



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

### **Plagiarism Policies in Bulgaria**

***Full report***

*Irene Glendinning*

*October 2013*



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

### Plagiarism Policies in Bulgaria

#### 1. Information sources

Information about higher education policies and procedures for plagiarism in Bulgaria was collected through

- the three levels of on-line surveys (students, teachers and senior managers) in Bulgarian;
- 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 national survey were from 2 influential people concerned with HE. The limited information collected at this level has helped the team to have some idea about historical and the recent development in HE in Bulgaria 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 much 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	
Bulgaria	93	6	2			0	5	
Breakdown of student responses by domicile and award		Home students	Other EU students	Non-EU students	Not known	Bachelor, diploma	Master, doctor	Blank, other
Bulgaria	93	89	1	3	0	75	18	0

Almost all student participants were Bulgarian nationals / residents, mainly enrolled on undergraduate programmes. The other students were from Italy, Armenia, Turkey and Mongolia.

Many institutions and individual contacts across Bulgaria were asked to participate in the research. The low response rate at all levels was very disappointing and clearly can only be seen as an opportunistic sample and may not be representative of the whole Bulgarian HE population. Unfortunately the six teacher respondents and one senior management response were all from the same institution but from different subject areas. The one national level response was from a different location and institution. Taking into account student responses the survey results included views from 5 Bulgarian institutions in total, which is not sufficient in volume or representation nationally to generalise the findings, but does provide an insight into differences between institutions and some interesting individual views and ideas were captured.

#### 2. Higher Education in Bulgaria

According to the Eumida report (2010, p89) there are at least 59 higher education institutions in Bulgaria of which about one third are private. Institutions include specialist universities and colleges for humanities, economics, technical and vocational subjects, the arts, sports, medical and military (*Universities in Bulgaria* 2007).

Different “*foreign students*” were mentioned by a few participants as part of the problem with controlling student plagiarism. Participants reported that Bulgarian institutions are keen to attract students from overseas to bring in more funding: “*there are many ... problems, the population is under pressure due to decreases, financial, social, other problems, we are trying to attract more students*” (national interview). Turkey was specifically mentioned as one of the target markets for recruitment where university fees are higher than in Bulgaria, but some problems were reported with student engagement: “*they register their presence but don’t want to study; they talk in Turkish during exams, we can’t control them*” (national interview).

Many Bulgarian institutions welcome European students on Erasmus programmes, often taught in English. This brings different threats to academic integrity and quality: “*there are students from other countries who don’t speak good English, also some teachers don’t speak good English ...*” (national interview). This evidence raises questions from two perspectives, about the difficulty for students to write in English and the ability of the teachers to be able to assess the value of their work and detect any possible cases of plagiarism.

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

According to national and senior management interviews there is no quality monitoring organisation in Bulgaria for higher education. “*Standards, quality I don’t think so, it is bureaucratic, not about plagiarism*” (national interview). However there are accreditation visits, typically every 6 years, which involve visit to HE institutions: “*when they inspect educational programmes and plans, but nothing in the direction of plagiarism policies etc, no such criteria*” (national interview).

Teachers were asked to provide some indication of the nature of student assessments. The responses confirmed that assessment in the single institution represented is typically a mixture of examinations, assignments and project work. Table 2 contains a summary of responses.

Examinations	Assignments	Projects	Other assessment
40%-90%	10%-60%	0%-25%	

Although teacher participants were few, the responses showed that the nature of assessment varies considerably even within one institution. For a different question three out of six teachers responding confirmed that some students were set assessed group work, estimated between 0% and 40% of the overall assessment workload.

It was reported that some complications of assessment practices higher education in Bulgaria may have an impact on the ability and will of teachers to pursue cases of suspected plagiarism, for example “*where there are poor student results for a teacher it means they are seen as a poor teacher*”, “*teachers are not paid [to support students] for the second or third sitting [resits, retakes], so they think - why should I bother? [They say:] I care about students but I also care also about my free time*” (national interview).

### 4. Academic Integrity and Plagiarism in Bulgaria

#### 4.1 Research and development in academic integrity and plagiarism

Although some interest in academic integrity and plagiarism was apparent in Bulgaria, the low teacher and management response rates demonstrate a reluctance to discuss this topic. No evidence was found of specific research within the country about academic integrity or of people actively trying to bring about changes to improve practices nationally or locally. No statistics or guidelines were found either held nationally or institutionally about plagiarism and academic dishonesty: *“We do not have statistics, but we have indirect evidence that plagiarism is widespread”* (senior management, translated). However one of the institutions surveyed was using software in at least one faculty for submissions and screening of student work, apparently both for local and distance learning students:

*“Only the faculty where I work uses Turnitin and deals with issues of plagiarism”; “I think that the approach supported by many is using effective software ... Teachers bring maximum ceiling matching texts to students. Then the results of the inspection in Turnitin can be seen by the teacher, and the student”; “all interested teachers are trained to use the functions of Turnitin”; “the distance students must submit their written work electronically and they are scanned using Turnitin”* (senior management, translated).

