

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND AWARENESS OF EDUCATION FRAUD



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

Volume 10

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND AWARENESS OF EDUCATION FRAUD

Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency
and Integrity in Education (ETINED) – Volume 10

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Foreword

Since its launch in 2015, the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED) has played a leading role in promoting ethical standards and transparency across member states' educational systems.

With the publication of this report, the Council of Europe's Education Department, in collaboration with the Academic Equivalence Mobility Information Centre of Italy (CIMEA), offers a significant contribution to understanding and addressing threats to academic integrity. By examining the perceptions and awareness of education fraud of higher education students, this report provides critical insights into developing effective prevention strategies. In doing so, it opens new perspectives for the implementation of the Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030 "Learners First" – Education for today's and tomorrow's democratic societies, which puts learners at the centre of policies and practices and promotes the integrity and resilience of education systems.

In line with the principles set out in Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)18 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering education fraud, this report seeks to empower education stakeholders by shedding light on how students perceive and experience education fraud and academic dishonesty. This perspective is essential to the ongoing work of the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) for 2024-2027, which prioritises ethics, transparency and student agency in education.

As mentioned above, the report is an integral part of ETINED's ongoing mission to share best practices, establish guidelines and enhance capacity building across the educational landscape. It explores students' awareness of education fraud, their direct experiences, their sense of protection within their academic communities and the role of new technologies, offering invaluable guidance for the development of tools and strategies to foster a culture of ethics and integrity in education. By including students' voices, the report supports inclusive and participatory policy making and contributes to the promotion of democratic culture in learning environments, in line with the broader objectives of the Council of Europe's Education Programme.

The findings presented in this report will contribute to our continued efforts to ensure that educational systems across Europe remain fair, transparent and resilient to fraudulent practices, thereby safeguarding the integrity of education for all learners.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the many students whose participation made this study possible. I am pleased to recommend this report to all education stakeholders who are committed to upholding academic integrity and improving the quality of education systems in line with the Council of Europe's common vision for education in the 21st century.



Villano Qiriazhi

Head of the Education Department
Council of Europe

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'V' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Executive summary

This report describes students' perceptions and awareness of education fraud in relation to six aspects: knowledge, experience, protection, prevention, technology and community.

More precisely, the study explores students' knowledge of the phenomenon of education fraud,¹ their direct experiences with it, and the extent to which they feel informed and protected by the academic community. It also examines the relationship between new technologies and fraud, and identifies the main actors that can help combat education fraud. The study is based on findings from a survey targeting higher education students from the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention² represented at the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU)³ of the Council of Europe. The survey was disseminated through institutional channels, with support from CDEDU representatives (delegates and observers) at the national level.

By presenting the survey results, this study aims to gauge students' overall awareness of education fraud, potentially increase their knowledge and provide insights into the phenomenon. In light of this, the document also serves as a starting point for better understanding how to tackle education fraud – not only by developing tools to counter and prevent it, but also by promoting a culture of ethics, transparency and integrity.

The results allow a number of considerations to be drawn regarding the six aspects analysed.

With regard to the first aspect, students have limited knowledge of the phenomenon of education fraud. While they are somewhat familiar with common forms of fraud such as plagiarism, they are less aware of others, including accreditation and visa mills. There is a clear consensus among students about the negative impact of education fraud on the quality of education, particularly in terms of equity and the reputation of the education system.

1. List of terms and definitions on education fraud as per Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2022\)18](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering education fraud.

2. European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18), May 1955, available at www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatynum=018, accessed 29 April 2025.

3. CDEDU website, available at www.coe.int/en/web/education/cdedu, accessed 29 April 2025.

In terms of experience, plagiarism is the most frequently encountered form of fraud. Students themselves are the primary source of information, followed at a considerable distance by web advertising. Notably, there is very limited awareness of the main reporting bodies within the academic community. In fact, most students did not report cases of fraud either because they did not know whom to contact or because they did not consider it their responsibility.

Similarly, concerns were expressed about the limited protection perceived by students within the academic community. Specifically, the need to raise awareness about responsible bodies and their effectiveness in handling cases of fraud was highlighted as a key area for improvement. Additionally, students suggested the importance of ensuring anonymity and privacy in the reporting process, as well as a desire for greater transparency regarding procedures and outcomes.

With regard to the aspect of prevention, more than half of the students stated that they had not received any training on education fraud, while most are unaware whether academic integrity is included in their curriculum.

The section on new technologies provides insights into the perceived relationship between technology and fraud, as well as familiarity with artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Over half of respondents believe that technology plays a role in fraudulent activities within education. However, they do not see new technologies related to education fraud as inherently problematic, acknowledging the importance of higher education institutions adapting to them. New technologies are thus seen equally as a potential problem and a possible solution in addressing education fraud. Regarding familiarity with AI, the data reveal a certain level of uncertainty. Students are equally divided between those who are aware of and use existing AI tools, and those who are either unaware of them or unsure about their applications. The vast majority of students who do use AI tools do so for learning purposes. As for whether the use of AI tools and conversational agents could be considered a form of plagiarism, opinions are divided, reflecting the ongoing debate about the implications of using AI in academic contexts. Half of the respondents stated that it depends on the context, while the remaining half was evenly split between those who agreed and those who disagreed with the statement.

Finally, students expressed the view that efforts to prevent education fraud should be undertaken primarily within the academic community. They identified universities and teaching staff as the most significant actors in addressing education fraud, while also recognising themselves as key players in upholding academic integrity and committing to an active role in this effort. Regarding national governments, students emphasised their importance not only in enforcing legal standards, but also in fostering an environment of trust, transparency and ethical behaviour in education.

Part 1

Context and objectives of the study

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of education fraud. Furthermore, by sharing information on this topic, the document has the twofold objective of raising awareness about the importance of transparency and integrity in educational practices, and supporting the development of tools that promote ethics in education.

The results presented in the study are based on a survey launched by the Academic Equivalence Mobility Information Centre (CIMEA), in collaboration with the Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED). This initiative builds on previous research developed under the Erasmus+ project FraudS+ (False Records, Altered Diploma and Diploma Mills Qualifications Collection),⁴ which resulted in the publication "Knowledge and awareness of fraud in education: a student perspective".⁵

To follow up on this previous research, a new questionnaire was developed in line with the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)18 on countering education fraud,⁶ which provides guidelines for countering education fraud across member states. The questionnaire was aimed at higher education students from the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention represented at the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) of the Council of Europe. It was distributed through institutional channels, with CDEDU representatives disseminating it at the national level. The questionnaire received a significant response, with 5 333 students from 40 countries sharing their insights. The results of this study were presented during the 8th ETINED plenary meeting, held in Rome on 26 and 27 November 2024.

4. More information about the FraudS+ project is available at www.cimea.it/EN/pagina-fraud-scan, accessed 29 April 2025.

5. FraudS+ project (2022), "Knowledge and awareness of fraud in education: a student perspective", CIMEA.

6. Council of Europe (2022), *Countering education fraud – Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)18 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 July 2022 and explanatory memorandum*, available at <https://rm.coe.int/ok-prems-137222-gbr-2512-cmrec-2022-18-et-expose-motifs-a5-web-1-/1680a96147>, accessed 29 April 2025.

Part 2

Data collection and analysis

Drafting and distribution process

The questionnaire, designed to explore students' perceptions of education fraud, was divided into five sections, primarily composed of closed-ended questions. The first section established the education levels at which respondents were currently studying, while the second section focused on assessing their knowledge of the phenomenon of education fraud and the various types of fraud that exist within the academic context. The third section analysed students' direct experiences with fraud, covering issues such as: types of fraud encountered; sources of information; frequency of fraudulent incidents within their institution; bodies designated to combat fraud within the academic community; and existing sanctions. The fourth section was devoted to the use of new technologies, with a specific focus on artificial intelligence. Lastly, as a way forward, respondents were invited in the final section to share additional insights and suggestions for tackling education fraud; this section also included a link to the ETINED platform.

The questionnaire benefitted from insights gathered during the 7th ETINED plenary meeting, held in November 2023, where it was presented to participating representatives. It was subsequently presented at the ETINED Bureau meeting and the 5th CDEDU plenary meeting in March 2024, and later to the members of the Council of Europe's Sub-Group on Higher Education Policy in September 2024. It was further refined based on comments and insights received during these meetings.

The questionnaire was distributed online through institutional channels. It was sent to CDEDU delegates and observers, who were asked to disseminate it. Thanks to the active engagement of CDEDU representatives, a high number of responses was collected – 5 333 responses in total, from 40 countries. The survey was available online from July to September 2024. While the majority of responses were submitted in English, some additional comments were provided in respondents' native languages. This should be taken into consideration, as varying levels of language proficiency may have influenced how students interpreted and responded to the questions.

Data analysis

The full dataset was initially analysed to provide an overview and to highlight all responses collected at the national level. Subsequently, the dataset was segmented into two categories, based on the number of responses received from each country. The objective was to exclude both high and low deviations, in order to improve the representativeness and robustness of the analytical models.⁷ This dual approach, based on proportional analysis, ensured that exclusions fairly reflected the contributions of both overrepresented and underrepresented countries. The newly configured dataset, comprising 4800 responses from moderately represented countries, served as the basis for subsequent analysis, providing a more balanced and representative sample for generating insights. The second analysis confirmed the findings of the first, with the exception of two questions, which will be examined in greater detail in Part 3.

7. See Appendix 2 – Methodology annotation regarding data harmonisation.

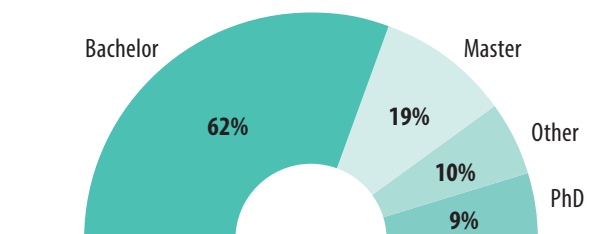
Part 3

Outcomes of the survey

Academic level of respondents

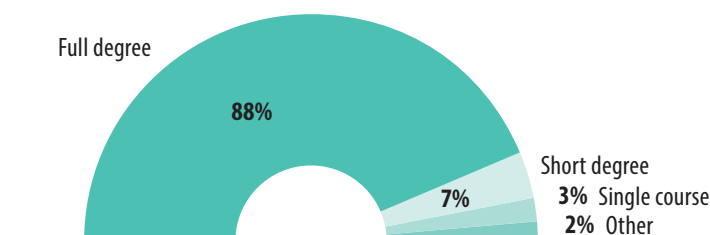
The largest proportion of respondents (62%) reported being enrolled in bachelor's programmes, indicating a significant representation of undergraduate students (Figure 1). Master's students accounted for 19% of the total, while 10% of respondents reported studying at other academic levels, including certificate or professional programmes. PhD candidates represented a smaller segment, comprising 9% of the sample.

