



## *Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe*

### **Plagiarism Policies in Ireland**

#### ***Full Report***

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### Plagiarism Policies in Ireland

#### 1. Information sources

Information about Ireland was collected through

- the three levels of on-line surveys;
- student focus groups;
- structured interviews with academics, university senior managers and individuals concerned with academic integrity and research at national and regional independent organisations and institutions;
- Documentation and on-line evidence.

Interviews were conducted in different ways: face to face, by telephone and via Skype with senior managers from the Higher Education sector, researchers into academic integrity and plagiarism and government representatives. The national level questions focused on national and institutional policies and procedures relating to plagiarism prevention and detection in Ireland. Responses to the national survey from four people have helped to furnish the background to the educational situation in Ireland. Views and opinions from university students, academic staff and senior management participants added to this information. Where possible in the following report *colour coded* voices of the participants, have been used to inform and enrich the narrative.

Table 1 summarises the responses received to different elements of the survey.

Country	Student responses	Teacher responses	Senior Management and National			Student Focus Groups	Organisations and Institutions		
Ireland (IE)	81	14	4			3	4		
Breakdown of student responses		Home students	Other EU students	Non-EU students	Not known	Bachelor, diploma	Master, doctor	Blank, other	
Ireland (IE)	81	69	8	4	0	71	6	4	

#### 2. Higher Education in Ireland

The Republic of Ireland has one ancient University, (University of Dublin, incorporating Trinity College Dublin (TCD) founded 1592), Dublin City University, University of Limerick, a federation of 4 constituent National University of Ireland universities (University College Cork, University College Dublin, NUI Galway, NUI Maynooth), 14 Institutes of Technology and several colleges of education and specialist HE institutes. The Institutes of technology have been campaigning for full university status. The Hunt Report published in January 2011, set out the “National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030”. The report recommended some mergers of institutions, partly on economic grounds and also to encourage compliance with performance criteria. For the institutes of technology the incentive for change was possible future status as “technological universities”.

Just under 200,000 students are studying at higher education level in Ireland. “*There are so many people entering HE now – 70% going into tertiary education*” (national interview). About 10% of the

student population is international students from across the world, particularly from Anglophone countries (UK, UAS, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), but also substantial numbers each year are from other parts of Europe, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, with less from parts of Africa and India.

### 3. *Quality Assurance in Irish Higher Education - teaching, learning and assessment*

The Higher Education Authority is a government body with responsibility for planning, policy development and allocation of funding to Higher Education in the Republic of Ireland. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was founded in November 2012 with responsibility for external quality assurance of the Irish university sector, taking over responsibility from the Irish University Quality Board (IUQB) and amalgamating the functions of three other agencies. The previous agencies had responsibility for carrying out institutional quality audits, separated out according to institution type, universities, institutes of technology and colleges. Oversight of plagiarism policies was not directly part of the audit process, but could have arisen if a panel member raised a question or decided to explore some evidence in more depth.

Irish HE institutions have external examiners appointed to provide external oversight of adherence to quality systems and assessment procedures. The external’s role is to assure equivalence in standards across the HE sector by scrutinising examination papers and assessment specifications in advance and moderating samples of marked work when the board of examiners meets to decide the final grades. It is normal for institutions to have blind double marking and/or internal moderation of work.

Professional bodies such as *Engineers Ireland* maintain codes of ethics and codes of conduct for the profession. They provide accreditation for appropriate programmes on request from institutions. They provide panels of academics and other professionals that visit the institution to explore the course content, resources provided for students, the assessment process and aspects of quality.

All the systems of external and internal scrutiny described above provide additional opportunities for the operation of quality systems including management of student plagiarism to be monitored. Confidential feedback from participants acting in external roles in Irish HEIs suggests that poor quality systems or inconsistent application of quality processes in some institutions may have led to cases of student plagiarism that have been either ignored or not recognised.

The teachers’ questionnaire asked respondents to comment on the typical assessment students were required to complete. It appears from the limited number of responses that most teaching and assessment is individual rather than in groups/teams. The amount of group working and team assessment reported was low, with 50% of responses saying there is 10% or less group work. The question about breakdown of assessment types showed that courses had a mixture of different types of assessment, ranging from 70% to 0% by formal examination and 10% to 50% by project work, as summarised in Table 2.

This varied assessment profile in different institutions and programmes will create different barriers and opportunities for plagiaristic behaviour.