This evidence was supported by other input to the survey with all six of the teachers and 20 of the 93 student respondents mentioning the use of anti-plagiarism software. However the national level interviewee from a different institution provided this viewpoint:

*“Teachers and students are aware it is illegal to steal, but here people have easy access to material and if teachers are not strict then it is easily done”; “I have not heard of the governing body of our institution speak about plagiarism, no policies”; “I heard of such a tool Turnitin, not sure where it is being used, but it is not popular here”* (national interview).

Some academics in Bulgaria have studied or worked in other countries and are aware of what more could and should be done to help students to avoid inadvertent plagiarism, for example:

*“When I was at [a UK university] I was given guidelines about how to prevent [plagiarism]. I talked to my colleagues [in Bulgaria] asking for their point of view, but my colleagues are not aware of how to control, make policy, encourage good practice”; “Here there is not a single case of a student being dismissed for plagiarism. Here there are no measures”* (national interview).

It is very clear from this small sample of data that policies and practices vary greatly between institutions in Bulgaria.

#### 4.2 IPPHEAE survey findings on policies and procedures

The student and teacher questionnaire responses can provide some insight into what sanctions are applied, Question 7 asked: *What would happen if a student at your institution was found guilty of plagiarism in their assignment or final project/dissertation?*

The responses summarised in table 3 indicate that a range of sanctions is available in some Bulgarian HEIs for cases of plagiarism that have been identified. The most common penalties appear to be verbal warning, zero mark and rewriting, but it is of concern to note that 54% (S) and 50% (T) believed it was possible that no action would be taken for plagiarism in an assignment and 33% of teachers said this could also be the case for a dissertation. The most common responses about the dissertation were zero mark and verbal warning.

Table 3: Sanctions for plagiarism					
Assignment		Project or Dissertation		Possible sanction	Feedback (S=student, T=Teacher)
Student	Teacher	Student	Teacher		
54%	50%	9%	33%	No action would be taken	It is impossible not to take action (S)
67%	50%	19%	50%	Verbal warning	If a small portion is borrowed from the theoretical part (S)
34%	0%	37%	13%	Formal warning letter	
59%	50%	29%	33%	Request to re write it properly	Writing new coursework (S)
60%	67%	52%	50%	Zero mark for the work	
44%	17%	25%	0%	Repeat the module or subject	
34%	0%	25%	0%	Fail the module or subject	
28%	0%	26%	17%	Repeat the whole year of study	
23%	0%	32%	17%	Fail the whole programme or degree	
31%	0%	32%	0%	Expose the student to school community	
35%	0%	27%	17%	Suspended from the institution	
26%	15%	25%	15%	Expelled from the institution	
41%	15%	16%	31%	Suspend payment of student grant	
40%	0%	20%	17%	Other: Deprivation of rights (S)	
				It depends to what extent. Many definitions cannot be expressed in any other way than that which is already known. I would not consider it plagiarism, but automatic programs will consider, I guess (S)	

A specific example of sanctions was raised for a case of plagiarism was provided concerning “a student’s diploma thesis for master’s degree. I reviewed her work, it mentioned web sites as sources, I came upon a PDF and found two whole chapters had been downloaded; I sent the evidence to the reviewer. When marking was completed the student was given reduced points but had passed. This is typical, normal” (national interview).

Although no statistics are available the senior management (quoted earlier) and national respondents agreed that student plagiarism had increased: “I am aware in an increase ever since the Internet gives access to information, easier way to find sources, easier to steal another’s IP, especially bachelor and masters students” (national interview).

In response to questions about whether policies for plagiarism and academic dishonesty should be separate, several anecdotes revealed incidences of corruption and exam cheating:

*“It is not uncommon for students trying to cheat in state exams. People have to have the exam to progress. They were given questions to write, a written exam, their answers were the same as the person who supervised the exam”*

*“I was sitting in a café and saw students exchange wires to place in ears before an exam ... , he could not pass state exam, his father was a lawyer in criminal law, paying for his attempts to resit. Proceeded to take measures, passed after that, he cheated directly”*

*“... taking notes into an exam on paper, ... small writing, from web site, also different versions, hide in wrist or fingers, folded up like accordion or rolled up”*(national interview).