Figure 1 – Academic level of students



Regarding the types of educational programmes attended, the vast majority of respondents (88%) stated that they were enrolled in full-degree programmes (Figure 2). In contrast, short-degree programmes were attended by 7% of respondents, while 3% reported being enrolled in single courses. A further 2% selected "Other", reflecting a variety of educational pathways pursued by students, including part-time master's degrees, vocational master's programmes, MBAs and other specific professional courses.

Figure 2 – Educational programme attended by students



Awareness and perception of education fraud

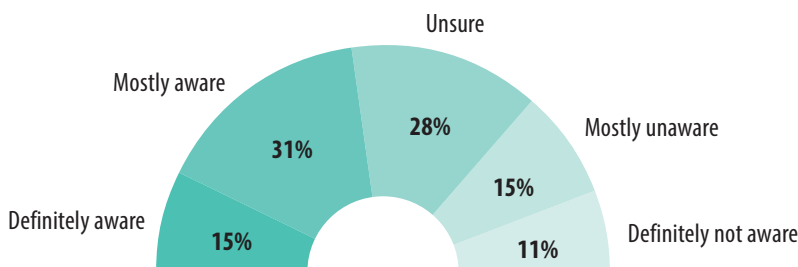
This section presents responses related to students' familiarity with education fraud in general, as well as with some of its specific types. The topic was explored through four questions in the questionnaire. The first two questions assessed students' knowledge of education fraud and its various forms. After answering these, students were provided with definitions of different types of education fraud and were then asked: (a) whether they were aware of these types prior to the survey; and (b) how familiar they were with them after reading the definitions. This approach served two main purposes: first, to better understand the extent to which students recognise the phenomenon even without knowing its formal definitions and classifications; and second, to raise awareness of education fraud among students by providing relevant information.

Familiarity with education fraud and different types of fraud

The results show that a small proportion of respondents (15%) reported being "definitely aware" of what education fraud is, while 31% indicated they were "mostly aware" of the phenomenon (Figure 3). A significant 28% stated they were "unsure", reflecting a notable degree of uncertainty within the group. Meanwhile, 15% reported being "mostly unaware", and 11% declared they were "definitely not aware" of education fraud.

According to these findings, 54% of respondents were either unsure or not familiar with the concept of education fraud, while 46% expressed some level of awareness (either definite or partial). It is important to highlight that only 15% of respondents reported being "definitely aware" of what education fraud is.

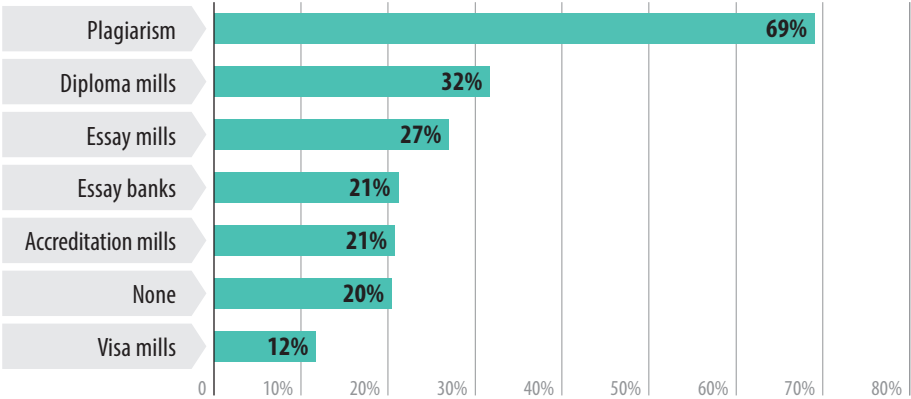
Figure 3 – Awareness of the phenomenon of education fraud



When it comes to student awareness of different types of education fraud, the most recognised phenomenon among respondents was plagiarism, with 69% indicating familiarity with this type of fraud (Figure 4). Diploma mills were also relatively well known, cited by 32% of students, followed closely by essay mills at 27%.

Accreditation mills and essay banks were each recognised by 21% of respondents. Visa mills had the lowest level of recognition, with only 12% of students indicating familiarity. Additionally, 20% of respondents selected "None", indicating no familiarity with any of the types of education fraud listed.

Figure 4 – Familiarity with types of education fraud

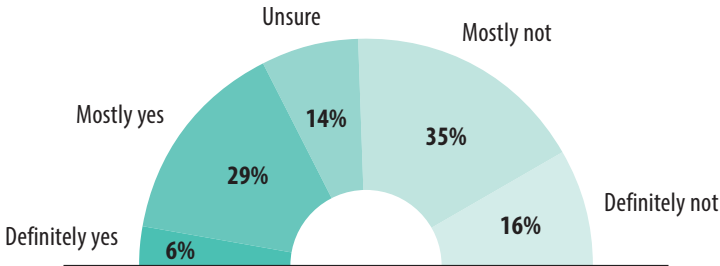


Knowledge of types of fraud after reading definitions

When asked whether they knew the definitions before participating in the survey, only 6% of students responded that they definitely knew them, while 29% indicated they were mostly familiar with them (Figure 5). A further 14% reported being unsure of their knowledge prior to the survey. In contrast, 35% of respondents stated that they were mostly unfamiliar with the terms and 16% said they definitely did not know the definitions before participating.

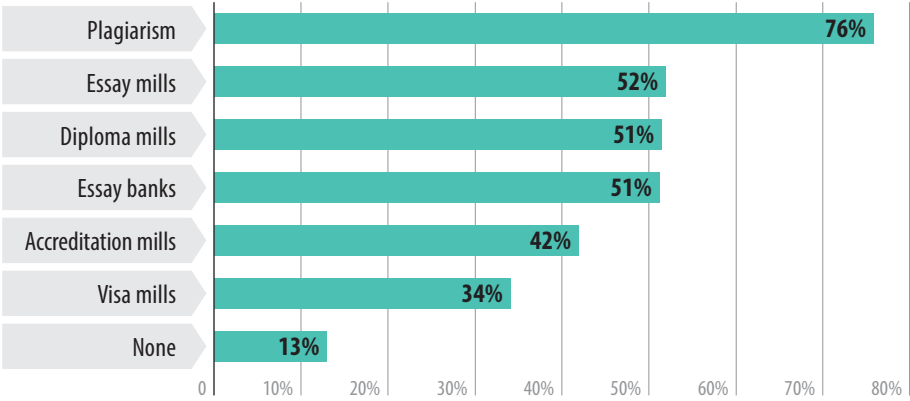
These findings reveal that just over half of the respondents had limited or no knowledge of the different types of education fraud. The data align with students’ general understanding of fraud, suggesting that their perception of awareness for each specific type of fraud is consistent with their overall awareness of education fraud.

Figure 5 – Knowledge of definitions before participating in the survey



On the other hand, after reading the definitions, awareness of the various types of fraud increased significantly (Figure 6). Familiarity with plagiarism rose to 76%, while 52% of respondents reported familiarity with essay mills, diploma mills and essay banks. Familiarity with accreditation mills reached 42%. Recognition of visa mills remained relatively low at 34%, and 13% of respondents stated they still had no familiarity with the phenomenon of education fraud.

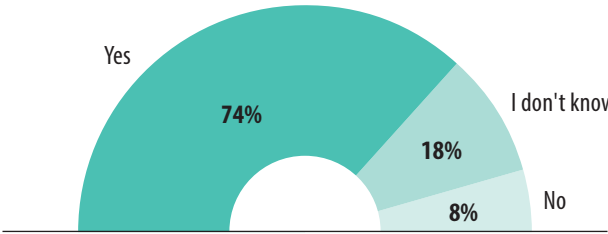
Figure 6 – Familiarity with phenomena after reading the definitions



Perception of the impact of fraud on the quality of education and the main aspects affected by education fraud

The results show a clear consensus among students regarding the negative impact of education fraud on the delivery of quality education (Figure 7). A significant majority (74%) believe that fraud has a detrimental impact on the educational system. In contrast, only 8% of respondents stated that fraud does not negatively affect education quality, while 18% were uncertain about its consequences. These figures suggest that most students recognise the harmful implications of fraud within education, although a small proportion either disagrees or is unsure about the extent of its impact.

Figure 7 – Perception of fraud impact on quality of education



Aspects affected by education fraud

For this topic, results from the secondary analysis are presented, as they differ from those of the full dataset. According to the findings, students tend to associate education fraud particularly with issues related to equity and the reputation of the education system (Table 1). The highest-ranked concern among respondents who identified a link between education fraud and education quality was the impact on access to equal opportunities for learning and protection for all citizens – considered the most significantly affected aspect.

Following closely, quality assurance ranks second, reflecting the perception that fraud undermines the overall standards of educational systems. The credibility of regulated professions (such as the medical sector and public-service employment) ranks third. In fourth place, students identified the transparency of the national education systems as being notably affected. The international reputation of educational institutions and the systems they belong to ranks fifth, indicating that fraud is also perceived to threaten the global image of educational bodies. Employability and the mechanisms of mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications at the international level follow in sixth and seventh place, respectively. The international mobility of students and the national economy are viewed as the aspects least affected by education fraud from the students' perspective.

