



Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in France

Full Report

Irene Glendinning

October 2013



Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe

Plagiarism Policies in France

1. Information sources

Information about policies and procedures for plagiarism in France was collected through

- the three levels of on-line surveys (**students**, **teachers**, **senior managers**) available in French;
- student focus groups;
- structured interviews with **academics, university senior managers and individuals concerned with academic integrity and research** from 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 all four countries making up the UK. Responses to the senior management questionnaire and national survey were from influential people concerned with HE. The limited information collected at these levels was crucial to set the context of both historical and recent development in Higher Education in France and how this has impacted on student plagiarism. Interviewees were involved in reviewing this report and they have been made aware of the findings of the research. Views and opinions from university students, academic staff and senior management participants from the questionnaires and focus groups form most of the evidence presented in this report. Where possible the *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 Questionnaire responses	Teacher Questionnaire responses	Senior Management and National	Student Focus Groups	Organisations and Institutions			
France	129	8	4	3	16			
Breakdown of student responses by domicile and award	Home students	Other EU students	Non-EU students	Not known	Bachelor, diploma	Master, doctor	Blank, other	
France	129	125	1	3	0	111	6	12

Almost all student participants were French nationals / residents, mainly enrolled on undergraduate programmes. The 12 “other” students did not specify their programme or level. Most of the student respondents were undertaking sub-degree programmes, typically studying at IUTs.

Many institutions and individual contacts across France were asked to participate in the research. The low response rate particularly at teacher level was disappointing and therefore this can only be seen as an opportunistic sample that may not be representative of the whole French HE population. However the student focus groups provided useful information about student views and national interviews helped to set the scene for higher education in France.

2. Higher Education in France

There are currently 81 public universities in France and 23 grandes écoles all offering the full range of academic disciplines. There are also many private universities, both religious and secular. For admissions purposes the public universities are organised into 35 Academies. The national government closely regulates the curriculum for “National Diplomas” and sets the comparatively modest rates for higher education student fees. Public universities are required to admit any student from within their geographic area passing the baccalaureate. About 80% of secondary school leavers progress to higher education. About 10% of students studying in France are international. Admission to one of the grandes écoles is normally achieved through an entrance exam following a two-year study at a “classe préparatoire aux grandes écoles” (Campus France web site).

3. Quality Assurance in French Higher Education - teaching, learning and assessment

According to national interviews there is no quality monitoring organisation in France for higher education and no national system for audits of quality process and systems. However, “*une démarche qualité est en place dans la plupart des organismes de recherche*”, (*there are changes taking place regarding quality in most research organisations*) (national interview), which is welcome news. However according to one interviewee “*it is all PR [public relations], they talk about it but nothing ever changes*” (national interview).

The nature of assessment can have a bearing on the amount of plagiarism, for example an assessment regime with 100% examinations would not provide equivalent opportunities for students to plagiarise as a programme with 100% assessment by coursework. However a regime with largely examinations could be reliant on memorisation and rote learning. This may be deemed acceptable practice, but would make it difficult to demonstrate higher level learning outcomes required by Bologna.

To explore the national culture of assessment in France the teachers’ questionnaire contained questions about group assessment and asked respondents for some indication of the breakdown of examinations, assignments and project work. Table 2 contains a summary of responses.

Examinations	Assignments	Projects	Other assessment
5%-95%	5%-90%	0%-50%	Internship

Although teacher participants were few, the responses showed that the nature of assessment varies considerably. A different question six out of seven teachers responding confirmed that some aspects of assessed group work were included, estimated between 10% and 50% of the assessment.

When asked about quality monitoring in French higher education, one of the national interviewees offered this assessment: “*No national structure is present, but a quality change is in place in most research organisations. Some like INRA (French National Institute for Agricultural Research) perform quality audits; however scientific and academic integrity is not part of the measured items*” (national interview, translated).

4. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism in France

4.1 Research and development in academic integrity and plagiarism

Despite the tight regulation of the educational and academic curriculum in France, very few statistics were available at national or institutional level about higher education in general (Eumida p 148). A report *La fraude aux examens dans l’enseignement supérieur* was published in April 2012 for the attention of the ministry of higher education and research in France (Mazodier et al 2012). Section 3 of the report includes some discussion of plagiarism. The report makes clear that France lags behind some other European countries (naming Switzerland, Norway and UK) in having no visible policies

for academic misconduct, examination fraud and plagiarism and advocates a more cohesive, consistent and proportional policy for France, while taking into account student circumstances and maturity.

Some of the discussion is focused on breaches of copyright, giving examples of measures for preventing this by restricting student access to the “outside world” to disallow printing out of materials. Other aspects of the report concern examination fraud and suggest obvious and basic ways of controlling and monitoring student behaviour, including collusion, during formal tests, exams and timed assessments (eg having enough invigilators, room for spacing out desks, requiring mobile phones to be switched off, securing toilets). It suggests policies for employing invigilators, recommending that employing senior students should be a last resort, perhaps confined to support for students with disabilities.