There were reports that bribery and unfair influence is common in Bulgaria, “money for the teacher in student book” and that corruption is the main problem rather than plagiarism (national interview). The general consensus of respondents was that policies for plagiarism and academic honesty should be combined rather than dealt with separately.

#### 4.3 Use of digital tools

The use of software to aid plagiarism detection and prevention was featured earlier in the narrative about policies for plagiarism in Bulgaria (4.1). Responses to specific questions on the student and teacher questionnaires in Tables 4 and 5 add to the evidence already discussed.

Table 4: Digital tools and other techniques for detecting plagiarism – number of responses	Student #	Teacher #
Software (Turnitin), anti-piracy software, unnamed software	20	6
Web, Internet, search engines	2	1
<i>Computers, smartphones, cameras, ipads</i>	18	
<i>No briefing, no tools or techniques are used</i>	6	
<i>Don't know</i>	29	
<i>No response or unintelligible</i>	19	

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>	56%	100%
<i>For some courses students must submit their written work using the tools</i>	44%	17%
<i>Students must submit all written work using the tools</i>	26%	33%
<i>Students may use the tools to check their work before submitting</i>	23%	17%

As already mentioned (4.1) differences emerged in student responses between institutions where software is used and those where there is no access. Clearly students and teachers who are part of a regime making use of software tools see this as an effective deterrent. The final comment from Table 3 raises a legitimate concern that students may be disadvantaged if teachers interpret results on similarity metrics too literally by taking all matches to mean there is plagiarism. It is interesting to note that some students have access to digital tools to check their work prior to submitting. Experience elsewhere shows that digital tools must be used intelligently, both by teachers and students, and can only be effective when part of a wider policy response to academic integrity.

According to one participant, the advantages of digital tools are not confined to use for matching with publications, papers and standard texts, *“there are “companies” that offer students to write for them their written work, when it comes to a topic and 300 students who write on it, “the companies” when offering written work on it cannot develop unique versions so enter into the mechanism of plagiarism that Turnitin successfully captures”* (senior management, translated). The ability to detect ghost-written clones of essays and other work, or indeed instances of students copying work from each other (collusion), is often not appreciated by institutions who have not piloted the use of software tools.

#### 4.6 Making systems and procedures more effective

All participants were asked to suggest examples of good practice and to propose ideas for what should be done to reduce student plagiarism. The responses are summarised in Table 8b.

Table 8b: Thematic summary of ideas for how to reduce student plagiarism	Number of Responses			
	Student	Teacher	Senior Man	National
Advertise, promote	1			
Student education about plagiarism, codes of practice/conduct	5			1
Teaching scholarship, writing skills, paraphrasing, creativity, critical thinking	6			
Designing assessments to discourage plagiarism	2		1	
Systematic use of anti-plagiarism software, development of tools	3	1		
More control, impose severe sanctions	4			
Easier topics for term papers	1			
Block or restrict the Internet	2			

Some more detailed suggestions from participants are presented below:

*“To prevent plagiarism we should be taking steps in several ways – for a start teachers should not set subjects that encourage plagiarism, instead they should be set shorter works*

*by volume and the volume gradually to increased; students should not be disadvantaged but acclimatised gradually to write more text” (senior management, translated).*

*“What is missing, on their first day students get speeches, flowers, welcome from mayor, politicians, but nothing about plagiarism – first day should be about if cheating in exams, you get expelled, but no teacher wants to bother. They see me as strict teacher wanting to change the world – somebody different, exceptional” (national interview).*

*“To allow for alternative forms of testing for essays or themes are not for everyone. You can also increase the time of writing assignments. This will reduce the psychological pressure and temptation to “go meter” the easy way” (student, translated)*

*“Recommend early education students to lecture and presentation exactly which cases are plagiarism and what does not and how it should be quoted and paraphrased it to come on site and the university platform Moodle prominently” (student, translated).*

*“By stimulating creative work and foster the development of personal ideas” (student, translated).*

*“Increased control over measures to reduce plagiarism by university and also by the teachers themselves” (student, translated).*

Some student responses called for stronger penalties, banning use of the Internet, setting easier work. All participants, but particularly the student respondents suggest a very mature understanding about academic integrity and what can be done to improve academic standards in Bulgaria. The national respondent talked about having views that were out of line with those of colleagues and was nervous about being identified. This suggests a reason why plagiarism is not being addressed may be an unfounded fear of reputational damage by admitting that some students may be plagiarising.

