



Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in Austria

Full report

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December 2013



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1. Information sources

Information about Austria was collected through

- the three levels of on-line questionnaires completed in German;
- structured interview questions at national level completed by email;
- a focus group of students studying at Lodz University of Technology within ERASMUS exchange.

543 students completed the survey representing 15 institutions. 87 teachers completed the survey, representing 4 universities. The breakdown of survey participants is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of Survey responses								
Country	Student responses	Teacher responses	Senior Management and National		Student Focus Groups (number of students)		Organisations and Institutions	
Austria (AU)	543	87	2		1 (4)		17	
Breakdown of student responses		Home students	Other EU students	Non-EU students	Not known	Bachelor, diploma	Master, doctor	Blank, other
Austria (AU)	543	530	13	0	0	254	256	33

The sizeable sample of responses from across Austria was due to dissemination and assistance from the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity, who were very supportive of the project. Only 13 of the 543 student respondents said their permanent residence was outside Austria, of these students 12 were from Germany and one from Republic of Ireland.

Austria's 22 public and 12 private universities enjoy a high degree of autonomy and offer a full spectrum of degree programs. Austria currently has about three hundred thousand students studying at higher education level. Overall almost 20% of Austrian university students were international, however the percentage varies significantly according to types of institution. This makes Austria the third of all EU countries (after Luxembourg and Cyprus) when international student numbers are expressed as a percentage of total student population (Statistics Austria).

The Austrian post-secondary university level sector (Hochschulsektor) consists of:

- public universities (Universitäten), maintained by the state;
- private universities (Privatuniversitäten), operated by private organisations with state accreditation;
- maintainers of university of applied sciences degree programmes (Fachhochschul-Studiengänge) incorporated upon the basis of private or public law and subsidised by the state, with state accreditation (some of which are entitled to use the designation Fachhochschule);
- university colleges of education (Pädagogische Hochschulen) maintained by the state or operated by private organisations with state accreditation;
- the Institute of Science and Technology Austria;
- universities of philosophy and theology (Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschulen), operated by the Roman Catholic Church.

The non-university post-secondary sector (außeruniversitärer postsekundärer Sektor) consists of:

- academies for midwifery (Hebammenakademien);
- clinical technical academies (Medizinisch-Technische Akademien);
- military academies (Militärische Akademien);
- the school of international studies (Diplomatische Akademie);
- certain training institutions for psychotherapists (Psychotherapeutische Ausbildungseinrichtungen);
- conservatories (Konservatorien).

2. Quality Assurance in Austria Higher Education - teaching, learning and assessment

“The Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) was established as part of a fundamental reorganisation of the system of external quality assurance in Austria. The legal basis for establishing AQ Austria is the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz which entered into force on 1 March 2012.

According to AQ Austria’s legal remit, AQ Austria is responsible for the entire higher education sector in Austria (with the exception of university colleges of teacher education). In carrying out its responsibilities, AQ Austria follows these three basic principles:

- The higher education institutions bear the main responsibility for the quality of studies and for quality assurance.
- AQ Austria is an independent institution, with regard both to the Federal Ministry of Science and Research as well as to the higher education institutions.
- AQ Austria applies international standards of quality assurance within the Austrian higher education system.” (AQ Austria)

To capture an idea of assessment practices under the educational systems across the countries surveyed the teachers’ questionnaire asked respondents to comment on the typical assessment students were required to complete. Responses are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers’ responses, assessment in Austrian HEIs			
Examinations	Assignments	Projects	Orals
90%	0%	5%	5%
85%	10%	5%	
80%	10%	10%	
70%	20%	10%	
70%	15%	15%	
60%	20%	20%	
60%	10%	30%	
60%	15%	15%	10%
50%	10%	40%	
50%	15%	15%	20% (Laborarbeit)
50%	40%		10% (Übung etc.)
40%	30%	20%	10%
40%	60%		
40%	40%	20%	
30%	50%	20%	
30%	40%	30%	
30%	30%	20%	20%
20%	20%	10%	50% Einzelprüfungen
20%	50%	30%	0

Table 2 suggests that all students in Austria have to complete formal examinations, in this sample ranging from 90% to 20% of the assessment portfolio. However all the teachers indicated that some other assessment is required, including project work and sometimes orals, in different proportions. In a separate question it emerged that group working and team assessment were not common

requirements in Austria, from the 80 respondents 49 said their courses had at least 90% individual work, the remaining responses were 70%/30%, 60%/40% and 50%/50% individual/group work.