The report talks about the decline in rigour of the assessment monitoring process in medical studies after the first year: *“It was reported to us by so many doctors they had passed all exams of the second to sixth grade in a lecture theater surrounded by the same friends”* (Mazodier et al 2012 p33, translated). The reason given for this unusual situation was that academics focused on student retention rather than being concerned about assessment standards and quality.

4.2 Blogs about plagiarism in France

In common with other EU countries, some bloggers inside and outside France conduct research into academic misdemeanors in France and expose their results for public scrutiny (Blogs: Weber-Wulff, Darde, Bergardaa, Maurel-Indart). This research has demonstrated that careers of some high ranking figures in French public life have progressed despite their plagiarism. In most cases even after the evidence has been made public no action was taken to punish the plagiarists. One rare exception to this rule was the case of the Chief Rabbi in Paris, Gilles Bernheim, who stepped down from his post in April 2013 after the revelation on March 2013 that some of his publications plagiarised other authors and also he appeared to falsely claim to have a higher doctorate award (Blogs: Darde, Weber-Wulff).

Worryingly, some of the cases exposed through this medium have been academic directors condoning and continuing to support doctoral students and their theses that had been shown to be plagiarisms. Other people exposed have been senior members of national or regional commissions or panels, some themselves with responsibility for deciding the outcomes of accusations of fraud and plagiarism.

The bloggers, acting as whistle-blowers, have been exposed to *“the full spectrum of retaliation from colleagues”*, including the requirement to personally finance their own legal defense (national interview). This situation is discouraging people from raising matters that will lead to improved standards for higher education in France. As a consequence, such calls for action are normally confined to emeritus professors and tenured academics close to retirement (national interview).

4.3 Strategies, policies and procedures for academic integrity in France

As mentioned earlier, since it is common for assessment in France at bachelor and master’s levels to be by examination, the opportunities for plagiarising in essays and written work are limited, but other forms of misconduct are possible. It was confirmed by the survey that some bachelor programmes do not require students to complete any independent written work such as a final dissertation. During a focus group in France students asserted that candidates are often rewarded for rote learning, possibly penalised for not exactly reproducing material from their lecture notes for the examinations and sometimes discouraged from writing critically or stating their own point of view in their academic writing.

4.4 IPPHEAE survey findings on policies and procedures

Feedback from all sources and respondents suggests that it is very unusual for students in France to be accused of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, “with the exception of very heavy cases of plagiarism”, “0.03% of students” are affected by some accusation of cheating (Mazodier et al 2012 p37). Of these few cases that arise only about 50% result in “firm convictions”, with 35% receiving “suspended sanctions (including warning and blame)” (Mazodier et al 2012, p 37, translated). However the same report suggests that “To fight against fraud and plagiarism, higher education institutions use more prevention than punishment” (ibid p37), but later in the report “prevention” is suggested to be activities such as monitoring tests.

Sanctions for conviction of serious fraud in France include prohibiting the offender from taking any official tests for a period of at between two and five years after the offence. This ban reputedly precludes taking a driving test and any other formal national examinations. Although the reported incidence of student “cheating” is low, this potential draconian outcome is a serious deterrent for everyone concerned in the process of detecting and penalising student plagiarism, adding to the difficulties of assessing the extent and scale of ignored and undetected student and academic misconduct.

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		Sanction	Feedback (S=student, T=Teacher)
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher		
19%	25%	2%	13%	No action would be taken	Disciplinary Panel (4xS)
53%	75%	21%	38%	Verbal warning	We also propose to explain to the institution to eventually establish mitigating circumstances and conclude that plagiarism was not intentional (S)
32%	0%	40%	13%	Formal warning letter	A letter and a zero (S)
19%	50%	27%	38%	Request to re write it properly	sometimes, depending on teacher (T)
80%	63%	57%	38%	Zero mark for the work	A letter and a zero (S)
24%	25%	17%	38%	Repeat the module or subject	
45%	38%	50%	63%	Fail the module or subject	possible but rarely applied (T)
9%	0%	19%	13%	Repeat the whole year of study	I don't think so (S)
14%	13%	36%	13%	Fail the whole programme or degree	a colleague was excluded without being able to validate his career, he has just started at another institution (S) if repeated (S)
26%	13%	27%	13%	Expose the student to school community	subject to collegiale decision (T)
27%	13%	27%	25%	Suspended from the institution	subject to collegiale decision (T)
13%	25%	30%	38%	Expelled from the institution	subject to collegiale decision (T)
12%	13%	26%	25%	Suspend payment of student grant	If logic is excluded (S)
12%	13%	10%	13%	Other	Sanctions depend on the disciplinary section of the University with teacher input (if applicable) (T)

The responses in table 3 indicate that a range of sanctions is available in French HEIs for cases of plagiarism that have been identified. The most common penalties appear to be zero mark and verbal warning, but for the dissertation failure was selected by half the students and the majority of teachers. The questionnaires did not explore how frequently and for what offences the different options are applied, but some feedback here and in the government report suggests there may be a “light touch” approach in some institutions and inconsistency within and across the HE sector. The low response rate and lack of statistics makes it impossible to know, but information from documentation, blogs and interviews suggests that there is a relaxed approach to all forms of academic misconduct in France.