Feedback from one student participant highlighted the practice of rewarding students for the number of sources referred to in their essays rather than, in his perception, the quality of the writing and research, he said that students “*don’t understand they are actually doing anything wrong (Some subjects focus too much on your reference list and not content)*”.

Examinations	Assignments	Projects	other

70	30		
70	30		
70	20	10	
60	30	20	(>100%)? Oral 10%
60	20	20	
60	20	20	
60	10	30	
55	30	15	
50	40	10	
50	25	25	
40	60		Project/Assignments
40	30	30	
20	50	10	+ On-line activities
10	60	30	
0	80	20	
0-40	40-100	30-50	Competency/Practice/OSCE Pass/Fail

#### 4. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism in Ireland

In common with most parts of Europe, no statistics are available for the Republic of Ireland on academic misconduct or plagiarism cases. *“There is not a picture [about the amount of plagiarism] nationally. It is up to individual institutions. In this institution there are no central figures; our policy says it should be done but at the moment it is not done”* (national interview).

The Royal Irish Academy is developing a policy for research integrity. According to a discussion document *“The incidence of research misconduct is difficult to determine, partly because of the relative absence of agreed national structures responsible for monitoring research integrity and collecting and collating relevant data...”* there is evidence that suggests it is underreported at the individual and institutional level” (RIA 2010 pp5). According to the national interviews, there is similar situation with statistics for academic misconduct at bachelor and master’s level.

Concerning policies for academic misconduct and plagiarism, these are institutionally defined, but with different levels of maturity between institutions:

*“It is for each HEI to generate their own – it concerns me that they interpret it so differently”;*

*“We have separate policies, the procedures for exams stayed as they were – it is the way it evolved. The focus here is on prevention and education. It is useful to have a separate group, with exams the students know they go straight to the panel”;*

*“When I have been invited to other Irish organisations I find policies are less well developed. In some cases they are developing policy, sometimes just Turnitin and some not at all. Some have persuaded management to do something about it, but it can be seen as a taboo subject”;* (national interviews).

There are concerns from some survey participants that institutional policies are not consistently being applied, for example *“I think it varies across the institution, with some schools or disciplines being more proactive than others”* (senior management survey). Other HEIs have well designed systems, based on research elsewhere *“We have plagiarism advisors in each school and our institutional plagiarism policy is well circulated”* (senior management survey). There is also evidence of maturity of processes and systems in at least one HEI:

*There were some inconsistencies in penalties being applied, multiple interpretations based on a survey for advisers. So we got the group together to sort out problems, based on Jude*

*Carroll's three criteria: level of student, severity of case and extent – made a huge difference. We created a forum for them to talk and informal supportive training for advisers. More recently, 18 months ago, we looked at tariff Benchmark (AMBER project), established advisers took it and applied retrospectively to check for consistency and found high rate of consistency. We liked the tariff, but adapted to own situation and purposes. Our policy was revised to include this for September 2012 – and staff like it. It is about consistency and transparency (national interview).*

Question 7 of the student and teacher questionnaire asked about 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 3.

Assignment		Project or Dissertation		
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
10	29	1	7	No action would be taken
57	64	9	14	Verbal warning
36	50	21	36	Formal warning letter
58	71	19	57	Request to re write it properly
70	64	46	43	Zero mark for the work
23	43	36	50	Repeat the module or subject
25	29	59	29	Fail the module or subject
6	21	40	21	Repeat the whole year of study
4	14	51	14	Fail the whole programme or degree
4	7	14	0	Expose the student to school community
15	7	36	0	Suspended from the institution
4	7	28	6	Expelled from the institution
6	14	17	7	Suspend payment of student grant
7	14	7	7	Other

Additional feedback from the teacher questionnaire to question 7:

No action would be taken	<i>It depends entirely on the individual lecturer many of whom ignore plagiarism procedures</i>
	<i>Spoken to by Tutor and Head of Dept</i>
Verbal warning	<i>Depending on the year of the programme and percentage of the overall mark awarded to the student, a verbal warning or a more severe penalty would apply.</i>
	<i>This may be applied in certain cases</i>
	<i>Penalty Points given</i>
	<i>For seemingly inadvertent plagiarism</i>
	<i>Accordingly by the institution.</i>
Formal warning letter	<i>In all cases of major plagiarism</i>
	<i>Given the opportunity to resubmit with marks capped at 40% (bare passing mark)</i>
Request to re write it properly	<i>In all cases of major plagiarism</i>
	<i>Resubmission is one option applied</i>
	<i>Yes every effort would be made to ensure a learner was made aware of the academic writing centre and how they can assist and develop you academic writing skills.</i>
Zero mark for the work; Repeat the module or subject; Fail the module or subject	<i>This is possible if the plagiarism is serious enough but not the most common penalty.</i>
Zero mark for the work	<i>For high level of plagiarism or repeated plagiarism</i>
Repeat the module or subject	<i>Repeat is allowed (the student will have to pay repeat fees) and penalty points are deducted from his mark.</i>

	<i>I'm unsure what the procedure is; I never contemplated plagiarism; I'm 45yrs old and believe my work should be authentic. Mine. Open to constructive criticism, interpretation and objective helpful analysis.</i>
Repeat the whole year of study	<i>Only where passing that segment is mandatory and lesser penalties not appropriate</i>
	<i>Often a fail in a module results in repeating the year of study</i>
	<i>I'd say just the module but I don't know.</i>
Fail the whole programme or degree	<i>Only where passing that segment is mandatory and lesser penalties not appropriate</i>
	<i>In very severe cases</i>
	<i>Well I would imagine if it were Medicine or Nuclear Science or similar yes!</i>
Suspended from the institution	<i>Did the learner kill somebody? Remember there is learning for the plagiariser in the wrong the committed providing they acknowledge what they did was not best practice and fundamentally and downright wrong. I think a lot of sanction can be convoluted. Plain English...What you did was wrong and makes a mockery of you and the institution. Get your act together or go to another institution.</i>
Suspend payment of student grant	<i>Student grant will be withdrawn automatically, if the year has to be repeated</i>
Expelled from the institution	<i>I think it would be a good deterrent, but I think there is more learning in discovering why the learner felt the need to plagiarise and to get them back in the programme. There is little learning in being expelled.</i>

As is to be expected the penalties appear to be less severe for assignments than plagiarism in major project or thesis components. The most common sanctions for an assignment appear to be formal warning, zero mark and rewriting, according to the responses from both teachers and students. The most common sanctions for the project appeared to be zero mark and either rewrite or repeat the work. A range of other sanctions appear to be available in more serious cases of dishonesty. However there are differences of opinions between respondents about whether, how and why punishments, penalties and sanctions are needed.

A view expressed in the teachers' questionnaire is that some institutions may be too lenient with students: *"students should fail in many cases, but the University is very lax to enforce plagiarism penalties and takes a very soft approach on students"*. Another specific example of leniency was provided during an interview: *"There was a case of a student on a sports scholarship, a member of staff reported him for plagiarising, but it was not supported [by the authorities] and the plagiarism was ignored"* (national interview).

It is interesting to note the views from some teachers that imposing a fairly minor penalty may inadvertently result in more severe sanctions, for example if a student fails a mandatory component they may be prevented from completing their degree; if asked to repeat a year they may forfeit financial support. The higher responses from students compared to teachers about the most severe penalties proposed in the list may indicate that some students have a perception that the sanctions will be worse than they actually are in practice.

Only a small percentage of teachers (21%) and student respondents (20%) said they had encountered cases of academics plagiarising or using unattributed materials (Annex IE-1, Qu S5i, T5n), but some examples of unethical conduct emerged during the interviews:

*"I've heard others say their work was used and not attributed often, but it never happened to me. I have witnessed issues about people claiming rights for patents – I had to adjudicate, people can behave very badly";*

*"Within Ireland it is common for teachers to reuse materials without citation. I get worried about copyright";* (national interviews).

The concern with such practices is that because students rely on academics for guidance on academic conduct they may be misled that this type of behaviour is acceptable.

The teacher and student survey contained two questions about “digital tools”, responses are summarised in Tables 4 and 5. It is clear from the responses that software tools for aiding detection of plagiarism are being adopted and applied by at least some universities in Ireland. There is also evidence that tools are being used systematically for checking all assignments in some cases. The feedback from teachers and students also confirms that some students are allowed to make use of software tools to pre-check their work before submitting.