Although this is based on a small sample of responses from just 80 teachers, this evidence is useful to interpret of some of the responses to questions about student plagiarism.

3. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism in Austria

The Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI) has membership from 36 universities, research institutions and research funders and has responsibility to investigate cases of scientific misconduct. It also has an important role for promoting good practice to students and professors, particularly by developing guidelines and running seminars. However the OeAWI *“are not usually dealing with student plagiarism because this is the responsibility of the universities”* (national interview).

According to a national survey participant *“we do have national statistics on plagiarism including all public and private and applied universities”*; *“I believe there are more cases because there is more awareness ... it is a hot topic since prominent politicians were found to have plagiarised their thesis”*.

On further investigation it was found that the OeAWI collects data annually on behalf of the government from all public universities (22), applied universities (21) and private universities (12) about

- How many suspected cases they had in the last year
- How many proceedings they initiated in the last year
- How many proceedings are closed and are still open
- What kind of sanctions were imposed

The resulting government reports for 2011 and 2012 and the statistics are not made publicly available, but the data is shared between various working groups concerned with education strategy and policy. However the data as summarised in Tables 3 and 4 was provided by national organisations with permission for inclusion in this report.

Table 3: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE: Statistics on plagiarism (2011)	Public Universities	Fachhochschulen	Private universities	total
Institutions contacted	21	21	14	56
Feedback received	21	20	9	50
Results of the evaluation				
Number of suspected cases in approved work	32	2	2	36
Cases where proceedings initiated	25	21	2	48
Procedures opened	13	1	0	14
Procedures completed	13	20	2	35
Table 4: EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE: Statistics on plagiarism (2012)	Public Universities	Fachhochschulen	Private universities	total
Institutions contacted	22	21	12	55
Feedback received	22	21	11	54
Results of the evaluation				
Number of suspected cases in approved work	14	12	6	32
Cases where proceedings initiated	8	32	11	51
Procedures opened	10	1	3	14
Procedures completed	10	33	6	49

Tables 3 and 4 show that in both years very few allegations were recorded across HE institutions in Austria compared to statistics seen by the author from several UK universities and for Sweden. Of the suspected cases recorded, very few appear to have led to any penalty. The data provided suggest that only a minority of potential cases are being recorded and investigated by institutions, perhaps representing only the most serious forms of misconduct, and that more could be done to strengthen institutional policies procedures at all levels of higher education.

Both national sources also confirmed that “*a working group on plagiarism control and prevention*” is actively investigating ways to improve academic integrity in Austria. This national level response is very commendable.

According to one national source “*public universities have initiated several changes/initiatives within the last years to overcome plagiarism:*

- *revision of curricula, especially concerning special lectures on*
- *scientific writing*
- *stipulation of concrete guidelines of good scientific practice*
- *online publication of bachelor, master and doctoral thesis*
- *usage of software detection/electronic tools to detect and prevent plagiarism”*

Many questions in the student and teacher questionnaires explored knowledge and experiences of institutional policies and practices. The survey aimed to determine not just whether policies existed but how well they were communicated to stakeholders and whether they were effective and fair.

Question 7 for both student and teachers was about penalties or sanctions: *What would happen if a student at your institution was found guilty of plagiarism in their assignment or final project/dissertation?* The responses are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Sanctions for plagiarism				
Assignment		Project or Dissertation		
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
20%	18%	2%	3%	No action would be taken
48%	44%	8%	14%	Verbal warning
10%	13%	30%	16%	Formal warning letter
53%	51%	28%	41%	Request to re write it properly
52%	47%	49%	44%	Zero mark for the work
31%	25%	20%	10%	Repeat the module or subject
34%	28%	20%	15%	Fail the module or subject
1%	1%	6%	0%	Repeat the whole year of study
2%	9%	41%	38%	Fail the whole programme or degree
5%	1%	7%	0%	Expose the student to school community
2%	1%	21%	5%	Suspended from the institution
0%	1%	17%	6%	Expelled from the institution
1%	3%	8%	2%	Suspend payment of student grant
7%	5%	9%	6%	Other

There are differences in the responses to some questions between students and teachers (Table 5). It is particularly worrying that 20% of student respondents and 18% of the teachers believed there would be no consequences for plagiarising in assignments. The responses suggest that some more draconian penalties listed in the options appear to be applied occasionally in Austrian institutions but typically only when plagiarism occurs in a major element such as the final thesis. Students were more likely than teachers to believe that these more serious penalties would be applied.