National and management level respondents expressed uncertainty about whether numbers of plagiarism cases are rising: *“there are no statistics”, “we need to find out what is going on”* and *“I am not convinced the frequency increases, but that plagiarism cases are detected more often”*.

Concerning whether policies for plagiarism and academic dishonesty should be separate, two respondents took a broad view: *“I think there should be an educational aspect to it, eg example of experience with Chinese students, they are used to cut and paste, not aware of the conventions. There should be some scale applied with different levels”* and *“Unfortunately, plagiarism, different from “cheating”, does not apply only to students, but must be given in the context of the overall scientific integrity agenda”* (national interviews). It is notable from the former comment that although the international student population in France is relatively low in comparison with the UK, the cultural differences affecting study and writing practices were deemed important by at least one participant.

4.5 Use of digital tools

The report to the Ministry referred to earlier made reference to anti-plagiarism software tools, stating that *“their use is still uncommon”*. Of all HEIs investigated only Science Po said they provided access to tools for all lecturers and professors, in this case the tool Urkund was used for submission of student work. At this institution *“teachers interviewed indicated that they had seen a sharp drop in the amount of plagiarism”* (Mazodier et al 2012 p35, translated), which is at odds with the reported impact of introducing digital matching tools elsewhere, where identified cases tend to increase initially (several UK national interviews). The report cites skepticism by some academics about the effectiveness of software tools, especially considering the cost of licenses, and advocates close contact between student and supervisor as an antidote to both plagiarism and ghost writing:

“The best technique to prevent plagiarism is organizing appointments frequently between teacher and student throughout the dissertation writing or thesis and of course regular oral questions about some details of the work presented. Dealing with plagiarism in close contact with professor/teacher also reduces subcontracting written assignments to third parties” (ibid p36, translated).

This excellent advice works well for individually supervised projects and where class sizes are low. The following response about the use of software tools came from the senior management survey:

“More and more French universities use anti-plagiarism software. But I think their effectiveness is modest in the hard sciences where the majority of publications are in English and in French are plagiarized by students in their thesis or dissertation”.

Considering the IPPHEAE survey responses above and summarised in Table 4, the use of anti-plagiarism software appears to be more prevalent than the government report suggested. Alternatively, it is possible that the institutions contributing to the IPPHEAE questionnaire are not typical compared to HEIs elsewhere in France.

Table 4: Digital tools and other techniques for detecting plagiarism – number of responses	Student #	Teacher #
Software (Urkund, Positeo.com, Compilatio), (Logiciel anti plagiat, L'outil informatique)	61	2
Google, Internet	6	1
Computers (informatique, ordinateurs), smartphones	3	
collection of reports and other projects by the administration	1	
Surveillance	1	
Charter	1	
Neither, nothing	12	2
Don't know	16	
No good software for French Language; free software exists, but not used automatically		2

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

Table 5: Use of software tools - percentages	Student	Teacher
<i>It is up to the lecturers to decide whether to use the tools</i>	70%	50%
<i>For some courses students must submit their written work using the tools</i>	15%	13%
<i>Students must submit all written work using the tools</i>	8%	25%
<i>Students may use the tools to check their work before submitting</i>	10%	13%
<i>Very few departments work on the subject of plagiarism</i>		13%
<i>I use it for papers I believe to contain copied work</i>		13%
<i>Only teachers use these tools, we do not have access to these tools</i>	3%	

Although these responses suggest teacher access to software tools is growing, there appears to be no systematic use and reluctance to allow students to access digital tools in a formative way. A comment from the student questionnaire suggested this would be a good idea:

“I know there is software to detect plagiarism. Only teachers use this. I think it would be interesting to use with the student body and provide steps the candidate takes to show that nothing has been plagiarized, BEFORE sanction / examination” (student feedback, translated).

A counter-argument to this came from a national interviewee who believed that student access to digital tools was a great problem: *“there is tendency for students to think plagiarism is what the tools show you”* and where copied texts are not found by the tools then students may believe their work must be sound, but this is *“a blade with two sides”*. However experience elsewhere confirms that student use of digital tools can be effective if controlled and supervised as part of the overall learning experience.

Suggestions from students about reducing plagiarism summarised in table 8b also included several requests for student access to software tools for checking their work.

4.6 Making systems and procedures more effective

The apparent negativity between teachers surrounding the use of digital tools for aiding the detection of plagiarism appears to be based partly on the dearth of French language resources in the repository accessible to the text matching algorithms. However arguably the lack of investment in good quality tools, perhaps financial or through lack of a dialogue about the importance of academic misconduct and plagiarism to academic standards at either institutional or national level, must have some bearing on the national perception about the value of such tools to academia.

One of the teacher respondents provided an example of how poorly students understand plagiarism, saying that he/she *“had to move to in-class exams in order to avoid the problem. If I allow time at home, the students will almost always copy at least some of the research word for word”* (Teacher questionnaire).