Interestingly 83% of the teachers agreed that *one or more of my colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes* but none of the teachers agreed that they *may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)* (Annex BG-1 Qu T5n, T5o). Just 38% of students admitted they may themselves have plagiarised and about the same percentage agreed with the statement that *I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution* (Annex BG-1 S5k, S5j). The apparent reluctance of both students and teachers to admit to possibly having plagiarised may be interpreted to be a true belief, which may or not be accurate. However two other possibilities are: (a) the concept of plagiarism may not be fully understood; (b) that there is some reluctance to admit even inadvertently plagiarising, perhaps cultural or motivated by some fear of exposure. Point (a) is explored further in 5.2 the analysis of responses to question S15 and T19.

The one senior management respondent agreed that their *institution/faculty has a robust approach to the detection and prevention of student plagiarism* citing effective use of Turnitin for both. However only 17% of the teacher respondents, who were all from the same institution, agreed that their *institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention* (Annex BG-1 Qu T5c) with 34% disagreeing. 50% of the teachers believed their institution was serious about *plagiarism detection* with 17% disagreeing (Annex BG-1 Qu T5d). Although the data was low in volume and institution specific, the discrepancy of responses suggests that even in more enlightened institutions more needs to be done particularly to discourage student plagiarism as well as detecting it and responding when it happens.

When asked whether *policies, procedures and penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty* are made available to students (Annex BG-1 Qu 5), the student responses were slightly more positive (53% agreed, 26% disagreed) than the teacher responses (50% agreed, 50% disagreed). Interestingly 17% the teachers disagreed with the statement that this information was available to them. On

questions about consistency of application of policies and procedures few of the teachers agreed that *teachers follow the same procedures* (0%), *follow the required procedures* (0%) and *are consistent between students* (17%), but more of the students agreed in response to the same statements (25%, 47% and 33% agreeing respectively) (Annex BG-1 Qu S5l, T5q, S5n, T5s, S5m, T5r).

Encouragingly 83% of teachers and 46% of students responded positively to the statement: *it is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism* (Annex BG-1 Qu S5o, T5t). Although not discussed though any other feedback, a similar percentage of teachers and students agreed that *translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism* (Annex BG-1 Qu S5p, T5u).

## 5. Perceptions and Understanding of Plagiarism

### 5.1 Support and guidance

Various different approaches can be adopted to raising student awareness about academic integrity, for example in some countries and institutions students are asked to sign an honesty statement. 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
15%	0%	On starting their degree
12%	0%	For every assessment
13%	33%	For some assessments
12%	50%	Never
41%	0%	Not sure

The responses show that most of the respondents had not come across this type of formality.

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

60% of students said were aware about plagiarism before they started university, 23% became aware of this during their undergraduate degree and 6% during their masters or PhD. 11% said they still were still not sure about this.

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

51% of students said they learnt about writing conventions before starting their bachelor degree, 29% during bachelor degree, 9% during masters and 11% 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	
75%	33%	20%	67%	Web site
49%	33%	24%	67%	Course booklet, student guide, handbook
47%	50%	24%	17%	Leaflet or guidance notes
59%	17%	28%	50%	Workshop / class / lecture
42%	17%	24%	0%	I am not aware of any information about this
57%	0%	27%	17%	Other

The responses in Table 7 confirm that information about plagiarism is made available to most students in Bulgaria through a range of media. However, oddly 42% of students also said they were

not aware of any information on plagiarism. According to student responses, access to information about academic dishonesty suggests that institutions may be placing more emphasis on deterring plagiarism than the wider range of possible academic dishonesty or cheating categories. There is no correspondence between the student and teacher responses in Table 7, which may be due to the limitations of the teacher data sample.

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 channels for education of students about plagiarism and academic dishonesty appear to be through tutors, in classes. The responses confirm that specialist services and information for supporting students in academic integrity and academic writing were available in some but not all participant institutions.

Student	Teacher	Service or provision
28%	0%	<i>Academic support unit</i>
34%	83%	<i>Advice in class during course/module</i>
27%	17%	<i>Additional lectures, workshops:</i>
46%	50%	<i>Advice from tutors or lecturers</i>
30%	0%	<i>Guidance from the library</i>
15%	0%	<i>University publisher</i>
11%	0%	<i>Academic writing unit/Study skills unit</i>

Some students studying in Bulgaria said received guidance in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues according to 26% of student and 33% of teacher respondents (Annex BG-1 Qu S5a, T5a). However 53% of students and 50% of the teachers agreed that they would like to have more training in this area, with 26% and 50% respectively disagreeing (Annex UK-1 Qu S5b, T5p).