The additional feedback in Table 6 (roughly translated) shows there are local procedures within some Austrian HEIs. Some comments suggest that the nature of the punishment is varied according to the seriousness of the offence. However it appears that some teachers in Austria take the

decision independently of any departmental system or oversight, which practice can lead to inconsistencies and unfair outcomes.

Table 6: Additional feedback from teachers to Question 7:

<i>nicht aber sofortige meldung an bürokraten-obertanen but not the immediate message to high-level bureaucrats</i>	Formal warning letter
<i>Dies würde ich tun – this is what I would do</i>	Request to rewrite it properly
<i>das ist das mindeste... – that is the least...</i>	Verbal warning
<i>da PrüferInnen ungern zugeben, dass bei Ihnen plagiiert wurde - because examiners are reluctant to admit that was plagiarized at all Diese und alle weiteren Fragen sind missverständlich! – these and other questions are misleading! es würde EINIGES PASSIEREN!- Something would happen! je nach Verantwortlichen – depending on the charge Möglicherweise - possibly wird bei mir mit 'nicht genügend' bewertet – given the worst grade- fail</i>	No action would be taken
<i>auf Grund der Plagiatsprüfung im dekanat nicht passieren - falls doch muss die Arbeit zurückgewiesen werden. bei laufender Betreuung sollte das eigentlich nicht passieren - should not happen due to the plagiarism check by the dean's office if it happens after all the work has to be rejected . Under ongoing supervision this should not happen.</i>	Fail the module or subject
<i>abschluss verunmöglicht! graduation made impossible! Das hängt auch von der Schwere des Vergehens ab (ein einziges fehlendes Zitat wäre wahrscheinlich unerheblich) This also depends on the severity of the offense from (one missing quote would probably irrelevant)</i>	Fail the whole programme or degree
<i>das sicherlich nicht – surely not that</i>	Expose the student to school community
<i>kann ich nicht sagen – I cannot say</i>	Suspended from the institution
<i>Arbeit wird negativ benotet=work is negatively graded schlechtere Note –Lower Grade bei mir selbst wird es wohl zu einer rücklegung-rücknahme der betreuung kommen---by myself it would probably be a case of taking back supervision Die Arbeit wird nicht anerkannt! – the work would not be accepted! ich weiß es nicht wirklich –I do not really know Weiß ich nicht!?! - I do not know!?!</i>	Other feedback

It appears from these responses to be the responsibility of each examiner to deal with any plagiarism they detect in student work. The IPPHEAE survey showed that 15.19% of students and 6% of teachers that responded admitted they may have “accidentally or deliberately” plagiarised at some time previously.

Referring to the responses to Question 5 summarised in Annex AT-1, 66% of students and 80% of teachers responding agreed that their institution had policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism. Regarding information being available to students, 33% of teachers responded positively compared to 39% of students. This suggests that, where there are policies in place, much more could be done to inform students about the policies and consequences to them.

Responses to questions in Annex AT-1 about penalties for plagiarism confirm the perception in students and teachers of a low level of consistency of approach to plagiarism. Only 11% of teachers and 10% of students who responded believed there was a standard set of penalties for plagiarism. When asked about whether the same procedures were used for similar cases of plagiarism just 12% of students and 11% of teachers agreed. The student responses rose to 26% and teachers’ responses to 18% when asked about consistency of procedure from student to student. Uncertainty and negative responses were expressed about whether *student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties* (35% of students and 38% teachers disagreed that this happens with 56% and 46% respectively saying they did not know).

Taking this set of responses a whole, captured from a wide range of Austrian institutions suggests that the decision-taking in Austria about penalties for academic misconduct and specifically relating to plagiarism could be viewed as unfair.