Student and teacher Question 8: *What digital tools or other techniques are available at your institution for helping to detect plagiarism?*

<b>Table 4: Software Tools (number of responses)</b>	<b>Student #</b>	<b>Teacher #</b>
Software for text matching (Turnitin or unnamed)	72	14
End Note [not for detection – formatting references and citations]	1	
Website for student use	1	
Nothing		1
Don't know	10	
Substring and citation based matching	1	

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

<b>Table 5: Use of software tools</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
<i>It is up to the lecturers to decide whether to use the tools</i>	58%	73%
<i>For some courses students must submit their written work using the tools</i>	53%	36%
<i>Students must submit all written work using the tools</i>	25%	22%
<i>Students may use the tools to check their work before submitting</i>	21%	43%
<i>Other: Course coordinators may insist on use by lecturers</i>		x

There was further feedback from the student questionnaire about the value of digital tools:

*“Turnitin is a very good incentive. Scaring the life out of students is a horrid but effective course of action”.*

4 students recommended more use of Turnitin by teachers

2 students asked for Turnitin for student use

1 student asked for *“less blind use of Turnitin”* by lecturers.

One way of highlighting academic integrity is to ask students to sign some form of statement about integrity and honesty. Responses about when *students are required to sign a declaration about originality and academic honesty* from the student and teacher questionnaire are summarised in Table 6.

<b>Table 6: Students signing a declaration</b>		
<b>Student</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>When</b>
10%	7%	<i>On starting their degree</i>
26%	57%	<i>For every assessment</i>
30%	29%	<i>For some assessments</i>
5%	0%	<i>Never</i>
28%	7%	<i>Not sure</i>

The teachers’ responses suggest this is fairly common practice in Ireland, either for all or for some assignments. However 33% of student respondents appear not to have encountered this requirement.

Education of students about good academic practice is a key element of a preventative strategy. Students were generally confident that they understood plagiarism, but there was slightly less certainty about the technicalities of academic writing:

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

68% of students said were aware about plagiarism before they started university and 31% became aware of this during their undergraduate degree. Only 1% said they still were still not sure about this.

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

21% of students said they learnt about writing conventions before they started bachelor degree and 59% during bachelor degree, 1% during master's degree and 19% said they were still not sure about this.

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:

Plagiarism		Academic Dishonesty		
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher	
37%	64%	23%	50%	Web site
75%	93%	42%	86%	Course booklet, student guide, handbook
40%	21%	26%	14%	Leaflet or guidance notes
67%	79%	46%	71%	Workshop / class / lecture
4%	0%	17%	0%	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 8. The main channel for education of students about plagiarism and academic dishonesty appears to be through tutors, in classes and through course handbooks and course handbooks and study guides. The responses confirm that there is also provision in some institutions of specific and dedicated services and information for supporting students in academic integrity, perhaps through the university library or an academic support unit.

Student	Teacher	Service or provision
32%	57%	Academic support unit
77%	100%	Advice in class during course/module
37%	57%	Additional lectures, workshops:
58%	86%	Advice from tutors or lecturers
40%	71%	Guidance from the library
7%	14%	University publisher
33%	64%	Academic writing unit/Study skills unit

When asked for suggestions about what more can be done to reduce student plagiarism, a range of responses from students suggested that the current provision for support, guidance and sources of advice is not seen as sufficient by most students.

	Number of responses
<i>Compulsory classes in anti-plagiarism at beginning of degree and throughout the year</i>	24

<i>Advice on academic writing skills, using examples, walk-throughs, building confidence</i>	8
<i>Plain, concise advice, information, examples</i>	7
<i>Information about penalties, digital tools, consequences of plagiarism</i>	4
<i>More staff to make use of Turnitin</i>	4
<i>Standardise referencing style across subjects, allow for "modern" types of sources</i>	3
<i>More frequent shorter reading assignments with individual feedback</i>	2
<i>Rewards for originality in student work</i>	2
<i>Targeting "at risk" students to offer mentoring and additional support</i>	2
<i>Student access to Turnitin for checking work prior to submission</i>	2
<i>Lecturers should avoid setting standard essays that can be copied/downloaded</i>	1
<i>Academics should acknowledge difficulties for students with cross-disciplinary studies</i>	1
<i>On-line site available with guidance</i>	1
<i>If same person always corrects same student work – will spot style differences</i>	1
<i>More awareness from lecturers</i>	1

The number of useful and relevant suggestions in this list demonstrates how knowledgeable the student participants were about this subject and high levels of interest in the IPPHEAE research. Adding to this evidence about prevention measures, 86% of teachers and 65% of student participants agreed that *It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism* (Annex IE-1 Qu S5o, T5t).