The senior management respondent said there was optional training available for “*all interested teachers ... to use the functions of Turnitin*”, but they agreed that more training would be useful. This sentiment was echoed strongly by the national interviewee:

*“Yes I think there should be, this interview is making me have the idea to do something about this in Bulgaria, especially students, teachers, every academic institution”* (national interview).

The same respondent clarified that although all academic staff colleagues held PhD awards, many did not understand the conventions when asked about referencing, citation and use of academic sources.

## 5.2 Perceptions and understanding of plagiarism

Only 24% of student participants agreed with the statement that *the previous institution [where] I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution*, with 40% disagreeing (Annex BG-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. As in some other questions there is little correspondence between the teacher and student responses about reasons for plagiarism. Taking the most common reasons selected suggests that the teacher respondents believed students view their assessment as a mechanistic way of achieving an academic award, which can be circumvented by any means available, including plagiarism and cheating, with the consequence that deep learning does not happen. This is supported by some additional comments from all types of respondents. Although the most common student selections were *... easy to cut and paste, they think they will not get caught* and *they run out of time*, fewer students than teachers selected options related to

rejecting aspects of learning or lack of control by teachers. Despite limitations of the teacher data, these results suggest it would be valuable to have more dialogue within institutions across the academic community about academic integrity, particularly involving students as valued partners.

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
24%	67%	Y	<i>They think the lecturer will not care</i>
56%	83%	Y	<i>They think they will not get caught</i>
54%	33%	Y	<i>They run out of time</i>
39%	100%	Y	<i>They don't want to learn anything, just pass the assignment:</i>
30%	0%	N	<i>They don't see the difference between group work and collusion</i>
40%	67%	Y	<i>They can't express another person's ideas in their own words</i>
47%	17%	Y	<i>They don't understand how to cite and reference</i>
30%	17%	Y	<i>They are not aware of penalties</i>
39%	33%	Y	<i>They are unable to cope with the workload</i>
26%	17%	Y	<i>They think their written work is not good enough:</i>
33%	0%	Y	<i>They feel the task is completely beyond their ability</i>
59%	83%	Y	<i>It is easy to cut and paste from the Internet</i>
19%	17%	Y	<i>They feel external pressure to succeed</i>
24%	83%	Y	<i>Plagiarism is not seen as wrong</i>
30%	50%	Y	<i>They have always written like that</i>
22%	17%	Y	<i>Unclear criteria and expectations for assignments</i>
35%	50%	Y	<i>Their reading comprehension skills are weak</i>
33%	0%	Y	<i>Assignments tasks are too difficult or not understood</i>
19%	17%	Y	<i>There is no teacher control on plagiarism</i>
Additional feedback from questionnaires and interviews			
		Y	<i>No objective criteria or knowledge about their own potential</i>
		Y	<i>Students just extract knowledge, no critical review</i>
	Y		<i>They do not understand what they read</i>
		y	<i>Because they value their spare time and rely on someone else's knowledge to obtain a higher score with less effort</i>
Y			<i>Laziness</i>

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

It was disappointing to see from responses in Table 11 how many student respondents (61%) believed the purpose of referencing and citation is to defend themselves against accusations of plagiarism. However some student participants appeared to have a good grasp of why referencing and in-text citations are required. Two additional comments from students added to the list of reasons: *“to provide alternative sources in which can be found further information similar to that of course work”*; *“to honor the work of the author of the original text”* (student questionnaires, translated). The former comment revealed some confusion between a list of references and a bibliography.

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?*

Table 11: Reasons for referencing and citation

61%	<i>To avoid being accused of plagiarism</i>
42%	<i>To show you have read some relevant research papers</i>
31%	<i>To give credit to the author of the sourced material</i>
40%	<i>To strengthen and give authority to your writing</i>
8%	<i>Because you are given credit/marks for doing so</i>
14%	<i>I don't know</i>

Table 12: Referencing styles, Student Question 11, Teacher Question 10a						
Yes		No		Not sure		Question
student	teacher	student	teacher	student	teacher	
54%	50%	24%	33%	22%	17%	<i>Is there any referencing style students are required or encouraged to use in written work?</i>
58%		15%		23%		<i>Are you confident about referencing and citation?</i>

It appears that a referencing style convention is applied in some 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).