The teacher and student survey contained two questions about “digital tools”, responses are summarised in Tables 7 and 8. Question 8: *What digital tools or other techniques are available at your institution for helping to detect plagiarism?*

Table 7: Software Tools	Student	Teacher
Software for text matching (Turnitin, SafeAssign, Doculoc, Ephorus, EDV)	7%	28%
Unnamed software	64%	55%
VLE, Platform	1%	1%
Internet, Google	2%	3%
Don't know	26%	12%

Student and teacher Question 9: *How are the tools you named above used?*

Table 8: Use of software tools	Student	Teacher
It is up to the lecturers to decide whether to use the tools	34%	43%
For some courses students must submit their written work using the tools	19%	33%
Students must submit all written work using the tools	12%	11%
Students may use the tools to check their work before submitting	6%	5%

Feedback from the questionnaires suggests that most Austrian HEIs (71%) use software as part of a strategy for managing plagiarism. Also some institutions had successfully systematically incorporated such tools into their submission systems.

Question 4 of the student and teacher questionnaire asked when *students are required to sign a declaration about originality and academic honesty...* Results collected from both groups are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Students signing a declaration		
Student	Teacher	When
31%	1%	On starting their degree
7%	5%	For every assessment
31%	52%	For some assessments
6%	5%	Never
8%	23%	Not sure

The responses in Table 9 show differences between student and teacher perceptions, but this could be accounted for through the wider range of institutions covered by the student survey.

Students were generally confident that they understood the technicalities of academic writing, but there was less certainty about plagiarism:

Student Question 2: I became aware of plagiarism...

48% of students said that they still were still not sure about plagiarism, compared to 21% that said they learned about plagiarism before they started their bachelor degree.

Student Question 3: I learned to cite and reference...

37% of students said they learnt to cite and reference before they started bachelor degree and 49% said this was learnt during bachelor degree, only 2% of student respondents said they were still not sure.

The questionnaires asked students and teachers what information is available for students. Responses from both students and teachers confirmed that the main source of information is through the web site or in class. However, teachers demonstrate more confidence than students

that information is available. The responses suggest that information about academic dishonesty generally has a lower profile compared to plagiarism.

The information in Tables 10 and 11 confirms that routine lectures are normally used for advising students about academic integrity. It appears from student responses that some additional lectures and workshops on this subject may be available in some institutions that teacher respondents were not aware of. However a significant minority (Table 7) was not aware of any information on plagiarism (36% and 14%) or academic dishonesty (22% and 28%).

Student Question 6, Teacher Question 2/3 addressed the question about *awareness-raising: students become aware of plagiarism and of other forms of academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating) as an important issue through:*

Table 10: Ways that students become aware about plagiarism and academic dishonesty				
Plagiarism		Academic Dishonesty		
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
43%	30%	26%	20%	Web site
23%	14%	13%	10%	Course booklet, student guide, handbook
31%	60%	17%	36%	Leaflet or guidance notes
55%	74%	35%	64%	Workshop / class / lecture
36%	14%	22%	28%	I am not aware of any information about this

Student Question 12, Teacher Question 14 asked: *Which of the following services are provided at your institution to advise students about plagiarism prevention?* The responses are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11: Services and student support for discouraging plagiarism		
Student	Teacher	Service or provision
13%	17%	Academic support unit
57%	69%	Advice in class during course/module
48%	28%	Additional lectures, workshops
36%	35%	Advice from tutors or lecturers
17%	15%	Guidance from the library
2%	2%	University publisher
9%	10%	Academic writing unit/Study skills unit

The teacher questionnaire Question 6 asked who was responsible for monitoring, reviewing and revising policies and procedures for academic integrity and plagiarism.

Monitoring: 17% selected Institutional level, 34% selected Faculty or subject level; 47% did not know.

Reviewing: 23% Institutional level; 28% selected faculty or department; 48% did not know.

Revising: 8% believed it was at national level, 22% institutional, 13% faculty or subject level and 57% did not know.

The above responses demonstrate a serious lack of awareness among academics responsible for teaching about responsibilities for policies and procedures.

4. Perceptions and understanding of Plagiarism

It was important to gain some insight through the survey of what participants understood by plagiarism in order to be able to validate and interpret responses to certain questions. According to two national level participants from Austria the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI) “

“In our definition plagiarism is something done wilfully, it is scientific misconduct”; *“In my opinion plagiarism – academic dishonesty”* Further advice confirmed that this is typical of definitions used in Austrian institutions. It is important to bear these definitions in mind when considering the following responses and analyses.