Discussions in focus groups further confirmed the perception that some students in France have a rather naïve view of how to use literature sources in their own writing. After explaining to students what plagiarism was, they all readily admitted that they frequently plagiarise in their writing. A teacher observing the focus group defended the students’ confessions by asserting that at the age of 18 they are too young to be concerned with the complexities of academic writing.

When asked for suggestions about what more could be done to reduce student plagiarism, a range of responses from all levels of respondent suggested that the current provision for support, guidance

and sources of advice is not seen as sufficient. Table 8b summarises the responses by common themes.

Table 8b: Thematic summary of ideas for how to reduce student plagiarism	Number of Responses			
	Student	Teacher	Senior Man	National
National commission created to solve this problem				1
Staff training or development, codes of practice/conduct	1			
Student education about plagiarism, codes of practice/conduct	17	3	1	
More transparent access to resources, good case studies, study aids	12			
Teaching academic writing skills, paraphrasing, use of sources	18			
Encourage respect for copyright and IP rights	1			
Better communication between students and teachers	1			
Academic Personal tutors and supervisor support	1			
More information for parents	1			
Per-arrival, preparing potential students working with feeder schools				1
Student access to digital anti-plagiarism tools for text matching	9			
Systematic use of anti-plagiarism software, development of tools	6	1		
Focus on learning, teaching critical thinking, philosophy, originality	1			
Connections between offence, level of severity and applying penalties		1		
Consistency in guidance and sanctions between teachers		1		
More control, prevention measures	13			
Ensure students /staff understand the consequences, sanctions	20			
More severe sanctions	4			
Frequent reminders about the consequences	1			
Make plagiarism cases public	1			1
More time for homework	1			
The solutions are complex	1			
Work not requiring research sources, but opinion of students, class tests	2			
Block the Internet	1			

Many student responses focused on sanctions, with several students calling for stronger penalties, banning use of the Internet, setting work not requiring use of sources. However almost all respondents asked for more information, guidance and support in understanding what plagiarism is and how to improve their use of academic sources in their writing. The use of software tools was suggested by 15 students, with the majority of these respondents specifically asking for student access so they could pre-check their work. One student believed that *“it is the way of life for students”*. In separate questions 75% of the teachers agreed that *one or more of my colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes* and 50% of teachers agreed with the statement: *I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)* (Annex FR-1 Qu T5n, T5o).

In response to the question: *do you believe your institution/faculty has a robust approach to the detection of student plagiarism*, the one senior management respondent from France said *“My institution is not concerned”*. As the 2012 report discussed earlier indicated, this appears to be a common position in universities across France. None of the teacher respondents agreed that their *institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention* (Annex FR-1 Qu T5c), but 38% of the teachers believed their institution was serious about *plagiarism detection* with 50% disagreeing (Annex FR-1 Qu T5d).

When asked whether *policies, procedures and penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty* are made available to students (Annex FR-1 Qu 5), the student responses were more positive (70% agreed, 18% disagreed) than the teacher responses (38% agreed, 50% disagreed). Interestingly half the teachers disagreed with the statement that this information was available to them. On questions about consistency of application of policies and procedures most of the teachers disagreed that *teachers follow the same procedures* (75%) and *are consistent between students* (63%), but responses from students to the same questions were more balanced (Annex FR-1 Qu S5I,

T5q, S5m, T5r). Encouragingly 75% of teachers and 63% of students responded positively to the statement: *it is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism* (Annex FR-1 Qu S5o, T5t).

5. Perceptions and Understanding of Plagiarism

5.1 Support and guidance

One way of showcasing academic integrity is to ask students to sign some form of statement about integrity and honesty. In some countries and institutions this can take the form of a formal ceremony, but in other institutions can be a more routine part of enrolling or submitting assessment. Responses about when *students are required to sign a declaration about originality and academic honest* from the student and teacher questionnaire are summarised in Table 6.

Student	Teacher	When
59%	0%	On starting their degree
2%	0%	For every assessment
5%	13%	For some assessments
3%	88%	Never
28%	0%	Not sure

These responses show a very strange divide between experiences of the students and the perception of teachers about this issue. The limited number of teachers may be part of the reason for these odd responses, but there is a clear difference in perception. In separate feedback from students to questions about what information they receive and what can be done to discourage plagiarism several student mentioned a contract or a charter.

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

52% of students said were aware about plagiarism before they started university, 39% became aware of this during their undergraduate degree and 1% during their masters of PhD. 9% said they still were still not sure about this.

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

54% of students said they learnt about writing conventions before starting their bachelor degree, 39% during bachelor degree and 7% said they were still not sure about this.

Student Question 6, Teacher Questions 2 and 3 asked 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	
52%	50%	16%	25%	Web site
35%	13%	26%	38%	Course booklet, student guide, handbook
41%	0%	25%	0%	Leaflet or guidance notes
52%	50%	47%	38%	Workshop / class / lecture
22%	25%	24%	25%	I am not aware of any information about this
24%	25%	24%	0%	Other

The responses in Table 7 confirm that information about plagiarism and academic dishonesty is made available to some students in France through the web or in workshops. However, a sizeable minority of students and teachers are not aware of any information and universities that do provide

information may be placing slightly more emphasis on deterring plagiarism than the wider range of possible academic dishonesty or cheating categories.

