequitable. In addition, if the allegations and outcomes are not recorded, preferably centrally for the whole institution, there is no way of monitoring or understanding phenomena such as types and volume of cheating cases, repeat offenders, trends in cheating and effectiveness of countermeasures.

In addition to education and training for students, there is an essential requirement for institutions to provide regular training for every member of academic and research staff and for everyone involved in support, teaching, learning and assessment of students. Training for staff was advocated by Dawson and Sutherland-Smith (2018) especially to improve identification of contract cheating cases, but more



general training and guidance can help markers to remain alert for noticing characteristics of other types of cheating.

As indicated in quality assurance guidelines, the elements discussed above are fundamental to good practice in academic integrity strategies, policies and procedures (OIAHE, 2018; QAA, 2020, 2021; QQI, 2020; TEQSA, n.d.).

## Conclusions

The results from these three projects have provided very useful insights into how plagiarism and other forms of academic integrity breaches are managed across the 38 countries. Although other research into specific aspects of academic integrity has been conducted in some of these countries, no other research has the same focus and geographical scope as these three projects. The earlier IPPHEAE research in the 27 EU countries has already led to positive changes to national strategies and policies in several countries, such as UK, Czech Republic and Lithuania. Researchers from all these countries continue to be actively involved in this field. It would be interesting to re-run the survey to check what progress has been made in every EU country since 2013, but no funding is available right now.

We know that the SEEPPI project results helped to catalyse changes to national policies in Montenegro (CoE News, 2018). The delay in publishing the results from PAICKT means any impact from those findings has also been delayed, but that report will be published by CoE early in 2022. What is clear from the PAICKT results, as can be observed from responses about training provision for decision-makers in Fig. 8, is that other interventions, by Council of Europe and other organisations, are already bearing fruit in some of the PAICKT countries, when compared to responses to the same question from the six South East European countries.

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