One question was included in all four levels of the survey to determine whether any differences existed in reasons for plagiarism in different parts of Europe. The responses summarised in Table 9 from students and teachers suggest that implementation of sanctions, applied consistently, combined with more guidance and support for academic writing skills may have a deterrent effect on student plagiarism.

Comparing teacher and student responses from Table 12, 86% of teachers and 69% of students selected the option *it is easy to cut and paste from the Internet*. 72% of teachers but only 55% of students believed that students plagiarise because *they think they will not get caught*. The most common reason for plagiarism selected by 71% of student respondents was lack of *understanding how to cite and reference* and 62% of teacher respondents also agreed with this statement. Student respondents were more likely than teachers to view time and workload as reasons for student plagiarism.

Student Question 14, and teacher Question 17: *What leads students to decide to plagiarise?*

Table 12: Reasons student plagiarise – student and teacher questionnaires		
Student	Teacher	Possible reason for plagiarism
35%	55%	They think the lecturer will not care
55%	72%	They think they will not get caught
62%	48%	They run out of time
44%	49%	They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment:
15%	26%	They don't see the difference between group work and collusion
57%	66%	They can't express another person's ideas in their own words
71%	62%	They don't understand how to cite and reference
46%	41%	They are not aware of penalties
29%	9%	They are unable to cope with the workload
24%	22%	They think their written work is not good enough:
21%	13%	They feel the task is completely beyond their ability
69%	86%	It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet
33%	21%	They feel external pressure to succeed
37%	48%	Plagiarism is not seen as wrong
37%	34%	They have always written like that
22%	16%	Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments
18%	29%	Their reading comprehension skills are weak
15%	8%	Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood
21%	14%	There is no teacher control on plagiarism

Several questions were included in the questionnaires for students and teachers as a means of determining how well respondents understood concepts relating to plagiarism. Student responses

in Tables 13, 14 and 15 provided some encouragement that advice had been given on acknowledging sources in academic writing, but there was a clear message that respondents viewed the avoidance of accusations of plagiarism as more important than aspects of academic rigour.

Student Question 10: *What are the reasons for using correct referencing and citation in scholarly academic writing?*

Table 13: Reasons for referencing and citation	
72%	To avoid being accused of plagiarism
67%	To show you have read some relevant research papers
33%	To give credit to the author of the sourced material
69%	To strengthen and give authority to your writing
2%	Because you are given credit/marks for doing so
1%	I don't know

It was interesting to note that just over half the respondents from Austria were aware of a standard referencing style (Table 11: 49% students, 54% teachers). 67% of student respondents said they were confident about referencing and citation. Finding good quality sources was the area of difficulty in academic writing selected by the most student respondents.

Student Question 14, Teacher Question 10a:

Table 14: Referencing styles						
yes		No		Not sure		Question
student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
49%	54%	36%	37%	13%	8%	Is there any referencing style students are required or encouraged to use in written work?
67%		13%		18%		Are you confident about referencing and citation?

Student Question 13: *What do you find difficult about academic writing?*

Table 15: Difficulties with academic writing	
52%	Finding good quality sources
19%	Referencing and citation
30%	Paraphrasing
33%	Understanding different referencing formats and styles

The following will provide further evidence to verify whether the confidence of students and teachers about academic writing protocols is justified. Students (question 15) and teachers (question 19) were asked to identify possible cases of plagiarism based on a brief scenario, and suggest whether some “punishment” should be applied. The answers are summarised in Tables 16 (student responses) and 17 (teacher responses).

A question was included in both the student and teacher questionnaire that allowed the researchers to gain some insight into the appreciation of respondents of what constitutes plagiarism and whether sanctions should be applied for different types of behaviour. The question presented six variations on a scenario relating to student work. In all cases 40% of the work had been copied from other sources. All six cases could be viewed as plagiarism, but some of the cases show some attempt to attribute sources, therefore could be considered to be poor academic practice, depending on the student’s background and academic maturity.

Table 16 summarises the student responses and Table 14 shows the teachers’ responses to the six scenarios.

Qu	Is it plagiarism?			Punishment?	Assuming that 40% of a student's submission is from other sources and is copied into the student's work as described in (a-f) below, indicate your judgement on plagiarism
	Yes	No	Don't know		
a	96%	1%	2%	100%	word for word with no quotations
b	67%	5%	26%	38%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	37%	30%	30%	14%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	73%	9%	15%	48%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	37%	21%	38%	18%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	12%	61%	24%	5%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

Teacher Question 19: Is it plagiarism?