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

Table 13: Difficulties with academic writing	
65%	<i>Finding good quality sources</i>
28%	<i>Referencing and citation</i>
45%	<i>Paraphrasing</i>
28%	<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 to compensate for 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 such matches in 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. However, only 30% of student respondents and 50% of the teachers agreed that punishment may be appropriate for such conduct. The much lower number of students and teachers positively identifying possible nuances in the extent of plagiarism from the remaining examples, particularly focusing on the difference between cases (a) and (d), suggests that students' confidence in understanding academic writing conventions may be misplaced and that some teachers may themselves be inadvertently plagiarising. The low number of respondents opting for "punishment" may be indicative of a culture where academic misconduct and plagiarism are not seen as requiring sanctions.

Student Question 15, Teacher question 19: Examples of possible 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	71%	4%	19%	30%	word for word with no quotations
b	51%	8%	34%	22%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	25%	31%	38%	7%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	24%	25%	43%	4%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	26%	17%	49%	8%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	24%	33%	34%	2%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

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%	50%	word for word with no quotations
b	83%	0%	17%	33%	word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations
c	17%	33%	50%	17%	word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations
d	50%	17%	33%	33%	with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations
e	50%	33%	17%	33%	with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations
f	0%	83%	17%	0%	with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations

## 6. Examples of good practice

Very few examples of good practice in academic integrity policies for Bulgaria were provided by respondents. However the use of software to aid detection and prevention of plagiarism in at least one institution in Bulgaria is to be welcomed as suggested by one teacher: *“automatic inspection and monitoring of Internet resources”*. However another teacher respondent was less positive: *“There are no “best practices”*” (teacher questionnaire, translated). Other requests for suggestions generally reverted to providing examples of poor practice, some of which have been included earlier in this report.

As observed in other EU countries, there are individuals and small pockets of like-minded Bulgarian academics who would like to see sweeping changes to educational standards and quality both within their institutions and across the wider Higher Educational sector. However, these people are not sure how or where to start this process and have no means of connecting to each other. Some people were already noticed by colleagues and students when trying to enforce stricter standards, a situation which elsewhere has led other people to be disciplined or even be forced to relocate to a different institution or job. Such people deserve to be supported and encouraged.

It was encouraging to discover that use of ghost writing commissioned by students for writing assessments was identified as a problem by one respondent (senior management). Worryingly the participant was confident that software matching tools would locate this work and while there is some doubt whether this is generally true, this does provide evidence of some vigilance.

## 7. Discussion

No previous research has been located into policies for plagiarism and academic misconduct in Bulgarian HE institutions and it has proved difficult to persuade people to participate in this research. However the limited data that has been collected provides a very useful insight into current assessment practices in Bulgaria. It is impossible to ascertain how representative the information is of the whole of the Bulgarian HE sector, but the different viewpoints highlighted in this report provide a very useful starting point for recommending actions that will lead to improved practices, nationally and institutionally.

The apparent lack of any quality assurance framework in Bulgaria, or any embedded tradition of academic oversight, will mean that introducing any reforms will be difficult. This should not deter an attempt to recommend some challenging changes, but it would be unrealistic to expect too much impact in the short term at least.

By far the most positive outcome from the research is the feedback from students about what needs to be done to make the necessary changes. Far from being lazy, looking for something for nothing from their university studies, as suggested by responses from some teachers, the student participants demonstrated good insight into both causes and remedies for plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Their views have greatly influenced the recommendations that follow.

## 8. Recommendations for Bulgaria

### 8.1 Nationally

- 8.1.1 High level guidelines should be drawn up, with timetable for implementation, to advise higher education institutions on required policy reforms, to move towards a national minimum standard on policies and procedures for assuring quality and academic integrity in student assessment, in line with the Bologna agreement. Such guidelines could be based on similar provision elsewhere, for example the Quality Assurance Agency, UK's Quality Code
- 8.1.2 The national government should release small amounts of funding to facilitate awareness-raising about the need for academic integrity across all levels of higher education in Bulgaria (incorporating honesty, trust, fidelity, ethical conduct, scholarly practices, academic writing standards). This could be achieved by promoting a series of guest seminars and running interactive workshops for academic staff, administrator and students, making use of both local knowledge and external expertise.
- 8.1.3 The current system of national accreditation inspections for higher education universities and colleges could be extended to incorporate monitoring of the effectiveness of policies and procedures for assuring academic quality and standards, particularly relating to institutional oversight of assessment practices, misconduct and plagiarism.
- 8.1.4 The national government could encourage higher education Institutions to make use of technological aids for supporting the detection and prevention of student plagiarism by offering a financial subsidy to purchase software licenses. National support for guidance and training in the implementation and application of digital tools would help to ensure intelligent use of the software, based on experience and best practice elsewhere in the world.
- 8.1.5 "Whistle blowers" should be supported, to encourage people to expose genuine cases of academic fraud or dishonesty, rather than silenced or intimidated.