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 study guides. The responses confirm that specialist services and information for supporting students in academic integrity and academic writing were not available in most participant institutions.

Student	Teacher	Service or provision
4%	13%	Academic support unit
53%	25%	Advice in class during course/module
13%	13%	Additional lectures, workshops:
59%	38%	Advice from tutors or lecturers
18%	13%	Guidance from the library
12%	13%	University publisher
9%	0%	Academic writing unit/Study skills unit

In additional feedback to this question four students said they were presented with a charter or contact about plagiarism at the start of their studies and three students said they received information about plagiarism in the form of a document or by mail.

It is clear that some participants studying in France received guidance in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues according to 52% of student and 38% of teacher respondents (Annex FR-1 Qu S5a, T5a). Despite this 65% of students and only 38% of the teachers agreed that they would like to have more training, with 15% and 50% respectively disagreeing (Annex UK-1 Qu S5b, T5p).

The senior management respondent said they did not know whether their institution provided training for teachers on dealing with cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, but they agreed this was important to have in-service development. This was echoed strongly by the two national interviewees, for example:

“Yes definitely, also for staff, it is important as they are role models. In .. France some hard core staff in universities don’t think they should learn anything new, there is a lot of resistance, even in younger academics, they have to be forced to take courses eg on supervisory processes and academic integrity, they say they don’t have time, too busy, why should they need it when they have been teaching for years? They are not aware of the need to change” (national interview).

5.2 Responses about plagiarism

53% of student participants agreed with the statement that *the previous institution [where] I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution*, with 16% disagreeing (Annex FR-1 S5q).

All participants were asked to reflect and comment on the question *what leads students to decide to plagiarise?* Their responses are summarised in Table 9.

Distinct differences emerged in the responses from students and teachers about reasons for plagiarism. Four suggested reasons for student plagiarism: *Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments, not being aware of penalties, there is no teacher control on plagiarism and they think the lecturer will not care* were selected by many more teachers than students. Conversely more students than teachers selected *they think they will not get caught, they run out of time and they*

can't express another person's ideas in their own words. There was more of a consensus on most other points, including the ease of cutting and pasting from the Internet.

Responses to Student Question 14 and teacher Question 17:

Table 9: Reasons student plagiarise – student and teacher questionnaires			
Student	Teacher	SM/National	Possible reason for plagiarism
19%	50%		<i>They think the lecturer will not care</i>
53%	25%		<i>They think they will not get caught</i>
56%	25%	1	<i>They run out of time</i>
49%	63%		<i>They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment:</i>
8%	38%		<i>They don't see the difference between group work and collusion</i>
55%	38%		<i>They can't express another person's ideas in their own words</i>
26%	25%	1	<i>They don't understand how to cite and reference</i>
31%	88%		<i>They are not aware of penalties</i>
37%	38%	1	<i>They are unable to cope with the workload</i>
39%	25%	1	<i>They think their written work is not good enough:</i>
30%	25%		<i>They feel the task is completely beyond their ability</i>
49%	50%	1	<i>It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet</i>
26%	25%	1	<i>They feel external pressure to succeed</i>
39%	25%	1	<i>Plagiarism is not seen as wrong</i>
34%	38%		<i>They have always written like that</i>
22%	63%		<i>Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments</i>
15%	25%		<i>Their reading comprehension skills are weak</i>
30%	25%		<i>Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood</i>
36%	63%		<i>There is no teacher control on plagiarism</i>
Additional feedback from questionnaires and interviews			
		3	The consequences are not understood
1		1	They do not know exactly whether or not it is plagiarism
		1	Other people have had successful careers after having plagiarised

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

Table 11 summarises responses to Question 10 of the student questionnaire exploring understanding of basic academic writing conventions: *What are the reasons for using correct referencing and citation in scholarly academic writing?*

Table 11: Reasons for referencing and citation	
85%	<i>To avoid being accused of plagiarism</i>
62%	<i>To show you have read some relevant research papers</i>
81%	<i>To give credit to the author of the sourced material</i>
57%	<i>To strengthen and give authority to your writing</i>
9%	<i>Because you are given credit/marks for doing so</i>
3%	<i>I don't know</i>

It was disappointing to see from responses in Table 11 how many student respondents (85%) believed the purpose of referencing and citation is to defend themselves against accusations of plagiarism. Other than that observation, the great majority of the student participants appeared to have a good grasp of why referencing and in-text citations are required. It appears that a referencing style convention is applied in most of the subject areas and institutions that responded, with a balance between students said they were positive about referencing and citation and those who were either not confidence or not sure (Table 12). Finding good quality sources and paraphrasing were the aspects of academic writing where most difficulty was reported by student respondents (Table 13).