Table 1 – Aspects affected by education fraud

Rank	Main aspects affected by education fraud (from the most important to the least)
1	Access to equal opportunities for learning and protection for all citizens
2	Quality assurance
3	Credibility of regulated professions (e.g. medical sector) and public-service employment
4	Transparency of the national education systems
5	International reputation of the education institution and education system it belongs to
6	Employability
7	Mechanisms of mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications at the international level
8	International mobility of students
9	National economy

Comparison with full dataset results

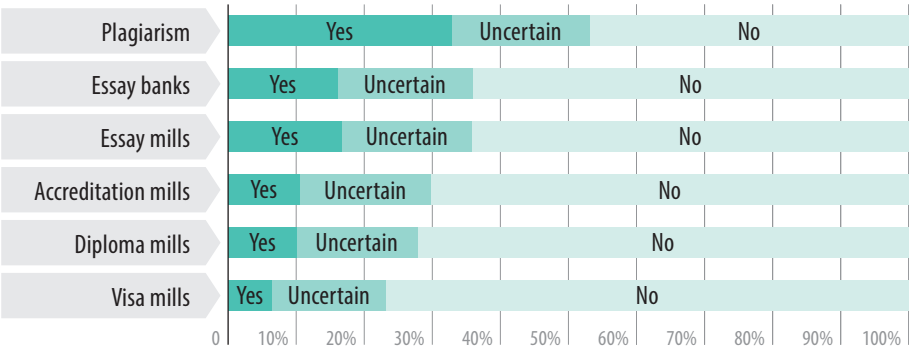
Results from the full dataset reveal two main differences. First, in the ranking of aspects affected by education fraud, mechanisms of mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications at the international level are perceived as more relevant than in the secondary analysis – ranking fourth instead of seventh. Conversely, the transparency of the national education systems was considered less important in the full dataset, dropping to seventh place in the ranking compared to fourth place in the secondary analysis.

Experiences of education fraud

To analyse students’ experience with fraud, various aspects were considered. The first focus was on the different types of fraud students had encountered and how they received information about fraudulent activities. Attention then shifted to the broader academic community to assess whether students knew whom they could report cases of fraud to and whether they would be willing to do so. Within this framework, the survey also explored students’ knowledge of the incidence of fraud within their academic community, as well as the sanctions associated with fraudulent actions. Finally, the perspective was expanded to examine whether respondents felt protected by their academic community and to gain a more nuanced understanding of their suggestions for improving protection against education fraud.

Direct experience of fraud

Figure 8 – Students’ personal experience of education fraud



According to the data, plagiarism is the most frequently encountered form of fraud,⁸ with 32% of respondents indicating that they have experienced it firsthand (Figure 8). Essay mills and essay banks were jointly ranked second, with 16% of students reporting direct experience with each type of fraud. Two other types of fraud – accreditation mills and diploma mills – were each directly experienced by approximately 10% of students. Visa mills had the lowest reported incidence, with 6% of respondents confirming personal encounters.

Sources of information regarding fraudulent activities

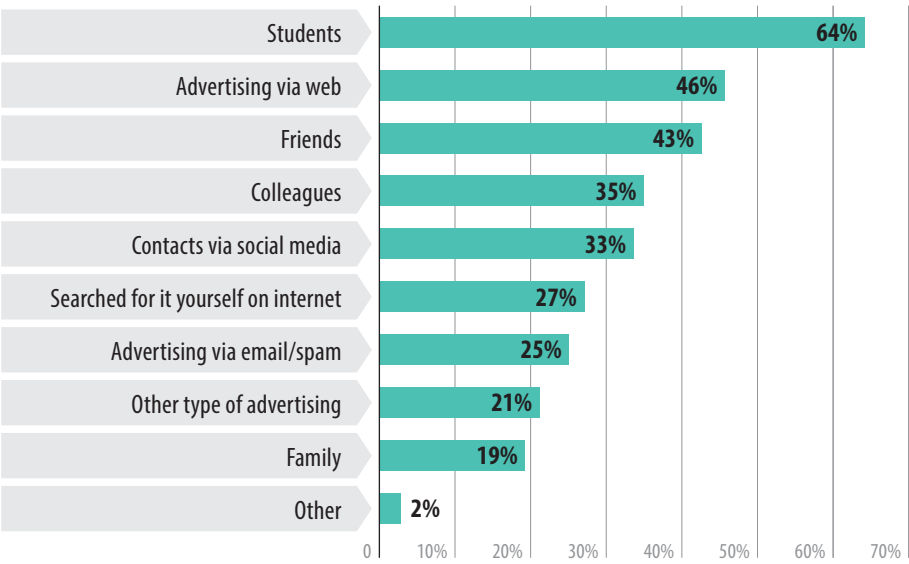
According to the results of the secondary analysis, the most common source of information for respondents who had encountered fraud was other students, with 64% indicating this as their primary source (Figure 9). Web advertising followed

8. All definitions presented in this section of the survey are drawn from Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)18 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on countering education fraud, adopted on 13 July 2022, and its explanatory memorandum. The definitions are also included in the questionnaire (Appendix 1).

closely, at 46%. Friends were also a notable source, with 43% of participants stating they had learned about fraudulent activities through their peers.

Other significant sources included colleagues (35%) and contacts via social media platforms such as Facebook or YouTube (33%). Searching for fraudulent activities independently on the internet was reported by 27% of students, while advertising via email or spam was cited by 25%. Other types of advertising and sources were the least common (21%). “Family” was selected by 19% of respondents.

Figure 9 – Main information sources



Comparison with full dataset results

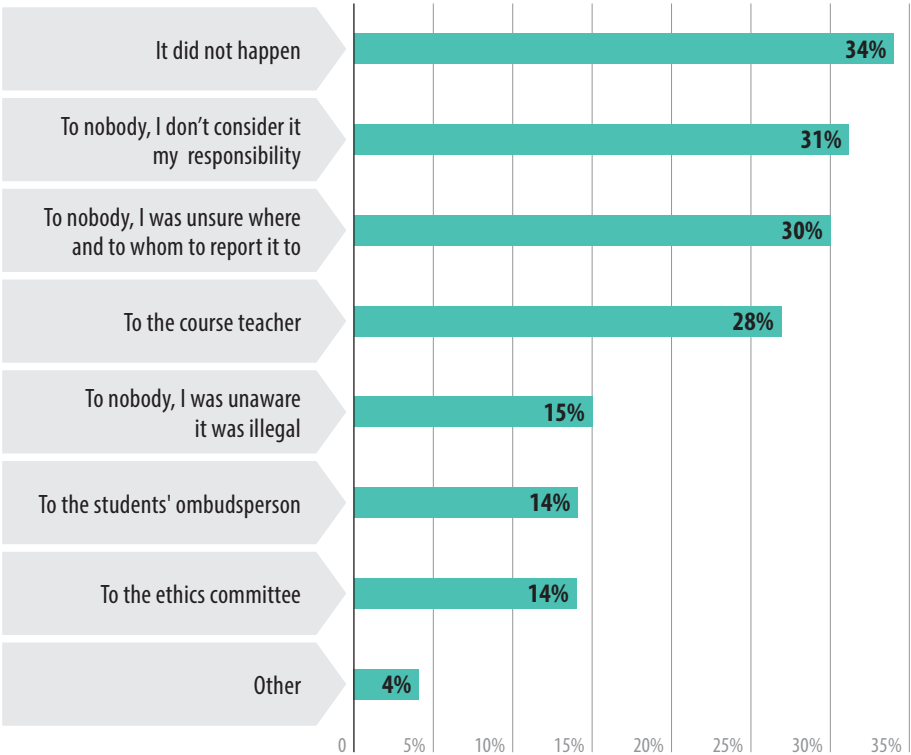
The full dataset analysis revealed some differences in the most common sources of information on education fraud. The item “family” was selected by a higher proportion of respondents in the full dataset (43%), compared to 19% in the secondary analysis, while “friends” was selected by a lower proportion of respondents (34% compared to 43%).

Bodies to which students report education fraud

Among the students who had encountered education fraud, a significant portion – 34% – stated that the incident did not occur within their academic community (Figure 10). The results show that a noteworthy percentage of students chose not to report the episode of fraud, either because they did not consider it their responsibility (31%) or because they were unsure of where or to whom such incidents should be reported (30%). Among those who did report fraud, the most common point of reference was the course teacher, cited by 28% of respondents, making it the most frequently used official reporting channel.

The students' ombudsperson was approached by 14% of students, as was the ethics committee. Notably, 15% of respondents indicated that they were unaware the activity they witnessed constituted illegal or unethical behaviour, which led them not to report the incident. Finally, 4% of participants selected "Other", identifying reporting bodies such as academic co-ordinators, institutional authorities, or direct confrontation with the individual involved in the fraudulent activity.

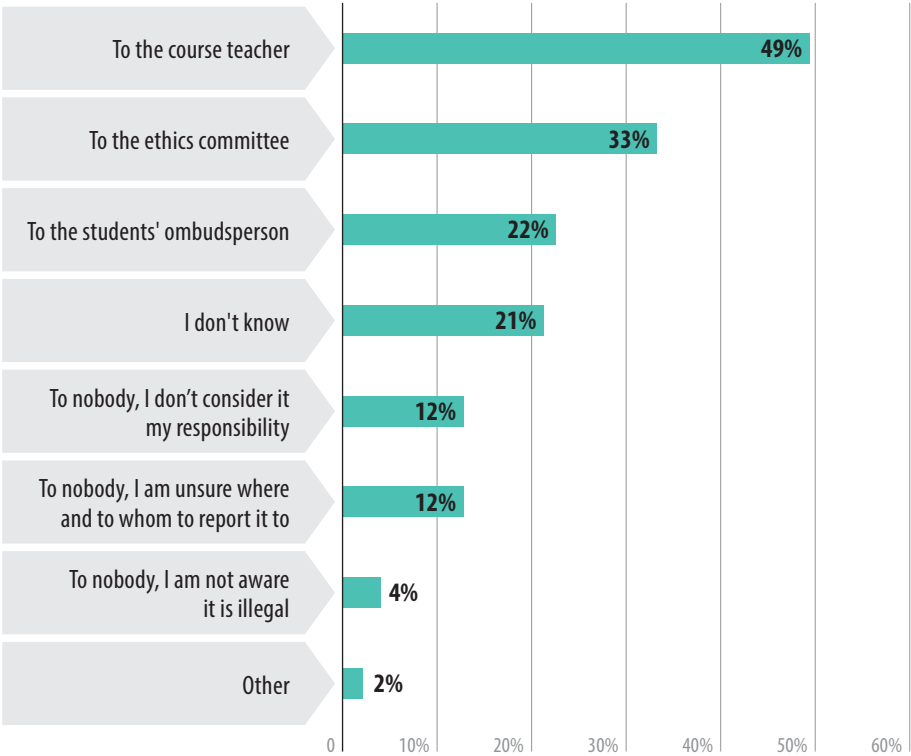
Figure 10 – Reporting bodies according to students who have encountered fraud



The same question was also put to students who had not encountered education fraud, in order to gather insight from this group (Figure 11). In this case, the percentage of students identifying bodies to which they would report fraud was higher than in the previous question. Almost half of respondents (49%) stated that the course teacher would be their first choice, followed by the ethics committee, selected by 33% of participants. The students' ombudsperson was also a prominent option, with 22% choosing it as a reporting channel.

