

## THE FUNDAMENTAL ROLE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN THE AXIOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL SPACE

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### Summary

In the article, the authors define the concept of 'academic integrity' and determine the relationship of academic integrity with the main European values, such as academic freedom, critical thinking and trust, emphasising its role in the formation of a reliable and transparent educational environment. It is noted that in the context of rapid digitalisation and globalisation, where the availability of information is increasing, the issue of honesty and originality in educational and scientific activities becomes extremely important. Academic integrity acts as a fundamental ethical principle that guarantees the quality of the educational process, the reliability of scientific research and the legitimacy of qualifications. The authors analyse various dimensions of integrity – systemic, institutional, collegial and individual – demonstrating the complexity of its implementation and support at all levels of the educational space. Modern mechanisms for ensuring and promoting academic integrity are considered, including legislative initiatives, institutional policies, the role of European networks and the use of technological solutions to combat plagiarism. As a result of the pedagogical discourse, which was based on the analysis of scientific sources and self-reflection of experience, it was established that academic and pedagogical staff, as carriers of academic culture, are obliged to comply with the requirements of academic integrity in their professional activities.

**Key words:** academic integrity, plagiarism, european values, education, educational process.

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### 1. Introduction

The rapid digitalisation of the educational space is one of the main challenges for modern academic integrity. While information technology expands access to scientific resources and improves knowledge sharing, it also creates new challenges for maintaining integrity in education. After the Law of Ukraine «On Education» in 2017 legislated the principle of academic integrity, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine developed methodological recommendations for heads of educational institutions. These recommendations emphasize the importance of compliance with the norms of academic integrity by all participants in the educational process: teachers, researchers and students. Particular emphasis is placed on the

obligation of the administration of educational institutions to implement effective mechanisms to prevent and detect violations of academic integrity. This is key to ensuring a quality and fair educational environment.

Integration of Ukrainian higher education into the European space is impossible without a deep understanding of modern European practice of quality assurance in higher education, as well as knowledge of relevant models and international standards. In this context, academic integrity plays a fundamental role in the axiological structure of European education. It is an integral part of the quality system that guarantees the credibility of educational qualifications and research, and is therefore a prerequisite for successful integration.

The issues of researching academic integrity in educational institutions are reflected in the works of L. Kartashova, S. Alekseeva, V. Romakin, V. Sherstyuk, V. Kasadzhuk, T. Tymochko, O. Semenoh, V. Sherstyuk, M. Zharykov, O. Korobkin, T. Becher, V. Humboldt, and others.

## 2. Analysis of the definitions of «academic integrity»

Academic integrity, often identified with scientific honesty, is a key ethical principle governing educational and research activities. It requires unconditional adherence to high standards of honesty, intellectual integrity, and moral transparency at all stages of academic work, from teaching and conducting research to preparing publications (*Alekseeva, 2024*).

As the scientists note in their research (*Bilous, Pylypchuk, 2019*), «...academic integrity is a fundamental component of a quality educational process and effective research. Its provision is the result of consolidated efforts all subjects of the academic community – students, research and teaching staff, administrative staff of educational institutions and state education authorities».

In particular, in the Law of Ukraine of 05.09.2017 «On Education», Article 42 V of the Law defines academic integrity as «a set of ethical principles and rules established by law that should guide participants in the educational process during learning, teaching and conducting scientific (creative) activities in order to ensure confidence in learning outcomes and/or scientific (creative) achievements».

The analysis of scientific research and own pedagogical experience leads me to the conclusion that academic integrity encompasses several interrelated dimensions, each of which plays a role in the formation of an honest and high-quality educational and scientific environment:

- The systemic dimension. At this level, the principles of academic integrity are enshrined in legislation and regulations at the level of the entire higher education and research system. The introduction of strict sanctions for violation of these norms is a key tool for eradicating negative phenomena and forming a new culture of integrity in the academic environment. This creates a legal framework for the functioning of an integrity system.

- The institutional dimension. This refers to the implementation of the principles of academic integrity at the level of specific educational institutions. This includes the development and implementation of corporate codes, rules of conduct and organisational documents that reflect integrity values. The institution establishes sanctions for non-compliance with these rules, which helps to cultivate academic integrity among its staff and students.

- The collegial dimension. This level refers to the academic community as a whole, bringing together all participants in educational and research activities: students, postgraduate students, teachers and administrators. It emphasises mutual responsibility and joint efforts to uphold the principles of integrity.

– The individual dimension. This is the level of the individual – student, teacher, researcher or manager. It focuses on personal and professional ethics, as well as the desire to maintain one's reputation and gain respect in the academic environment.

It is important to note that the individual and collegial levels relate to personal relations, while the institutional and systemic levels relate to regulatory and administrative regulation and responsibility.

### 3. Academic Integrity as a Guarantee of Higher Education Quality in Europe

Modern European practice is based on a centuries-old tradition of academic freedom, responsibility and the pursuit of truth. The European educational area is based on a number of axiological values that are an integral part of its identity. These include academic freedom, institutional autonomy, critical thinking, pluralism, openness and democracy. Academic integrity is not a separate element, but is organically woven into this value structure, being its essential condition.

Academic freedom implies not only the freedom to teach and research, but also the responsibility for its fair use. Dishonest practices, such as plagiarism or falsification, undermine the very idea of academic freedom, turning it into permissiveness (*Harashchuk, Kutsenko, 2019*).

Critical thinking is the foundation of the European educational tradition, and it can only be developed in an environment where the independence of thought, originality and truthfulness are valued.