Table 12: Referencing styles, Student Question 11, Teacher Question 10a						
Yes		No		Not sure		Question
student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
64%	63%	9%	25%	22%	13%	<i>Is there any referencing style students are required or encouraged to use in written work?</i>
44%		38%		13%		<i>Are you confident about referencing and citation?</i>

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

Table 13: Difficulties with academic writing	
53%	<i>Finding good quality sources</i>
29%	<i>Referencing and citation</i>
49%	<i>Paraphrasing</i>
25%	<i>Understanding different referencing formats and styles</i>

The survey included questions that explored respondents' understanding about what constitutes plagiarism. 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.

All six cases (a-f) may be categorised as plagiarism, but some (c,f) could be construed as poor academic practice or perhaps patch-writing due to poor language skills could account for some matching (b,e). However given that the scenario says 40% of the paper is identical to other work, there should normally be an investigation of this work, possibly leading to a sanction, before any academic credit was awarded.

Considering the responses in Tables 14 and 15 to part (a), the most obvious example of plagiarism, it is notable that while the vast majority of students and teachers were clear this was a case of plagiarism, with most respondents agreeing that punishment may be appropriate for such conduct. The lower number of students and teachers positively identifying possible plagiarism examples from the remaining options, particularly case (d), suggests that students' confidence in understanding academic writing conventions may be misplaced and that teachers may themselves be inadvertently plagiarising. The low number of respondents opting for "punishment", other than for scenario (a) for both and (b) for the teachers, reflects the emerging picture of the culture in France where it appears to be unusual to apply sanctions for plagiarism.

The lack of teachers' ability to identify clear cases of plagiarism is particularly worrying. Although this was a small sample, the participants expressed interest in the research and took part voluntarily, making it more likely that the results would be slightly skewed towards better the informed within the HE teaching community.

Student Question 15, Teacher question 19: Examples of possible plagiarism:

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	93%	2%	5%	71%	word for word with no quotations
b	49%	6%	42%	28%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	29%	34%	33%	16%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	44%	16%	38%	35%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	25%	28%	43%	12%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	18%	49%	30%	17%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

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	88%	0%	0%	88%	word for word with no quotations
b	75%	25%	0%	63%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	38%	25%	25%	38%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	50%	0%	38%	38%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	38%	0%	50%	25%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	0%	13%	50%	0%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

6. Examples of good practice

If taken seriously and put into action, recommendations from the recent report to the Ministry of Education (Mazodier et al 2012) would provide an excellent starting point for the long journey on which France needs to embark, with the goal of establishing and applying institutional policies for academic integrity at all levels in Higher Education.

A national interviewee spoke about some training courses offered in French institutions for researchers on academic integrity. This practice needs to be extended to ensure that there is development at all levels for both students and teachers.

Although blogging can be seen by some as undesirable targeting of individuals, the bloggers provide a very useful service, facing a high degree of opposition, exposing cases of malpractice and raising awareness in academia and the wider population that something needs to be done.

7. Discussion

Some of the evidence about plagiarism and academic conduct in general in France emerging from this research is a stark reminder that the introduction of the Bologna principles cannot itself bring about harmonisation and consistency of standards across different EU states. The statement that *“until there is a political will to do something nothing will change”* (national interview) applies as much to the wider EU modernisation of higher education agenda as it does to policies and systems for handling plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Most interviewees were despondent about the prospect of any change, for example *“France is like a monarchy”, “It is impossible to solve the problem, there is a programme of corruption”* (national interviews).

There is evidence of will for change at an academic and management level, for example *“I think the example should come from teaching researchers (and perhaps society in general) and that there must be a strict policy at this level”* (national interview). However the paralysis described by one national interviewee when a case of serious plagiarism is identified *“the minute the thesis is presented it is accepted, no one wants to move. Before that some advice can be given if plagiarism is found”*, indicates that a major attitudinal shift is needed before sustained changes can be possible, then only if there is strong leadership from the very highest levels of both academia and society in France.

8. Recommendations for France

8.1 Nationally and internationally

Some of the recommendations from the April 2012 report to the French Ministry of Education are of direct relevance to the IPPHEAE research, particularly as they were based on a comprehensive survey of HE institutions across France. The recommendations 1-6 have been translated and presented for reference with a glossary of abbreviations in Annex FR-2. It is not clear what progress has been made since April 2012 on these six points, but action on all six recommendations would provide an excellent sign that France was taking this problem seriously.

8.1.1 With reference to *Recommendation 1* (Mazodier et al 2012 p71):

1 integrate the issue of plagiarism in the work carried out by the Group of Bologna on quality assurance programs and degrees.

It is encouraging to note that the French report links developments in academic integrity to the work of the Bologna group on quality assurance (point 1 above); The examples of a lax approach to QA described in the French report and from other sources suggest that academic standards in France are out of line with those in some other EU states. There are suggestions from student feedback that some student assessment in France may be too reliant on memorisation and rote learning, with independent and critical thinking discouraged. Not only is this counter to the standards of learning outcomes required by Bologna at higher education levels, but it is also one of the factors that appear to condone or even encourage the apparent culture of unchallenged plagiarism. The recommendation is that the range of teaching and learning at bachelor and master’s degree levels in French Higher Education is reviewed, with the dual aims of increasing accountability and transparency, improving academic standards and discouraging plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

8.1.2 With reference to *Recommendation 2* (Mazodier et al 2012 p71):

2 promote at EU level the creation of a High Level Group on ethics academic assessments. The creation of a High Level Group recommended is to be welcomed. This group is advised to look at examples of good practice in academic integrity elsewhere in the world before

developing policy, particularly recent developments in Australia as well as research and effective policies and strategies developed over the last 12 years in parts of the UK.