Qu	Is it plagiarism?			Punishment?	Assuming that 40% of a student's submission is from other sources and is copied into the student's work as described in (a-f) below, indicate your judgement on plagiarism
	Yes	No	Don't know		
a	94%	1%	1%	70%	word for word with no quotations
b	76%	7%	13%	44%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	45%	22%	31%	20%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	83%	33%	11%	53%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	54%	15%	28%	28%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	20%	55%	23%	9%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

The responses to this question some extent validate respondents' other answers since knowledge of what plagiarism is have a fundamental bearing on questions about personal experiences of plagiarism and academic writing skills.

Scenario (a) presents the most obvious case of plagiaristic behaviour, identified by 94% of teachers and 96% of student respondents, with a high degree of agreement that punishment was needed. However case (d) provides a potentially more serious scenario than case (a) because of a possible the attempt to avoid detection of the copied work. The majority of teachers (83%) and students (73%) correctly identified this as plagiarism, but the perceived need for punishment was considerably reduced to 53% of teachers and just 48% of student respondents. This may be due to the apparent need for there to be "wilful" intent for dishonesty in order for plagiarism to be considered problematic, as described early in quotations from national respondents.

Referring again to Annex AT-1 Question 5 responses, 89% of students and 83% of teachers agreed that *Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues*. 60% of student respondents and 49% of teachers said they would like to have more training on *avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty*.

The responses about the scenarios (Tables 16 and 17) together with the lack of certainty about many question expressed by both teachers and students demonstrates how complex and confusing this area can be. This leads the researchers to conclude that some of the confidence expressed by respondents about personal skills and knowledge may be overstated.



Lifelong Learning Programme

5. Examples of good practice

Austria's Agency for Research Integrity (OEAWI.at) that has the role for monitoring and oversight of research quality and integrity and for developing guidelines. *"Almost all universities have guidelines and use plagiarism detection software routinely to detect plagiarism in master and PhD theses"* (national interview). However, in common with some other EU countries, the focus within institutions has largely been on research. In Austria the activities relate mainly to the thesis at master's level and above rather than encompassing all elements of student work at all levels of study.

The use of software tools for deterring and detecting plagiarism appears to be common in Austrian higher education, with evidence of systematic submission of student work via the tools in some institutions. However as the above quotation suggests, bachelor degree work is sometimes not subjected to such checks.

Several Austrian working groups have been set up for actively investigating a range of policies for academic integrity in higher education: *"We plan to organise another working group on this topic – not only in terms of plagiarism but also other kinds of scientific misconduct. One of the aims will be to modify the university law to have national procedures"* (national interview). The working groups are also trying to establish a *"common definition of plagiarism and to have a common strategy of how to handle plagiarism"*.

There is good evidence in the survey responses about the provision of training in Austria for students in study skills, academic writing and about plagiarism and academic misconduct. However some respondents (49% of teachers and 60% of students) said they would like to have more training.

There was evidence from a national respondent that work is already beginning in Austria to instil understanding pre-university about appropriate use of source materials: *"Once a year I am invited to give a seminar for school librarians and school teachers about plagiarism and how to avoid it"* (national interview).

6. Discussion

Austria has made a good start with academic integrity compared to many other EU countries. There is evidence of excellent progress in raising awareness about the need for effective policies and responses to counter the threat of plagiarism and fraud in research. However the survey results suggest there is no cause for complacency as institutional policies and systems in Austria are still quite immature.

Working groups in Austria are attempting to formulate common national policies for academic integrity that will be enshrined in university regulations. There are examples of national policies elsewhere that are not very effective, in Sweden for example. The UK experience indicates that to be workable and acceptable any such policies need to be easy to deploy, proportional and light on bureaucracy, otherwise some academic staff will certainly ignore them. The policies and associated sanctions also need to work for different academic subjects and at all levels within higher education. There are many examples of effective policies in Anglophone countries, but these have normally been applied at institutional rather than national level (for example Bretag 2013, Morris and Carroll 2011, Park 2004, Carroll 2003, Tennant and Rowell 2010).

Austrian HEIs are already developing policies and procedures for encouraging good academic practice to sit alongside the processes for detecting and penalising poor practice. However there appears to be a particular gap with bachelor level student work, policies and processes need to be developed with some urgency to ensure all students begin to develop necessary skills and values for academic integrity when they enter higher education, if not before that stage.