The following comment from a senior management respondent makes a very different suggestion about what can be done to discourage plagiarism:

*I think it doesn't help to talk about "plagiarism" and "referencing", because students hear the talk but don't apply it to themselves. Instead we need to model and encourage good academic practice. For example, our 1st year English students are encouraged to demonstrate their reading using the mechanics of referencing, and this is rewarded, but the word "plagiarism" is never used. (Senior Management)*

## 5. Perceptions and understanding of Plagiarism

### 5.1 Awareness about plagiarism

One student participant observed that *"there needs to be more awareness and education about the problem. I admire the work you are doing in highlighting the issue because I have never been educated about it by my faculty or lecturers during my four years in college. I find that worrying, to say the least"*. However it is clear that many student participants did receive guidance, *in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues* according to 50% of student and 69% of teacher respondents (Annex IE-1 Qu S5a, T5a). However 79% of students and 43% of the teachers said *they would like to have more training* (Annex IE-1 Qu S5b, T5p).

All four levels of survey included questions that explored respondents' understanding about what constitutes plagiarism and the underlying reasons why it occurs. The responses to the question about why students plagiarise are summarised in tables 9 and 10.

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

Student	Teacher	Possible reason for plagiarism
23%	7%	<i>They think the lecturer will not care</i>

65%	57%	<i>They think they will not get caught</i>
62%	86%	<i>They run out of time</i>
51%	36%	<i>They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment:</i>
22%	7%	<i>They don't see the difference between group work and collusion</i>
77%	79%	<i>They can't express another person's ideas in their own words</i>
77%	79%	<i>They don't understand how to cite and reference</i>
37%	14%	<i>They are not aware of penalties</i>
49%	50%	<i>They are unable to cope with the workload</i>
37%	50%	<i>They think their written work is not good enough:</i>
41%	29%	<i>They feel the task is completely beyond their ability</i>
73%	64%	<i>It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet</i>
31%	9%	<i>They feel external pressure to succeed</i>
21%	29%	<i>Plagiarism is not seen as wrong</i>
33%	36%	<i>They have always written like that</i>
42%	7%	<i>Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments</i>
36%	71%	<i>Their reading comprehension skills are weak</i>
32%	21%	<i>Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood</i>
9%	7%	<i>There is no teacher control on plagiarism</i>

**Table 10: Other reasons for student plagiarism**

*They are afraid to fail.*

*They're f\*\*\*\*\*g badass.*

*They don't care about plagiarism.*

*Not enough training given on Plagiarism[sic]!*

*Spoon feeding in secondary schools, particularly in languages, consists of a teacher writing sentences on the board which the student is expected to learn off for their essays.*

*It is easier to plagiarise than not to*

*I think for me anyway it would be accidental. I want to learn and write well, but it is difficult to understand what is "common knowledge" and what isn't*

*They believe that the authors way of explaining is the perfect way, and therefore nothing should be changed*

*They don't understand they are doing anything wrong*

*Students are lazy.....the institution go way beyond what they need to to facilitate student learning difficulties. You just need to lift the phone, email the Tutor or get your ass into the library where there is always someone to assist you. A lot of society [sic] expect others to do the work for them; don't wait for the ship to come in...row out to meet it...be yourself and remember use plain english [sic]!!*

*Basic instinct is to take the easiest line – same as taking notes into exam*

*If no repercussions then this is the natural route*

*They have poor habits from secondary school*

With reference to Table 9, there was reasonably good correspondence between responses from students and teachers to many of the questions. According to student respondents the main reasons for plagiarism were: *it is easy cut and paste from the Internet* (S 73%, T 64%), *they run out of time* (S 62%, T 86%) and *they think they will not get caught* (S 65%, T 57%). In response to two questions concerning academic writing skills 79% of teachers and 77% of students selected both *inability to cite and reference* and *difficulties in paraphrasing* as reasons for student plagiarism, The

student (36%) and teacher (71%) responses differed to the statement *Their reading comprehension skills are weak*.