8.1.3 Although it contained some reference to plagiarism “prevention” activities, the recommendations from the French report described above focus predominantly on legislation, sanctions and punishment. A complementary approach that has proved useful elsewhere is to focus on educating teachers and students about good academic practice, improving design of assessment coupled with a transparent quality assurance regime to discourage or remove opportunities for cheating and to foster consistency and fairness in academic decisions (consistent with 3.1.1).

8.1.4 With reference to *Recommendations 4 and 5* (Mazodier et al 2012 p71):

4 ask the CPU to promote the AMUE collection of best practices, development of training, developing guides.

5 engage with AMUE to work on antiplagiat software (comparing the costs and effectiveness of different products; acquisitions of licenses, etc.)

There are lessons to learn from similar activities in the UK and Australia that might be useful to the French policy makers.

a) There are many very useful tried and tested resources and research papers already available in English that could be translated for use in France (JISC, IPPHEAE UK report)

b) The policy decision in the UK from 2002 to fund research into plagiarism and make Turnitin available to HEIs transformed the way plagiarism is viewed in the UK today. Building on these lessons could provide a short-cut method from France to make rapid and effective progress (Rowell 2009, p2)

8.1.5 The IPPHEAE survey results indicate that the adoption of digital tools can be useful providing they are utilised in an appropriate setting and all parties understand the limitations and values that they bring to strategies for academic integrity. In particular there need to be

a) Clear policy statements about when and how tools should be used and accessed by teachers, students and administrators;

b) Guidance for teachers about how to interpret and make use of the outputs for helping to detect cases of plagiarism and information about the limitations for what the tools can achieve;

c) Guidance for teachers on how to use the tools formatively to support student learning;

d) Clear guidance for students on how software tools can help them and particularly what they do not show;

8.1.6 It is important that any reforms introduced are applied across all levels in higher education, not just for doctoral level programmes and research.

8.1.7 It is essential in a healthy democratic society to allow and encourage people to freely raise matters of concern, particularly where there are implications for national and educational quality and standards. Further a forum should be provided to ensure that any whistle-blower cases raised are fully investigated without prejudice and a public response provided.

- 8.1.8 Should the French ministry or individual institutions wish to conduct a more comprehensive survey about academic integrity and plagiarism in France, the tried and tested on-line IPPHEAE surveys are available to use for this purpose.

8.2 Institutionally

- 8.2.1 Although the national coordination in the recommendations described in 8.1.1 (1-6) makes good sense when considering the scale of reform needed in France, encouraging more local responses to changing culture and attitudes may help to bring about more rapid and sustained reform. The institutional recommendations need to echo each of those outlined above at national level.
- 8.2.2 The IPPHEAE survey results suggest that it would be useful to stage a serious programme of professional development for academic staff within institutions to update people on how research practices have changed in the last 12-15 years and promote some good practice examples for assuring high standards in academic integrity.
- 8.2.3 Institutional leadership and support needs to be established to encourage academic teaching staff to highlight cases of student cheating and plagiarism.
- 8.2.4 If not immediately achieved on a national basis, each institution or region should develop a set of fair, proportional sanctions and related procedures for consistently dealing internally with cases of academic dishonesty in students. There are many examples that can be used for guidance, for example the AMBeR project report and tariff (Tennant and Rowell 2010, Tenant and Duggan 2008).

8.3 Individual academics:

- 8.3.1 Although the French Higher Education system tends to be controlled centrally and does not encourage independence of actions, each individual academic has a responsibility for upholding standards and quality in all aspects of academic activity, including teaching, setting assessments, grading of work, providing support, guidance and advice to students. This list of activities naturally extends to aspects of academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Given a supportive regime at institutional and national levels, it should be possible for academic staff to
- a) support students to improve independent study, research and writing skills;
 - b) develop innovative assessments that challenge students and make plagiarism or cheating difficult;
 - c) respond to suspected cases of student plagiarism and cheating according to policies that are fair, transparent and easy to apply.

9. Conclusions

The national interviewees involved in this research were under no delusions about the difficulties faced by France in the areas of both quality assurance and academic integrity at higher education level. The French reforms will require a steep climb from the current situation to achieve what is expected and desirable under the terms of Bologna. However every IPPHEAE participant was sure that this difficult journey needs to be made, no matter how treacherous and long the ascent may prove to be.

France is not the only EU country that must make this journey, but as one of the largest and most prominent member states, its successful transition is of key importance to the reputation of higher education throughout the EU.