Interestingly, compared to the previous question, fewer respondents (21%) stated that they would not know whom to report fraud to and only 12% said they would not consider it their responsibility.

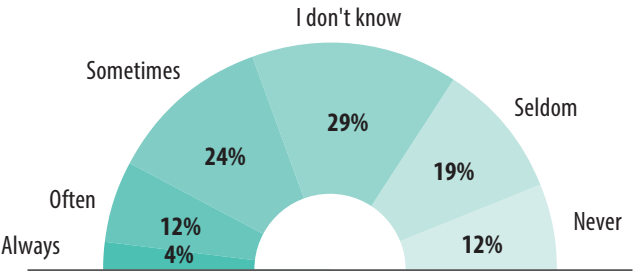
Figure 11 – Reporting bodies according to students who have not encountered fraud



Incidence of fraud within the academic community

According to the data, the responses indicate a fragmented picture (Figure 12). While 29% of respondents stated that they had no knowledge of whether fraud occurred in their academic environment, the remaining respondents did not perceive it as highly prevalent. Specifically, 24% stated that fraud occurs sometimes, followed by 19% who said it happens seldom and 12% who indicated that it is non-existent within their academic community. Only 12% reported that fraud is a common phenomenon and a small proportion (4%) reported a regular incidence of fraud.

Figure 12 – Perceived frequency of fraud

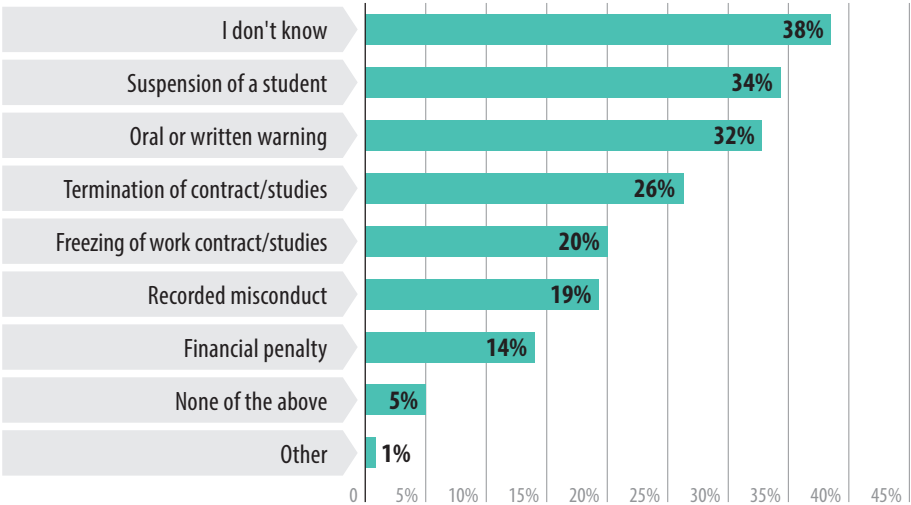


These data suggest that the majority of students believe fraud occurs at least occasionally within academic settings, while a substantial proportion remains uncertain about its frequency.

Most common sanctions for fraudulent activities

This question aimed to explore student awareness of the common sanctions applied by institutions when cases of fraud are verified. A notable 38% of respondents stated that they did not know what sanctions are typically imposed, which is consistent with previous findings regarding students' uncertainty about where to report fraud. Nevertheless, 34% of respondents reported awareness of suspension as a possible sanction, while 32% were aware of oral or written warnings. Termination of contracts or studies was cited by 26% and approximately 20% of respondents noted sanctions such as the freezing of work contracts or studies, and recorded misconduct.

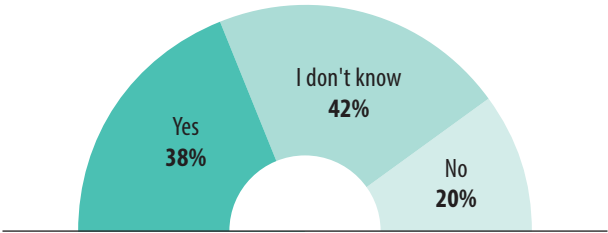
Figure 13 – Most common sanctions for fraud within institutions



Perceived protection by academic communities in case of reporting education fraud

Findings reveal that 38% of respondents believe they would be protected by their academic community if they were to report fraudulent activities. By contrast, 20% of respondents felt they would not be protected. It is also noteworthy that a large portion of respondents – 42% – indicated that they did not know whether they would receive protection.

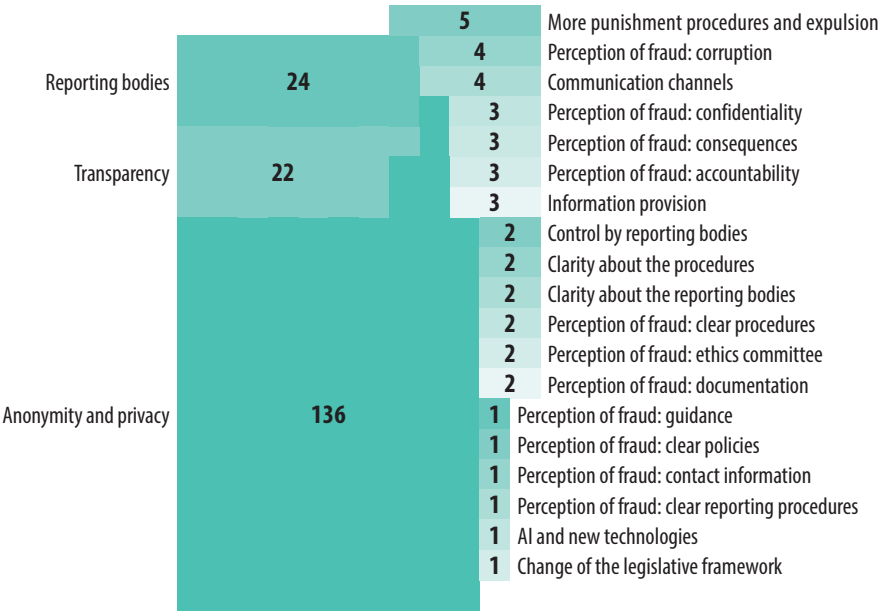
Figure 14 – Perceived protection by academic communities in case of reporting education fraud



Students’ suggestions for enhancing protection in case of reporting education fraud

This section presents insights provided by respondents on how to improve protection when reporting education fraud. The findings are based on the analysis of open-ended responses and have been grouped into key thematic clusters, each representing the main areas of improvement most frequently suggested by students.

Figure 15 – Students’ suggestions for enhancing protection



The largest cluster relates to anonymity and privacy. The majority of respondents proposed improvements aimed at ensuring confidentiality in the reporting process. Students also emphasised the need to raise awareness of the existing responsible bodies and their effectiveness in handling fraud cases. As noted in the quantitative analysis, many students remain unaware of whom they can report instances of fraud to. Transparency emerged as another important theme,

reflecting a strong desire for greater openness regarding both the procedures and outcomes of fraud cases. This includes transparency in the investigation process as well as the actions taken by institutions. Other suggested areas for improvement include the establishment of clear reporting procedures, the involvement of ethics committees, control by reporting bodies and the provision of contact information. Each of these smaller clusters highlights specific, targeted improvements – ranging from clear procedures to practical steps that make it easier for students to report misconduct. Overall, the comments received offer a comprehensive set of suggestions aimed at enhancing protection mechanisms, with particular emphasis on anonymity, the role of reporting bodies and transparency of procedures.

Use of new technologies

The fourth section of the survey aims to examine student perspectives on the relationship between new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), and education fraud. The findings reveal diverse opinions on the matter.

Relationship between new technologies and education fraud

Student perceptions of how, and to what extent, new technologies – including AI – are related to education fraud were explored from various angles. First, students were asked whether they saw a connection between the two phenomena. The focus then shifted to the role of higher education institutions, questioning whether they would need to adapt to these new technologies. Lastly, a specific question was posed to explore whether students perceive digital tools and AI as part of the problem of education fraud (for instance, by easily enabling the forgery of documents) or as tools to help prevent and tackle it.

Starting with the first point, over half of the participants reported believing that technology plays a role in fraudulent activities within education (37% agreed and 15% strongly agreed). Interestingly, 30% of respondents were unsure. A smaller percentage disagreed, with 11% expressing disagreement and 7% strongly disagreeing.

Regarding the role of higher education institutions, most respondents (56%) reported that they do not see new technologies as inherently problematic and acknowledged the importance of institutions adapting to them. However, there was still a significant degree of uncertainty among respondents, with 29% stating that they were unsure about this matter. Overall, a similarity can be observed between the responses to both questions, highlighting a general willingness and confidence towards new digital tools, accompanied by a certain degree of hesitation and a little distrust (15%).

The survey also assessed whether students perceive new technologies as part of the problem of education fraud, or as tools to support efforts to prevent and tackle it. This was explored by asking them if they agreed with the following two statements.

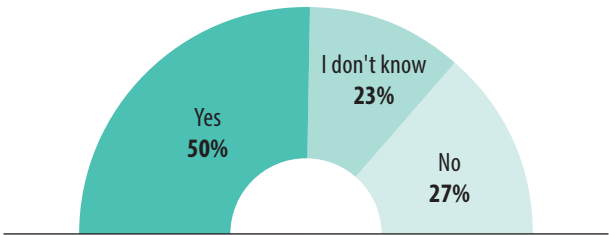
“New technologies are part of the problem of education fraud, as they easily permit forging documents and creating fake qualifications.”