An additional factor to consider is provided in responses to Question 5 (Annex FI-1, S5p, T5u), with 36% of teachers and 29% of students agreeing that *translation across languages can be used to avoid detection of plagiarism* with 64% and 57% respectively saying they did not know. The responses from students studying in other EU countries to this question are generally much more positive. This could reflect the homogeneity of the student respondents in use of English language, but this explanation does not account for the lack of understanding in teachers about this type of misconduct.

When asked whether or not plagiarism is always academic dishonesty, one response was “*No it can be a sin of omission or commission, sometimes they don’t understand, there can be cultural aspects*” (national interview).

### 5.2 Understanding about academic writing conventions

Tables 11, 12 and 13 summarise responses to questions about different aspects of academic writing.

Question 10 of the student questionnaire explored students’ understanding of basic academic writing conventions: *What are the reasons for using correct referencing and citation in scholarly academic writing?*

78%	<i>To avoid being accused of plagiarism</i>
65%	<i>To show you have read some relevant research papers</i>
89%	<i>To give credit to the author of the sourced material</i>
73%	<i>To strengthen and give authority to your writing</i>
26%	<i>Because you are given credit/marks for doing so</i>
0%	<i>I don't know</i>

Table 11 indicates that most student respondents appeared to have a good grasp of why referencing and in-text citations are required and it appears that a referencing style convention is applied in most of the subject areas and institutions that responded. Although the free-format comments from students’ ideas for discouraging plagiarism presented earlier (Table 8a) include three points about use of different referencing styles. It is worth noting that although 51% of students were positive, 49% of student respondents expressed lack of confidence or uncertainty about referencing and citation. Difficulties in finding good quality sources and paraphrasing were the aspects of academic writing selected by most students (Table 13).

Student Question 11, Teacher Question 10a:

yes		No		Not sure		Question
student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
78%	86%	9%	7%	11%	7%	<i>Is there any referencing style students are required or encouraged to use in written work?</i>
43%		44%		12%		<i>Are you confident about referencing and citation?</i>

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

58%	<i>Finding good quality sources</i>
49%	<i>Referencing and citation</i>

56%	<i>Paraphrasing</i>
23%	<i>Understanding different referencing formats and styles</i>

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 purpose of this question was to try to establish what behaviour different people viewed as plagiarism and whether they believed some sanction should be applied in such cases. Tables 14 and 15 summarise the responses from students and teachers respectively.

Student Question 15: Examples of possible plagiarism, with 40% matching text

Table 14: Student responses to possible cases of 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	98%	0%	1%	77%	word for word with no quotations
b	75%	1%	22%	44%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	28%	17%	51%	15%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	74%	9%	16%	48%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	37%	9%	51%	16%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	18%	49%	30%	2%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

Teacher Question 19: Is it plagiarism?

Table 15: Teacher responses to possible case of 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	100	0	0	86	word for word with no quotations
b	85	7	7	79	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	93	7	0	64	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	86	0	14	71	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	71	7	21	50	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	50	29	21	29	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

All six cases (a-f) above may be categorised as plagiarism, but some could be construed as poor academic practice or perhaps patch-writing due to poor language skills could account for some matching. However given that the scenario says 40% of the paper is identical to other work, it is difficult to justify why a student should be given academic credits without some investigation.

Some of the student respondents and a few teachers appear to be unsure about what constitutes plagiarism (deliberate or accidental) by suggesting that blatant copying may not be plagiarism if some words are changed or if references are added. Lower percentages of respondents believed “punishment” was appropriate even when some said they believed this was a case of plagiarism.

This raises questions about perceived and actual expectations of original content in assessed work from HE students and teachers respectively.

Student Question 11 (Table 12) reveals that 43% of the student respondents said they were confident about referencing and citation, with 56% saying either they were not confident or not sure. Responses in Table 14 confirm that many students and a few of the teachers that responded would benefit from guidance in understanding appropriate practices for academic writing.

### 5.3 Awareness of policies and procedures

There were positive responses from 73% and above of participants to questions about *institutions having policies and procedures for plagiarism and academic dishonesty* and *made available to students and staff* (Annex IE-1 Qu 5). However, responses to questions about *consistency of application of the policies and procedures* were rather less positive, with relatively high numbers of respondents not sure about some answers. Only 7% of the teachers and 22% of the students believed that *all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism*, with 71% and 31% respectively disagreeing with the statement (Annex IE-1 Qu S5l, T5q). There was a great difference between teacher and student responses to one of the questions. None of the teachers agreed with the statement *I believe the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student*, with 63% disagreeing and 31% not sure. However 53% of the students agreed with the same statement, with 9% disagreeing and 36% not sure (Annex IE-1 Qu S5m, T5r).