References

- Bonaccorsi, A., Brandt, T., De Filippo, D. Lepori, B., Molinari, F., Niederl, A. Schmoch, U., Schubert, T., Slipersaeter, S. (2010) *Feasibility Study for Creating a European University Data Collection* (EUMIDA project report and dataset) <http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/docs/en/eumida-final-report.pdf> [28/05/2013]
- Bergardaa, M., blog <http://responsable.unige.ch/> [accessed 25/06/13]
- Campus France: <http://www.campusfrance.org/en/page/universities-and-higher-education-and-research-clusters> [accessed 28/05/2013]
- Darde, J., blog <http://archeologie-copier-coller.com/> [accessed 25/06/13]
- JISC (formerly) Joint Information Systems Committee <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/> [accessed 23/04/2013]
- JISC Electronic Plagiarism Project:
<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/plagiarism/archive/detection.aspx> [accessed 23/04/2013]
- Maurel-Indart, H., blog <http://leplagiat.net/> [accessed 25/06/13]
- Mazodier, M., Foucault, M., Blemont, P., Kesler, S. (2012) *La fraude aux examens dans l'enseignement supérieur - Rapport à Monsieur le ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche* (April 2012)
- Rowell, G. (2009) *A National Strategy for Ensuring Authenticity in Student Work*, EDULearn13 Conference, Barcelona, Spain 6th-8th July 2009
- Tennant, P. and Rowell, G. (2010). *Benchmark Plagiarism Tariff for the Application of Penalties for Student Plagiarism and the Penalties Applied*. UK: Plagiarismadvice.org.
- Tennant, P. and Duggan, F. (2008) *Academic Misconduct Benchmarking Research Project: Part 2. The Recorded Incidence of Student Plagiarism and the Penalties Applied*. UK: The Higher Education Academy and JISC.
- Weber-Wulff, D., blog <http://copy-shake-paste.blogspot.de/2013/04/french-rabbi-steps-down-in-plagiarism.html> [accessed 25/06/13]

Irene Glendinning

With contributions from Anna Michalska and Stella-Maris Orim

October 2013

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

Table 16: Student and teacher responses to questionnaire Question 5 (percentages) (S n=129; T n=8)							
Qu	Disagree (1,2)		Don't know		Agree (4,5)		Question
	student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
S5a T5a	32%	50%	13%	13%	52%	38%	Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues
S5b T5p	15%	50%	14%	13%	65%	38%	I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5c T5b	9%	50%	19%	13%	72%	38%	This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism
T5c		75%		25%		0%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention
T5d		50%		13%		38%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection
S5d T5e	18%	50%	12%	13%	70%	38%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students
T5f		50%		13%		25%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff
S5e T5g	7%	50%	26%	25%	66%	25%	Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula
S5f T5h	19%	13%	20%	25%	59%	63%	I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5g T5i	22%	25%	49%	38%	27%	38%	Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism
S5h T5m	8%	38%	42%	25%	50%	25%	The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty
T5j		13%		68%		26%	The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism
T5k		25%		50%		25%	There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country
T5l		50%		38%		13%	Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs
S5i T5n	22%	0%	47%	13%	27%	75%	I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes
S5j	40%		16%		31%		I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution
S5k T5o	29%	26%	23%	25%	46%	50%	I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)
S5l T5q	23%	75%	47%	13%	27%	13%	I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism
S5m T5r	25%	63%	35%	25%	34%	13%	I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student
S5n T5s	10%	63%	43%	25%	44%	13%	I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures
S5o T5t	8%	0%	26%	25%	62%	75%	It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism
S5p T5u	14%	0%	32%	25%	51%	63%	I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism
S5q	16%		28%		53%		The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution
S5r	2%		2%		94%		I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism

Annex FR-2

A report *La fraude aux examens dans l'enseignement supérieur* published in April 2012 set out evidence from research about the current deficit in policies for responding to breaches to academic integrity in higher education at all levels and made recommendations for the French Ministry of Education on how the country and HE institutions should respond (Mazodier et al 2012).

Recommendations 1-6 from the report summarised and translated.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS 1-6

1 integrate the issue of plagiarism in the work carried out by the Group of Bologna on quality assurance programs and degrees.

2 promote at EU level the creation of a High Level Group on ethics academic assessments.

3 submit to the consultation the principle of creating an ethics committee in higher education and its functioning public institutions.

4 ask the CPU to promote the AMUE collection of best practices, development of training, developing guides.

5 engage with AMUE to work on antiplagiat software (comparing the costs and effectiveness of different products; acquisitions of licenses, etc.)

6 legalize a [fast-track system for resolution for minor academic dishonesty] by allowing a prior admission of guilt.

Abbreviations used in the report

Responsibilities for several actions were referred to the following European and national level organisations, initiatives and working groups:

AMUE – Agence de Mutualisation des Universities et Establishments

CPU – Conference des Presidents d'Université

CNESER - Conseil National de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche

Groupe de Bologna

(The remaining recommendations 7-12 from the report have not been elaborated here as they concerned reforming national legislation or developing new national systems for handling different forms of academic dishonesty).