### 8.2 Institutionally

- 8.2.1 Higher Education Institutions need to provide strong leadership to promote high standards in academic quality and academic integrity, in line with the requirements of the Bologna agreement. Internal systems for monitoring and advising will help to create a supportive culture, while sending a strong message that maintaining status quo is not an option. It is possible that new strategy, policies and procedures will need to be devised to bring about such changes.
- 8.2.2 Institutions should listen to the views of academic teachers and managers when devising policies and procedures about academic integrity to ensure that what is mandated is practical and feasible. If teaching staff are genuinely consulted there is more likely the change management will be effective.
- 8.2.3 It is important that senior managers listen to the student voice prior to setting institutional policy. Engagement of student leaders in this process can encourage buy-in and compliance, particularly where major changes are likely.
- 8.2.4 Institutions may find it valuable to make use of ideas from external academics and researchers in this area in order to establish what policy options are available and have worked elsewhere before deciding which would best suit the particular needs of the institution.
- 8.2.5 Institutions should try to acquire an institutional licence for text matching software. Before implementing the tools institutions should define regulations, policies and procedures clarifying use of the tools and provide training for all staff.
- 8.2.6 Training, education and support for students should be provided on academic integrity, plagiarism, techniques for writing and appropriate use of good quality sources and guidance should be provided for student use of software for text matching.
- 8.2.7 An on-going development programme should be provided for academic staff involved in teaching and assessment that encourages dialogue about academic standards and integrity.
- 8.2.8 In line with requests from student participants, academic teaching staff should be encouraged to set more challenging student assessments that help to discourage plagiarism and academic dishonesty with rewards for critical thinking and creativity.
- 8.2.9 Every HE institution should encourage dialogue across the academic community about all matters relating to quality and standards.

### *8.3 Individual academics:*

- 8.3.1 Academic teaching staff should be mindful of the recommendations at national and institutional level and how they would be affected. They should encourage colleagues and managers to bring about similar complementary changes “bottom up”, at faculty and departmental levels.
- 8.3.2 Where possible academic staff interested in raising standards in assessment and academic integrity should attend and contribute to professional development activities.
- 8.3.3 Academic teaching staff should communicate with colleagues and students to establish what resources are needed to support student awareness about academic integrity issues and further learning and development. Many suitable resources already exist and are available for free, but may need to be translated or adapted for use in Bulgaria.
- 8.3.4 Any suspected cases of plagiarism or academic dishonesty uncovered need to be investigated and suitable action taken according to an agreed and consistent set of regulations and procedures. If not already available, the underlying policies will need to be established either at departmental, faculty or institutional level.

- 8.3.5 Software tools have proved very useful in various places and in part of Bulgaria for aiding the detection of plagiarism. They also have wider applications for detecting students copying each other (collusion) and when used formatively for helping students to learn to write in a more academic style (for example Davis 2009, Ireland and English 2011). Academic staff are encouraged to request that their institution purchases licenses for suitable digital text matching tools (also see 8.1.4, 8.2.5).
- 8.3.6 Any academic interested in this topic wishing to become part of a research community in Bulgaria, linked to counterparts in Europe and across the world, is encouraged to make contact with the IPPHEAE team.

## 9. Conclusions

For Bulgaria, one of the advantages in coming late to the developments in this area is that there is no need to waste time by learning from your own experience, so much more is known and documented than say ten years ago about what strategies, policies and systems can be effective and what approaches work less well (for example Carroll 2005, Carroll and Appleton 2001, Davis 2009, Ireland and English 2011, Neville 2010, Park 2003, Park 2004, Morris 2011, Rowell 2009, Tennant and Rowell 2009, Tennant and Duggan 2010).

The major hurdles to progress would be lack of will to make changes, nationally, institutionally and between individual academics on the front line of the educational process. Some strong leadership is needed to kick-start this process, followed up by on-going monitoring and support. Some investment will be needed, but small amount of funding well applied could begin a rapid cascade of reforms.

The apparent negativity among some respondents about the current situation, coupled with a tendency for some people to view Bulgaria as “a lost cause” and den of corruption, needs to be turned around. The misplaced energy could be used to bring about required reforms and slowly but surely prove the critics wrong.