### 5.4 Training and skills development for students and teachers

In response to the statement *I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty* 79% of students and 43% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed, with 13% and 50% respectively disagreeing (Annex IE-1 Qu S5b, T5p). The student response underlines the key message in the additional feedback responses from students summarised in Table 8a, with many requests for workshops, classes, information and guidance on academic writing conventions and skills. However the differences between teacher and student responses to a number of questions discussed earlier suggests that some teachers may be over-estimating the effectiveness of the support currently being offered to students and perhaps some may demonstrate misplaced confidence in their own understanding of plagiarism and academic writing practices.

How training is delivered to students was the focus of one of the interviews “*I have firm belief that it should not be stand-alone but integrated into courses*”. There was also information from the same interviewee about professional development for teaching staff: “*We have Teaching and Learning Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) follow-on for good practice in teaching design, there are centres across Ireland*” (national interview). This last response shows how systematic education of academic professionals can help by “designing-out” opportunities for plagiarism through effective course design.

It is clear from the feedback that some Irish HEIs have recognised the need to make special provision the area of academic integrity by creating a workable and transparent system for discouraging plagiarism, supporting staff and student development in this area and managing accusations of plagiarism and academic dishonesty that may arise proportionately, consistently and fairly. According to one interviewee “*The focus [at this institution] is on prevention [of plagiarism]*” (national interview) and as far as can be deduced from this limited sample of responses, this appears to be the direction of travel for other HEIs in the Republic of Ireland, although some have travelled farther than others on this journey.

## 6. *Examples of good practice*

Evidence from the national interviews confirmed that some research is taking place in Ireland to develop, evaluate and disseminate good practice in policies for promoting aspects of academic integrity. The research is contributing to and building on research and activities of the wider research community, mainly in other Anglophone countries.

Offering a PGCert in Teaching and Learning for academic staff is common practice in UK HEIs. It is encouraging to find this approach has been adopted by some Irish HEIs and that some of the content of this qualification was linked by the interviewee to enhancing skills to address student plagiarism.

It is clear from the feedback at all levels that many universities in the Republic of Ireland are making use of software for checking student work. In addition “*the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland have developed policies for using Turnitin*” (National Interview) to check student work.

The most effective example of an institutional strategy observed in the course of the research in Ireland was a distributed institution-wide system of “Plagiarism Advisors” that had been established at one HEI. The network of specially trained officers is monitored and coordinated, working together as a functional unit to ensure consistency of approach, with academic conduct cases handled on a local (school) level. Similar systems are working well in several HEIs in the UK, with each system customised to fit local requirements.

## 7. *Discussion*

Almost every student participant from Ireland provided additional feedback on what additional measures should be taken to reduce plagiarism. This provides confidence that student respondents were alert to the need for action and suggests they were interested in improving the current situation, for personal and institutional benefit.

When asked what more could be done to reduce plagiarism, national interviewees said

*“We need to do more of what we are doing, which is difficult in current climate, with huge numbers, good designing is difficult”; “The main thing is integrating [information about academic writing] into teaching and learning rather than having stand-alone [sessions]”; Improvements to reduce student plagiarism “can only happen as a result of improving teaching – otherwise [some academics are] hardly going to be good enough to recognise plagiarism”; (national interviews).*

The results at all levels are clearly indicating that there needs to be more support for students and less reliance on assumed previous skills. This finding is reinforced by these statements made during a student focus group: *“they expect you to critically evaluate but no one ever taught you to do it. No one ever taught me to write”; “People who might get caught don’t know what they are doing”* (student questionnaire).

In the course of the IPPHEAE research the team encountered interested people in HEIs who were actively engaged in providing staff development for academic staff. In some other HEIs new policies and systems are being developed for addressing plagiarism. However the feedback suggested that not all HEIs in the Republic of Ireland are equally committed to providing effective policies for assuring academic integrity to respond to the current threats to academic standards.

On the broader area of quality assurance, one student respondent during a focus group said there appears to be a *“focus on reputation, finance, international students and global rankings, no care for teaching and learning quality”*. The same student also made the comment that *“smaller universities try to improve, larger universities do not need to”*. It is to be hoped that the new quality agency in

Ireland takes a leading role in addressing the issues raised through this research and supports and promotes good practice already embedded within the sector.

