

# ETINED Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education



## **Volume 6** Project on Academic Integrity in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Turkey

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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**ETINED**  
**Council of Europe Platform on Ethics,  
Transparency and Integrity in Education**

Volume 6 –  
Project on Academic Integrity  
in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia,  
Kazakhstan and Turkey

**Authors:**

Irene Glendinning  
Tomáš Foltýnek  
Dita Henek Dlabolová  
Jana Dannhoferová  
Veronika Králíková  
Anna Michalska  
Stella-Maris Orim  
Pavel Turčínek

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All other correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to the Education Department of the Council of Europe  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
France

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# Executive summary

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## Background

This project was conducted under the framework of the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED). ETINED is a network of specialists appointed by the 50 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention. The network meets once a year to oversee the Council of Europe's work in this area. Its mandate stems from the 2013 Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and has been shaped and agreed upon by the 50 states represented within the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE). The activities of ETINED are based on the assumption that issues regarding quality education and corruption can only be effectively addressed if all relevant sections of society commit fully to fundamental positive ethical principles for public and professional life, rather than relying only on legal norms and regulations.

At the 2nd ETINED Plenary Session on 15 and 16 February 2018 in Strasbourg, it was agreed that, following the results of two projects – Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe (IPPHEAE), covering 27 EU member states, and the South East European Project on Policies for Academic Integrity (SEEPPAI), conducted in six countries in South-East Europe – the next objective should be to cover all remaining countries of the European Cultural Convention by 2020. This will allow member states to have a complete picture of the situation in Europe. The profile of each member state should be presented through the “Academic Integrity Maturity Model” (AIMM), in the form of radar charts and reader-friendly strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.

The current study on policies for academic integrity was conducted in five countries not already covered by previous studies, specifically Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Turkey.

The objectives of the study 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 could be shared with the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention;
- ▶ propose guidelines to serve as a reference basis for promoting capacity building in higher education institutions (HEIs) and/or peer learning.

Target groups were:

- ▶ higher education students;
- ▶ academic (teaching) staff;
- ▶ senior managers;

- ▶ national policy makers responsible for higher education;
- ▶ quality assurance and standards agencies and researchers studying aspects of academic integrity and quality assurance for higher education.

This report makes specific recommendations about tools, guidelines and tailored capacity-building and co-operation activities for member states to consider, following a survey and AIMM analysis of results for each country. Where possible, the research has been conducted in consultation and dialogue with the relevant national authorities.

## Summary of findings

All five countries have made progress, in some cases in a very short time frame, in improving the quality and integrity of their higher education provision. Collaboration with international partners, mobility and participation in projects is clearly valued highly by academics in all five countries and is helping them to accelerate the development of policies and systems appropriate to their local situation and needs. Despite this progress, challenges remain. The recommendations in this report aim to address some of the challenges identified and strengthen academic integrity at national and institutional levels.

Considering the desire for fairness and equity in the student experience, the questionnaire responses for all five countries indicate the need for greater consistency in the approach to institutional decision making and the use of disciplinary measures following confirmed cases of academic misconduct by students.

Analysis of the responses from teachers in all five countries identifies a need for training in academic writing, including how to identify and avoid plagiarism in their own writing. Additional skills in this area would improve the quality of teaching, research and publications by academic staff.

Access to software to support the detection of plagiarism and collusion is an important part of the toolset for academics. However, not all institutions have access to effective software. Where effective software was available, we saw evidence that it is often not appropriately deployed and that some academics and managers need further training in interpreting the outputs. In addition, the software tools may not have access to a comprehensive language corpus of scholarly materials in every language, which limits the capacity of the tools to match to the text submitted.

## Summary of recommendations

(N = National level; I = Institutional level)

### Quality-related recommendations

- ▶ Consider removing incentives that may drive down the quality of education, academic publishing and research, such as “cash bonuses” for publishing in journals, which incentivise quantity rather than quality (N+I).

- ▶ All higher education providers, public and private, should be regularly monitored and audited for policies on academic integrity as part of oversight of quality assurance (N).
- ▶ A national digital language corpus of all academic sources should be created and maintained for reference purposes and for use by text-matching software (N).
- ▶ Working with students to understand their needs and motivations for engaging with their studies is essential for improving academic integrity (N+I).
- ▶ Further training and education for students, researchers and academics on academic writing techniques, ethical conduct and research skills are needed (I).
- ▶ Attention to teaching, learning and assessment approaches is central to academic quality and integrity, for example by encouraging active rather than passive learning; designing assessments that include practical elements or require critical thinking and do not have ready-made solutions; and not repeating the same assessments for subsequent cohorts of students (I).

## Transparency-related recommendations

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- ▶ There needs to be openness and sharing of ideas on how to prioritise and address corruption and academic misconduct in higher education (N+I).
- ▶ Institutional records and statistics should be maintained on allegations and outcomes of student academic misconduct investigations to monitor trends and progress on measures for deterring academic misconduct, including the ability to identify students who repeatedly infringe academic integrity rules (I).
- ▶ Accountability, transparency and consistency of regulations and procedures for managing allegations of academic misconduct and unethical practice are essential for ensuring fairness and equity (N+I).

## Capacity building

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- ▶ Expert advisers on ethical conduct and integrity should be invited to provide guidance on how policies and practices can be developed and strengthened (N+I).
- ▶ Capacity-building projects relating to academic integrity, with national and international partners, should be supported and funded (N+I).

## Building a culture of academic integrity

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- ▶ Senior members of society and leaders of HEIs should set an example to younger people, abiding by, and promoting a code of ethical conduct and anti-corruption. For example, this could be included in institutional mission statements, and in staff and student codes of conduct (N+I).
- ▶ A commitment to behave with integrity in professional and personal life should become one of the defining attributes of a university graduate, for example included in a student charter (I).
- ▶ Academic staff should be valued and suitably rewarded for their contributions to education and academic integrity (N+I).

- ▶ Awareness, understanding and responses about evolving threats to integrity, quality and standards must be an ongoing requirement for everyone in higher education (N+I).
- ▶ All institutions need to develop, implement and maintain transparent, fair, robust and consistent strategies, policies and sanctions for academic integrity (I).
- ▶ Academic staff need to be incentivised to detect and report suspicions of academic misconduct as a means of discouraging unethical practices (I).
- ▶ Allegations of serious forms of academic misconduct should be considered by an experienced and trained panel, rather than by an individual academic (I).

## Deterring academic misconduct

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- ▶ All HEIs need software tools to help identify and deter plagiarism and collusion that are effective in relevant languages of study and research (N+I).
- ▶ Training is needed for all people involved in higher education about the limitations, use and misuse of text-matching software tools and related products (N+I).
- ▶ Trials should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of different text-matching software tools in relevant languages of study and research (N).

## Deterring corruption

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- ▶ Conflicts of interest should be declared and managed. There is a need for all professionals to declare conflicts of interest and not participate in marking where there could be potential for undue influence, for example relating to appointments, awarding student grades, and responses to corruption and misconduct (N+I).
- ▶ Corruption needs to be challenged, particularly through strong sanctions for offering and receiving bribes and favours. Reporting should be encouraged by making it easy and protecting identities (nationally, staff and students) (N+I).

## Concluding remarks

Researchers from the PAICKT team were made most welcome in every country and city we visited. We are very grateful to everyone who participated in the research and those who helped to make this project a success. We are particularly grateful to the five country managers. Their input and support for the project provided valuable insiders' views of the countries under study that had been difficult to capture for the two previous projects.

We hope that the findings from this research will be viewed constructively as guidelines on where to place priorities for improving policies and practices. Where good practice has been identified, it is important that opportunities are created for dissemination and consolidation, both nationally and internationally, to ensure everyone can continue to learn and benefit.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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### Project description

The aim of the Project on Academic Integrity in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Turkey (PAICKT) was to explore perceptions of policies and procedures to support academic integrity and discourage and manage student plagiarism and academic dishonesty. The main goal was to map academic integrity in higher education in the target countries. The objectives were to identify and analyse policies and practices with regard to plagiarism and academic integrity, to explore gaps and challenges, and also to document examples of good practice and success stories that can be shared.

This report includes preliminary guidelines to serve as a reference basis for promoting capacity building in higher education institutions (HEIs) and/or peer learning on encouraging academic integrity and reducing academic misconduct. Information from multiple sources and multiple stakeholders was collected throughout the project. The report builds on information from students, teachers and senior leaders within HEIs, from representatives of policy makers at the national level, from quality assurance and standards agencies, and from researchers in the countries involved. These data were collected using online questionnaires, personal interviews and focus groups, as well as a review of existing materials and documentary sources.

The project was conducted by two teams of international experts from the Czech Republic (Mendel University in Brno)<sup>1</sup> and the United Kingdom (Coventry University),<sup>2</sup> comprising academics and researchers with considerable experience in this field.

PAICKT<sup>3</sup> was commissioned and funded by the Council of Europe through its Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED)<sup>4</sup> and follows two previous projects, Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe (IPPHEAE)<sup>5</sup> and the South East European Project on Policies for Academic Integrity (SEEPPIAI).<sup>6</sup>

The project ran between autumn 2018 and autumn 2019. This report is the main outcome of the project. It provides a holistic view on the current situation in the five project countries and provides recommendations relevant to the priorities of each country, an overview of progress to date in developing policies for academic

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1. <http://mendelu.cz/en>.
  2. [www.coventry.ac.uk](http://www.coventry.ac.uk).
  3. <http://plagiarism.cz/paickt>.
  4. [www.coe.int/etined](http://www.coe.int/etined).
  5. <http://plagiarism.cz/ippheae>.
  6. [www.plagiarism.cz/seeppai](http://www.plagiarism.cz/seeppai).

integrity, and best practices. It also draws from experience in other parts of the world. Additional outcomes will be academic publications and dissemination activities, featuring analyses of the collected data. Analysis of the survey data has allowed the responses from the five countries to be compared to those for 33 European countries that have already been surveyed through previous research (IPPHEAE and SEEPPAI). It must, however, be recognised that the data for the 27 EU member states, with results published in 2013, were collected several years earlier than data for SEEPPAI and PAICKT.

## Objectives

The objectives of the study 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 could be shared with the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention;<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ propose guidelines to serve as a reference basis for promoting capacity building in HEIs and/or peer learning.

Target groups were:

- ▶ higher education students;
- ▶ academic (teaching) staff;
- ▶ senior managers;
- ▶ national policy makers responsible for higher education;
- ▶ quality assurance and standards agencies and researchers studying aspects of academic integrity and quality assurance for higher education.

## Methodology

The team followed a similar methodology to that used for SEEPPAI. The main difference was that a country manager was used in each of the five countries to support the research. These managers assisted in collating relevant documentary sources about national policies and background information on the higher education landscape in each country.

The English versions of the three levels of questionnaires (for students, teachers and managers) were updated in light of SEEPPAI's experience of using them. The questionnaires were then sent to the Council of Europe to be translated into five languages of the countries under study. The translations were then uploaded to the survey platform (Jisc online surveys). Links to test versions of the translated surveys were then circulated to country managers and other native speakers to allow them

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7. [www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/european-cultural-convention](http://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/european-cultural-convention).

to be piloted. As a result of this exercise, further refinements and corrections were made to ensure accuracy of wording. The data collection period was from January to July 2019.

Visits to each country were scheduled from March to June 2019, guided by advice from the country managers. During each visit the visiting team members conducted semi-structured interviews, held student focus groups, and offered to run seminars and discussions with interested students and academics. With permission from participants, audio recordings were made of interviews and student focus groups.

The student focus groups were conducted by the younger members of the research team, where possible without any institutional staff in attendance, to encourage student participants to answer questions without constraints. All steps were taken to ensure the methods were consistently applied in all parts of the research and in all countries, to reduce the chances of bias or misleading results. One of the ways this was achieved was by having integrated teams with representation from both Coventry University and Mendel University on every visit.

Analysis of the data collected was conducted between April and October 2019, making use of the Academic Integrity Maturity Model (AIMM) that was designed for IPPHEAE and used in SEEPPAI. This tool allowed comparison of the metrics for the five new countries with those for the 33 European countries previously surveyed. Thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data.

## Ethical approval

Ethical approval from Coventry University was required before its team could participate in any research. As Coventry University has a more rigorous ethical approval process than Mendel University in Brno, this approval served both teams.

Full approval was required before the primary data collection could begin (using online surveys, student focus groups and semi-structured interviews). The ethical approval process required submission and scrutiny of all plans and documentation related to the conduct of the research, particularly risk assessment, participant information, informed consent forms, questionnaires, interview questions and focus group prompts. Ethical approval was also issued by Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University for the research to be conducted in Turkey.

## Country manager tasks

Country managers were responsible for the following:

- ▶ providing information on national level policies, procedures and general information about higher education (part of the report), to be completed by December 2018;
- ▶ distributing links to the questionnaires (translated into local languages), in early 2019;



- ▶ organising the country visits, making contact with HEIs, arranging for student focus groups and identifying senior leaders to be interviewed;
- ▶ interviewing people with responsibility for or interest in academic integrity nationally.

The country managers were asked to provide input for the report on national policies in their country, providing information about how academic integrity and ethical conduct is being addressed at both national and institutional levels, together with details of any initiatives or projects either underway or planned. They helped with introductions, logistics and translations during the visits to each country. They also assisted with translating the qualitative data from questionnaires into English and checking the final report.

## Review of national policies

Before conducting personal interviews (especially with higher management and with national policy makers), it was important to have an overall picture of the situation in a given country. Hence during the autumn of 2018, a review was conducted of national policies with regard to academic integrity and current activities. The most important questions to be answered for each country related to overviews of the higher education system, and national guidelines, regulations and rules regarding academic integrity or academic ethics, as well as an overview of current (or recent) research, activities and initiatives in the field of academic integrity or related fields.

The review was performed mainly by country managers using knowledge of the local environment and referring to documents in local languages. The project team supplemented the information they provided using publicly available resources (documents from ministries, project reports, published interviews, etc.).

## Online questionnaires

### Refinement of the questionnaires

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The questionnaires previously used in the IPPHEAE and SEEPPAI projects were updated for use in PAICKT. There was a questionnaire for students, for teaching (academic) staff – both of which contained mainly closed questions, with a small number of open questions – and for higher management of HEIs (mainly open questions). All questions were carefully examined, using experience from SEEPPAI analysis, to ensure useful and accurate collection of data, and also updated to reflect emerging challenges. However, the core questions were retained from the previous projects so that the same method of analysis could be used for all countries. Refinement of the questionnaires was performed jointly by both project teams, using the English versions, before language translations were done.

## Translations and piloting

The English-language questionnaires would have been an obstacle for many possible respondents in the target countries, therefore all questionnaires were translated into the local languages of the target countries. The translations were provided by the Council of Europe. The language translations of the questionnaires were then uploaded to the survey platform (Jisc online surveys). Links to test versions of the translated surveys were circulated to country managers and other native speakers to allow them to be piloted. Special attention was paid to the piloting – any mistakes in wording or terminology or omitted options for the questions could have invalidated data analysis and data comparison. Based on the feedback from piloting, further refinements and corrections were made to the master copies of the survey language versions to ensure clarity, accuracy and consistency of wording.

## Project dissemination and communication channels

For external communication, an e-mail address was created ([paickt2019@gmail.com](mailto:paickt2019@gmail.com)), which was administered by one member from both teams. A project website for basic dissemination and a public summary of information on the project was created and is available at [www.plagiarism.cz/paickt](http://www.plagiarism.cz/paickt) as well as at [www.facebook.com/PAICKT](https://www.facebook.com/PAICKT). The sites were managed by the Mendel University team, and will remain available for dissemination of the research results and to connect to stakeholders.

## Limitations

All studies dealing with sensitive topics have their limitations and this project was no exception. The following limitations must be taken into account when interpreting the results:

- ▶ Self-selection bias for online questionnaires: participation in the study was entirely voluntary, which prevented the collection of information from those who did not participate, whatever reasons they may have had. For example, some people may have been reluctant to answer sensitive questions despite reassurances about anonymity.
- ▶ Selection bias during personal visits: not all fields of studies, and not all types of HEIs, were covered in every country (e.g. in Azerbaijan only Baku-based institutions were visited).
- ▶ Potential for bias in the selection of students and staff participants: at some institutions, we suspected that the management consciously chose people expected to provide us with the “right” answers. In these cases, the researchers did their best to verify the information provided and were careful not to overgeneralise. Nonetheless, the information provided through questionnaires, focus groups or interviews was accepted as valid commentary.
- ▶ Confirmation bias: participants may have given answers they thought the project team expected.

- ▶ Timing of studies: IPPHEAE data were collected during 2012-13, which means the results are not contemporaneous with more recent results from the SEEPPAI and PAICKT projects.
- ▶ Potential for bias arising from the choice of country managers.
- ▶ Language barriers in interviews and focus groups: to address this, translators were used where possible.

This study, as with the vast majority of research dealing with academic integrity, is based on self-reported perceptions and viewpoints. The results presented here reflect the responses collected, but these may not always accurately represent the reality, despite assurances of anonymity for individuals and institutions. This is a limitation, but it also means the study is comparable with other similar studies.

Despite these challenges, the team is deeply indebted to the participants who were co-operatively open and objective in the information and ideas they shared, which generated confidence in the validity of the results and provided useful evidence about what actions are needed and what to prioritise.

## Chapter 2

# Findings from the research

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Compared to the preceding projects (IPPHEAE and SEEPPAI), there have been many more recent activities related to academic integrity in the countries included in the present study. There have been both national and local initiatives aiming to raise awareness, discuss academic integrity issues, and adopt policies at institutional and national level. Most of these projects are quite recent (2016 and later), suggesting that mindsets are changing and policy makers at both national and institutional level are increasingly convinced about the importance of academic integrity and the development of related policies.

The most relevant examples of recent activities include:

- ▶ the Council of Europe's project Strengthening Integrity and Combating Corruption in Higher Education in Armenia;
- ▶ anti-corruption days organised in Azerbaijan and Georgia;<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ formation of the Academic Integrity League in Kazakhstan;
- ▶ the project Academic Integrity for Quality Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Institutions in Georgia, supported by the Erasmus+ programme;
- ▶ events (seminars and conferences) on academic integrity and academic writing in Turkey.

