

Student perceptions and awareness of education fraud

INTRODUCTION

This brief presents key findings from the report “Student Perceptions and Awareness of Education Fraud,” endorsed by the 7th plenary meeting of the Council of Europe’s Steering Committee for Education (CDEU). Based on a Europe-wide survey of over 5,000 higher education students across 40 countries, the report – developed in partnership with CIMEA and the Council of Europe’s ETINED Platform – sheds light on how students perceive, experience, and understand education fraud. The findings underscore the urgent need for coordinated action to raise awareness, strengthen protections, and build a culture of academic integrity. As part of the broader efforts under the Council of Europe’s Education Strategy 2024-2030 “Learners First,” the report calls for empowering students as active partners in preventing education fraud and ensuring transparency and trust in higher education.

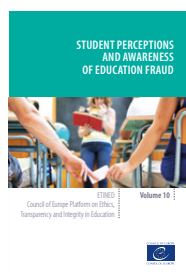


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Education fraud encompasses behaviours or actions within the education field intended to deceive and gain an unfair advantage. It negatively impacts the quality of education, particularly in relation to equity and the reputation of the education system.



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EDUCATION FRAUD INCLUDES*



The activities of diploma mills, accreditation mills, visa mills, essay mills and essay banks



Impersonation by undertaking in whole or in part any work or assessment required as part of a programme in the place of an enrolled learner



Illegal or irregular use of authentic documents



Plagiarism



Production or use of forged, plagiarised or counterfeit documents



The offer of unrecognised or unaccredited qualifications with the intention of deceiving another

*The definitions are drawn from **CM/REC(2022)18**

KEY DEFINITIONS

Accreditation mill

Institution or organisation which is not recognised by national competent authorities and intends to mislead.

Diploma mill

Institution or organisation which is not recognised by national competent authorities and purports to issue awards or qualifications by misrepresentation.

Essay mill

Organisation or individual which contracts with students to complete assignments for financial gain, whether or not the content is plagiarised.

Essay bank

Organisation or individual from whom students can purchase pre-written essays.

Visa mill

Institution or organisation which is not recognised by national authorities and misrepresents itself to circumvent immigration law.

Plagiarism

Means using work, ideas, content, structures or images without giving appropriate credit to the original source(s), especially where originality is expected.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS OF THE REPORT

The report highlights the need to foster a stronger culture of integrity in higher education, where students, institutions, and policymakers share responsibility for addressing education fraud. Key steps include raising awareness, enhancing digital literacy, strengthening support systems, and embedding academic integrity into teaching and institutional practices.

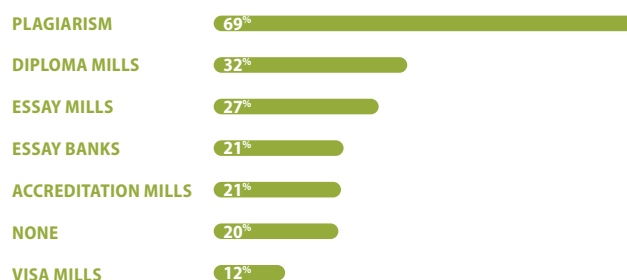
KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- 01** Students in Europe have limited knowledge of education fraud, with varying levels of familiarity with different types of fraud. Plagiarism is the most well-known type.
- 02** Plagiarism is the most frequently encountered type of fraud among students.
- 03** A significant portion of students are unsure or unaware of what education fraud is.
- 04** Students' main sources of information about fraudulent activities are other students and web advertising.
- 05** There is a consensus that education fraud negatively impacts the quality of education, especially equity and the reputation of the education system. There is limited awareness of the main reporting bodies within academic communities, and many students do not report fraud.
- 06** Students express concerns about limited protection against fraud and desire greater transparency and anonymity in reporting processes.
- 07** Over half of the students have not received training on education fraud, and many are unaware if academic integrity is included in their curriculum.
- 08** Students believe technology plays a role in fraudulent activities but also acknowledge its potential as a tool for prevention.
- 09** There is divided awareness and understanding of AI tools among students, with varying opinions on whether AI use constitutes plagiarism.
- 10** Efforts to prevent education fraud should be carried out within the academic community, with key roles for universities, teaching staff, and students.
- 11** Students emphasise the importance of national governments in enforcing legal standards and fostering trust, transparency, and ethical behaviour.

Awareness of the phenomenon of education fraud



Familiarity with types of education fraud



COUNCIL OF EUROPE REFERENCE DOCUMENTS



CM/REC(2022)18

Recommendation on countering education fraud and explanatory memorandum



CM/REC(2019)9

Recommendation on fostering a culture of ethics in the teaching profession



Explanatory Memorandum of this Recommendation



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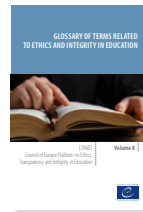
Ministerial Declaration on Governance and Quality Education



CM/REC(2012)13

Recommendation on ensuring quality education

ETINED PUBLICATIONS



2024

Glossary of terms related to ethics and integrity in education



2023

Measures to counter education fraud: Legislation, practices and instruments



2022

Best practice programme in promoting academic integrity: A compendium of best practices



FURTHER READINGS



CIMEA · 2022

FraudS+ project, Knowledge and awareness of fraud in education: a student perspective



CIMEA, ERASMUS+ PROJECT

FraudS+ project - False Records, Altered Diploma and Diploma Mills Qualifications Collection



THE ETINED PLATFORM

ETINED is a network of specialists appointed by member states of the Council of Europe and states parties to the European Cultural Convention. Since its launch in 2015, the ETINED Platform has been dedicated to promoting a culture of ethics, transparency and integrity within the education sector. The Platform has produced guidelines aimed at ensuring ethical practices in the teaching profession and has developed targeted recommendations on academic integrity based on assessments and exchanges with stakeholders in the field.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-2030 "LEARNERS FIRST"

The report contributes to the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, reaffirmed at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, which emphasise transparency, accountability, and youth participation in democratic processes, including education, and to Pillar II: Enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education under the Council of Europe's Education Strategy 2024-2030 ("Learners First").



LEARNERS FIRST

Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030