Trust and transparency, which are fundamental to integrity, allow for the mutual recognition of qualifications and the mobility of students and teachers within Europe.

Thus, academic integrity acts as a moral compass and ethical framework that guides and supports the values of European education.

Academic integrity in Europe is implemented at several interrelated levels, each of which plays a unique role in its support and promotion. At the institutional level, the principles of academic integrity are embodied in specific policies and practices of higher education institutions. This allows system-wide norms to be adapted to the specifics of each university or college:

– Codes of academic integrity and ethics. Most European universities develop their own codes that detail the expected standards of behaviour for students, faculty and administration. These codes are often part of the statutes or internal regulations.

– Rules and procedures. Clear rules are in place for citation, presentation of research papers, examinations, and procedures for dealing with integrity issues (e.g., disciplinary committees).

– Training and awareness programmes. Universities organise trainings, seminars and information campaigns for students and teachers on academic integrity, its importance and the consequences of violations.

– Use of software. Systems for checking texts for plagiarism are actively used, which is an important tool for preventing and detecting dishonest practices.

– Quality assurance models. Academic integrity is integrated into internal quality assurance systems, which involves regular monitoring and evaluation of compliance with relevant standards.

At the institutional level, the principles of academic integrity are reflected in a number of key documents that regulate the activities of higher education institutions. These include the charter, collective agreement, internal (labour) regulations, code of academic integrity and corporate ethics, and the university development strategy (programme).

At the systemic level, the principles of academic integrity are enshrined in national legislation and international agreements, creating a legal and regulatory framework for their functioning. Many European countries have implemented provisions on academic integrity in their laws on education and science. For Example, in Ukraine, this is the principle of academic integrity enshrined in the Law of Ukraine "On Education" of 2017, which provides for liability for its violation. Within the Bologna Process (European Higher Education Area – EHEA), academic integrity is recognised as a key element of quality assurance and mutual recognition of diplomas. The Bologna Process documents, such as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), directly or indirectly require compliance with the principles of integrity. Numerous recommendations and reports from the Council of Europe and the European Union (e.g., the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity) are aimed at harmonising approaches to academic integrity and combating dishonesty in the Member States.

These systemic measures create a unified legal framework that allows for the formation of a new culture of rejection of dishonesty in the academic environment.

European networks and associations play a key role in coordinating efforts, sharing experiences and developing common standards of academic integrity. For example, the European Network of Academic Integrity (ENAI), founded in 2017, is a leading organisation that brings together experts, researchers and practitioners in the field of academic integrity. It conducts research, organises conferences, workshops, and develops guidelines and tools for educational institutions. Their Guidelines for Developing Effective Academic Integrity Policies are an important resource for European universities. The European University Association (EUA) is actively working to improve the quality of higher education, and academic integrity is an integral part of its agenda. The EUA conducts research, publishes reports and organises events aimed at strengthening integrity in European universities. The European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (ENQA), as the main network of quality assurance agencies, integrates academic integrity requirements into its accreditation standards and procedures. The establishment of a working group on academic integrity in 2020 underlines its importance for the external quality assurance system. The Council of Europe actively cooperates with universities and educational institutions to develop recommendations and programmes aimed at promoting integrity, including the "Compendium of Best Practices for Promoting Academic Integrity during Covid-19" (2021).

These organisations contribute to a common understanding and approach to academic integrity across Europe. In European universities, academic integrity is seen as an integral part of the quality of the educational process. This approach is enshrined in the Bucharest Declaration of Ethical Values and Principles for Higher Education in the European Region, adopted in September 2004 at an international conference in Bucharest. In the Values and Principles section of the Declaration, the importance of academic ethics, culture and community is clearly outlined, and the role of academic integrity is emphasised in such aspects as teaching and learning, democratic and ethical leadership and governance, research based on academic integrity and social responsibility (*Dzhurylo, 2022*).

The Paris Communiqué of 25 May 2018 emphasises the fundamental importance of academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, as well as student and staff participation in the governance of higher education and social responsibility for it. These values are the foundation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

As these principles have been challenged in some countries in recent years, European Ministers are strongly committed to promoting and defending them across the entire EHEA through intensive political dialogue and cooperation.

Given the long experience of combating dishonesty, European universities justifiably qualify it as a significant threat to academic security. This leads to the development and implementation of institutional regulations, including systems of penalties and sanctions. The vast majority of European higher education institutions operate on the basis of their own Codes of Ethics, which consolidate the principles of responsibility, competitiveness, public service, ethical behaviour, law-abidingness, support for international cooperation and environmental respect. The current trends in the development of academic integrity in the European context are characterised by the influence of globalisation, the integration of professional ethics and deontology into the educational process, and increased informatisation.

#### 4. Conclusions

The modern educational process should be based on the principles of honesty, responsibility, transparency, respect and ethics, while integrating innovative technologies and advanced techniques. Academic staff, researchers and teachers, as carriers of academic culture, are obliged to comply with the requirements of academic integrity in their professional activities. This includes: mandatory references to sources when using other people's ideas, developments, statements or information; compliance with the legislation on copyright and related rights; provision of reliable information on research methods and results, sources used and own pedagogical (research, teaching, creative) activities; maintaining a research protocol; monitoring compliance with academic integrity by students; and objective assessment of learning outcomes. Academic integrity is not just a set of rules, but a fundamental value guide underlying the quality of higher education in Europe. It is a prerequisite for building trust in educational qualifications, the reliability of scientific research, and ensuring sustainable development of society. In the context of rapid digitalisation and globalisation, the importance of academic integrity only increases, as it is a guarantee of the authenticity of knowledge and professional competence of graduates.

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