With help from the country managers, data collection (questionnaires, interviews, discussions and focus groups) was successful and the in-country visits went smoothly. Table 1 summarises project activities and Table 2 shows the number of questionnaire responses collected.

A total of 18 online questionnaires were made available, covering five local languages and English versions of the three levels of questionnaires. After the surveys had closed, the responses were reorganised according to country into datasets from the language basis of the questionnaires (based on the location of the work/study institution of each respondent) and level (student, teacher, manager). Four responses completed by nationals from the target countries studying outside these five countries were considered to be out of scope and were therefore not included in the data for analysis. The final valid response counts are listed in Table 2.

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8. <http://etico.iiep.unesco.org/en/anti-corruption-day-developing-country-capacity-fight-corruption-education>.

**Table 1: PAICKT project in-country activities**

PAICKT activities	Student focus groups	Manager/national interviews	Teacher/student seminars	Teacher interviews/discussions	Universities visited	State/public	Private
Armenia	4	4	2	3	5	4	1
Azerbaijan	5	3	0	2	5	3	2
Georgia	4	4	0	5	5	3	2
Kazakhstan	5	8	2	2	9	1	8
Turkey	5	5	3	1	5	4	1
Totals	23	24	7	13	29	15	14

**Table 2: PAICKT questionnaire responses by country**

Questionnaire responses	Students	Teachers	Managers	Totals
Armenia	73	27	10	110
Azerbaijan	281	52	29	362
Georgia	229	90	22	341
Kazakhstan	72	29	8	109
Turkey	296	40	8	344
Totals	951	238	77	1266

Each student focus group consisted of a group of students studying at the same institution.

This report presents results from both qualitative and quantitative data collected during the project. It is anticipated that the examples of good practice will inspire other institutions and countries to take action. Where gaps and challenges have been identified, recommendations have been made for how to improve the situation. Most of the challenges discovered apply to more than one country, but a specific issue may be detailed in the context of a particular country if it was raised there several times during data collection.

In addition, corruption trends were examined. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Armenia's CPI for 2020 was 49/100, with a rank of 60/180 and a score change since 2012 of +15. Azerbaijan's CPI for 2020 was 30/100, with a rank of 129/180 and a score change since 2012 of +3. Georgia's CPI for 2020 was 56/100, with a rank of 45/180 and a score change since 2012 of +4. Kazakhstan's CPI for 2020 was 38/100, with a rank of 94/180 and a score change since 2012 of +10. Turkey's CPI for 2020 was 40/100, with a rank of 86/180 and a score change since 2012 of -9. It follows from the above that Turkey is the only country with a score that decreased between 2012 and 2020.

## Armenia

### Review of national policies

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Higher education in Armenia is represented by both state and private HEIs. In 2017, the system included 66 HEIs, of which 23 (with their 14 branches) were state HEIs; 5 HEIs had been founded by interstate agreements and with state participation; and there were 31 private HEIs and seven branches of foreign state and private HEIs. There are several types of HEIs in Armenia: *hamalsaran* (university), *institut* (institute), *kon-servatoria* (conservatoire) and *akademia* (academy), providing education at bachelor's, master's and doctorate level. Total enrolment in 2016 was 97 719, of which 88 309 students were in state HEIs. The gross enrolment rate at undergraduate level was 52.9% and the graduate enrolment rate was 12.7%. In this context, and since 2005, the higher education system in Armenia has been aligned with the Bologna Process.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoES) is the authorised state body for education and is responsible for developing and implementing state policy/strategy and legislation in higher education, as well as for authorising state licences. The ministry is also a source of funding and has an oversight and auditing function. State and private HEI rectors' councils function as advisory bodies to the ministry. The official website of the MoES of the Republic of Armenia is the primary resource for higher education policies.<sup>9</sup>

Armenia allocates 2.2% of its gross domestic product to education. Only 0.2% of this allocated amount is assigned to the higher education sector. In 2017, government expenditures on education represented 10.4% of the total.<sup>10</sup> The National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (NAS RA) is favoured over universities for allocation of research funding. The various research institutes under NAS RA receive direct funding from the government, while HEIs receive their funding through the MoES.

Since 2008, the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA), as an independent foundation, has been responsible for quality assurance and promotion of quality at higher education level through compulsory institutional and optional programme accreditation. In 2017, ANQA became a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) for five years.

The Council of Europe supported Strengthening Integrity and Combating Corruption in Higher Education in Armenia, a national project related to academic integrity. The aim of the project was to identify what 10 HEIs needed to internalise and/or develop codes of ethics and to evaluate internal documents (Smith and Hamilton 2015). Representatives of the selected HEIs were trained, then supported and guided to develop university codes of ethics and related documentation.

In 2016, a higher education strategy was drafted by the Armenian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports that included "commitment to ethical behaviours in education processes and adoption of academic integrity". However,

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9. <https://escs.am/en>.

10. <http://uis.unesco.org/country/AM>.

a change of government meant that the strategy was not implemented. At the time of publishing this report, the draft strategy document is no longer available on the ministry website.

## **Policies related to academic integrity at institutional level**

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Evidence from both questionnaires and interviews confirmed that in most institutions, if there are policies on academic integrity and ethical practices, these only apply at postgraduate level and above, and are mainly focused on the conduct of PhD students and academics rather than undergraduate and master's students. There is no bespoke software for helping with the detection of plagiarism in the Armenian language, but some institutions use the tool Anti-plag.

## **Perceptions on academic integrity**

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We heard from interviews, focus groups and in free-format comments in the questionnaires that Armenia has a problem with plagiarism by students and academics, and the perception is that the problem is not diminishing. Many examples surfaced from the PAICKT interviews about plagiarism by academics in Armenia, including some by institutional leaders. The evidence confirms that education of academic staff and senior leaders on academic integrity should be a priority for Armenia.

The results of the interviews indicate that students are able to procure academic work, typically from other students or from "essay mills", to submit as their own work. It is recognised that there are companies that buy work from students that they can re-sell to other students. For example, in one focus group it was claimed that "in the copy centre across the street, when you print an assignment there, they keep a copy and sell it to others". Students taking part in focus groups were aware of "contract cheating", or the commissioning of assignments and dissertations. According to the questionnaire responses, 35% of students were aware of at least one student who had used someone else to complete an assessment. Some students believed the practice was forbidden, others that the government was planning to ban it.<sup>11</sup> One group claimed it was more common at undergraduate level, while other students believed it to be more common at universities other than their own.

Student views varied greatly. One focus group said it was impossible to plagiarise or cheat in examinations in their institution due to systematic checks by teachers and standard penalties. A very different picture emerged from focus groups with students from other institutions. Two groups said that plagiarism was common and talked about "learning at [the] last moment", meaning doing what is needed to pass the assessments, with a focus on getting a qualification and a lack of research skills. Another group explained that the requirement to identify the sources they use limited the opportunities to plagiarise.

Students were aware of assessment topics routinely being repeated from year to year in some institutions, providing ample opportunity for them to find suitable

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11. A new law dealing with contract cheating was actually passed right after the end of data collection for PAICKT.

pre-written essays and answers. Evidence emerged from an interview with management of cases of cheating using technology, even to the extent of asking for help from the family doctor to insert ear-pieces that can be used for communication with a friend or family member during an examination.

## Evidence on skills, knowledge and training

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It was clear that training about academic writing and ethics is included for students at some institutions – 48% of surveyed teachers confirmed this. However, only three managers agreed, while one manager expressed doubts about what was taught and how much students benefited from these classes. The manager's view was confirmed in one of the focus groups, where students discussed their lack of skills to conduct the research activities that formed part of their assignments.

More than one fifth (21%) of students believe that they might have plagiarised – accidentally or deliberately. It was stated by a senior manager, and by several teachers, that students often unknowingly violate academic integrity, because they are unaware what conduct is appropriate. Student focus group participants confirmed their lack of skills and knowledge with regard to academic writing, but most students seemed to be aware of what constitutes appropriate academic conduct. According to the student survey, lack of knowledge of academic writing was the 14th-ranked reason out of 21 reasons listed for plagiarism, the most common of which were student assumptions that they would not get caught, laziness, and the ease of cutting and pasting from the internet. Students also said that the majority of young people go to university, but some who enrol as an alternative to unemployment have low motivation to learn. Student participants believed these colleagues, who were less committed to study, were more predisposed to cheating.

Evidence from the interviews suggests the need to strengthen the capacity of teachers and researchers on academic integrity. Teachers in Armenia are required to undertake retraining (“attestation”) every five years. The attestation committee decides whether the teacher is or is not “competent for the position occupied”, and the decision serves as a basis for the educational institution to decide whether the teacher retains their position or is removed from it. At present, retraining subjects do not include academic integrity. It was suggested by one respondent that this could be added to the available topics, and preferably made compulsory for all professors as a way of regularly updating their knowledge.

## Examples of good practice

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One institution we visited had particularly clear policies and procedures on academic integrity in place, confirmed by consistent responses from management, teachers and students. This was a private HEI with small classes and extra support provided for students who needed help. There was a policy of changing coursework assessments and examination questions every year to avoid reuse of previous answers. This institution also keeps records of cases of misconduct to detect repeat offenders. Teachers and managers believed their rigorous supervision of exams, including the policy of separating desks by three metres in examinations, made it “impossible to cheat in exams”. This view was confirmed by students from the same institution,

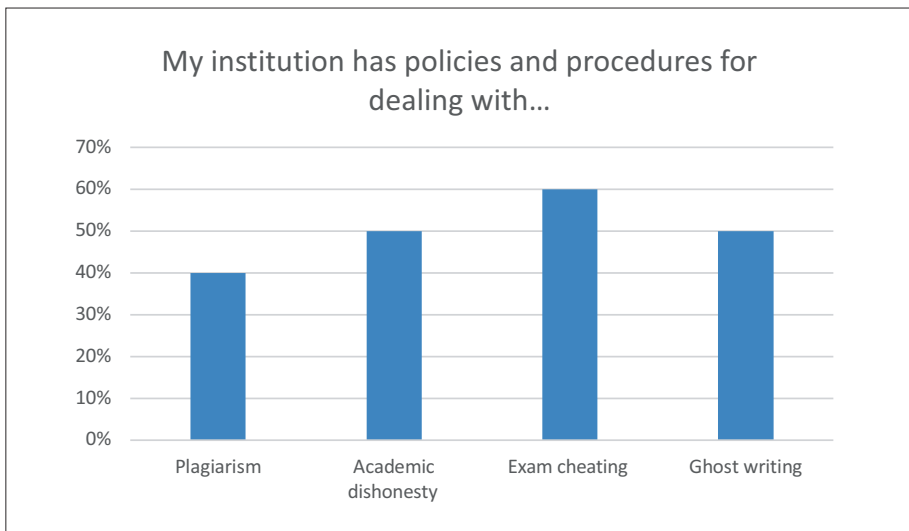


who said they “can’t plagiarise, because they have a system”; teachers check student drafts and are familiar with the work of individual students, and students believe that teachers would know if they plagiarised.

## Challenges and deficits

The feedback from interviews and questionnaires confirms that many Armenian HEIs lack institutional policies relating to academic integrity. Only about a half of interviewed managers said that their institution had such policies (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Managers who “agree” and “strongly agree” to a question about what policies they have**



The need for a more consistent approach to plagiarism was apparent in the questionnaire responses. At present, individual academics take decisions about whether academic misconduct has occurred and whether and how to apply sanctions; only 29% of surveyed teachers and 20% of surveyed managers agreed that “penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula”. Although this is also the case in many other countries, it is nevertheless problematic. We came across examples where an academic or institutional leader was placed under social pressure to intervene, for example, to overturn a fail grade or to facilitate admission of an under-qualified student to university. This type of situation constitutes a conflict of interest that, in ethical terms, should be declared, leading to measures to ensure fairness prevails.

A scheme of cash bonuses (~€200) for academics publishing in journals with a high impact factor was discussed during one interview. This type of incentive can motivate academics if the parameters are set appropriately. Most importantly, there is the need to shield those deemed eligible from potentially predatory/disreputable publishers/

journals. If not appropriately managed, this type of initiative can incentivise poor practice such as “salami slicing” (defined as “unjustified breaking up of a study into two or more publications in order to increase the number of publications” by the European Network for Academic Integrity) and self-plagiarism.

We regularly heard that university teachers’ salaries are insufficient for them to support their families. As a consequence, it is common for teachers to have a second job, which reduces the time they can use for supporting students. During one interview with university management, we heard about the case of a teacher from the university who demanded students pay her for private lessons to pass her courses. This illustrates how low salaries can lead to corruption.

The IPPHEAE and SEEPPAI projects recommended whistle-blower protection as a means of encouraging members of the academic community and beyond to report any academic misconduct or corruption. However, this suggestion was seen by some interviewees as inappropriate for Armenia, due to negative connotations dating from Soviet times: whistle-blowing would be perceived as colluding with the state against the community. Similarly, the suggestion of working with students as partners was also rebuffed by one interviewee, on the grounds that this would lead to the student leaders being seen as traitors by their peers.

In fact, these views from managers were contradicted by evidence from the student focus group from the same institution. All students participating in the group expressed serious concerns about the poor quality of education and wanted to help to improve their university, mainly to change the current rigid and traditional system. As nobody appeared to be willing to listen to their calls for change, they said they felt powerless. They spoke of a lack of interest on the part of institutional leaders in implementing the changes they were asking for.

In the course of the PAICKT project, the following weaknesses related to policies and procedures within HEIs in Armenia were identified:

- ▶ Most HEIs have no code of ethics.
- ▶ The internal regulations of HEIs deal with a small minority of academic integrity issues and these issues are too general (e.g. academic freedom, assessment policy, plagiarism, development and monitoring of academic programmes).
- ▶ The regulations related to academic integrity issues are mostly declarative and do not include enforcement mechanisms.
- ▶ In general, the representatives of HEIs seem to have different understandings of concepts related to corruption and academic integrity, namely “conflict of interest”, “harassment”, “integrity”, “corruption” and so on. Conflict of interest was not identified as a subject requiring regulation.

On the positive side, there is a common understanding about the value of effective regulations concerning academic integrity and the need to develop effective policies and procedures.

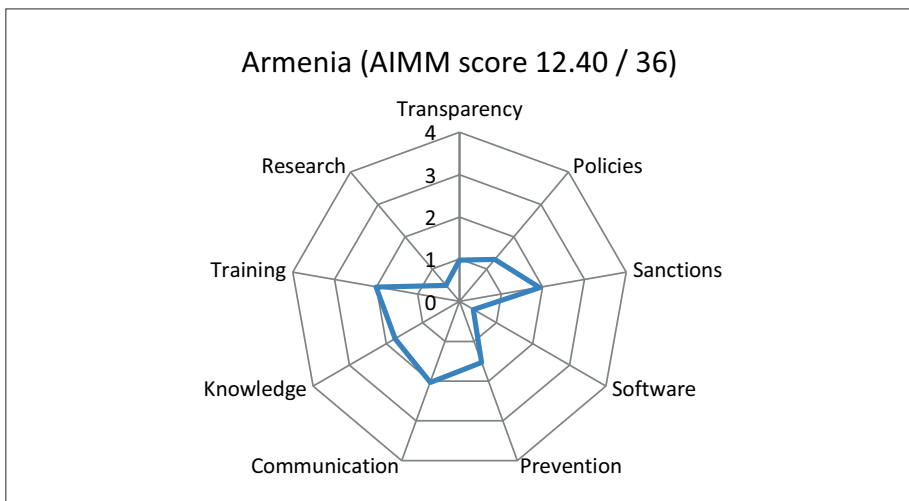
## Recommendations specific to Armenia

Recommendations to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports

- ▶ External monitoring of HEIs for academic quality and integrity should be introduced and all HEIs should be required to have robust internal systems for assuring quality, standards and academic integrity.
- ▶ The ministry is advised to implement the existing draft higher education legislation, code of ethics and guidance on academic integrity at the earliest opportunity.
- ▶ The ministry should provide guidance for HEIs on how to develop policies and enforcement mechanisms to deter academic misconduct and strengthen integrity.
- ▶ “Academic integrity” should be added to the compulsory subjects required to be studied by professors as part of the five-year skills updating programme (the “attestation”).
- ▶ Raising the salaries of higher education teachers is likely to improve the quality of higher education by ensuring teachers have sufficient capacity to appropriately support students and reducing the temptation to use corrupt methods to supplement their income.

## AIMM results for Armenia

**Figure 2: Armenia AIMM radar chart**



Strengths and opportunities

- ▶ One institution has strong policies for academic integrity (confirmed by students, teachers and managers).
- ▶ Some measures can be taken for academic misconduct at PhD level.
- ▶ Training is provided at higher levels of education.

- ▶ Draft legislation on ethics is ready but not yet adopted or implemented.
- ▶ Obligatory training for professors every four or five years provides an opportunity for training about academic integrity and improving academic writing skills.
- ▶ Armenia's small, interconnected higher education community provides opportunities for introducing comprehensive positive changes to quality, standards and integrity.
- ▶ There are plans to introduce new laws designed to raise quality and integrity in education.

#### Weaknesses and threats

- ▶ Academic integrity is not prioritised in some HEIs.
- ▶ Academic writing skills are not routinely taught in many HEIs.
- ▶ Most students are not taught academic writing skills before starting at university.
- ▶ Some academics are unfamiliar with the citation and referencing requirements of international journals.
- ▶ Institutional policies for quality and academic integrity are not routinely checked or monitored by external agencies responsible for quality and standards.
- ▶ Armenia's small, highly connected population, with its close personal loyalties and family contacts, can lead to conflicts of interest that have an impact on fairness and integrity.
- ▶ We found that several academic leaders were sceptical about how effective the planned legislation on academic ethics would be in improving academic integrity.
- ▶ There is no history of co-operation between student leaders and the higher education leadership to influence positive change, unlike the situation in many other countries.
- ▶ It is uncommon for HEIs in Armenia to use any software tools that support the detection of plagiarism in student work.