## 8. *Recommendations for Ireland*

- 8.1.1 The national government should aim to provide funding for research and development in the Republic of Ireland in the area of increasing awareness of existing good practice in academic integrity;
- 8.1.2 The national agencies and professional bodies are encouraged to recognise and celebrate good practice in the sector regarding policies and procedures for addressing plagiarism;
- 8.1.3 The QQI should explore the introduction of a system for monitoring plagiarism and academic dishonesty cases, at institutional level at least, within the HE sector;
- 8.1.4 The Education Ministry should consider introducing educational information pre-university to support students in the transition to Higher Education.

Institutionally:

- 8.2.1 Institutional quality systems should be audited to ensure that all potential cases of academic misconduct within the institution are identified and dealt with equably, consistently, proportionally and fairly;
  - 8.2.2 Systematic and compulsory training/development about academic writing skills should be provided for students at all levels when they first enrol; this should be reinforced and regularly revisited through embedding within curricula;
  - 8.2.3 Information for students should be made readily available through a variety of media (web, course guides, posters, leaflets, classes) about the penalties and procedures for academic dishonesty;
  - 8.2.5 Effective formative and systematic use should be made of software tools for text matching (eg Turnitin) to educate and prepare students for academic writing and research as well as for deterring plagiarism;
  - 8.2.6 Regular, collegiate staff development should be available for all academic staff to foster good practice in academic integrity, identifying cases of plagiarism and design of assessment to discourage plagiarism;
  - 8.2.7 Institutions should draw on the expertise and knowledge within the academic community in the Republic of Ireland and further afield to move towards a solid institutional strategy for assuring academic quality and integrity.
- 8.3 Individual academics:
- 8.3.1 Support and guidance should be provided for students and colleagues across the sector in development of skills for academic writing and effective use of academic sources;
  - 8.3.2 Academic staff should remain personally vigilant to uphold academic standards by identifying and responding appropriately to potential cases of academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, collusion and ghost-writing;
  - 8.3.3 Academic staff are advised to keep up to date with developments in policies and good practice in academic integrity through staff development workshops and research.

## 9. Conclusions

Although the research in the Republic of Ireland involved a relatively small sample of people, some very good practice and awareness about plagiarism was revealed, but also evidence of less mature policies and systems elsewhere in the Irish HE sector. Student respondents were supportive of the research and aware of the need for much more guidance and support to improve their skills and knowledge. It is to be hoped that the recommendations are taken seriously and some improvements ensue.

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### Annex IE-1: Responses to question 5: (1=strongly disagree – 5=strongly agree)

Qu	Negative (1,2)		Don't know		Positive (4,5)		Statement
	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
s5a t5a	38	21	10	7	50	71	<i>Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues</i>
s5b t5p	13	50	8	0	79	43	<i>I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty</i>
s5c t5b	4	7	5	0	90	93	<i>This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism</i>
t5c		14		0		86	<i>I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention</i>
t5d		14		0		86	<i>I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection</i>
s5d t5e	19	14	6	0	73	86	<i>Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students</i>
t5f		7		0		93	<i>Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff</i>
s5e t5g	4	7	53	29	42	64	<i>Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula</i>
s5f t5h	41	14	40	29	18	57	<i>I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty</i>
s5g t5i	19	0	75	36	6	64	<i>Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism</i>
s5h t5m	5	0	14	7	82	93	<i>The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty</i>
t5j		0		71		29	<i>The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism</i>
t5k		7		71		21	<i>There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country</i>
t5l		7		71		21	<i>Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs</i>
s5i t5n	50	14	27	57	20	21	<i>I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes</i>
s5j	50		15		35		<i>I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution</i>
s5k t5o	52	64	21	14	26	21	<i>I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)</i>
s5l t5q	31	71	46	14	22	7	<i>I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism</i>
s5m t5r	9	71	36	29	53	0	<i>I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student</i>
s5n t5s	1	29	30	29	70	43	<i>I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures</i>
s5o t5t	11	0	19	7	65	86	<i>It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism</i>
s5p t5u	11	0	57	64	29	36	<i>I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism</i>
s5q	19		6		35		<i>The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution</i>
s5r	24		14		63		<i>I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism</i>