It is commendable that Austria sees the need to establish a common understanding about what constitutes plagiarism. However the difference in the way plagiarism and student conduct in general is viewed in certain educational systems, including Germany and Austria, compared to the view in some other countries including the UK, Australia and USA could be problematic, particularly the requirement to have evidence about deliberate fraudulent conduct before work is viewed as plagiaristic. This definition could mislead students and some academics into believing it is acceptable to copy from sources without due acknowledgement (ie to plagiarise) as long as this could be seen as accidental.

Perhaps rather than using the labels “plagiarism” or “misconduct”, it would be more meaningful to consider a range of appropriate responses to different forms of potential misconduct, including unacknowledged copying. For example if a student genuinely plagiarises in error through ignorance, then, at the very least, a fair response (in consideration of both academic standards and other students’ efforts) would be for the work to be disallowed and the student required to submit a new piece of work, but only after being given comprehensive guidance on ethical conduct and good academic practice. Academic quality and standards will be affected if there is failure to respond in such cases. Inconsistent responses lead to disparities in outcomes and are inherently unfair for students.

The high number of international students studying in Austria poses a special problem. Even if it could be assumed that all students coming through the Austrian educational system were well versed in academic integrity, this cannot be assumed to be true for students entering Austrian HEIs from other countries, regardless of the level of entry. Additional attention needs to be made to ensure that students entering Austrian education at any stage are suitably equipped and educated about expectations and academic values.

Many suggestions were made by survey participants including 258 comments from students and 42 suggestions from the teacher respondents about what could be done to reduce student plagiarism. Many of these comments concerned better information and more training. This feedback is available for further analysis, which might prove useful to those in Austria involved in generating policies.

7. Recommendations for Austria

Responses from Austria should be on four levels: national, institutional and individual. The recommendations based on the findings from the research are set out below.

7.1 National responses

- 7.1.1 Austria is encouraged to continue the practice of operating working groups to gather ideas and evidence with members who can influence policy decisions. However there needs to be much more attention to the needs of student education, starting pre-university if possible.

- 7.1.2 The adoption of software tools for aiding plagiarism prevention has been high in Austria compared to many other countries. However it seems that the full potential of the tools has not yet been recognised. **Some guidance on limitations and applications of digital tools could be developed nationally (or perhaps internationally) for use in education and research, based on research elsewhere** (for example Ireland and English 2011, Davis 2011).
- 7.1.3 The anonymised Austrian dataset, together with other data from the IPHEAE project, is available on request. It is recommended that this evidence is used by the national agencies to inform policy decisions on academic integrity.
- 7.1.4 **Austria is to be commended for the national focus on plagiarism guidance and advice. It is clear from the responses that much more support and training is needed for both teachers and students. The national agencies should be supported to continue and extend their work in this area with a view to cascade the good practice to ensure all institutions are equipped to manage the dissemination, guidance and advice.**
- 7.1.5 **The development of national policies for academic integrity in Austria is a major step. This process will include formulating policy, hopefully using inclusive evidence-based approaches, designing and implementing the associated processes across disparate institutions, gaining acceptance from management and academic staff and subsequently monitoring and reviewing the operation. Suggestions were included earlier (paragraph 6) about previous initiatives that may be of relevance.**
- 7.1.6 **Reaching a common national agreement on what constitutes plagiarism and good academic practice may prove difficult.** However the international nature of education and research requires that any national definitions must be consistent with a global consensus. This may be much more difficult to achieve, given the Austrian view that plagiarism only applies when there is “intent” to deceive.
- 7.1.7 It would make great sense for German speaking countries to combine to create a common digital repository of academic sources that can be utilised by text matching software. The research has not revealed any evidence of such an initiative.