## Azerbaijan

### Review of national policies

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There are several types of state and private HEIs in Azerbaijan, namely universities, academies, institutes, colleges and conservatoires. Their right of autonomy is protected by law. However, they have to meet certain standards, as set out in the legislation.<sup>12</sup> There are 40 state education institutions and 11 private institutions, the oldest of which is Baku State University, founded in 1919. This university, which has 16 faculties, has produced several of the nation's leaders.

12. [www.scholaro.com/pro/Countries/Azerbaijan/Education-System](http://www.scholaro.com/pro/Countries/Azerbaijan/Education-System).

The HEI system in Azerbaijan is regulated by national laws, elaborated in manuals, education standards, rules, orders and decisions, concepts, regulations, agreements and protocols issued by the Ministry of Education. At the time of research, an abridged version of each of these regulations was available in English. Although none of these documents is directly focused on academic ethics or academic integrity, it is possible to find references to the moral values associated with study at college in some documents (for example, textbook policy talks about moral health, but is primarily focused on secondary schools).

There has been a focus on reforming science to reduce bureaucracy and Sovietism, granting wide autonomy and responsibility to the universities themselves to decide who should be awarded bachelor's and master's degrees. The aim of this autonomy is to serve as an incentive to further development. Azerbaijan has not yet adopted a system of autonomy in awarding doctoral degrees and still relies on a Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) to verify doctoral awards.

For over two years, the Azerbaijani HAC has been implementing complex measures to fight plagiarism in doctoral dissertations. The main development is the creation of a repository of doctoral dissertations that are integrated into a common network with university repositories. For transparency, HAC makes the dissertations publicly available via its website and uses a text-matching system. Also, all PhD students are required to publish in indexed international journals.

The Ministry of Education organises seminars where the importance of strengthening the business environment, the ethics of teaching and student-teacher relationships in HEIs is emphasised as critical to the development of education.<sup>13</sup> There are ongoing projects aimed at improving the quality of student-centred education. The encouragement of positive behavioural habits in students, the creation of a healthy environment in general educational institutions, and the application of occupational standards and a code of ethics for teachers are also seen as important.<sup>14</sup> No other references to academic ethics were found in published documents. However, academic staff members are required to act in accordance with a professional code of ethics issued by each HEI.

Because of its unique geographical location between Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan has joined two of the six committees on education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): the European Committee, which includes 41 countries, and the Asian Committee, which includes 37 countries.<sup>15</sup> Azerbaijan welcomes international students and provides education in many different fields, taught in English. From 2007 to 2015 about 4 000 students from all three levels of higher education won government scholarships to study at leading foreign universities. The most popular destinations for Azerbaijani students were the UK, Turkey, Germany, Canada and the Netherlands. Almost 1 800 students received scholarships to study at master's or PhD levels.

The tuition fees paid by students provide a higher proportion of the funding, for both public and private educational institutions in Azerbaijan, than that provided

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13. [edu.gov.az/en/page/9/12205](http://edu.gov.az/en/page/9/12205).

14. [edu.gov.az/en/page/9/11929](http://edu.gov.az/en/page/9/11929).

15. [www.educations.com/study-guides/asia/study-in-azerbaijan](http://www.educations.com/study-guides/asia/study-in-azerbaijan).

by the government. Fees are either paid by the government or are self-funded by students. Approximately 30% of students receive some form of government scholarship or subsidy, based on rankings from entrance exams. Students who qualify under a quota set by the government receive public funding. In addition, HEIs can receive funds from national and international projects, real estate, donations, consultancy services, and so on.

### **Policies related to academic integrity at institutional level**

In official documents available on the websites of certain universities, academic honesty is portrayed as playing an important role in maintaining the integrity of the universities in Azerbaijan. The documents state that students are expected to recognise and uphold high standards of intellectual and academic integrity and refrain from any form of dishonourable conduct in the course of their academic work. No communication is permitted between students during examinations; any dishonest work identified will be rejected. For violation of the examination rules or dishonesty in an examination, the student is subject to disciplinary action. According to the regulations, any of the following kinds of infringement is strictly forbidden and, if proven, should be penalised: plagiarism, cheating, unauthorised collaboration, falsification and multiple submissions. However, evidence from student focus groups and questionnaire responses indicated that incidents of academic dishonesty are not always reported by teachers. Rights and responsibilities for following the standards of academic conduct are seen as essential for all members of the academic community.

All managers responding to the online questionnaire said their institution had policies for dealing with exam cheating. The majority of managers also confirmed they had policies on other types of misconduct (plagiarism: 84%; academic dishonesty: 72%; ghost writing: 76%). It is interesting to compare managers’ views about these policies with those of students and teachers: students and teachers are much less aware of policies dealing with different types of academic misconduct (see Table 3).

Institutional policies and practices concerning academic integrity vary across institutions. This suggests that national guidelines and directives are not yet fully implemented in every HEI.

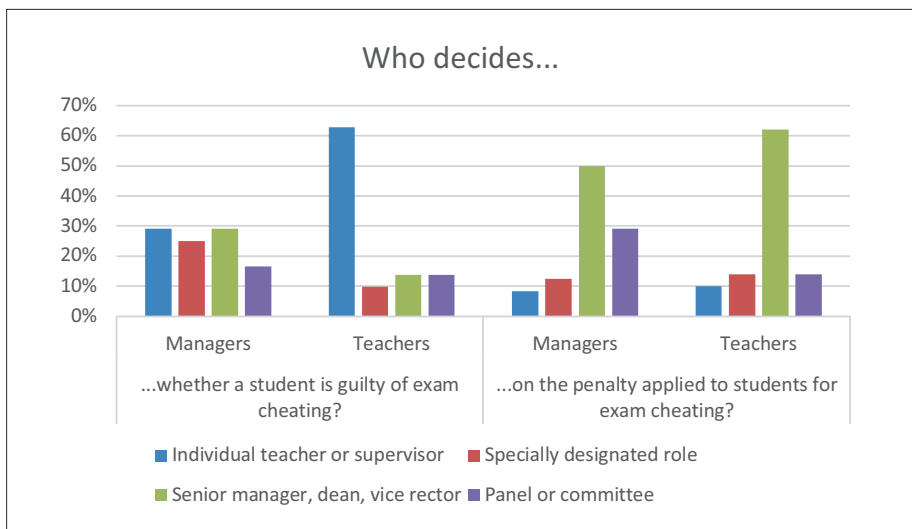
**Table 3: Percentage of Azerbaijani respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that their institution had policies and procedures for dealing with different forms of misconduct**

My institution has policies and procedures for dealing with ...	Teachers	Students	Managers
Plagiarism	61%	65%	84%
Academic dishonesty	66%	71%	72%
Exam cheating	82%	81%	100%
Ghost writing	60%	59%	76%

Evidence from some interviews confirmed very strict responses to student cheating, such as “cameras in every room” to monitor students for signs of cheating during examinations. Students are asked to “sign to say they agree” to being monitored in this way, with all violations reported to the dean. According to student focus group participants and student survey responses, exam cheating was deterred by strict teachers and cameras (according to responses from three out of five focus groups) and the use of metal detectors to check for forbidden devices that might be used for cheating (e.g. mobile phones). There is an associated financial penalty if cheating is confirmed, because students are required to pay for repeating any failed credits. This was seen by several respondents as an effective deterrent. If a student is required to repeat the whole course (which is usual in cases of cheating), they have to pay 100% of the fee for extra credits. Students in focus groups confirmed they understood the possible sanctions, but only 53% of student questionnaire participants agreed they knew what penalties were applied for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. In many institutions, the student focus groups confirmed that their teachers do not always report cases of academic dishonesty. Lack of accountability and no recording of cases means that the scale and nature of academic integrity breaches are unknown and repeat offenders cannot be tracked. To respond to cheating in examinations, many institutions have special camera-equipped rooms, monitored by specially trained staff responsible for the fairness of the exam process.

The survey asked managers and teachers who decides if a student is guilty of exam cheating, and who decides on the penalty to be applied. Although most managers and teachers agreed that the penalty is decided on by a senior manager (e.g. dean, vice rector), over 60% of teachers believed that they were responsible for the decision of whether to uphold the allegation of exam cheating, compared to less than 30% of managers (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Comparison of managers’ and teachers’ responses on exam cheating decisions in Azerbaijan**



Some institutions said they used text-matching software to help to check for plagiarism in master's and PhD theses and scientific papers, but only a quarter of teachers confirmed use of text-matching software at their institution through the questionnaire. Only one student focus group expressed awareness of text-matching software being used in their institution, and very few students mentioned it in the questionnaire. This suggests that minor assessments are rarely checked for plagiarism. If cases of plagiarism go undetected, important early opportunities are missed for improving academic writing skills.

Recognition of the need for a strong consistent approach to plagiarism was apparent in the questionnaire responses: 40% of managers and 54% of teachers agreed that at their institution "penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula". The same sentiment was captured in the interviews: according to one interviewed manager "if more than 20% of plagiarism is found, [the] student cannot defend the thesis and has to rewrite it. If there is more than 30% of plagiarism, s/he has to choose [a] different topic". Unfortunately, this statement also reveals misunderstandings about the capabilities of text-matching software and a mistaken over-reliance on similarity percentages generated by the software.

## Perceptions on academic integrity

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The evidence collected during the project shows that some institutions and individuals in Azerbaijan are taking appropriate measures to improve academic integrity and discourage academic misconduct.

Different perceptions identified during the research include the need for:

- ▶ strengthening the motivation of students to acquire knowledge and skills useful for their future career;
- ▶ promoting the process of academic writing as an enjoyable activity (i.e. focusing on the process rather than on the result);
- ▶ training students on research skills and use of academic sources.

Each of these measures provides ways to encourage ethical conduct by students and academics. As we can see, all these measures are focused on students. Very few respondents mentioned any measures focused on teachers or higher management. However, effective educational change needs two-way dialogue across the whole academic community, including listening to the views of students.

On the subject of corruption, it was stated in several student focus groups that students bribe teachers to pass courses or to get a better grade. Teachers conceded that this happened in the past, but claimed that it was no longer a problem. Focus group participants perceived that corruption and nepotism was common in everyday life. However, there was an agreement that this phenomenon has decreased significantly in recent years. The use of computer-based exams and anonymity of exam candidates, which makes identification of specific students more difficult, can help to reduce bribery. Reduction in this form of corruption was said by respondents to be mostly due to the efforts and strict attitudes of university management.



In the questionnaire, when asked how common student plagiarism was in Azerbaijan, 58% of students said they were aware of at least one case of plagiarism at their university, and 36% agreed that they might have plagiarised. Focus group participants provided a range of answers, some talking about accidental plagiarism and self-plagiarism, and one focus group actually denied it occurred. There was a similar pattern when asked about other forms of cheating.

Based on the survey, 53% of students were aware of at least one student who had used someone else to complete an assessment. Contract cheating was also confirmed in four out of five focus groups: some students were aware of a website where work could be ordered. Although students in one of these focus groups were reluctant to discuss this in any detail, students in another focus group were more forthcoming, providing specific examples of contract cheating in group work and absentee students who “always have good grades”. The price was believed to be “5 AZN [€2.50] per essay [of] 10 pages” or “depends on the type of work, 10-20 AZN [€5-10]”. When asked about methods for exam cheating, students in two focus groups mentioned the use of ear-pods, smartwatches and iPhones. They also noted that some students rented these devices to others, and even mentioned a price of 20-30 AZN [€10-15] per exam.

## Evidence on skills, knowledge and training

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In responses to the questionnaire, 36% of students said they had received training in techniques for academic writing and avoidance of plagiarism and 70% said they would welcome more training. The three most common ways they became aware of the seriousness and consequences of plagiarism were through a “website”, a “teacher or supervisor” and “social media”; each of these options was selected by about half the students. According to teachers, students mainly get this information from the “teacher or supervisor”, followed by “information during introductory lectures” and “workshop, class or lecture”. Comparing the results clearly illustrates the difference between the views of teachers and students and highlights the most frequent sources of student information. When we asked how they became aware of the consequences of academic dishonesty in general, the most popular option, selected by 54% of students, was “teacher or supervisor”.

Almost half of the students said they became aware of plagiarism (46%) and learned how to cite and reference (45%) before starting their undergraduate studies. Almost all other students said they became aware of plagiarism and citation during their undergraduate studies (47% plagiarism and 45% citing and referencing). The remainder (around 6%) said they were still not sure about these issues.

Interviews with senior academics and managers about the situation institutionally and nationally provided examples of how knowledge and skills are improving, including:

- ▶ involving international visitors in the provision of seminars and workshops;
- ▶ hosting conferences focused on academic integrity;
- ▶ provision of training for both staff and students on new teaching methods;
- ▶ running a summer school on academic writing.

Internationalisation, especially the Erasmus+ mobility programme, was identified as an excellent way to share knowledge between different parts of Europe. Eastern European countries were viewed as particularly important in this regard, because they have historical similarities.

## Examples of good practice

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A code of conduct is in place at most (if not all) universities in Azerbaijan and one of the universities participating in the research said it has an honour code. The positive perceptions of managers and academic staff in that institution were echoed by students taking part in focus groups, who confirmed that their teachers took academic integrity very seriously, and that they were both strict and honest. Apparently, the honour code procedure commands the respect of the students. This university also pays special attention to students who do not perform well academically – we had an opportunity to attend part of a seminar for such students, aimed at identifying their problems and helping them to overcome them.

At another university, cases of academic misconduct dealt with by lecturers are reported to the dean's office, where records are kept. We also found a university with a webpage dedicated to academic honesty.

The involvement of many institutions in research projects, academic exchanges and twinning with international partners has helped to bring new ideas to Azerbaijan about improving academic practices, particularly relating to quality, standards and integrity. There is also a special scheme supporting double degree programmes with foreign universities. These projects were specifically named by research participants:

- ▶ PETRA – an Erasmus+ project to build teaching and learning centres, with funding allocated to buy new equipment and train teachers;
- ▶ EQAC<sup>16</sup> – Establishment and Development of Quality Assurance Centres at Azerbaijani Universities, a project which included academic integrity training in Sweden, Lithuania and the UK;
- ▶ TLC – teaching and learning centres, including training of teachers, for example in informatics.

## Challenges and deficits

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Although the majority of students responding to the questionnaire said they were confident they understood how to use academic sources, less than 40% were able to identify a clear case of plagiarism from a scenario provided (Figure 15, Scenario D). This evidence suggests that more training is needed to improve the skills and knowledge of students on academic writing conventions and academic integrity. However, evidence from the interviews suggests that plagiarism (copying from the internet) also occurs among academics in Azerbaijan. Plagiarism (accidental or deliberate) was admitted by 22% of teacher respondents to the questionnaire; 84% also agreed that more training is needed for teachers at their institution on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

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16. <http://eqac.az/en>.

Appreciation of the limitations of text-matching software is important. Responses from the questionnaire and interviews suggest the similarity percentage from text-matching software is being misinterpreted by some academics and managers as a measure of plagiarism.

When academic staff do not report cases or suspicions of academic misconduct by students, or if these incidents are not recorded centrally, it is unlikely that students will receive appropriate guidance or sanctions and it will be difficult to know whether this behaviour is habitual. In addition, if academic staff deal with student misconduct themselves, the outcomes for students will not be consistent.

Feedback from one student focus group revealed their fear of giving truthful answers when asked about corruption in universities: “Don’t ask such questions. We don’t want to go to prison.” But other participants in the same focus group felt that corruption was common and “everything is money”. Two other student focus groups claimed they knew about teachers taking money from students to pass exams in other (state) universities, but not at their institution.

## Recommendations specific to Azerbaijan

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### Recommendations for the Ministry of Education

- ▶ The ministry is advised to continue its support for the internationalisation of universities and student mobility with European partners, which can help to change mindsets on integrity issues.
- ▶ Many participants confirmed recent decreases in corruption, which is reflected by the increase in the Corruption Perception Index. Therefore, we recommend keeping current anti-corruption initiatives running.

### Recommendations for institutions

- ▶ Institutions should focus more on deterring misconduct through education on academic integrity and skills rather than relying on surveillance and punishment.
- ▶ Institutions that do not use text-matching software are strongly advised to introduce such software. We also advise that software be used not only as an aid to detect plagiarism, but also as a formative tool to develop academic writing skills. It is important that the limitations of these tools are fully appreciated.
- ▶ Institutions are advised to share good practice and learn from effective practices at other institutions.

## AIMM results for Azerbaijan

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### Strengths and opportunities

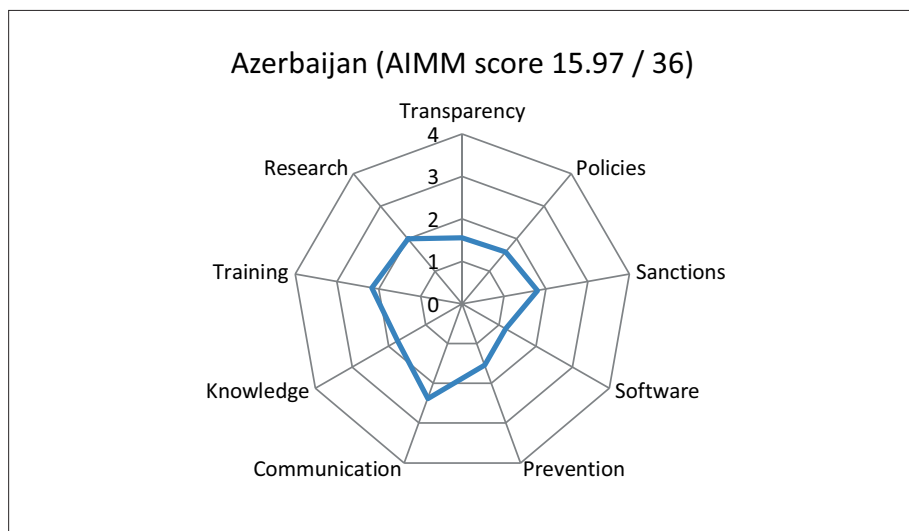
- ▶ Strong penalties are administered to discourage cheating, especially repeat offenders.
- ▶ There is some focus on motivating and engaging students to deter cheating.
- ▶ Strong sanctions are incurred by academics found to have behaved unethically, especially for accepting bribes.