“New technological tools can play a significant role in preventing and addressing education fraud; for example, they can facilitate secure exchanges of digital student data and enable the creation of online platforms to authenticate qualifications.”

It is noteworthy that the analysis showed that new technologies are seen equally as both a potential problem and a possible solution in relation to education fraud. Regarding the first statement, many respondents (29%) expressed clear concern about the potential misuse of new technologies in fraudulent activities, with an additional 7% strongly agreeing. Some 39% of respondents were unsure, and only a quarter (25%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. As mentioned, these findings are mirrored in responses to the second statement, with 39% of respondents expressing confidence, and an additional 9% strong confidence, in the potential of technology to safeguard against fraud. Similarly, 41% of respondents were uncertain, and a minority (11%) remained sceptical about the effectiveness of new technologies in addressing education fraud.

Familiarity with AI tools

Figure 16 – Familiarity with AI tools

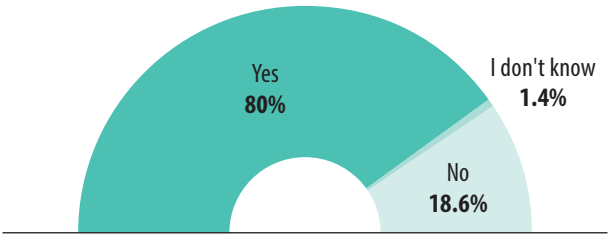


The questions in this section aimed to provide insights into students’ familiarity with AI tools and whether they use them in educational contexts. While half of the respondents reported being aware of AI tools, over a quarter (27%) indicated that they have no familiarity with AI tools at all and 23% of respondents were uncertain (Figure 16). These findings underscore that, although a significant number of respondents are utilising AI in their learning processes, a considerable portion remains unfamiliar with these technologies. Further details were gathered on the specific tools students have used. According to the data analysed, their primary AI tool is ChatGPT, highlighting its widespread popularity and usage among students. Another relevant finding is the emerging use of image and multimedia AI tools such as Midjourney, DALL-E, and Stable Diffusion, which are often used for creative tasks like generating images and multimedia content. Furthermore, the data show that respondents are familiar with writing and productivity tools, such as Grammarly, QuillBot and Copilot, which are commonly used to assist with writing, proofreading and generating code. Other responses referred to a range of AI tools including DeepL, Google Assistant and Perplexity, suggesting

that students are not confined to popular conversational agents but are familiar with a broad spectrum of AI technologies. A smaller number of respondents expressed familiarity with “the most known ones” or that they “keep up to date with free AI software”.

The vast majority of students who stated they use AI confirmed they actively use it for learning purposes (80%), suggesting that a significant portion have integrated these technologies into their academic routines (Figure 17).

Figure 17 – Use of AI tools for learning purposes



Among these users, the most common application (selected from a list of predetermined options) was obtaining explanations on specific topics (68%). Other students reported using AI to help with writing papers (14%) or defining the structure of a paper (13%). Some 7% of respondents stated they used AI to write part or all of an assignment or academic paper, while 2% indicated that they use AI to verify whether a paper would be accepted.

Other uses mentioned by 9% of students involved various tasks not covered by the provided categories. Upon reviewing these responses, the following key themes emerged.

Testing AI capabilities (89%): the vast majority of students who specified “other” uses mentioned experimenting with or testing the capabilities of AI. This group often explored AI tools beyond standard academic applications, aiming to understand the limitations, possibilities or innovative uses of the technology. These experiments varied widely, ranging from writing specialised code to assessing AI’s potential for solving complex problems or simulating different scenarios.

Programming and coding (8%): some respondents used AI tools for tasks related to coding or programming. These students applied AI to generate or debug code, indicating usage aligned with technical fields or an interest in computational applications of AI.

Writing assistance (5%): a few respondents indicated using AI for support in writing tasks, although their use cases appeared to go beyond the predefined categories of drafting or completing academic papers. These responses highlight that AI tools are also employed for more nuanced or specialised writing tasks.

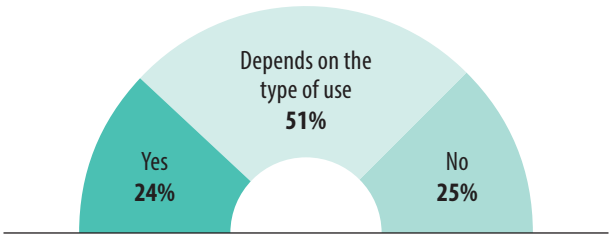
Translation (3%): AI tools were also used for translation purposes, with some students relying on these technologies to translate materials between languages.

The breadth of these responses suggests that, while AI is primarily used for direct academic purposes such as writing and explaining topics, a substantial number of students are engaging with the technology in more experimental or technical ways. This curiosity-driven usage points to the growing importance of AI literacy in education, as students seek to understand and leverage AI in diverse contexts beyond traditional academic tasks.

AI tools and plagiarism

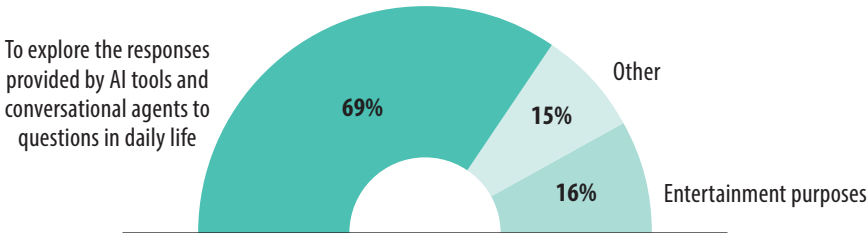
Regarding students’ views on whether the use of AI tools and conversational agents could be considered a form of plagiarism, the results show divided opinions and highlight the ongoing debate surrounding the implications of using AI in academic contexts. Some 51% of respondents stated that it depends on the type of use, while the remaining half of students were almost evenly split, with 24% agreeing that the use of AI tools should be regarded as plagiarism and 25% disagreeing (Figure 18).

Figure 18 – Use of conversational agents as a form of plagiarism



Respondents who did not believe that the use of conversational agents constitutes plagiarism stated that they use them to ask questions related to daily life (69%) and for entertainment purposes (16%) (Figure 19).

Figure 19 – Use of AI tools



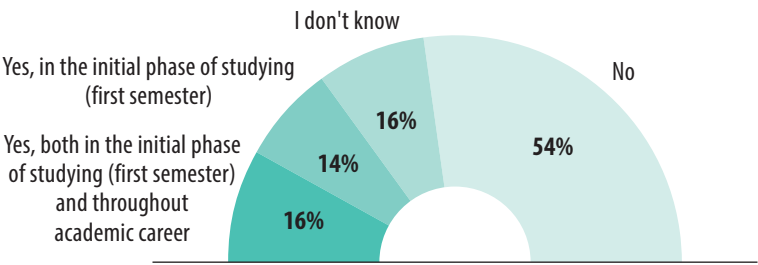
Other uses reported by students ranged from simple queries to seeking guidance on personal matters or receiving general information. Additionally, “learning” and “writing” were cited – especially for tasks such as drafting emails or other documents. A few respondents also mentioned turning to AI for “programming” help, such as coding assistance or debugging.

Initiatives to increase awareness in the academic community of education fraud

This section of the survey aims to gain a better understanding of how, and to what extent, students are informed about the phenomenon of education fraud within their academic community. To this end, they were asked whether they had received specific training on the topic and whether academic integrity was part of their curriculum.

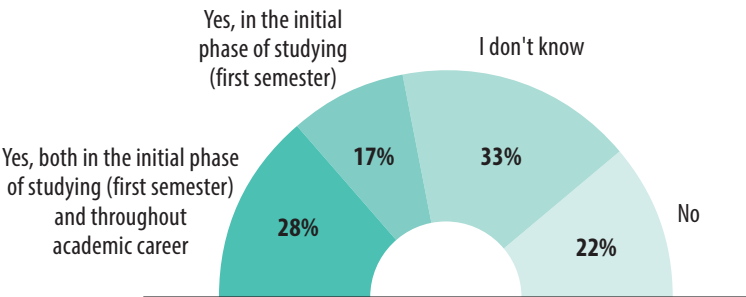
According to the data, more than half of the respondents (54%) reported that they had not received any such training (Figure 20). On the other hand, 16% of students indicated that training had been provided both during the initial phase of their studies (first semester) and as they progressed through their academic career, reflecting a more comprehensive approach adopted by some institutions. Another 14% mentioned receiving training only in the initial phase of their studies, while 16% expressed uncertainty, indicating they were not aware of whether such training was available to them.

Figure 20 – Training specifically focused on recognising and preventing education fraud



When asked whether academic integrity is included in their curriculum, responses revealed a similarly varied picture. Many respondents (33%) stated that they did not know whether this topic was covered in their studies, while a further 22% said that academic integrity is not included in their curriculum (Figure 21). This suggests that, for a significant portion of students, this subject may not be formally addressed by their institutions.

Figure 21 – Academic integrity included in the curriculum



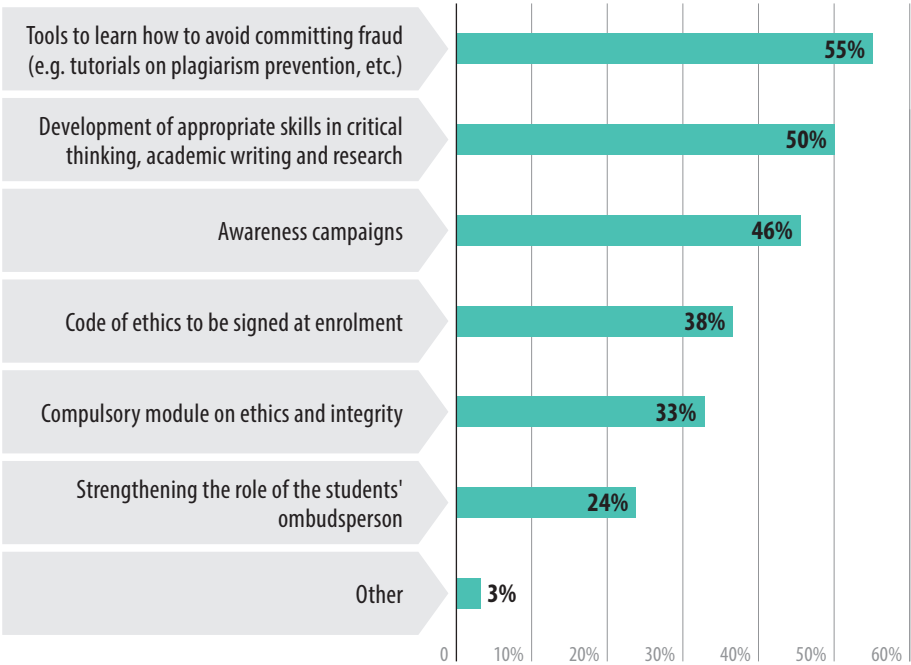
On the other hand, 28% of respondents reported that academic integrity is included both in the initial phase of their studies and throughout their academic career, underlining the proactive and sustained approach adopted by some of the institutions involved in the survey. An additional 17% indicated that academic integrity is taught only during the initial phase of their studies.