## References

- Universities in Bulgaria (2007) Human Resource Development Centre  
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe/files/dmfile/UNinBG.pdf> [accessed 26/06/13]
- 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> [26/06/2013]
- Carroll, J. (2005). *Handling Student Plagiarism: Moving to Mainstream* [online]  
<http://bejlt.brookes.ac.uk/vol1/volume1issue2/perspective/carroll.html> [accessed 26/03/12]
- Carroll, J. and Appleton, J. (2001) *Plagiarism: A Good Practice Guide* [online] available from  
<[www.plagiarismadvice.org/documents/brookes.pdf](http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/documents/brookes.pdf)> [06/12/11]
- Davis, M. (2009). The role of Turnitin within the formative process of EAP: a tool for global academic culture. *BALEAP 2007 Conference Proceedings*.
- Ireland, C., English, J. (2011). Let them plagiarise: Developing Academic Writing in a Safe Environment. *Journal of Academic Writing*, 1(1) 165-172
- 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]

Macdonald, R. and Carroll, J. (2006). Plagiarism: A Complex Issue Requiring a Holistic Institutional Approach. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31 (2), 233-245.

Neville, C. (2010). *The Complete Guide to Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism*. Open University Press.

Park, C. (2003). In other (people's) words: plagiarism by students—literature and lessons, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 28(5), pp. 471–488.

Park, C. (2004). Rebels without a Cause: Towards an Institutional Framework for Dealing with Student Plagiarism. *Journal of further and Higher Education*, 28 (3), 291-306.

Morris, E., *Policy Works* (2011) Higher Education Academy for England

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/academicintegrity/policy\\_works.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/academicintegrity/policy_works.pdf) [accessed 06/05/13]

Quality Code, Quality Assurance Agency, UK: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/default.aspx> [accessed 28/06/13]

Rowell, G. (2009) *A National Strategy for Ensuring Authenticity in Student Work*, EDULearn13 Conference, Barcelona, Spain 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> 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.

*Author Irene Glendinning*

*With contributions from Anna Michalska and Stella-Maris Orim*

*October 2013*

Annex BG-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	45%	17%	25%	50%	26%	33%	Students receive training in techniques for scholarly academic writing and anti-plagiarism issues
S5b T5p	26%	50%	16%	0%	53%	50%	I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5c T5b	15%	34%	33%	0%	49%	67%	This institution has policies and procedures for dealing with plagiarism
T5c		34%		50%		17%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism prevention
T5d		17%		33%		50%	I believe this institution takes a serious approach to plagiarism detection
S5d T5e	19%	34%	32%	17%	47%	50%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to students
T5f		34%		50%		17%	Plagiarism policies, procedures and penalties are available to staff
S5e T5g	21%	33%	38%	67%	36%	0%	Penalties for plagiarism are administered according to a standard formula
S5f T5h	24%	17%	40%	67%	29%	0%	I know what penalties are applied to students for different forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty
S5g T5i	28%	17%	43%	67%	26%	0%	Student circumstances are taken into account when deciding penalties for plagiarism
S5h T5m	15%	50%	40%	17%	39%	33%	The institution has policies and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty
T5j		0%		17%		50%	The penalties for academic dishonesty are separate from those for plagiarism
T5k		34%		50%		17%	There are national regulations or guidance concerning plagiarism prevention within HEIs in this country
T5l		83%		17%		0%	Our national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in HEIs
S5i T5n	37%	0%	31%	17%	31%	83%	I believe one or more of my teachers/colleagues may have used plagiarised or unattributed materials in class notes
S5j	38%		23%		39%		I have come across a case of plagiarism committed by a student at this institution
S5k T5o	40%	50%	22%	50%	38%	0%	I believe I may have plagiarised (accidentally or deliberately)
S5l T5q	30%	50%	41%	50%	25%	0%	I believe that all teachers follow the same procedures for similar cases of plagiarism
S5m T5r	25%	50%	38%	33%	37%	17%	I believe that the way teachers treat plagiarism does not vary from student to student
S5n T5s	21%	33%	32%	67%	47%	0%	I believe that when dealing with plagiarism teachers follow the existing/required procedures
S5o T5t	16%	0%	33%	17%	46%	83%	It is possible to design coursework to reduce student plagiarism
S5p T5u	21%	0%	34%	17%	42%	83%	I think that translation across languages is used by some students to avoid detection of plagiarism
S5q	40%		24%		24%		The previous institution I studied was less strict about plagiarism than this institution
S5r	12%		27%		54%		I understand the links between copyright, Intellectual property rights and plagiarism