- ▶ Conferences and events on academic integrity have taken place, involving local and international participants.

#### Weaknesses and threats

- ▶ Text-matching software is mainly used for master’s degrees, PhD theses and publications by academic staff, not for other levels of education.
- ▶ There is a need for more education for students to improve knowledge and skills on academic writing: less than 40% of student questionnaire participants were able to identify a clear case of plagiarism from a scenario provided (Figure 15, Scenario D).

**Figure 4: Azerbaijan AIMM radar chart**



## Georgia

### Review of national policies

After graduating from secondary school, all students take the national exams in order to qualify for university. There are three types of HEIs in Georgia: university, offering bachelor’s, master’s and PhD programmes; teaching universities, offering bachelor’s and master’s programmes; and college, offering only bachelor’s programmes.<sup>17</sup>

There are currently almost 60 HEIs in Georgia, of which 80% are private and 20% are state-managed.<sup>18</sup> The majority of universities are in the capital, with only 15 in the regions. Based on the scores students receive in national exams they may be eligible for a scholarship from the government, otherwise they are self-funded. The state university tuition fee is fixed (2 250 GEL/year, or ~€650), but fees vary at private universities.

17. [www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=131&lang=eng](http://www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=131&lang=eng).

18. [www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=1855&lang=eng](http://www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=1855&lang=eng).

Each university has to undergo an authorisation and programme accreditation process run by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement. New standards were introduced in 2017 and universities were allowed time to prepare themselves to meet the revised criteria. There are four new standards that focus on university missions and strategic development plans. Every sub-clause is required to be taken into account in the development of strategic plans. The board of experts appointed to audit universities has one international expert (this is obligatory), who is chair of the board. Other members are locally selected from different universities. The board also includes a representative of graduate employers and a student representative.

According to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, each university must “approve the internal regulations of the institutions and the grounds and rules of ethical and disciplinary liability” (Article 10. b). In addition, each HEI should have a code of ethics for students (Article 43, 7).<sup>19</sup> However, plagiarism and/or academic integrity are not defined in this law.

According to the Authorisation Standards for Higher Education Institutions (2.3), each university must have clear policies on ethics and academic integrity. There should be mechanisms in place to detect and prevent cases of plagiarism. Possible sanctions must be designed in advance and should be well communicated both to staff and students.<sup>20</sup>

In 2016, research was conducted by the Erasmus+ national office with financial support from the Open Society Georgia Foundation. The project report, “The problem of plagiarism and its perception in Georgia”, represented the first countrywide research project aiming to study academic integrity issues at HEIs in Georgia. In addition to identifying the weakness of the processes in place, the researchers provided a list of recommendations addressed both to universities and to the Ministry of Education and Science.<sup>21</sup>

In 2017, Ilia State University successfully submitted an application under the Erasmus+ capacity-building call and received a grant for implementing the project Academic Integrity for Quality Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Institutions in Georgia (INTEGRITY). This was a two-year national project involving 13 universities from Georgia, plus the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement. Four universities from EU countries were involved in this project: Dublin City University, the University of Vienna, Uppsala University and the University of Roehampton. The aim of the project was to develop an academic integrity culture supported by policies, mechanisms and activities that discourage plagiarism and ensure that the principles of academic integrity are well understood. Several activities were carried out: an academic writing curriculum review; faculty and administrative staff training in effective assessment strategies and student support services; and the purchase and roll-out of text-matching software. The project, which ended in spring 2020, focused on developing academic integrity

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19. <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/32830/55/en/pdf>.

20. <https://eqe.ge/en/page/static/449/avtorizatsiis-standartebi>.

21. [www.osgf.ge/files/2017/Publications/Plagiat\\_-\\_en\\_-\\_2016.pdf](http://www.osgf.ge/files/2017/Publications/Plagiat_-_en_-_2016.pdf).

policies in each university, followed by awareness raising through consistent and coherent public relations campaign workshops. The final conference on project outcomes took place at Ilia State University, Tbilisi.<sup>22</sup>

## Policies related to academic integrity at institutional level

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National guidelines are available on academic integrity, but they are “very general”. Around 80% of surveyed managers claimed their institution had policies and procedures for dealing with different types of academic misconduct. However, the maturity of the policies varies across institutions. Institutional leaders and managers reported in the interviews that either there are strict policies in place in their institutions, covering all types of academic misconduct by students, or that policies are under development. Where institutional regulations explicitly included policies for “contract cheating”, the difficulties in identifying this type of misconduct were clear, according to a member of senior management of one university: “It’s a responsibility of the teachers to detect such cases; it’s very difficult to prove”. These challenges explain why suspicion of such conduct is often ignored by academics, and not only in Georgia.

Several statements were made during management interviews about the measures in place to make it “difficult” or “impossible” for students to cheat in exams, such as: “We have a special centre for examinations (with specialists for monitoring and also a well-equipped room with cameras)”; “We have an exam centre for organising exams. It can guarantee quality”; and “We have very strict conditions and we are very strict. It is not easy for students to cheat.” According to student focus groups, the teachers are very strict during the examinations. Often, multiple invigilators are present and electronic devices are forbidden. Students in all focus groups were convinced that cheating at their institution was impossible. At a focus group in one institution, students were not aware that text-matching software was being used to check their work.

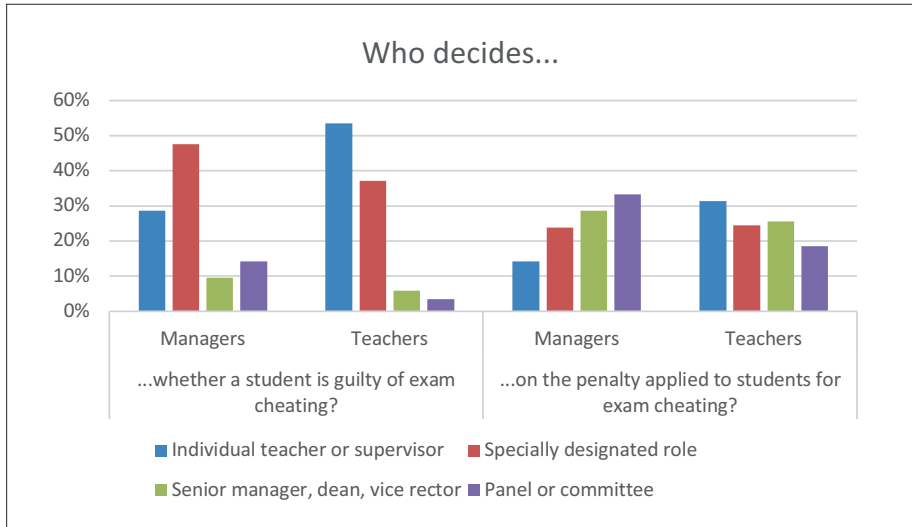
The Erasmus+ project discussed above resulted in the participating institutions developing policies they believed conform to “European standards”, including having a code of ethics. Although three of the five institutions visited as a part of PAICKT research were not involved in this project, they all take this subject very seriously and are working on improvements to policies and practices. Two interviewees from private universities suggested that in Georgia, policies for managing academic misconduct are more effective in private universities than in state universities.

Two managers confirmed that either a senior manager or a faculty committee had responsibility for finalising decisions following accusations of academic misconduct, including what sanctions to apply. This procedure is used for academic misconduct allegations for both students and academic staff. This is a desirable practice, but institutions should ensure that a consistent approach is followed. In the questionnaire, when we asked managers and teachers who decides if a student is guilty of exam cheating, and who decides on the penalty, differences of opinion were clear (Figure 5). Over 50% of teachers said they took decisions on misconduct and over 30% said they decided on the penalty. The opinions of managers on the same questions were quite different.

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22. <http://integrity.iliauni.edu.ge>.

**Figure 5: Comparison of managers' and teachers' responses on exam cheating consequences in Georgia**



Some universities said they maintained data at institutional level about academic integrity violations and the outcomes, but confidentiality requirements prevented them from sharing this information with people external to the institution.

### Perceptions on academic integrity

In Georgia, academic misconduct is viewed as something affecting both students and academics. This view was expressed in one teacher/manager interview about policies: “It mainly concerns students, how to catch them. There is nothing about members of staff”; and “When [a] student is cheating, problem is in the professor”. Another teacher/manager provided this insight about plagiarism by academic staff: “I do not know what penalties are for the professors. There are differences among subjects. For example, in [the] humanities it is ok to copy, but in physics it is considered as a shame.”

Sometimes the spirit of friendship might prevail over the need for integrity, when people are asked for help with academic work. For example, according to one teacher/manager, in cases of collusion by students: “Both of them get zero. One of them usually takes responsibility, because of friendship and [a] sense of loyalty and brotherhood. Everybody wants to help others.”

Based on survey responses, 30% of students believed they might have plagiarised, 60% of students were aware of at least one case of student plagiarism at their institution, and 56% knew at least one person who had used someone else to complete an assessment. These responses contrasted with those from students taking part in all focus groups, who claimed that there was very little plagiarism or exam cheating in their institution. When asked about contract cheating, responses from focus group participants varied on whether or not they had come across any contract cheating

by fellow students. However, all were either aware of advertising or knew the price (200 GEL, or ~€66) for such services, which was viewed by them as expensive.

When asked what more can be done by institutions to respond to cheating, one student said that enough was being done already; a member of another focus group explained that responses to cheating vary according to the teacher, but advocated stronger punishment.

## Evidence on skills, knowledge and training

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One manager interviewee explained how influences from international projects are having a real impact on Georgian higher education providers: “Before the project, students were mainly informed about the consequences of plagiarism. They were just punished and there were no policies about academic ethics.” However, after involvement in the project “we were first [university dealing with academic integrity], we are doing as much as possible. [For] other universities, the situation was not good there, but after entering the project [the] situation is better.”

Interviews with managers and teachers made it clear that some students in Georgia are receiving instruction on academic writing, reading, use of academic sources, note-taking and conducting scientific research, and being rewarded for their skills in these topics. These students are also advised on the consequences of academic misconduct. According to those interviewed, as these skills are not always taught prior to higher education, they must be included in higher education programmes to ensure students are suitably equipped for the demands of higher education. This was confirmed by students in the survey – 59% claimed that they became aware of plagiarism before starting their undergraduate studies, but less than half (45%) became aware of plagiarism and learned to cite and reference during their undergraduate studies. A small minority (7%) said they were still not sure about these concepts and skills. The questionnaire data also show differences between the perceptions of students, teachers and managers on training during university studies. Almost 91% of managers and 75% of teachers agreed that students receive training on academic writing, but only 47% of students agreed they had “received training in techniques for academic writing and avoidance of plagiarism”. The majority of respondents to all three questionnaires said they would welcome more training on these topics.

Pre-university education based on rote learning was suggested by managers and teachers as a reason for students resorting to plagiarism. Students did not identify previous educational methods as a reason for plagiarism, but instead selected reasons related to their current education. The most common reason selected from the list of options by students for plagiarism was “laziness and other priorities”, which corresponds to the opinions stated in student focus groups. It was proposed that because many students need paid employment to support themselves, they are sometimes short of time to complete coursework themselves. We also found that it is common for academics to have several jobs to support their families, which means they might have less time to follow up on suspicions of academic misconduct by students.

Different views were expressed by interview participants about attitudes to education based on the legacy of the Soviet era – some believed the new generation of young professors were no longer influenced by this. It was confirmed that some training is



provided for academic staff, and that “many teachers take part in that training and then these teachers provide training for other members of staff”. But some believed that professors were reluctant to engage in this type of training. Despite these differing views, 87% of surveyed teachers said they should receive more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty at their institutions.

## Examples of good practice

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A senior manager recalled in an interview: “One teacher did a small experiment. He asked students to read out loud [a] declaration of originality before doing the work. It influenced the students in [a] positive way.” We felt that this could be tried by other teachers.

Access to reputable text-matching software in most HEIs through project funding has helped academics and institutions to have a more systematic approach towards responses to collusion and plagiarism by students. Unfortunately, their main focus has been on detection. The software can also be used to help students learn about academic writing conventions when they start higher education and understand when they have made mistakes. This type of formative learning about academic writing can play an important role in developing academic writing skills. According to the interview responses, only a small minority of teachers in Georgia use the software in this way. In some institutions, students have access to the text-matching software to pre-submit their work for checking, and also receive guidance and support to interpret the feedback they receive from the software tools. However, teacher respondents were uncertain to what extent the software was being used in this way by other colleagues in their institution.

At least two institutions in Georgia have invested in a centre for academic writing. In one of these institutions the centre has expanded from employing just one person to 37 teachers, and teaches a compulsory course titled “Academic Techniques” to all students at the university, in English and in Georgian. These centres provide support for the entire academic community.

## Challenges and deficits

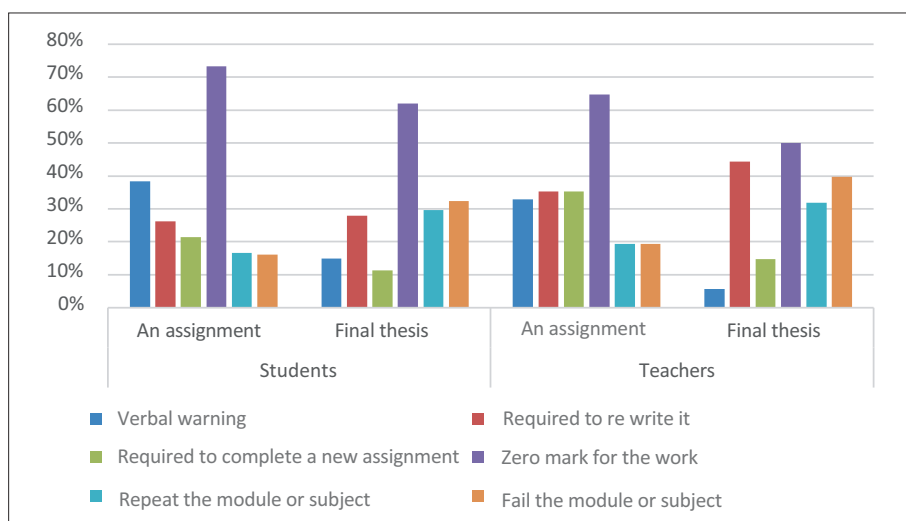
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Questionnaire responses indicate that Georgian students were more likely to have learned about plagiarism and citation methods before entering university than students from the other four countries covered in this project. However, several teacher participants called for more education for students before university on academic integrity to help in the transition: “There is a ... big difference between what is happening at schools and ... universities”.

Based on the questionnaire responses, 31% of students and 27% of teachers agreed with the statement that they might have plagiarised; 60% of students were aware of at least one case of student plagiarism at their institution; 75% of teachers had personally come across such cases; and 56% of students and 65% of teachers were aware of a case of contract cheating. Interview respondents told us that translation plagiarism by students and academic staff was fairly common in Georgia but acknowledged that this is difficult to detect. Awareness of different types of academic misconduct was higher in Georgia than in the other four countries being surveyed.

By far, the most common outcome for Georgian students when plagiarism is discovered in an assignment or a thesis is a grade of zero for the work (see Figure 6), which is a relatively lenient penalty. The other four countries surveyed make more use of other sanctions and are less dependent on this choice of outcome. It is important that a record of all upheld allegations and the outcomes is created and maintained centrally within the institution. The threat of a harsher penalty for repeated misconduct can provide a strong deterrent.

**Figure 6: Penalties for plagiarism in an assignment and final thesis in Georgia**



One respondent from a private university called for sponsorship to fund access to research databases, because only public universities are eligible for funding from the government. Other participants confirmed that there are “national foundations” for educational funding and that they received support from the Ministry of Education and Science.

The availability of digital student work, academic papers and theses in Georgian is quite limited at present, which affects the effectiveness of text-matching software for detecting similarities. Some tools cannot work with the Georgian alphabet, as was noted: “It’s a problem due to our language. Most of the similarity detection tools recognise only Latin [alphabet] languages.” The few that are suitable are very expensive. As stated earlier, it is uncommon for bachelor’s students in Georgia to use text-matching software tools to help to check their assignments for plagiarism.

## Recommendations specific to Georgia

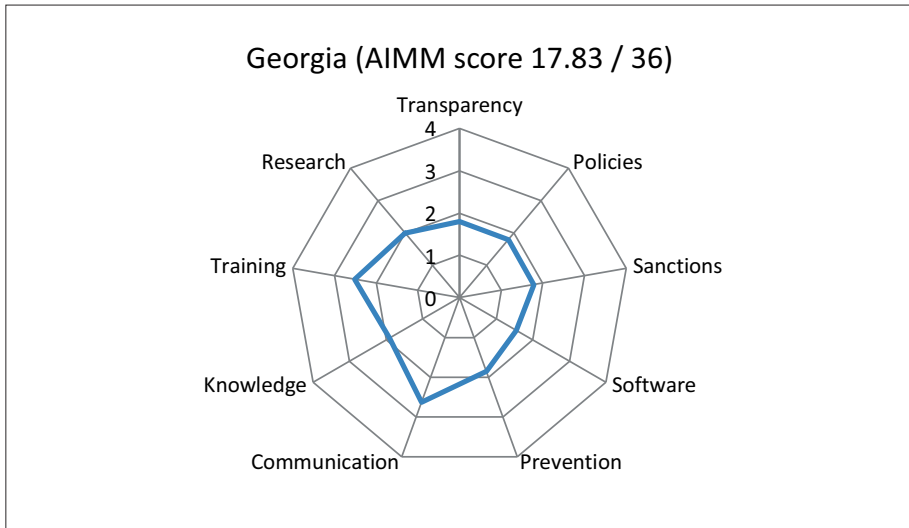
Recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Science and HEIs:

- ▶ International exchanges for students and academics and other staff should be encouraged and supported.
- ▶ More funding is needed to ensure access to research databases in both state-funded and private universities. The ministry is encouraged to explore possible sources of funding.

- ▶ The Erasmus+ project INTEGRITY has already had a significant positive impact on the culture of academic integrity in Georgia. The current initiatives should be allowed to continue after the official end of the project to ensure the momentum of positive change is not lost.

## AIMM results for Georgia

**Figure 7: Georgia AIMM radar chart**



### Strengths and opportunities

- ▶ Strict regulations and policies on what sanctions to apply may serve as a deterrent against academic misconduct.
- ▶ There is good awareness about how approaches to teaching and assessment can help to discourage academic misconduct.
- ▶ Policies and regulations cover a wide range of types of misconduct.
- ▶ Some institutions keep statistics on cases of academic misconduct.
- ▶ There is good evidence of training and education for students and staff on academic integrity, academic writing and the consequences of academic misconduct.

### Weaknesses and threats

- ▶ Although there are national guidelines, there are no national policies and there is no monitoring of HEIs with regard to academic integrity policies and practices.
- ▶ Inconsistencies exist on what is viewed as acceptable and unacceptable academic conduct.
- ▶ The penalties applied for student plagiarism appear to be lenient and inconsistent with institutional policies.

- ▶ Some assessment is focused on memorisation and multiple-choice tests rather than challenging students.
- ▶ Funding from international projects provides access to text-matching software, but this may not be affordable once the projects come to an end.

## Kazakhstan

### Review of national policies

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The higher education system of Kazakhstan is represented by more than 120 universities. All universities are required by the Ministry of Education and Science to follow academic integrity principles and have well-formulated and publicised academic integrity policies. However, implementation and control measures are not quite in place yet, and the requirements are still under discussion, as they have just been initiated and included in the updated education (state educational standards) regulation document, which came into force in November 2018.

Two independent academic accreditation agencies have been accredited by the EU. Most universities in Kazakhstan go through the accreditation process run by these two agencies on a regular (five-year period) basis.

Fewer than ten universities have adopted policies on academic integrity since their establishment. These include KIMEP University, Nazarbayev University, Kazakh-British Technical University and M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University. The necessity of establishing an effective system of academic integrity has always been well recognised and communicated at different levels. Some steps to promote academic integrity have also been implemented. For instance, M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University, in partnership with Nazarbayev University, conducts an Academic Integrity Conference on an annual basis. More than 80 universities have received programme accreditation recognition from various international accreditation bodies.

In August 2018, the Ministry of Education and Science and rectors of nine universities founded the Academic Integrity League, an association of HEIs. The declaration of establishment was signed by representatives of 24 HEIs. As of November 2019, 11 HEIs are members of the league and 16 other universities have expressed a desire to join the league. Its council was tasked to develop and approve a set of standards of academic integrity that are binding on members of the league. In addition, the list of candidates for joining the league was announced at the general meeting of the league and conditions for their membership were determined. The Academic Integrity League has a well-established governance structure, has developed a comprehensive set of goals and key performance indicators, and is organising a range of activities to further its objectives.

### Policies related to academic integrity at institutional level

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Some institutions have external quality audits and accreditation, but it is not clear whether academic integrity policies are included in this external scrutiny. Most

institutions we visited had internal quality processes and this includes oversight of policies for academic integrity in at least some institutions.

The nature of institutional policies and procedures for academic integrity depends on whether or not the institution is part of the Academic Integrity League. In addition to sharing good practice, league members aim for transparency by collecting and sharing data on academic integrity violations and student assessment.

Other external influences can affect institutional approaches, such as working with international partner institutions and participation in international research. Internationally educated institutional leaders and academics were also viewed by questionnaire respondents to have a positive impact on academic integrity.

There is a national requirement for HEIs to have licences for text-matching software tools, but which tools they use and how they are used varies by institution. In common with other countries studied, different thresholds were set according to the level of study and subject, specifying what similarity percentage is permitted from the software tool report, which involves misinterpreting the similarity percentage as a measure of plagiarism. According to one participant, the decision on whether to take action, “even if the indicators are high ... is up to [the] supervisor”. It is important that the limitations of the software tools are better understood by managers and academics in Kazakhstan.

Institutions involved in the survey said they have strong measures in place to counter cheating in examinations, including using video cameras, face recognition and not allowing students to take phones into examination halls. There are also measures to counter impersonation in examinations: “During exams students have photos and ID on the paper”.

The questionnaire responses indicate that a remarkably high percentage of teachers (84%) are convinced about consistency in procedures and penalties for student academic misconduct. Agreement with the statements “Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula” and “Teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases” are much higher than for the other four countries surveyed and are also considerably higher than responses from students and managers in Kazakhstan (see Figure 10). This may reflect national initiatives to establish academic integrity policies and efforts towards consistent outcomes for breaches of academic integrity.

Some institutions have disciplinary committees to decide outcomes for proven cases of academic dishonesty. When a student is failed for academic misconduct, they have to pay fees to repeat the course. According to one respondent, the available sanctions range from “[a] zero mark to suspension for one year”. One of the most unusual sanctions is to be added to a black-list of students who are not allowed to travel abroad to study on an Erasmus programme or receive a “letter of recommendation”. Occasionally, students are expelled, for example for “technical manipulations in the final thesis” or for repeated misconduct.

## Perceptions on academic integrity

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During the visits to Kazakhstan, team members found great openness to discuss academic integrity and a willingness to learn and change on the part of almost every person encountered (students, teachers, managers). Academic integrity is certainly a topic that is understood and in the national consciousness within government and higher education, at least.

Several participants suggested that some students are trying to “cheat the software” and “students are students, they try it all the time”. However, the perception of several respondents was that the situation is improving, with a reduction in number of cases of academic misconduct compared to previous years. This view was also expressed in a student focus group: “We are trying... especially at our university we are trying to change everything”, including the practices of teachers. One respondent stated that “most cases [of academic misconduct] happen in the first year of study”, suggesting that academic misconduct happens mostly unintentionally and is caused either by a lack of skills or lack of understanding of integrity issues. Participants also mentioned lack of motivation to learn in some courses: for example, the History of Kazakhstan is an obligatory course for all study programmes, including engineering.

Different views were expressed in response to questions about ghost writing and contract cheating. Students were aware of websites where work can be bought. Some students said it was not common in Kazakhstan, but others disagreed with this view. According to one student focus group participant “it’s better to buy it because when you write, the teacher, supervisor always sends you back and forth – it is very common”. In the anonymous questionnaires, 32% of students were aware of someone who had had an assessment completed by another person.

A manager, although not aware of any recent cases, described experiences as a student, when a friend “was pretty much taking all of the money from all of his course mates and making assignments for them”. Another manager denied it could happen “because I set work that could not be completed in this way, including empirical improvements, social science problems, interviews with grandparents” and “I’ve never heard of this in 20 years of teaching”. In a different institution, we were told “suspicious cases go to the committee. The student is asked to write an essay on the same topic in front of the teachers” for comparison with the submitted work. Another manager provided this novel insight into their experience: “Essay mills refuse to provide services to our students, there were too many cases of revealed contract cheating and students requested their money back”. In questionnaire responses, half the managers said they were aware of a contract cheating case.

Several academic staff mentioned issues related to academic publishing: “[The] major problem ... is to figure out which journals are pirated”. Because of the importance placed on journal impact factors, predatory publishers are problematic in many countries, and not confined to Kazakhstan.

## Evidence on skills, knowledge and training

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Despite the recent efforts to introduce good practice in Kazakhstan, there are still serious gaps in the common understanding of, and consequently education and

training about, plagiarism. Students in one focus group confirmed they had received training and guidance, but they appeared to be confused about what they had been taught. Further evidence of confusion emerged in questionnaire responses; students studying in Kazakhstan scored the lowest of the five surveyed countries in the recognition of plagiarism scenarios. Less than 75% of students considered scenario A (“40% of student work is copied word for word with no quotations, references or in-text citations”) to be plagiarism. Just 36% of students considered scenario D (“40% of student work is copied, some words are changed, no quotations, references or in-text citations”) to be plagiarism (Figure 15). Amongst teachers, just over 80% (Scenario A) and 65% (Scenario D) considered these examples to be plagiarism (Figure 16).

The focus has been on training and guiding students, which is confirmed by the questionnaire data (48% of students said they had received training, which is the highest level among the five countries). However, some participants suggested training of academics is lagging behind, speaking of the reluctance by some academics to change their approaches to teaching and assessment. The same issue was confirmed several times during the interviews with managers. The questionnaire responses also reveal a slightly lower demand for more training for teachers on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty compared to the other four countries (48% of teachers and 63% of managers from Kazakhstan, compared to at least 72% and 86% respectively in the other countries).

Although more Kazakh students said they had received training than students in other countries, and they had the lowest demand for more training (57%), only 36% of student respondents could correctly identify plagiarism (Scenario D, Figure 15). Also, given that the demand for more training for teachers is the lowest of the five countries, the quality of training provision should be investigated.

## Examples of good practice

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Based on input from interview participants, Kazakhstan has experienced a rapid shift in embracing academic integrity in higher education. However, it is important to be realistic about the remaining challenges and not become complacent. The Academic Integrity League is a very positive initiative with potential to counter the challenges of corruption, unethical practices and academic misconduct.

According to one student focus group, “The high quality of teaching is [an] incentive not to cheat”. Innovative approaches to pedagogy were found in several institutions in Kazakhstan. This included introducing more demanding forms of assessments and requiring students to demonstrate critical thinking skills. One institution took part in an Erasmus+ project focusing on assessment methods and workshops for academic staff. As a result, this institution is now moving away from a culture of multiple-choice tests and rote learning towards assessment that requires critical thinking. One respondent spoke of two types of examinations – “computer testing in the camera-equipped rooms and oral exams in front of the commission”. Both ways help ensure integrity during exams, but efforts to change students’ attitudes to cheating are also important.

At one institution, internal moderation of assessment tasks is conducted before the assignments are distributed to students. Another institution adopted measures to

counter ghost writing of diploma theses: “We have procedures, supervisors should mark every step in [an] electronic system and control final versions (step by step)”.

One institution maintains a webpage devoted to student problems and questions, which are answered by dedicated academic staff. This helps to prevent myths and rumours and deters students from seeking support from outside the university (especially essay mills).

## Challenges and deficits

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Although several institutions expressed enthusiasm about the effectiveness of recently established policies, our experience suggests that it will take time for them to understand the impact of implementing changes of such magnitude. Introducing a culture of academic integrity is not a box-ticking exercise. It involves action by every member of the academic community. Addressing academic misconduct and corruption is a complex, time-consuming process requiring changes to values and attitudes and developing new skills across the entire academic community.

Assessment and certification methods in Kazakhstan are largely based on Grade Point Average (GPA), resulting in little discrimination between the achievements of more and less able students, which also fuels grade inflation. Several academics we spoke to mistakenly see the use of grade distribution as an indicator of quality, which can result in a focus on achieving a normal (“right”) distribution rather than assessing actual student outcomes. A learning outcomes approach to designing assessments and measuring student achievement has been successfully adopted in many other countries. Changing from a system of GPA and grade distribution to using learning outcomes would overcome many of the disadvantages of the current process and more effectively promote and reward learning and achievement by students.

Many institutions in Kazakhstan have made good a start in automation and digitisation of institutional systems for collecting and sharing data. This initiative should be extended, potentially through inter-institution support, to cover the whole higher education sector.

The success and benefits of the Academic Integrity League are commendable, but these are not shared by all institutions in Kazakhstan. More work is needed to overcome the negativity and suspicions of the institutions not currently engaged with this initiative, particularly relating to their choice of text-matching software tools.

The requirement for PhD students to publish 14 articles, including at least one paper in a Scopus-listed journal, should be reviewed with some urgency. It is well understood from research in this field (Mills and Inouye 2020) that pressure to publish, especially when a PhD candidate is required to generate such a high number of publications within a tight time frame with no monitoring for quality, can lead to plagiarism, self-plagiarism, gift-authorship, and publication in low quality and predatory journals, and ultimately distracts PhD students from focusing on their research.

Feedback from the questionnaires and interviews provided evidence of a poor understanding of plagiarism on the part of both students and teachers. One teacher explained that “most students ... do not have a culture” of academic integrity, describing



a “copy-paste tradition”. Another teacher stated that some academic colleagues “cannot actually write themselves”.

The low salaries of academic staff are not commensurate with the demands placed on them in terms of teaching, research and publication. Overworked, undervalued and underpaid academic staff are unlikely to engage positively in additional duties relating to academic integrity.

In common with many other countries, some universities in Kazakhstan specify a threshold similarity percentage from text-matching software to determine whether or not plagiarism has occurred. We heard stories about students bribing staff within these institutions to edit their papers in order to get the percentage below the threshold. This demonstrates the urgent requirement for improved understanding, particularly for those designing policies and making decisions in universities, about how to use and interpret the outputs from similarity-checking software.

## Recommendations specific to Kazakhstan

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### Recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Science and HEIs

- ▶ There is a need to review reliance on number of publications as part of the evidence for academic progression and appointments, because this is driving down quality and encouraging the use of predatory journals, plagiarism and questionable academic practices.
- ▶ National access to the Scopus database is considered useful for scientists. The ministry should continue to support this benefit for scientific institutions in Kazakhstan. Although indexing in Scopus and Web of Science is seen as desirable, it should be noted that no index provides a reliable indicator of the quality of academic publications.
- ▶ The Academic Integrity League is an effective and innovative network. The ministry and HEIs are encouraged to build on the initial success of the league and encourage more institutions to benefit from collaboration. Ideally the league should remain inclusive, welcoming, autonomous and open to diverse ideas.
- ▶ There should be more funding for staff mobility, exchange of experiences, and capacity-building initiatives focused on quality education and innovative teaching and assessment methods.

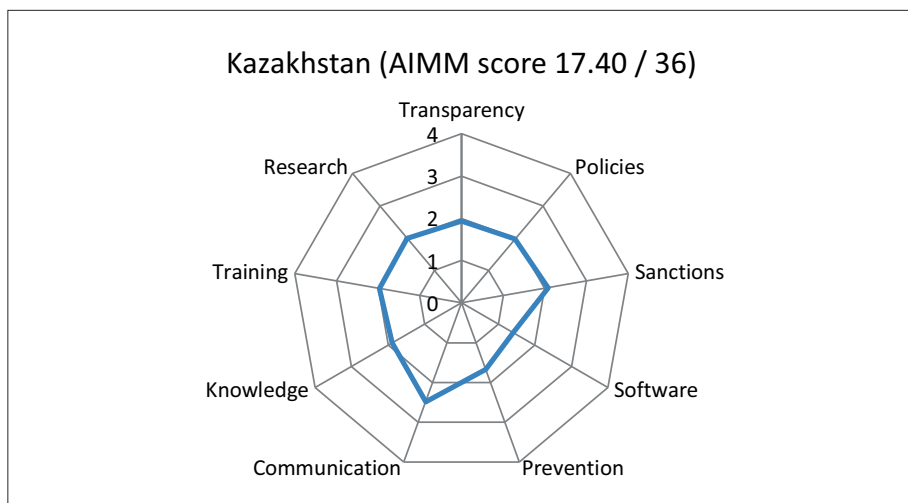
### Recommendations to institutions

- ▶ It is recommended that institutions focus more on deterring misconduct through education about academic integrity and skills rather than relying on surveillance and punishment. Specifically, institutions should be careful with “zero tolerance” of plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct. Students’ circumstances should always be taken into account, even for very serious allegations.
- ▶ Institutions should not be afraid of transparency. Openly admitting any academic integrity deficits and involving all stakeholders in discussions about how to address them is a positive first step to developing a culture of integrity.

- ▶ Institutions should improve students' motivation by making clear why study topics are important. Consideration should be given to removing curriculum content that is not relevant to learning outcomes.

## AIMM results for Kazakhstan

**Figure 8: Kazakhstan AIMM radar chart**



### Strengths and opportunities

- ▶ The Academic Integrity League, currently comprising 11 universities, facilitates transparency, sharing information and good practice, learning together and organising conferences.
- ▶ Quality assurance internal and external audits include academic integrity.
- ▶ Use of text-matching software is common across levels and for research and academic papers.
- ▶ Text-matching software is used for teaching in some institutions, with some students having access to the tool for pre-checking their work.
- ▶ There are strong policies, and strict approaches towards academic integrity and malpractice (by students and staff).
- ▶ There are strong sanctions that students are aware of to deter cheating.
- ▶ Records are kept and shared for academic misconduct allegations and their outcomes.
- ▶ There is monitoring of student work and viva voce examinations by supervisors to check authenticity.

### Weaknesses and threats

- ▶ Not all universities in Kazakhstan are engaged with academic integrity values.
- ▶ Some student participants were not aware of academic integrity policies.
- ▶ Some students and teachers lack understanding of how to identify plagiarism.

- ▶ There is a focus on catching cheating in some institutions, rather than education.
- ▶ Inconsistencies remain in standards of integrity, with students learning which teachers are strict and which will allow cheating.
- ▶ Not all institutions provide training for academic staff.
- ▶ There is a perception that the Ministry of Education and Science does not always respect the autonomy of HEIs.
- ▶ A “copy-paste tradition” survives despite recent progress.
- ▶ The requirement for PhD students to publish many journal papers incentivises gaming.
- ▶ Students are learning how to cheat the software to avoid accusations of plagiarism.
- ▶ Misconduct and corruption by some academics persists.

## Turkey

### Review of national policies

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Turkish universities offer associate degree programmes, bachelor’s degree programmes, graduate programmes and postgraduate programmes. Associate degree programmes take two years, and vocational high school graduates can qualify for them without taking centralised exams. Bachelor’s degree programmes generally take four years, but specialised programmes can take longer (e.g. medicine takes six years). Universities in Turkey offer a wide range of graduate programmes. While master’s programmes take about two years (non-thesis master’s programmes generally take 1.5 years), PhD programmes take about four years.

The Council of Higher Education (CoHE) is an autonomous institution responsible for the planning, co-ordination and governance of the higher education system in Turkey in accordance with the law. The National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (TYYÇ) was developed with reference to the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning was adopted by the CoHE in 2010.

National policies exist that aim to regulate academic integrity. The Law on Intellectual and Artistic Works, originally published in the Official Gazette in 1951, can be regarded as the earliest document on this subject. This law was recently updated to align with other European policies. The CoHE published an Ethical Code of Conduct for Higher Education Institutions in 2014. In addition, it also published "Instructions for the ethics of scientific research and publication in higher education institutions". The Intercollegiate Council, an independent unit of the CoHE that co-ordinates tenure applications, published the "Scientific research and publication ethics directive", which aims to act as a guide for the investigation of unethical cases in nationwide tenure applications. Another CoHE regulation aims to deal with incidents of plagiarism in postgraduate theses: plagiarism is defined and institutions are expected to implement text-matching software to detect similarities that may indicate plagiarism.

There have been several initiatives on academic integrity in recent years:

- ▶ The 4th International Conference: Plagiarism across Europe and Beyond was jointly organised by Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Mendel University in Brno and the European Network for Academic Integrity in Ephesus, Turkey, from 9 to 11 May 2018. The conference aimed to provide a forum for sharing best practices and experiences by addressing issues of academic integrity and bringing together prominent names in the field of academic integrity from across the world. A total of 160 delegates from 35 different countries on six continents attended the conference.
- ▶ Nationwide annual academic integrity seminars have been organised since 2016 by TechKnowledge, the electronic information solutions provider that distributes Turnitin in the Middle East and in Turkey.
- ▶ A workshop on plagiarism and publication ethics was organised by the Istanbul University Congress and Culture Center.
- ▶ A conference on academic writing and ethics was organised by Anadolu University.
- ▶ An ethics conference was organised by Middle East Technical University.
- ▶ An ethics conference was organised by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.
- ▶ An Applied Ethical Research Centre was set up by Middle East Technical University.
- ▶ National text-matching software was developed by intihal.net.
- ▶ The European Network for Academic Integrity (Erasmus+ KA2 project, 2016-19) had Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University as a project partner. The intellectual outputs of the project include educational materials about academic integrity for higher education teachers and students, a tool kit for cross-sector co-operation in terms of academic integrity, and a handbook for improvements in academic integrity (including glossary, general guidelines and self-evaluation tests for students, teachers and institutions).<sup>23</sup>

Two projects related to academic integrity are ongoing in Turkey. The first, Testing of Support Tools for Plagiarism Detection (TeSToP), is supported by the European Network for Academic Integrity. Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University is involved in the research team. The project aims to simulate actual usage of text-matching software in an educational setting in eight different European languages with the help of 15 web-based text-matching systems.

The second project is a study entitled "Academic profession in the knowledge-based society (APIKS)", with a first phase in 1992, a second phase in 2007, and an ongoing third phase under the Changing Academic Profession Research Series. In the third phase the researchers collected data from 1 882 academics in Turkey on ethics and plagiarism. The results from this research have not yet been published.

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23. [www.academicintegrity.eu](http://www.academicintegrity.eu).

## Policies related to academic integrity at institutional level

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There is external quality monitoring and accreditation of some higher education providers in Turkey that requires “compliance with ISO 9001”. However, academic integrity is not routinely included in this process and it is generally considered beyond the scope of the monitoring. According to one vice-dean, the Council of Higher Education provides definitions and leaflets for higher education providers concerning academic integrity, but no guidance on policies.

The view on quality monitoring from another university revealed that “for state universities, YÖK [CoHE] visits once a year. For foundation universities, they visit twice a year. They check all reports and then they criticise you, e.g. if we skip any step, the students can sue us. So, we have to follow all the steps”. It was emphasised in one interview that “European standards are the same for us” and one university vice-president was clear that their internal quality monitoring processes covered ethical issues.

Responding to the survey, 75% of managers said their institution had policies concerning exam cheating; 63% of managers said they had policies for managing plagiarism and academic dishonesty in general; and 38% of managers said they had policies for dealing with ghost writing (which is the lowest across all five countries studied). There was slightly less awareness of these policies on the part of teachers and students, except 83% of teachers were aware of policies for cheating on exams.

Contrary to the questionnaire responses, there were inconsistencies in interview responses with senior managers on institutional policies, suggesting variation within Turkey on whether or not policies relating to academic conduct had been implemented across their institution and if so, how complete and effective they were. No evidence was found of the systematic collection and analysis of statistics on cases of academic misconduct at institution or faculty level, other than by individuals for personal use or research.

Use of text-matching software is relatively common, and mandatory for theses at postgraduate levels in Turkey. The Turnitin similarity report must be provided for postgraduate theses. The Turkish Academic Network and Information Center (ULAKBIM) provides free access to Turnitin and iThenticate for all academics in Turkey. Although there is widespread use of text-matching software at Turkish institutions, the focus is on similarity ratios rather than interpreting the reports. The price of licences means that the tools may not be used for undergraduate students or for minor assignments. However, policies for institutional use and systematic institutional use of software in Turkey are not common. At one institution, students are required to sign a declaration of originality with each piece of work they submit.

## Perceptions on academic integrity

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Judging by the interview responses, use of essay mills and, more generally, contract cheating, appears to be common in Turkey – 39% of students and 49% of teachers reported being aware of a student who had an assessment written by somebody else. People expressed frustration at the difficulty in deterring and detecting contact

cheating, noting that “when the work is too good, it might be that they bought it”; “it is extremely hard to prevent”; and “it is hard to prove”.

The view from an institution about cheating in examinations was that in “this department, the students might cheat, maybe. We try to control it, but it’s impossible to control everything. At examination centres, they even use the help of police to prevent cheating, but we can’t do it at the departmental level”.

The strong commitment to integrity was clear in most of the interviews we conducted. An interviewee said: “I try to offer them something more than just textbook teaching. I offer them my experience. I’m trying to inject it into their blood, like attending classes. We teach them honesty. I tell the students give me a reason, a real one, why you missed my class.”

The level of study was thought by some participants to affect students’ attitudes to cheating: “It seems to be more problematic at undergraduate level as they do not go through Turnitin. I would like such regulations to be introduced at undergrad level as well.” This comment implies reliance on text-matching software and a perception of a strong deterrence effect at postgraduate level. The use of software tools is limited in some institutions “for economic reasons”, but according to one university manager, they “would like a more complete picture of student work”.

One senior manager expressed the view that “we’re aware the more we do [in response to academic dishonesty] ... the more creative students become”. On the positive side, a vice-dean told us that, “there is a growing interest to solve academic dishonesty”, but “first we need to focus on the academic side, otherwise it will not work”.

## **Evidence on skills, knowledge and training**

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There was a disparity in questionnaire responses from students compared to those from teachers and managers about training in techniques for academic writing and avoidance of plagiarism. Although the vast majority of managers (87.5%) and many teachers (57.9%) agreed that students receive training on scholarly academic writing, only 27.6% of students agreed that training had been provided. Almost 64% of students, 79% of teachers and 87.5% of managers said there should be more training for students. Compared to the other four countries studied, Turkish students appeared to be the least familiar with cases of student plagiarism, with just 23.2% saying they were aware of such a case.

According to one interviewee: “There is a regulation for the Higher Education Council to organise Ethics classes – a non-credit obligatory training.” Several interview respondents confirmed that they provided classes on academic writing and ethics, particularly to ensure students are “aware of the issue”, with one institution having “a week on plagiarism [prevention] when students arrive”. Another approach taken was contextualising ethical issues, “for example ethics in industrial engineering”. One respondent expressed doubts about how seriously students took this subject: “We have ethics classes, even at undergraduate level, but I don’t know if we change students’ attitudes. Some students come with fake medical reports to postpone their exams.”

Two participants spoke of training about the use of text-matching software tools for both students and academic staff. However, no evidence emerged of more general and regular development activities for academic staff on academic integrity, other than one interview respondent who confirmed that “we discuss these issues all the time”.

## Examples of good practice

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There is good evidence of ethics councils operating in some institutions and following what they perceive as adherence to “European standards”. Universities in Turkey have their own ethics boards that serve for their academics and students, mainly at postgraduate level. Academics are required to obtain ethical approval before applying for any funds for their research projects and ethical approval is compulsory for any postgraduate thesis. In addition to ethics boards, some institutions also make their code of ethics publicly available.

Some innovative approaches were revealed in pedagogy and assessment. In one institution, for example, there was a requirement for students to conduct peer reviews of each other’s draft assignments, in order to develop skills in constructive criticism.

In one university, although contract cheating was seen as “difficult to identify”, “co-operation between students and supervisors is so good. Professors check their work throughout the whole process of writing, minimising the potential for contract cheating.” At another university, a one-to-one viva is used to check whether students can defend their work.

One institution has an Applied Ethical Research Center that appears to be unique in the country. However, we were told: “They don’t publish any policies – it would be good if they did.”

An institution specialising in distance learning listed a range of measures it deployed to ensure authenticity in student assessment, including sending “printed exams with police officers” and a rigorous system of supervision for face-to-face examinations, which is used by other universities.

One PhD student in Turkey is currently researching policies for academic integrity to be implemented at undergraduate level. When the research is published, it is hoped that the findings will be of interest across the higher education sector in Turkey and beyond.

## Challenges and deficits

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There has been a difficult political situation in Turkey since 2016, with many higher education academics and institutional leaders dismissed and imprisoned. In some cases, there were genuine grounds of misconduct, for example (from an interview with a manager): “Last week one person from [an Exam] Centre was taken into custody – for releasing exam questions to some organisations”, but uncertainty surrounds other cases.

In the past, university rectors in Turkey were elected by staff and appointed by the President of Turkey, but since 2016 all rectors have been selected and appointed by the President, overturning the long-standing tradition of autonomy and self-governance

of higher education providers. Evidence also emerged from the interviews that the insecurity felt by some academics is leading to their reluctance to report cases of academic misconduct by students.

The subject of academic publishing practices in Turkey came up many times during separate interviews. The importance of academic publishing is elevated because publication records are used to determine academic progression. Referring to disreputable or “predatory” publishing, one senior manager noted: “There is no good judging system, no peer review, you just pay for being published.” There has been a response to this problem at national level, by requiring the use of reputable indexing databases such as SCI, SSCI, AHCI and Scopus to identify which journals are considered of sufficient quality for academic appointments and promotion purposes, but no index provides a guarantee of quality for journal articles.

In almost every Turkish institution participating in the research, there was evidence of the similarity percentage from text-matching tools being misinterpreted as a plagiarism percentage, which was then used to determine whether to apply sanctions, as seen in comments such as “in terms of plagiarism, we don’t allow students to submit their work with above 20% similarity – this is dealt [with] by academics”. To compound this error, different percentages were applied across the same institution, depending on the preferences of subject leaders. Over-estimation of the capabilities of text-matching software was also apparent: “It is impossible to cheat due to [the] existence of software.”

It was suggested by one participant that higher education providers in Turkey “are not ready” to adopt rigorous strategies, policies and systems for deterring, detecting and managing academic misconduct that have been applied elsewhere in the world. Apart from the additional work this would involve, many do not see the need to change, and claim that it would be “too difficult for people to follow these policies”.

## Recommendations specific to Turkey

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### Recommendations to the Ministry of National Education

- ▶ External quality and accreditation monitoring and review of HEIs should routinely include oversight of institutional policies and strategies for academic integrity, because lack of integrity implies lack of quality and low standards.
- ▶ Clear guidance is needed for HEIs from the Council of Higher Education on the requirements and process for establishing institutional policies for academic integrity and ethical conduct.

### Recommendations to both the Council of Higher Education and HEIs

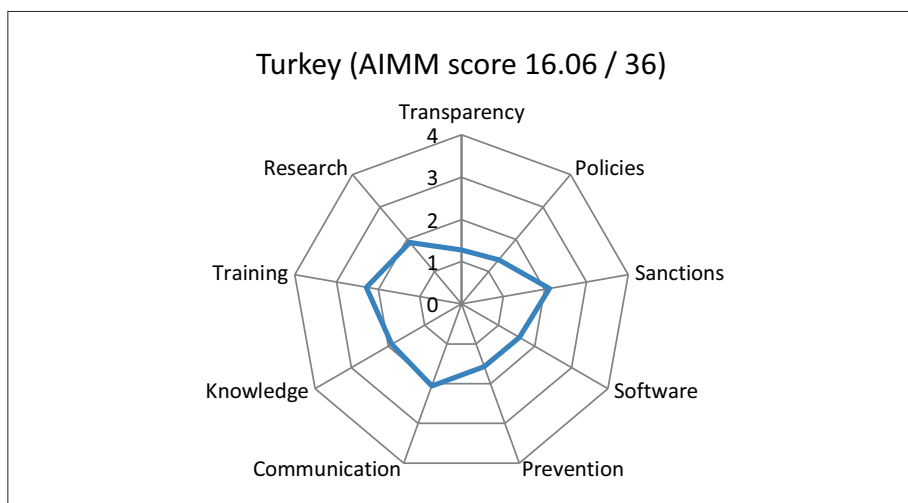
- ▶ There is a need to review reliance on the publication record of academics, researchers and PhD students as part of the evidence for academic progression and appointment, because this is driving down quality and encouraging the use of predatory journals, plagiarism and questionable practices. In particular, Scopus indexing is not a reliable indicator of publisher or journal quality and rigour. Also, the measures for assessing whether or not a journal is predatory should be based on very carefully and wisely selected criteria.



- ▶ It would be a great advantage to HEIs if upper secondary pupils and undergraduate students receive education and training on academic writing and academic integrity before they leave school for higher education or employment.
- ▶ A culture shift is needed to persuade all academics in Turkey to embrace the desirable scale of changes on academic integrity policies. It will take time to reach a tipping point on consensus in each institution. The government can help this process by ensuring academics feel supported and secure. The government may also accelerate progress by facilitating the sharing of good practice in academic integrity across Turkey and internationally.

## AIMM results for Turkey

**Figure 9: Turkey AIMM radar chart**



### Strengths and opportunities

- ▶ Some institutions confirmed they have ethics committees.
- ▶ Some academics work closely with students to monitor their progress in developing skills and writing.
- ▶ All HEIs in Turkey have access to reputable and effective text-matching software.
- ▶ Some students have training on ethical issues, academic integrity and academic writing.
- ▶ There are some excellent initiatives in creative pedagogy and innovative assessment methods, which could be shared across HEIs in Turkey.
- ▶ Turkey has rich multicultural campuses; a conscious strategy is needed to ensure all students understand local expectations, standards and requirements and can abide by institutional regulations.
- ▶ There is considerable research into academic integrity policies in Turkey.

### Weaknesses and threats

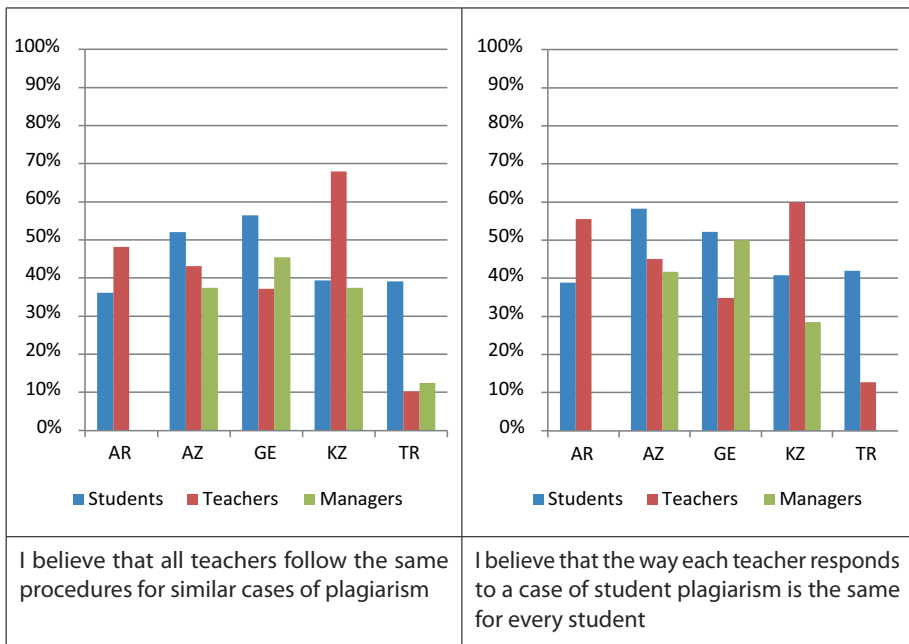
- ▶ Few institutions in Turkey have institutional policies for academic integrity and ethical conduct.
- ▶ Few HEIs in Turkey keep records or statistics on accusations and outcomes on academic misconduct.
- ▶ Most academics do not see the need for policies on academic misconduct or the need to strengthen academic integrity.
- ▶ Recent changes to the autonomy of HEIs in Turkey is affecting the willingness of individuals to follow up on and report cases of corruption and misconduct.

## Comparison between countries

### Policies for academic integrity

Comparing responses from students, teachers and managers to the same questions provides evidence on perceptions and experiences within the academic community and also how well concepts and regulations are communicated. Responses to survey questions concerning how suspicions of academic misconduct by students are handled are summarised in Figures 10 to 13.

**Figure 10: Perceptions on consistency of teachers' approach to student plagiarism**

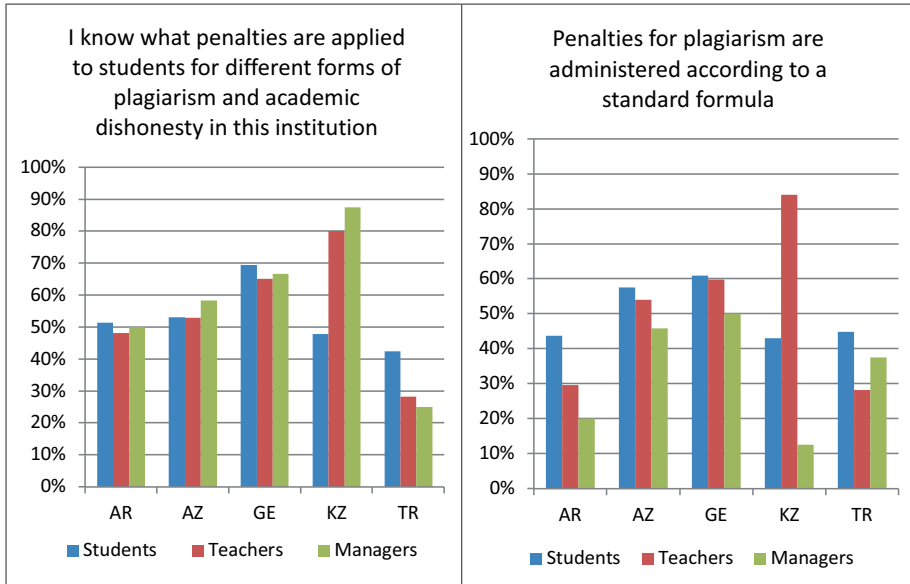


The vertical scale in Figures 10 and 11 shows the percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the question statement.

The overall impression from Figure 10 is that many teachers in all five countries respond inconsistently to suspicions of plagiarism, both in comparison to the actions

of other teachers and when responding to the behaviour of different students. Deeper analysis of the data in Figure 10 reveals zero or very low agreement on both questions from managers in Armenia (both zero) and from managers (12.5% and zero) and teachers (10.3%, 12.8%) in Turkey. The most positive responses were from teachers from Kazakhstan (68.0%, 60.0%) and Armenia (48.2%, 55.6%). Just over half of student respondents in Azerbaijan (52.1%, 58.3%) and Georgia (56.4%, 52.2%) believed their teachers behave consistently, with less than half of students agreeing in Armenia (36.1%, 38.9%), Kazakhstan (39.4%, 40.9%) and Turkey (39.1%, 42.0%).

**Figure 11: Perceptions on consistency of penalties for academic misconduct**

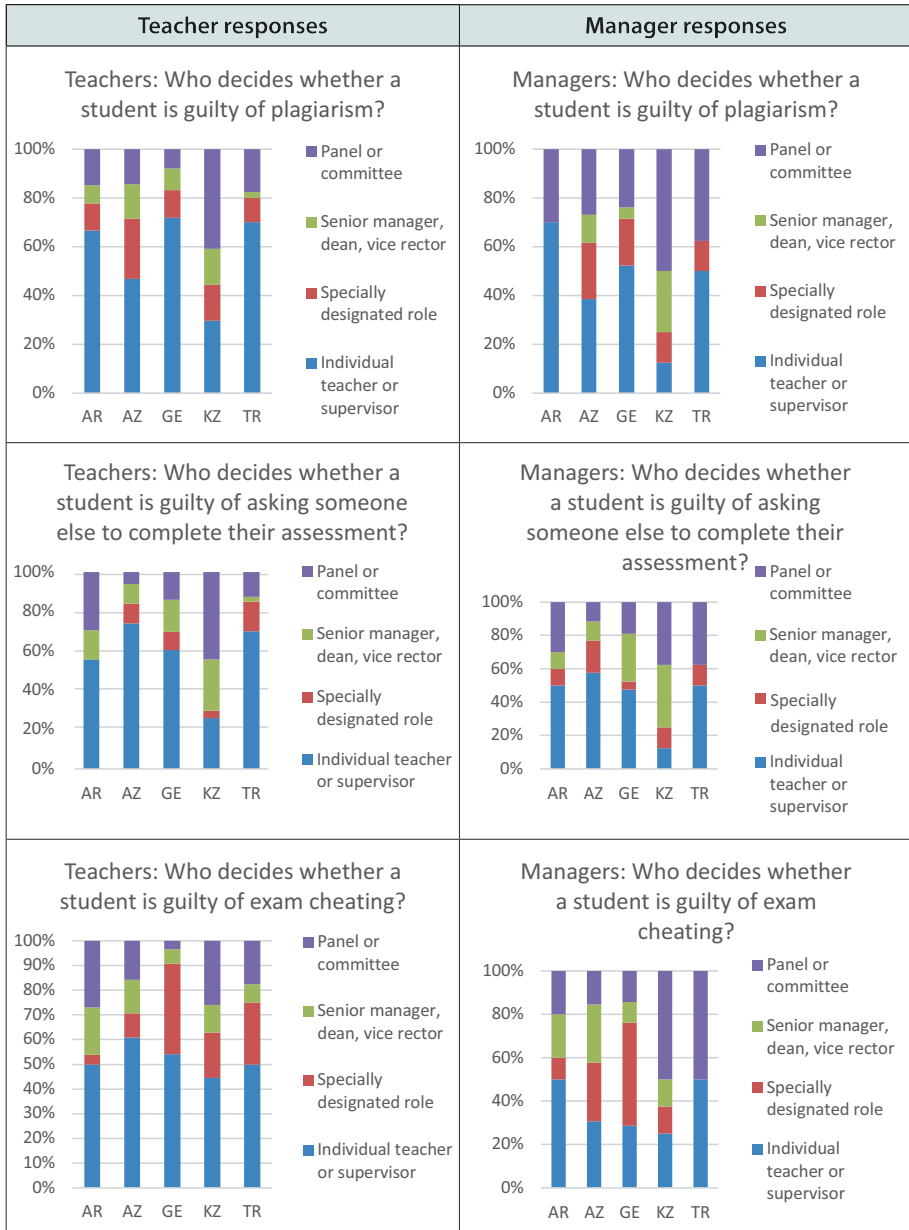


When asked whether there was a standard formula of penalties for plagiarism, only 12.5% of HEI managers in Kazakhstan agreed with the statement (Figure 11). However, 87.5% of HEI managers from Kazakhstan agreed or strongly agreed they were aware what penalties are applied for academic misconduct and plagiarism in their institution. Data from Armenia also show a less positive response from teachers and managers to the second question compared to the first, and this was also true of managers in Azerbaijan and Georgia. This could be interpreted to mean either that there are no standard penalties for types of academic misconduct other than plagiarism, or the standard penalties for plagiarism are not consistently imposed in these countries. In contrast, 37.5% of managers in Turkey agreed that they use a standard formula for penalties compared to just 25% of managers who said they were aware of penalties applied for plagiarism and academic misconduct by students. This low level of awareness about penalties in Turkey was also noted in interviews.

Given the desire for fairness and equity, the questionnaire responses for all five countries indicate the need for more consistency in decision making and the use of penalties when handling suspicions of academic misconduct by students. Responsibility for decisions on whether a student is guilty of misconduct and what penalty is to be applied is central to achieving consistency. The questionnaire included questions

for managers and teachers about this decision-making process in their institution. Three types of misconduct were considered: plagiarism, contract cheating/ghost writing and exam cheating. Respondents were asked who makes the decision about whether a student is guilty and who decides on the penalty. A summary of responses is provided in Figures 12 and 13.

**Figure 12: Who decides whether a student is guilty?**



If decisions on whether allegations are upheld are taken by individual teachers or supervisors there is potential for bribery and favouritism, and consistency is unlikely. For serious integrity breaches, such as exam cheating and contract cheating, where more stringent penalties could apply, it is preferable for a trained and experienced panel or committee to take the decisions, using predefined guidelines. Figure 12 reveals that in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey the predominant response was that individual teachers and supervisors are responsible for taking the decisions for all three types of academic misconduct. However, there are indications that panels or committees may operate under certain circumstances. According to some respondents there are specialist roles or senior managers may take decisions, particularly for decisions on exam cheating. The responses from Kazakhstan were different from the other four countries, with much less emphasis on individual teachers, and indicating a greater role for senior managers and committees.

Responses about who takes decisions on penalties are summarised in Figure 13. Although perceptions and the experience of respondents suggest that individual teachers and supervisors are taking some decisions on penalties, it is welcome to see that committees, senior managers and specially designated roles dominate decision making in all five countries. Removing decisions on penalties from individuals with responsibility for teaching and supervising the same students is a positive step. However, there is still potential for conflicts of interest as well as inconsistencies that need addressing, particularly where individual managers or academic leaders are independently taking decisions without the use of guidelines or standards.

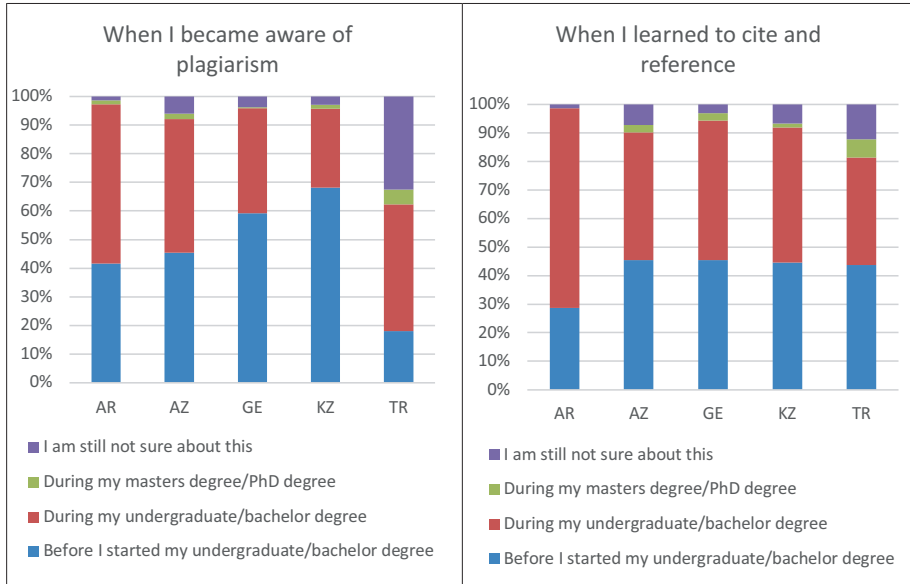
**Figure 13: Who decides on the penalty applied to students?**



## Skills and knowledge about academic writing

Questionnaire responses provide evidence about the skills and knowledge of students on academic writing. Figure 14 indicates when students learned about plagiarism and academic writing skills.

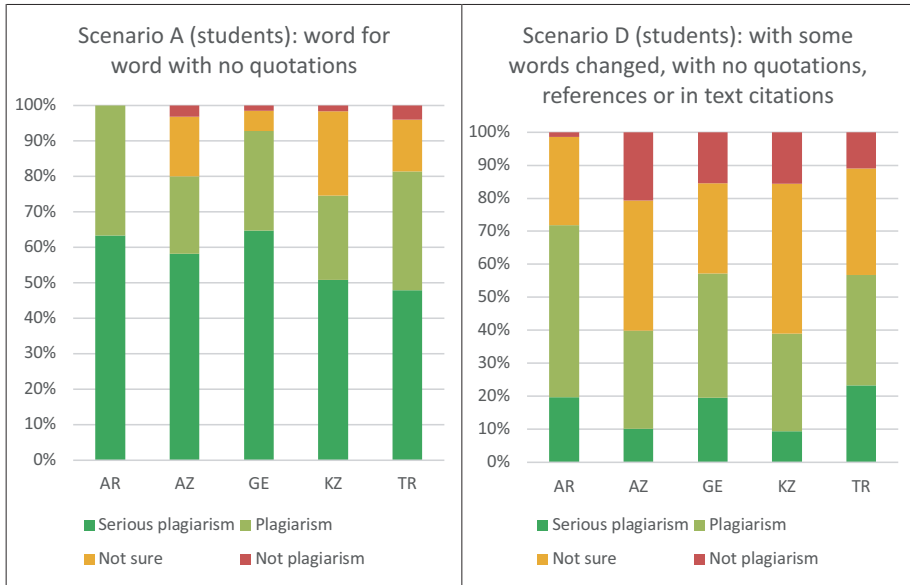
**Figure 14: Student responses about knowledge of plagiarism and academic writing skills**



Of the five countries, the responses from Turkey stand out, with 32.5% of students expressing uncertainty about plagiarism and 12.2% saying they are still not sure about citing and referencing. Very few students from the other four countries reported any lack of knowledge about either topic.

However, responses to questions asking students to identify cases of plagiarism from different scenarios suggest the confidence of the majority of students about their knowledge may be overstated. Figure 15 shows students' responses to two of the five scenarios presented in the question. The overall question explains that "40% of a student's submission is from other sources and is copied into the student's work as described".

**Figure 15: Student responses – Is it plagiarism?**



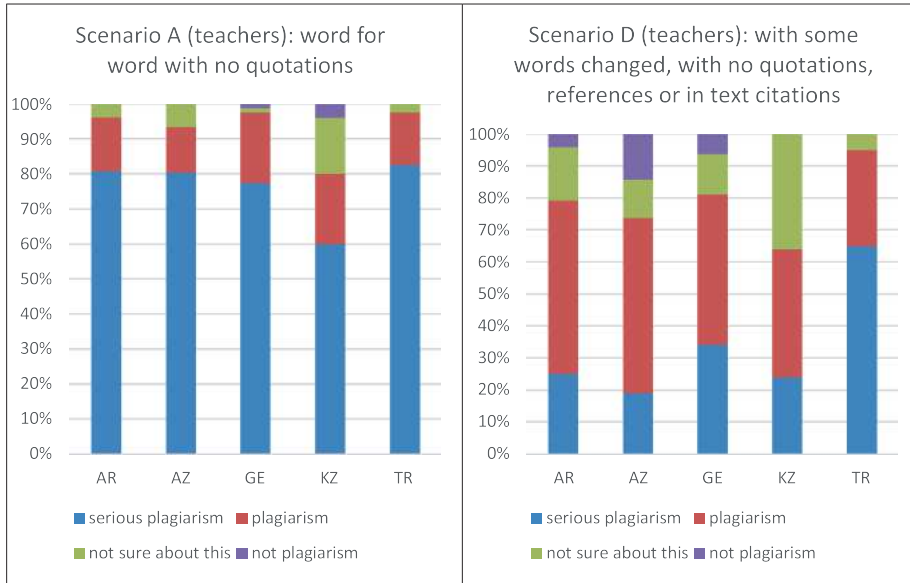
As can be seen from Figure 15, the majority of students in all five countries correctly identified Scenario A as serious plagiarism or plagiarism. However, over 25% of students in Kazakhstan and slightly fewer students in Azerbaijan (20%) and Turkey (18.6%) were either unsure or thought this was not plagiarism. Interestingly, all the Armenian students correctly identified Scenario A as serious plagiarism (63.4%) or plagiarism (36.6%).

Scenario D is also a case of serious plagiarism, but the student perceptions were quite different for this case. Over 60% of students from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, 43% of students from Georgia and Turkey, and 28% of students from Armenia were either uncertain or thought Scenario D was not plagiarism. The message from these responses is that students may be receiving training in topics relating to academic integrity and academic writing, but many do not understand the basic rules about citation, referencing and use of source materials.

Figure 16 shows teachers' responses to the same scenario questions. A small minority of teachers from Georgia (1.2%) and Kazakhstan (3.9%) were convinced Scenario A was not plagiarism, with some teachers in all five countries expressing uncertainty (15.4% of Kazakh teachers were not sure about Scenario A).



**Figure 16: Teacher responses – Is it plagiarism**

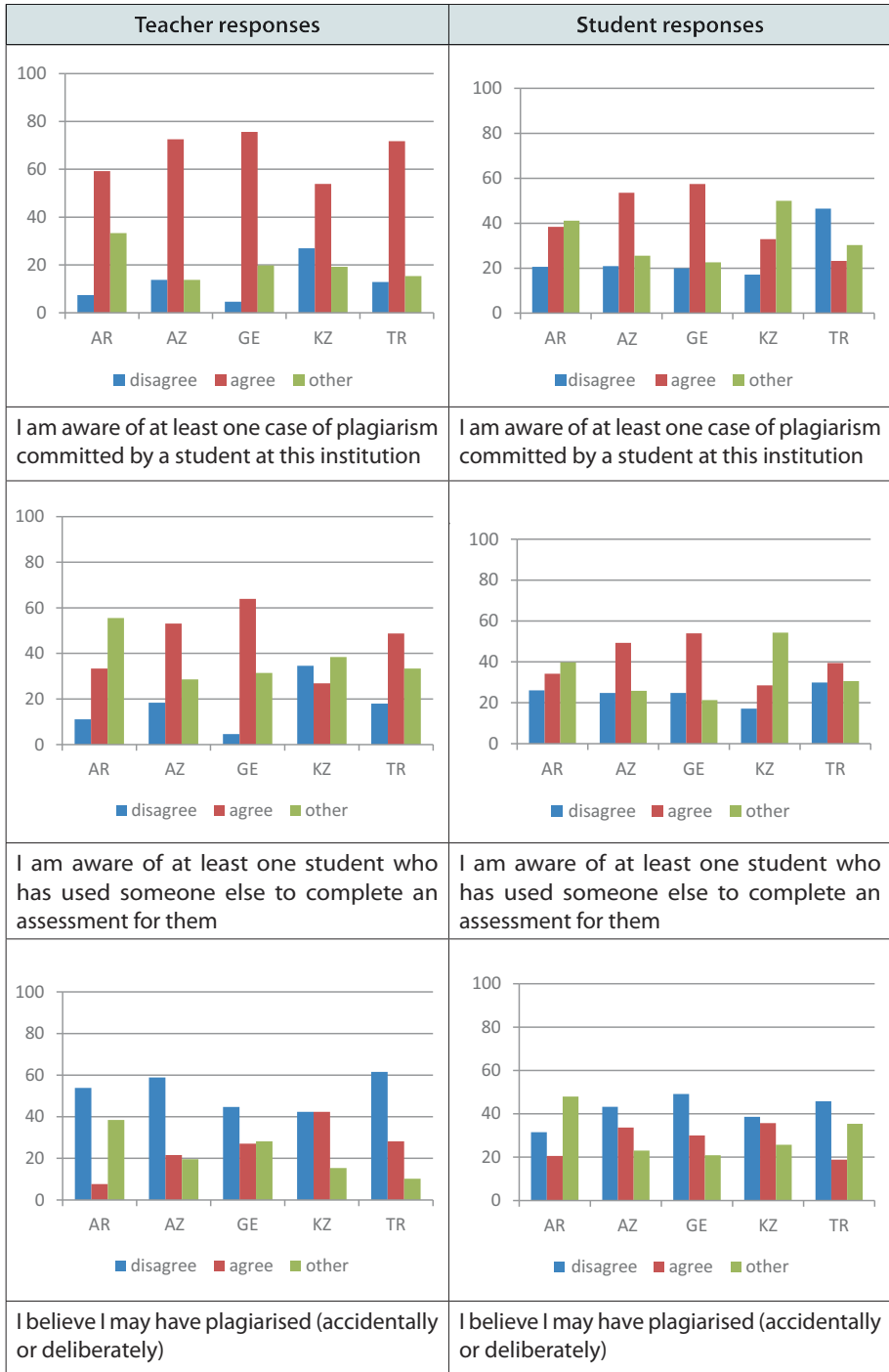


Teachers’ responses show a marked difference in their perceptions of the seriousness of Scenario D compared to their views on Scenario A. Apparently, many respondents wrongly believe that the act of changing a few words has diminished the severity of the plagiarism or made it less certain: 14.6% of Azerbaijani teachers, 6.3% of Georgian teachers and 4.2% of Armenian teachers did not think Scenario D was plagiarism. In contrast, the majority of teacher respondents from Turkey (65.0%) correctly identified both Scenarios A and D as serious plagiarism.

The analysis of these scenario responses from teachers demonstrates how urgently training is needed for academic staff and researchers in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and especially Kazakhstan. Unless academic staff understand and identify with the fundamental principles of academic writing, they will not be able to teach these topics to students or complete their own scientific manuscripts and journal papers without the risk of plagiarising.

The questionnaires for students and teachers included questions about their awareness of cases of plagiarism, ghost writing by “at least one” student, and also whether they “may have plagiarised themselves accidentally or deliberately”. The responses are summarised in Figure 17.

**Figure 17: Awareness of academic misconduct**



In Figure 17 the “other” category combines a selection of “not applicable”, those who did not respond and those selecting “not sure”. Up to 48% of student responses and up to 56% of the teachers’ responses came under the “other” category for one or both of the first two questions. This phenomenon was particularly strong for Armenia and Kazakhstan in response to the second question, about contract cheating, and for Armenia and for Turkish students in response to the third question about personal plagiarism. It appears that there was reluctance on the part of some respondents to engage with these questions.

What we can learn by exploring the views of respondents who did engage with the questions is that teachers from all five countries were more likely to admit they had encountered a case of plagiarism or contract cheating than the student respondents. Remarkably, 46.5% of student respondents from Turkey said they had not come across a single case of student plagiarism, with only 23.2% agreeing with the statement. In contrast, responses during students’ focus groups in Turkey revealed very strong awareness of plagiarism and the perception among students that this was very common in their country.

Responses to the second question, about contract cheating or ghost writing, should be of great concern to everyone interested in educational quality and standards. The global industry of essay mills, and websites designed for students to share work and solutions, is just part of the problem. Ghost writing can be more personal, for example asking another student, a friend or relative to complete the work. Whatever the source, the difficulty of detecting and proving this very serious form of misconduct adds to the complexity and threat from this form of academic misconduct. The good news is that ways of tackling contract cheating are beginning to emerge through research and initiatives in other parts of the world (e.g. Bretag et al. 2019; Dawson and Sutherland-Smith 2017; Sutherland-Smith and Dullaghan 2019).

Responses to the third question, about plagiarism by respondents themselves, show that, overall, students were slightly more likely than teachers to admit to plagiarising, although many respondents avoided answering the question. In light of the responses summarised in Figures 15 and 16, exploring understanding of academic writing and how to recognise plagiarism, there is a clearly identified need for all countries to arrange effective training on these topics for both academics and students.

## SWOT analysis of all countries in the study

Strengths and opportunities applying to all five countries

- ▶ Involvement in research with international partners from Europe has greatly influenced the attitudes and policies relating to academic integrity at some institutions.
- ▶ Those involved in the interviews were aware and serious about discouraging cheating.
- ▶ Institutions with more advanced policies should support institutions with less mature policies.
- ▶ Text-matching software could be better utilised for educating students about academic writing.

## Weaknesses and threats applying to all five countries

- ▶ Opportunities exist for contract cheating, by other students, family and friends, and commercial essay mills. Use of these services was relatively common across all five countries.
- ▶ Low pay and poor working conditions of academics, more than one job and lack of engagement are disincentives to taking action against academic misconduct by students.
- ▶ Grade inflation is being driven by incentives to award higher marks to students and not identify academic misconduct.
- ▶ The need for income from tuition fees discourages institutions from applying strong sanctions for academic misconduct by students.
- ▶ In many institutions, individual lecturers deal independently with cases of academic misconduct and decisions on sanctions; this type of regime is inherently inconsistent and unfair.
- ▶ Where text-matching software is available, the similarity percentage is often misinterpreted as a plagiarism percentage that can be used to determine actions and outcomes.
- ▶ Plagiarism by staff and students is common.
- ▶ Exam cheating is common (e.g. crib notes, use of technology, communicating with an accomplice, accessing notes, use of impersonators).
- ▶ Translation plagiarism is a problem common to all five countries; most text-matching software cannot identify this type of plagiarism.
- ▶ Constantly shifting and evolving threats to integrity require vigilance and adaptability.
- ▶ Publication records are central to prospects for the career progression of academics, researchers and PhD students; striving for quantity is affecting quality by driving the use of predatory/low quality journals. No indexing database provides a reliable indicator of quality.



# Chapter 3

## Lessons learned and recommendations

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In all countries, we perceived a strong will to address academic integrity issues. In some countries, efforts towards achieving a consistent approach were apparent. However, we also came across examples of policies in every country that are unlikely to improve integrity. Over-reliance on the percentages presented by text-matching software is a prime example. It is crucial that everyone in the academic community understands that the percentages generated by any text-matching tool do not show plagiarism, just text similarities. In addition, the software can only compare against available sources, therefore not all content from other sources will be found by the software. Ultimately, the decision on whether plagiarism has occurred requires academic judgment and should never be taken solely on the basis of similarity percentages.

### Recommendations

(N = National level, I = Institutional level)

#### Quality-related recommendations

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- ▶ Consider removing incentives that may drive down the quality of education, academic publishing and research, such as “cash bonuses” for publishing in journals, which incentivise quantity rather than quality (N+I).
- ▶ All higher education providers, public and private, should be regularly monitored and audited for policies on academic integrity as part of oversight of quality assurance (N).
- ▶ A national digital language corpus of all academic sources should be created and maintained for reference purposes and for use by text-matching software (N).
- ▶ Working with students to understand their needs and motivations for engaging with their studies is essential for improving academic integrity (N+I).
- ▶ Further training and education for students, researchers and academics on academic writing techniques, ethical conduct and research skills are needed (I).
- ▶ Attention to teaching, learning and assessment approaches is central to academic quality and integrity, for example by encouraging active rather than passive learning; designing assessments that include practical elements or require critical thinking and do not have ready-made solutions; and not repeating the same assessments for subsequent cohorts of students (I).

## Transparency-related recommendations

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- ▶ There needs to be openness and sharing of ideas on how to prioritise and address corruption and academic misconduct in higher education (N+I).
- ▶ Institutional records and statistics should be maintained on allegations and outcomes of student academic misconduct investigations to monitor trends and progress on measures for deterring academic misconduct, including the ability to identify students who repeatedly infringe academic integrity rules (I).
- ▶ Accountability, transparency and consistency of regulations and procedures for managing allegations of academic misconduct and unethical practice are essential for ensuring fairness and equity (N+I).

## Capacity building

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- ▶ Expert advisers on ethical conduct and integrity should be invited to provide guidance on how policies and practices can be developed and strengthened (N+I).
- ▶ Capacity-building projects relating to academic integrity, with national and international partners, should be supported and funded (N+I).

## Building a culture of academic integrity

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- ▶ Senior members of society and leaders of HEIs should set an example to younger people, abiding by, and promoting a code of ethical conduct and anti-corruption. For example, this could be included in institutional mission statements, and in staff and student codes of conduct (N+I).
- ▶ A commitment to behave with integrity in professional and personal life should become one of the defining attributes of a university graduate, for example included in a student charter (I).
- ▶ Academic staff should be valued and suitably rewarded for their contributions to education and academic integrity (N+I).
- ▶ Awareness, understanding and responses about evolving threats to integrity, quality and standards must be an ongoing requirement for everyone in higher education (N+I).
- ▶ All institutions need to develop, implement and maintain transparent, fair, robust and consistent strategies, policies and sanctions for academic integrity (I).
- ▶ Academic staff need to be incentivised to detect and report suspicions of academic misconduct as a means of discouraging unethical practices (I).
- ▶ Allegations of serious forms of academic misconduct should be considered by an experienced and trained panel, rather than by an individual academic (I).

## Deterring academic misconduct

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- ▶ All HEIs need software tools to help identify and deter plagiarism and collusion that are effective in relevant languages of study and research (N+I).

- ▶ Training is needed for all people involved in higher education about the limitations, use and misuse of text-matching software tools and related products (N+I).
- ▶ Trials should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of different text-matching software tools in relevant languages of study and research (N).

## Deterring corruption

- ▶ Conflicts of interest should be declared and managed. There is a need for all professionals to declare conflicts of interest and not participate in marking where there could be potential for undue influence, for example relating to appointments, awarding student grades, and responses to corruption and misconduct (N+I).
- ▶ Corruption needs to be challenged, particularly through strong sanctions for offering and receiving bribes and favours. Reporting should be encouraged by making it easy and protecting identities (nationally, staff and students) (N+I).

## Recommendations for action at European level

The research team members were made to feel very welcome by the people encountered in these five countries. There is clearly an appetite for continuing to build on the progress made to date in reducing corruption and enhancing integrity, in education and in wider society. Some of the differences between actions and policies observed in these five countries were due to involvement of institutions and individuals in European projects and also staff and student mobility in education. Anything that can be done to encourage further international collaboration in research and development initiatives would constitute effort, time and funding well invested.

However, there are a few notes of caution. The institutions we visited and the people we met were already engaged and very much aware of academic integrity. It is possible that institutions that declined our invitation to participate in the research are less engaged and have weaker policies and practices for academic integrity than the institutions that did engage. It is important that any national initiatives reach out to all parts of the higher education sector and encourage all institutions to improve their engagement with academic integrity and ethical practices.

Figure 18 (Appendix 1) compares the maturity of policies for academic integrity in the five countries, according to data collected in this study. This chart compares the strengths and weaknesses of approaches to academic integrity found in the five countries, using the nine categories in the Academic Integrity Maturity Model (AIMM).

Figure 19 (Appendix 2), showing all 38 countries surveyed to date through the three projects (IPPHEAE, SEEPPAI and PAICKT), should be viewed with caution, because there is no doubt that some of the countries surveyed in previous projects have made considerable progress on improving academic integrity since the data were collected. For example, Lithuania, Romania and Montenegro now have national strategies for academic integrity in higher education and other countries are taking action. When funding permits, further research should be conducted to update information on the original 27 countries surveyed.





## Chapter 4

# Conclusions

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**W**e hope that this research will be of value to all stakeholders in these countries, including people engaged in other research on related topics.

The recommendations in this report for all countries, together with the specific points for each country, provide a good starting point for what needs to be achieved next. Communication and sharing of good practice across countries in the study, combined with provision of training and education, are essential first steps.

Future initiatives should focus on training and education, responding to some of the deficits identified in the recommendations and building on and disseminating the good practice we found in all these countries. It is clear the international input to these countries is greatly respected and valued. However, the growing expertise in these countries should be used to the fullest extent possible. Involving local researchers and students in future research and development work will ensure the funding and initiatives are appropriately targeted and adjusted to suit the local culture and requirements.

The final message from this research is that to build greater academic integrity there must be buy-in and genuine desire to make progress across all the areas identified, at all levels of the higher education sector, with strong commitment and support from national governments.



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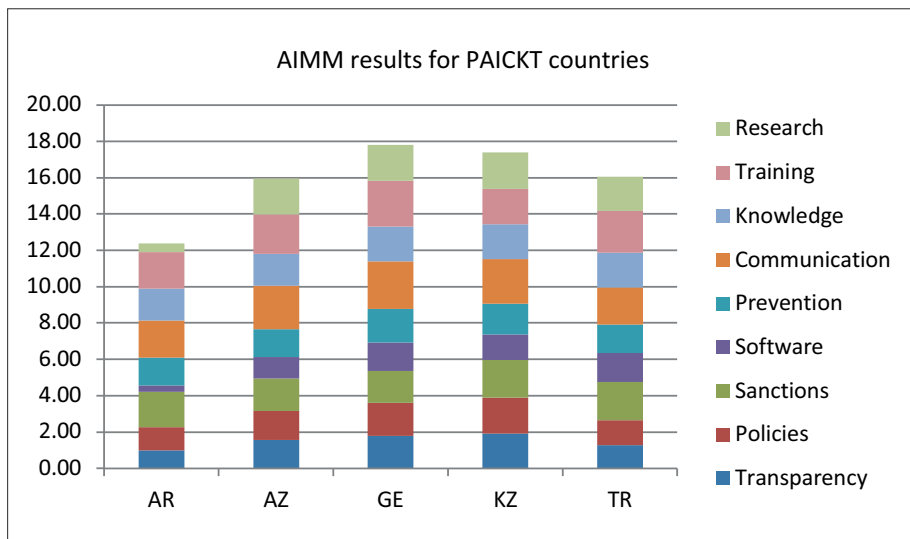


# Appendix 1

## Academic Integrity Maturity Model

**Figure 18: AIMM results for PAICKT countries**

Figure 18 compares the maturity of policies for academic integrity in the five countries, according to data collected in this study. This chart compares the strengths and weaknesses of approaches to academic integrity found in the five countries, using the nine categories in the Academic Integrity Maturity Model (AIMM).



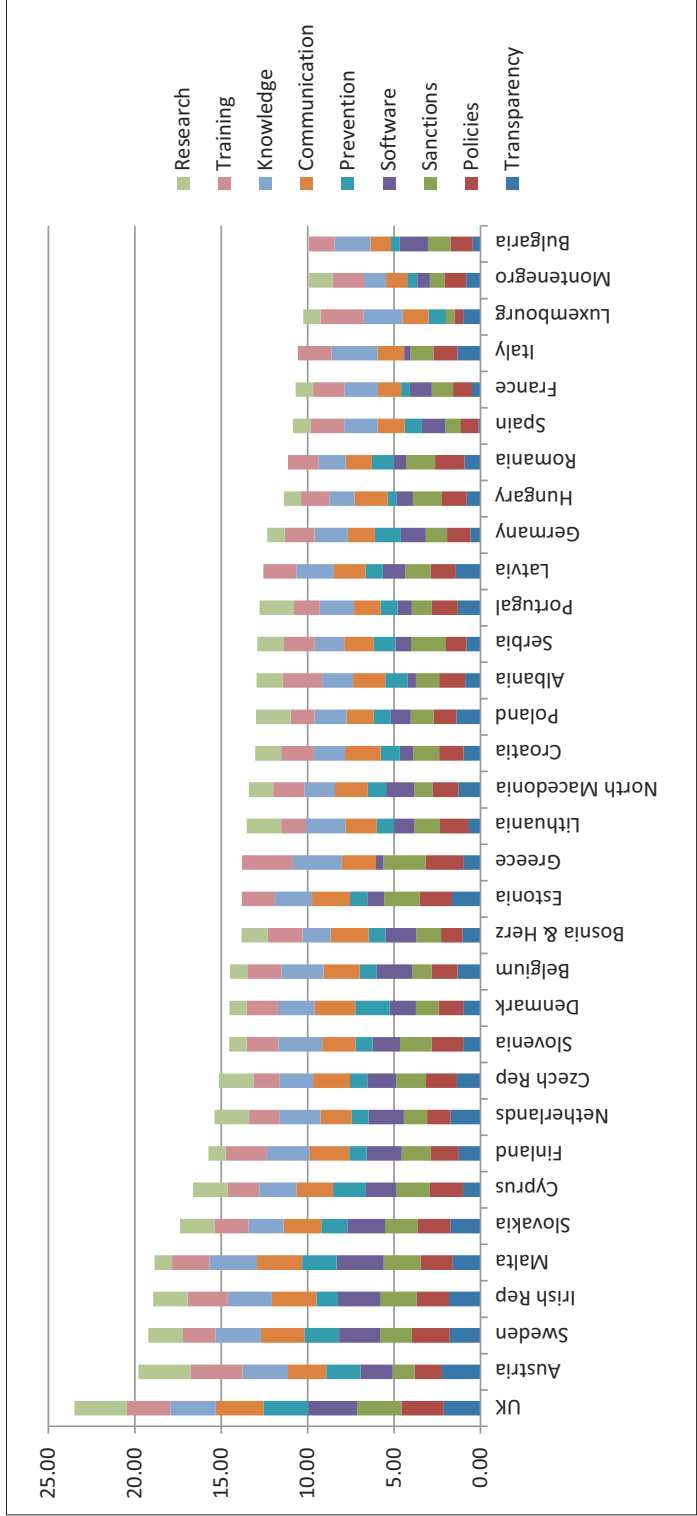




# Appendix 2

## Academic Integrity Maturity Model

Figure 19: AIMM results for 38 countries



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The Project on Academic Integrity in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Turkey (PAICKT) was based on previous research conducted in the European Union and South-East Europe and explored the overall situation regarding academic integrity in the five target countries. This report provides an analysis of the recent situation in the educational system of each of the project countries. It indicates strengths and weaknesses, identifies examples of good practice and provides recommendations for action that can be taken at both national and institutional levels.

This publication will be useful for policy makers at various levels, not limited to those in the five countries that were part of the project. It is anticipated that the examples of good practice, which are largely transferrable to other countries, will inspire other institutions and countries to take action to enhance academic integrity.

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