Tackling the phenomenon

Lastly, student suggestions for addressing education fraud were analysed, alongside their perceptions of the main actors responsible for combatting fraud at various levels, and their opinions about the actions national governments should take to prevent and address education fraud.

Regarding the first point, students expressed a strong focus on practical tools and skills development as a means to combat education fraud. The most frequently suggested measures were those aimed at equipping students with the knowledge and resources needed to understand and avoid fraudulent behaviour. In fact, 55% of respondents suggested tools to help students learn how to avoid committing fraud (for example, tutorials on plagiarism prevention) as the primary measure to address education fraud (Figure 22). Closely following this, skills development in critical thinking, academic writing and research was identified by 50% of respondents as another key element in fraud prevention.

Figure 22 – Students’ suggestions to address education fraud



Other frequently suggested measures included awareness campaigns, supported by 46% of respondents, and a code of ethics to be signed at enrolment, supported by 38%. Further suggestions included a compulsory module on ethics and

integrity (33%) and strengthening the role of the students' ombudsperson (24%). These responses suggest that students perceive fraud as something they could unintentionally become involved in, rather than as a purely deliberate act. From this perspective, institutional transparency and personal accountability are seen as factors that can help reduce fraudulent behaviour.

Perceptions of the key actors responsible for addressing fraud reveal that universities and teaching staff are seen as the most significant players, with 56% of respondents assigning a leading role to universities and 54% to teaching staff (Figure 23).

Interestingly, students themselves were identified by 44% of respondents as playing a significant role in combatting fraud, highlighting both the recognition of personal responsibility in upholding academic integrity and a willingness to actively participate in this effort.

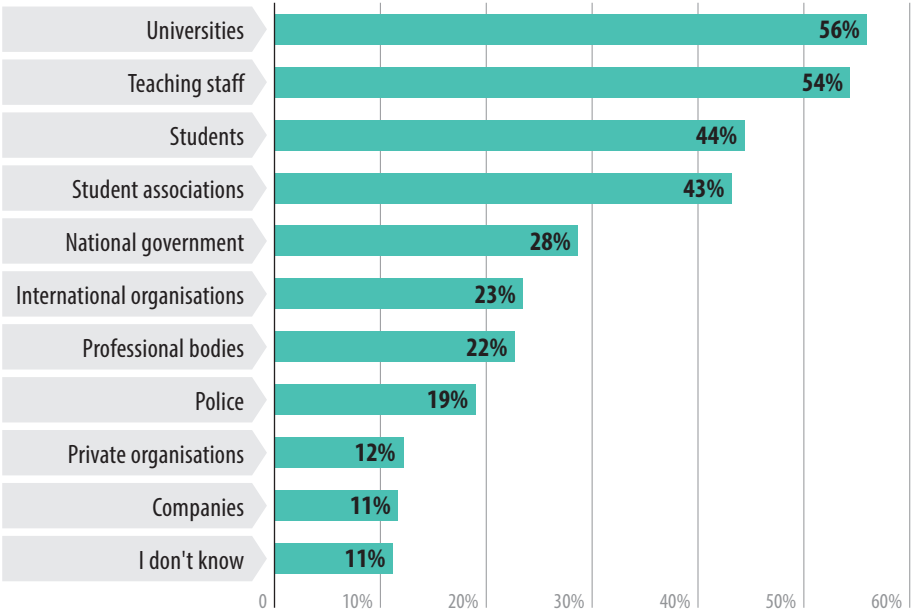
Other important actors included student associations (43%) and national governments (28%), though to a somewhat lesser extent.

International organisations were identified by 23% of respondents, while professional bodies responsible for maintaining standards in specific fields were noted by 22%.

The role of the police was mentioned by 19% of respondents. Private organisations and companies were each deemed important by 12% of respondents, indicating a more limited role compared to educational institutions and governance bodies.

Lastly, 11% of respondents selected "I don't know", reflecting some uncertainty about which entities are most responsible for addressing education fraud.

Figure 23 – Actors that could play a significant role in addressing education fraud



Students identified several key actions they believe national governments should prioritise to combat education fraud (Table 2). The highest priority was placed on introducing legal frameworks to protect the legitimacy of academic qualifications and institutions. The second most important suggestion was for governments to provide adequate training on fraud prevention, with an emphasis on promoting ethics, transparency and integrity.

In addition, students highlighted the need for governments to develop technological solutions for identifying and addressing education fraud at the national level, reflecting a desire for innovation in detecting fraud and verifying academic credentials. Beyond these core measures, students also emphasised the importance of protecting whistle-blowers, ensuring they can report instances of fraud safely and without fear of retaliation.

Linked to this is a call for the establishment of a national code of ethics to standardise principles of integrity across educational institutions. Finally, prohibiting the advertisement and promotion of fraudulent education services was seen as a necessary step to reduce opportunities for fraud and safeguard the integrity of education systems.

Together, these suggestions reflect a comprehensive approach, in which students expect national governments to play a central role not only in enforcing legal standards, but also in fostering a culture of trust, transparency and ethical behaviour in education.

Table 2 – Actions the national government can take to prevent and combat education fraud

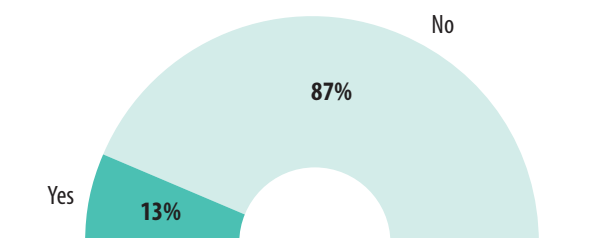
Rank	What actions do you think the national government can take to prevent and combat education fraud? (from the most important to the least)
1	Introduce in their legal framework the protection of the names of qualifications and institutions to combat education fraud
2	Provide adequate training on the prevention of education fraud while promoting ethics, transparency and integrity
3	Introduce and develop technological solutions for the identification of education fraud at national level
4	Establish measures to protect individuals who report education fraud
5	Establish code of ethics at national level
6	Prohibit the advertising and promotion of fraudulent education services

Familiarity with the work of the ETINED platform

In the last section, the survey explores students' knowledge of the ETINED platform and their general opinions about the survey itself.

The question regarding respondents' familiarity with the ETINED platform revealed that the majority (87%) were not familiar with it, while only 13% stated that they were aware of its work (Figure 24). This gap in awareness suggests that most students are not acquainted with the platform, which is dedicated to promoting integrity, transparency and ethics in education.

Figure 24 – Familiarity with the work of the ETINED platform



Additional comments

In the final question of the survey, participants had the opportunity to provide additional comments about their expectations regarding the questionnaire and the main topic it addressed. The various responses have been consolidated into the following key themes.

Enhancing education through technology, integrity and systemic reforms

Student feedback highlighted the significant potential for improving education through the adoption of technology, the promotion of academic integrity and the implementation of systemic reforms. These responses emphasised the transformative power of such measures in shaping a more supportive and effective learning environment.

AI: a tool for growth

Students view AI as a positive and valuable tool that, when used responsibly, can offer substantial benefits to learners of all ages. AI has the potential to enhance the educational experience by making learning more accessible, personalised and engaging. Teaching staff are seen as having an opportunity to integrate AI into their methods in ways that improve learning outcomes and support students with diverse needs.

Integrity and systemic improvement

The concerns raised by students about academic fraud underscore the need to address the root causes of dishonest practices within education. To tackle this

issue, it is essential to cultivate a culture that values transparency, flexibility and open communication. By addressing these systemic challenges, institutions can build trust, promote academic honesty and strengthen the overall integrity of the education system.

A collaborative future

Despite existing challenges, respondents expressed optimism about the future of education and its potential for meaningful, positive change. By actively listening to student feedback, educational institutions can work towards a more inclusive, responsive and supportive learning environment. This collaborative approach will help pave the way for a future in which education is more effective, equitable and accessible to all learners.

Part 4

Final considerations

Drawing on the six aspects explored in the study – knowledge, experience, protection, prevention, technology and community – several final considerations can be shared.

Firstly, it appears that knowledge of education fraud is limited. Although some students seem to have a general understanding of the phenomenon, only a small percentage expressed a clear awareness of fraudulent activities, with plagiarism identified as the most familiar form of education fraud. There is, however, a clear consensus among students regarding the negative impact of education fraud on the quality of education, particularly in relation to equity and the reputation of the education system.

With regard to experience, plagiarism again emerges as the most frequently encountered type of fraud, aligning with findings related to the aspect of knowledge. Another key point is the limited awareness students have regarding the appropriate bodies to which cases of fraud should be reported. Moreover, many students do not view reporting such cases as their responsibility.

These insights are especially striking when considered alongside students' perceptions of protection, where a more nuanced picture emerges. Specifically, students reported feeling unprotected by their academic community and advocated for greater awareness of existing responsible bodies, along with improved transparency and privacy safeguard, should they choose to report fraud.

These considerations become even more significant when viewed in light of the aspect of community. The study revealed that students believe efforts to prevent education fraud should begin within the academic community itself – particularly involving universities, teaching staff and students. This indicates a strong perception among students that they are active members of a broader academic community and that this community plays a key role in combatting education fraud. These internal efforts are seen as most effective when supported by national governments through the enforcement of legal standards and the promotion of trust, transparency and ethical behaviour in education.

Regarding technology, a concluding reflection concerns student attitudes towards new technologies, including AI, and their perceived relationship with education fraud. This part of the study, extensively explored in the questionnaire, provided comprehensive findings within the broader context of the research.

Students' attitudes towards new technologies in relation to fraud appear ambivalent, reflecting the dual nature of technology itself – it can be both a tool for preventing fraud and a means of facilitating it. The findings support this perspective and highlight the importance of digital awareness and literacy within academic communities, for both students and staff. In this context, the study reveals that a degree of uncertainty underpins all aspects of students' engagement with technology. This includes their familiarity with AI tools and their views on the relationship between such technologies and fraudulent behaviour.

With regard to whether the use of AI tools and conversational agents could be considered a form of plagiarism, the results show divided opinions and reflect the ongoing debate about the implications of using AI in academic contexts. Half of the respondents stated that it depends on how the tools are used, while the remaining half were evenly split between those who believed that the use of AI tools should be regarded as plagiarism and those who did not. These responses shed light on a broader lack of understanding about the appropriate and ethical use of AI in education.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Student awareness of education fraud

We invite you to participate in this questionnaire designed specifically for higher education students like you.

This questionnaire is conducted by the Academic Equivalence Mobility Information Centre (CIMEA), in collaboration with the [Council of Europe](#).

It is targeted at higher education students and the objectives are to:

- ▶ understand your knowledge of fraud in higher education;
- ▶ raise awareness about this issue and enhance your ability to address it;
- ▶ support the creation of tools that promote ethics and transparency in higher education.

Your participation is key in shaping our approach to foster a culture of integrity and transparency within the academic community. This includes policy makers, higher education institutions and other stakeholders engaged in addressing education fraud.

Background

This questionnaire is open to higher education students from the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention ([ETS No. 18](#)) represented at the Steering Committee for Education ([CDEU](#)) of the Council of Europe. This questionnaire builds on previous research from the Erasmus+ project “[FraudS+ \(False Records, Altered Diploma and Diploma Mills Qualifications Collection\)](#)”, which led to the publication “[Knowledge and awareness of fraud in education: a student perspective](#)”. It has been updated according to the principles outlined in the Council of Europe’s [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)18 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering education fraud](#).

What to expect

The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Some of the questions are conditional and will appear based on your responses to previous items.

Your responses will be treated anonymously. You will be asked to indicate your country of study and level of education. This information will not be included in the survey report, and no further personal details will be requested.

For any issue or further questions about the questionnaire, please contact Elisa Petrucci, Head of International Projects Unit at CIMEA and member of the evaluation team at e.petrucci@cimea.it.

Thank you for your valuable contribution!

The questionnaire will be open until 15 September 2024 (deadline extended).

☐ I have read and understood the data processing policy and confirm that I am of legal age.

Before starting

1. In which country are you currently studying?⁹

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ☐ Albania | ☐ Germany | ☐ North Macedonia |
| ☐ Andorra | ☐ Greece | ☐ Norway |
| ☐ Armenia | ☐ Holy See | ☐ Poland |
| ☐ Austria | ☐ Hungary | ☐ Portugal |
| ☐ Azerbaijan | ☐ Iceland | ☐ Republic of Moldova |
| ☐ Belgium | ☐ Ireland | ☐ Romania |
| ☐ Bosnia and Herzegovina | ☐ Italy | ☐ San Marino |
| ☐ Bulgaria | ☐ Kazakhstan | ☐ Serbia |
| ☐ Croatia | ☐ Latvia | ☐ Slovak Republic |
| ☐ Cyprus | ☐ Liechtenstein | ☐ Slovenia |
| ☐ Czech Republic | ☐ Lithuania | ☐ Spain |
| ☐ Denmark | ☐ Luxembourg | ☐ Sweden |
| ☐ Estonia | ☐ Malta | ☐ Switzerland |
| ☐ Finland | ☐ Monaco | ☐ Türkiye |
| ☐ France | ☐ Montenegro | ☐ Ukraine |
| ☐ Georgia | ☐ Netherlands | ☐ United Kingdom |

2. Which level are you currently studying at?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Bachelor
- ☐ Master
- ☐ PhD
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

9. This is a mandatory question.

3. What kind of educational programme are you attending?

- ☐ Full degree
- ☐ Short degree
- ☐ Single course
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

Awareness of the phenomenon of education fraud

4. How aware are you of what education fraud is?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Mostly unaware
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Mostly aware
- ☐ Definitely aware

5. Please select the types of education fraud you are familiar with.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- ☐ Accreditation mills
- ☐ Diploma mills
- ☐ Essay mills
- ☐ Essay banks
- ☐ Visa mills
- ☐ Plagiarism
- ☐ None

Education fraud

Definitions¹⁰

- ▶ **“Education fraud”** is behaviour or action occurring in the field of education intended to deceive and obtain an unfair advantage. It includes: (i) the activities of diploma mills, accreditation mills, visa mills, essay mills and essay banks, as defined below; (ii) 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; (iii) illegal or irregular use of authentic documents; (iv) plagiarism; (v) production or use of forged, plagiarised or counterfeit documents; and (vi) the offer of unrecognised or unaccredited qualifications with the intention of deceiving another.
- ▶ **“Fraudulent education service providers”** include accreditation mills, diploma mills, essay mills, essay banks and visa mills, whether stand-alone or part of larger undertakings.

10. All definitions presented in this section are drawn from Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2022\)18](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on countering education fraud, adopted on 13 July 2022, and its explanatory memorandum.

- ▶ An **“accreditation mill”** is an institution or organisation (in any legal form) which is neither recognised by national competent authorities nor authorised by the law of any member state to provide accreditation for education programmes or awards, and which intends to mislead employers, students or the public.
- ▶ A **“diploma mill”** (also known as a “degree mill”) is an institution or organisation which is not recognised by national competent authorities or organisations as an institution accredited or authorised by the law of any member state to confer awards or qualifications, and which purports, by means of misrepresentation, to issue such awards or qualifications.
- ▶ An **“essay mill”** (otherwise referred to as a provider of contract cheating services) is an organisation or an individual, usually with a web presence, which enters into contracts with students or their representatives to complete, in full or in part, one or more assignments (including student work such as essays, projects, theses and dissertations) for financial gain, whether or not the content is plagiarised, leading to a form of academic misconduct. For the avoidance of doubt, an essay mill does not include providers of private tutoring services lawfully operating within national legislation or regulations.
- ▶ An **“essay bank”** is an organisation or an individual from which or whom students can purchase prewritten essays on topics relevant to their studies.
- ▶ A **“visa mill”** is an institution or organisation (in any legal form) which is neither recognised by national competent authorities nor authorised by the law of any member state as an education institution, and which misrepresents itself as such with the objective of circumventing immigration law by supporting applications for visas or other permits which allow students to stay, study, work or access public funds in a given member state or in a group of member states (for example the Schengen area) with a common visa scheme.
- ▶ **“Plagiarism”** means using work, ideas, content, structures or images without giving appropriate credit or acknowledgment to the original source(s), especially where originality is expected. The term “plagiarised” applies to the ideas, content, structures or images in question.

6. Did you already know these definitions before participating in the survey?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Mostly not
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Mostly yes
- ☐ Definitely yes

7. Now that you have read these definitions, please select again the phenomena you are familiar with.

*Please choose **all** that apply:*

- ☐ Education fraud
- ☐ Accreditation mills
- ☐ Diploma mills
- ☐ Essay mills
- ☐ Essay banks
- ☐ Visa mills
- ☐ Plagiarism
- ☐ None

8. Do you think education fraud may negatively affect the quality of education?

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

9. If your answer to the previous question is "yes", in your opinion, what are the main aspects affected/caused by education fraud?

*Please list them **from the most important to the least**.*

- ☐ Access to equal opportunities for learning and protection for all citizens
- ☐ Transparency of the national education systems
- ☐ Quality assurance
- ☐ International mobility of students
- ☐ Employability
- ☐ National economy
- ☐ Credibility of regulated professions (e.g. medical sector) and public-service employment
- ☐ International reputation of the education institution and education system it belongs to
- ☐ Mechanisms of mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications at the international level

10. In your opinion, where is education fraud most commonly found?

*Please list the following points **from the most to the least relevant**.*

- ☐ Upper secondary education
- ☐ Post-secondary non-tertiary education
- ☐ Bachelor
- ☐ Master
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Lifelong learning

Experiences of education fraud

Please find below the definitions, if you need to read them again.

- ▶ **“Education fraud”** is behaviour or action occurring in the field of education intended to deceive and obtain an unfair advantage. It includes: (i) the activities of diploma mills, accreditation mills, visa mills, essay mills and essay banks, as defined below; (ii) 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; (iii) illegal or irregular use of authentic documents; (iv) plagiarism; (v) production or use of forged, plagiarised or counterfeit documents; and (vi) the offer of unrecognised or unaccredited qualifications with the intention of deceiving another.
- ▶ **“Fraudulent education service providers”** include accreditation mills, diploma mills, essay mills, essay banks and visa mills, whether stand-alone or part of larger undertakings.
- ▶ An **“accreditation mill”** is an institution or organisation (in any legal form) which is neither recognised by national competent authorities nor authorised by the law of any member state to provide accreditation for education programmes or awards, and which intends to mislead employers, students or the public.
- ▶ A **“diploma mill”** (also known as a “degree mill”) is an institution or organisation which is not recognised by national competent authorities or organisations as an institution accredited or authorised by the law of any member state to confer awards or qualifications, and which purports, by means of misrepresentation, to issue such awards or qualifications.
- ▶ An **“essay mill”** (otherwise referred to as a provider of contract cheating services) is an organisation or an individual, usually with a web presence, which enters into contracts with students or their representatives to complete, in full or in part, one or more assignments (including student work such as essays, projects, theses and dissertations) for financial gain, whether or not the content is plagiarised, leading to a form of academic misconduct. For the avoidance of doubt, an essay mill does not include providers of private tutoring services lawfully operating within national legislation or regulations.
- ▶ An **“essay bank”** is an organisation or an individual from which or whom students can purchase pre-written essays on topics relevant to their studies.
- ▶ A **“visa mill”** is an institution or organisation (in any legal form) which is neither recognised by national competent authorities nor authorised by the law of any member state as an education institution, and which misrepresents itself as such with the objective of circumventing immigration law by supporting applications for visas or other permits which allow students to stay, study, work or access public funds in a given member state or in a group of member states (for example the Schengen area) with a common visa scheme.

- **“Plagiarism”** means using work, ideas, content, structures or images without giving appropriate credit or acknowledgment to the original source(s), especially where originality is expected. The term “plagiarised” applies to the ideas, content, structures or images in question.

11. Have you experienced education fraud?

Please choose **the appropriate response** for each item:

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Accreditation mills | ☐ Yes | ☐ Uncertain | ☐ No |
| • Diploma mills | ☐ Yes | ☐ Uncertain | ☐ No |
| • Essay mills | ☐ Yes | ☐ Uncertain | ☐ No |
| • Essay banks | ☐ Yes | ☐ Uncertain | ☐ No |
| • Visa mills | ☐ Yes | ☐ Uncertain | ☐ No |
| • Plagiarism | ☐ Yes | ☐ Uncertain | ☐ No |

12. How did you get information about activities that turned out to be fraudulent?

This question will be shown only if the answer to question 11 was YES.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- ☐ Advertising via web
- ☐ Advertising via email/spam
- ☐ Other type of advertising
- ☐ Searched for it yourself on internet
- ☐ Contacts via social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, etc.)
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Colleagues
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Family
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

13. If you experienced education fraud within your academic community, whom did you report to?

This question will be shown only if the answer to question 11 was YES.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- ☐ To the teacher of the course
- ☐ To the students' ombudsperson
- ☐ To the ethics committee
- ☐ To nobody, I don't consider it my responsibility
- ☐ To nobody, I was unaware it was illegal
- ☐ To nobody, I was unsure where and to whom to report it to
- ☐ It did not happen
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

14. In case you would experience education fraud, to whom would you report to in your academic community?

This question will be shown only if the answer to question 11 was NO.

*Please choose **all** that apply:*

- ☐ To the teacher of the course
- ☐ To the students' ombudsperson
- ☐ To the ethics committee
- ☐ To nobody, I don't consider it my responsibility
- ☐ To nobody, I am not aware it is illegal
- ☐ To nobody, I am unsure where and to whom to report it to
- ☐ To other, please specify _____

- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

15. In your opinion, how frequently do instances of fraud occur within your academic community?

*Please choose **all** that apply:*

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never
- ☐ I don't know

16. Which departments or entities at your institution would you contact in case of fraud?

*Please choose **all** that apply:*

- ☐ Faculty board
- ☐ Institutional/university board
- ☐ Ethics committee
- ☐ Student council
- ☐ Case-appointed committee
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

17. To your knowledge, what are the most common sanctions for education fraud at your institution?

*Please choose **all** that apply:*

- ☐ Oral or written warning
- ☐ Recorded misconduct
- ☐ Suspension of a student
- ☐ Freezing of work contract/studies
- ☐ Termination of contract/studies
- ☐ Financial penalty
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

18. Should you find yourself in the situation of reporting education fraud in your institution, would you consider yourself protected by your academic community?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

19. In your opinion, which measures could be put in place to make you feel more protected when reporting education fraud?

Please specify

Use of new technologies

20. How much do you agree with the following statement?

"There is a relationship between new technologies (including artificial intelligence) and education fraud."

Please choose only one of the following:

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

21. How much do you agree with the following sentence?

"AI and digital tools are not inherently problematic.

Instead, it is essential for higher education institutions to change their perception and adapt to these new technologies."

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

22. Are you familiar with artificial intelligence tools (e.g. generative AI, conversational agents, etc.)?

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

23. If the answer to the previous question is "yes", have you ever used it for learning purposes?

This question will be shown only if the answer to question 22 was YES.

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

24. If the answer to the previous question is "yes", what did you use artificial intelligence tools (e.g. generative AI, conversational agents, etc.) for?

This question will be shown only if the answer to question 23 was YES.

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- ☐ Getting explanations on certain topics
- ☐ Getting help in drafting the structure of a paper
- ☐ Getting help in writing part or all of an assignment or academic paper
- ☐ Verifying if a paper would be accepted
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

25. In your opinion, can the use of AI tools and conversational agents be considered as a form of plagiarism?

This question will be shown only if the answer to question 23 was YES.

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Depends on the type of use, please specify _____
- ☐ I don't know

26. If the answer to the previous question is “no”, what did you use AI tools and conversational agents for?

This question will be shown only if the answer to question 25 was NO.

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Entertainment purposes
- ☐ To explore the responses provided by AI tools and conversational agents to questions in daily life
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

27. How much do you agree with the following sentence?

“New technologies are part of the problem of education fraud, as they easily allow to forge documents and create fake qualifications”.

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

28. How much do you agree with the following sentence?

“New technological tools can play a significant role in preventing and addressing education fraud; for example, they can facilitate secure exchanges of digital student data and enable the creation of online platforms to authenticate qualifications”.

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

Initiatives to increase awareness in the academic community on education fraud

29. Have you received training specifically focused on recognising and preventing education fraud?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes, in the initial phase of studying (first semester)
- ☐ Yes, both in the initial phase of studying (first semester) and while progressing through the studies
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

30. Is academic integrity included in the curriculum at your institution?

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- ☐ Yes, in the initial phase of studying (first semester)
- ☐ Yes, both in the initial phase of studying (first semester) and while progressing through the studies
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Tackling the phenomenon

31. What would you propose to further address education fraud?

*Please choose **all** that apply:*

- ☐ Code of ethics to be signed at enrolment
 - ☐ Compulsory module on ethics and integrity
 - ☐ Awareness campaign
 - ☐ Tools to learn how to avoid committing fraud (e.g., tutorials on plagiarism prevention, etc.)
 - ☐ Strengthening the role of the students' ombudsperson
 - ☐ Development of appropriate skills in critical thinking, academic writing and research
 - ☐ Other, please specify _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

32. Who do you think can play a significant role in addressing education fraud?

*Please choose **all** that apply:*

- ☐ Student associations
- ☐ Universities
- ☐ Teaching staff
- ☐ Students
- ☐ National government
- ☐ Police
- ☐ International organisations
- ☐ Professional bodies
- ☐ Private organisations
- ☐ Companies
- ☐ I don't know

33. What actions do you think the national government can take to prevent and combat education fraud?

*Please rank the following issues **from most to least relevant**:*

- ☐ Introduce in their legal framework the protection of the names of qualifications and institutions to combat education fraud
- ☐ Provide adequate training on the prevention of education fraud while promoting ethics, transparency and integrity
- ☐ Introduce and develop technical solutions for the identification of education fraud at national level
- ☐ Prohibit the advertising and promotion of fraudulent education services
- ☐ Establish code of ethics at national level
- ☐ Establish measures to protect individuals who report education fraud
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

Conclusions

This survey was conducted within the scope of activities of the Council of Europe Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED) platform.

34. Are you familiar with the work of the ETINED platform?

*Please choose **only one** of the following:*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

35. Do you have any additional comment?

Thank you very much for your valuable contribution!

Appendix 2

Methodology annotation regarding data harmonisation

Step 1 – Segmentation of countries

To determine which countries to exclude from the analysis, the dataset was segmented into two categories:

- ▶ top countries: countries with more than 1 000 responses;
- ▶ bottom countries: countries with fewer than 10 responses.

Step 2 – Proportional distribution of exclusions

The aim was to exclude 10% of the total responses – equivalent to 533 responses – based on the availability of responses from the bottom countries. Exclusions were distributed proportionally according to each group's contribution to the overall dataset.

Top countries:

- ▶ two top countries contributed a combined total of 3 546 responses to the survey, representing 66.5% of the total dataset;
- ▶ proportional to their contribution, these countries accounted for the majority of the exclusion burden, resulting in the removal of 458 responses from this group.

Bottom countries:

- ▶ countries with fewer than 10 responses contributed a total of 75 responses;
- ▶ given their limited contribution, all 75 responses from these countries were excluded.

Step 3 – Detailed breakdown of exclusions

Top countries provided a combined 3 546 responses, accounting for 66.5% of the dataset. Exclusions were applied proportionally across these countries.

Bottom countries contributed a total of 75 responses, all of which were excluded.

Step 4 – Reconfiguration of the dataset

Following the exclusion of 458 responses from the top countries and 75 from the bottom countries, a total of 533 responses were removed from the dataset.

Appendix 3

Participating countries

No.	Participating countries	No.	Participating countries
1	Albania	21	Ireland
2	Andorra	22	Italy
3	Armenia	23	Lithuania
4	Austria	24	Malta
5	Azerbaijan	25	Montenegro
6	Belgium	26	Netherlands
7	Bosnia and Herzegovina	27	North Macedonia
8	Bulgaria	28	Poland
9	Croatia	29	Portugal
10	Cyprus	30	Romania
11	Czech Republic	31	San Marino
12	Denmark	32	Serbia
13	Estonia	33	Slovak Republic
14	Finland	34	Slovenia
15	France	35	Spain
16	Georgia	36	Sweden
17	Germany	37	Switzerland
18	Holy See	38	Türkiye
19	Hungary	39	Ukraine
20	Iceland	40	United Kingdom

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This report presents students' perceptions and awareness on education fraud relative to six aspects: knowledge, experience, protection, prevention, technology and community. The study analyses findings from a survey targeted at higher education students from the states parties to the European Cultural Convention represented at the Steering Committee for Education of the Council of Europe. It examines their understanding of education fraud, experiences with it and views on institutional responses and preventive measures.

Findings indicate that, while students recognise the negative impact of education fraud on quality and equity, their awareness remains limited beyond common forms such as plagiarism. Many lack knowledge of reporting mechanisms and do not perceive themselves as adequately protected by their institutions. Prevention efforts appear insufficient, with over half of respondents having received no formal training on academic integrity.

Technology is seen as both a challenge and a potential tool for fraud prevention, with divided opinions on the ethical implications of artificial intelligence in education. While students identify universities, teaching staff and governments as key actors in addressing education fraud, they also acknowledge their own role in upholding academic integrity.

The report highlights the need for stronger institutional frameworks, enhanced awareness initiatives and policy measures to foster a culture of ethics, transparency and accountability in education.

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