7.2 Institutional responses

- 7.2.1 Institutions need to ensure that all students, at whatever level they enter higher education, are equipped with skills and knowledge about
- Academic and study practices, academic writing skills;
 - Identifying and using academic sources;
 - Ethical values and good practice in study and research;
 - Policies and consequences for academic dishonesty;
 - Plagiarism and how to avoid it.
- 7.2.2 **Institutions need to ensure that a set of effective and clear policies and procedures are in place applying across all levels and types of student work. The policies must be effectively communicated to academic staff and students to ensure a fair, transparent and consistent response to any accusations of plagiarism or academic dishonesty.**
- 7.2.3 **To complement the policies and procedures described in 7.2.2, an institutional strategy should be developed for discouraging student plagiarism and misconduct. This may include training, guidance, effective use of digital “anti-plagiarism” software, but should also incorporate pedagogic innovations to encourage more critical thinking and application of knowledge in student work, which present barriers for plagiaristic behaviour.**
- 7.2.4 Institutions should recognise the need for supporting academic staff in their quest to respond to plagiarism. Many academics need guidance and advice on how to deter

plagiarism, how to recognise when it occurs and what to do about it. However feedback from students and teachers suggests that many academics are overburdened with duties relating to research, teaching and marking and do not have time for any additional work that handling a case of student plagiarism may demand.

- 7.2.5 Institutions would be prudent to support requests from academics who wish to conduct research into aspects of academic integrity, particularly in the areas of policy improvements and student support.

7.3 Individual academics

- 7.3.1 Academic staff in their diverse roles as colleagues, teachers, research leaders and examiners, have a duty to support colleagues and students in their quest to maintain academic standards. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty present particular challenges to educational integrity and standards. Academics are advised to take advantage of any training and support that helps them to improve their own academic practice and to pass this knowledge on to colleagues and students.
- 7.3.2 Regardless of national or institutional policies, academics are on the front-line for initial decision-making about potential cases of academic malpractice, including poor referencing and use of sources. It is important for consistency and fairness that academic staff follow required processes, but it is also important that students receive guidance and advice at the first opportunity to ensure they do not make the same mistake twice.
- 7.3.3 A specific need was identified in the course of the survey feedback for academic examiners to be made aware of both limitations and potential strengths of different digital tools, to counter significant misunderstandings. It is also important that students become aware of the potential advantages of such software through teacher expertise and guidance.
- 7.3.4 If any academics from Austria have interest in engaging in research into plagiarism then they should contact members of the IPPHEAE team, who are planning on applying for further research funding to follow up on this first project.

8. Conclusions

The research into Austria has revealed some examples of good practice and positive initiatives at national level. However, institutionally policies are resulting in inconsistent and potentially unfair responses to cases of student plagiarism and academic dishonesty. The findings show that in many institutions more support and guidance is needed for students and teachers at institutional level.

It was clear from the detailed free format responses from the questionnaire that there is a high degree of awareness about plagiarism in Austria. Students were particularly knowledgeable about what could be done to reduce plagiarism, their suggestions and those from teacher respondents should be studied by those people in Austria that are currently working on policies.



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Annex AT-1: Responses to Question 5 (1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly agree)

Table 16: Student and teacher responses to questionnaire Question 5							
Qu	Negative (1, 2)		Don't know		Positive (4, 5)		Question
	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
s5a t5a	4%	8%	7%	7%	89%	83%	Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues
s5b t5p	26%	032%	10%	13%	60%	49%	I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
s5c t5b	4%	9%	27%	10%	66%	80%	This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism
t5c		15%		14%		71%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention
t5d		8%		11%		77%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection
s5d t5e	12%	67%	46%	0%	39%	33%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students
t5f		8%		23%		69%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff
s5e t5g	18%	32%	66%	52%	10%	11%	Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula
s5f t5h	46%	45%	30%	29%	21%	24%	I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
s5g t5i	35%	38%	56%	46%	1%	3%	Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism
s5h t5m	4%	10%	48%	31%	44%	55%	The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty
t5j		17%		62%		11%	The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism
t5k		23%		46%		25%	There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country
t5l		22%		56%		11%	Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs
s5i t5n	37%	48%	31%	30%	28%	18%	I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes
s5j	63%		9%		23%		I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution
s5k t5o	66%	74%	18%	17%	15%	6%	I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)
s5l t5q	31%	49%	49%	36%	12%	11%	I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism
s5m t5r	37%	41%	33%	38%	26%	18%	I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student
s5n t5s	28%	29%	43%	36%	34%	34%	I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures
s5o t5t	10%	7%	24%	11%	63%	75%	It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism
s5p t5u	19%	20%	30%	33%	47%	46%	I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism
s5q	22%		20%		8%		The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution
s5r	11%		13%		73%		I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism