

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TO THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY PRINCIPLES ADHERENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

## СТАВЛЕННЯ СТУДЕНТІВ ДО ДОТРИМАННЯ ПРИНЦИПІВ АКАДЕМІЧНОЇ ДОБРОЧЕСНОСТІ В ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ

*The article considers the students' attitude to adherence to the principles of academic integrity by university students and faculty. The outcome of the research presented is aimed at solving the problem of adherence to the principles of academic integrity by the academic community of Vinnytsia National Technical University. The article illustrates the results of a sociological survey conducted among Master Degree students and suggests practical recommendations for enhancing academic integrity in learning environment. The detailed analysis of the questionnaire in figures and percentage is shown. The conclusions drawn can motivate students and faculty to inform and improve various aspects of educational process at higher institutions.*

**Key words:** sociology, academic integrity, principles of academic integrity, fundamental values, academic performance, higher education quality assessment.

*У статті розглянуто ставлення студентів до дотримання принципів академічної доброчесності студентами та викладачами університету. Результати проведеного дослідження спрямовані на вирішення проблеми дотримання принципів академічної доброчесності науковою спільнотою Вінницького національного технічного університету. Стаття ілюструє результати соціологічного опитування, проведеного серед магістрів першого року навчання Вінницького національного технічного університету, та пропонує практичні рекомендації щодо підвищення академічної доброчесності в освітньому середовищі. Наведено детальний аналіз результатів опитування в цифрах і відсотках. Висновки сприятимуть підвищенню мотивації студентів та викладачів*

*до інформування та вдосконалення різних аспектів навчального процесу у вищих навчальних закладах.*

**Ключові слова:** соціологія, академічна доброчесність, принципи академічної доброчесності, фундаментальні цінності, академічна успішність, оцінювання якості вищої освіти.

*В статье рассмотрено отношение студентов к соблюдению принципов академической добропорядочности студентами и преподавателями университета. Результаты проведенного исследования направлены на решение проблемы соблюдения принципов академической добропорядочности научным сообществом Винницкого национального технического университета. Статья иллюстрирует результаты социологического опроса, проведенного среди магистров первого года обучения Винницкого национального технического университета, и предлагает практические рекомендации по повышению академической добропорядочности в сфере образования. Приведен подробный анализ результатов опроса в цифрах и процентах. Выводы способствуют повышению мотивации студентов и преподавателей к информированию и совершенствованию различных аспектов учебного процесса в высших учебных заведениях.*

**Ключевые слова:** социология, академическая добропорядочность, принципы академической добропорядочности, фундаментальные ценности, академическая успеваемость, оценивание качества высшего образования.

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**Target setting.** Academic integrity being fundamental to teaching, learning, research and the advance of knowledge is important to every aspect of the educational process and the adherence to its principles becomes an indispensable condition for improving the quality of education.

Academic integrity is an interdisciplinary concept that provides the foundation for every aspect and all levels of education. The International Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as a commitment, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage [1].

It is important for students, teachers, researchers and professional staff to act in an honest way, be responsible for their actions and show fairness in every part of their work. All students and staff should be an example to others of how to act with integrity in their study and work. Academic integrity is important for an individual and a university reputation [2].

**Actual scientific researches and issues analysis.** Many recognized and renowned researchers con-

tributed to the establishment of fundamental values and honour codes in academic environment, McCabe, MacFarlane, W. Bower, Zhang being among them [3].

In the United States academic integrity has been emphasized as a topic of research since the early 1960s. William Bowers's seminal survey research on students' cheating behaviors laid the foundations of the further theoretical and practical research of the problem. Thirty years later, Don McCabe in cooperation with Bowers revised the data and conducted comparable research. McCabe's research led directly to the establishment of the Center for Academic Integrity (later renamed the International Center for Academic Integrity) and he became the most prominent and widely cited researcher in the field having published a number of works influencing the growing academic integrity research community. McCabe's final contribution was "The Handbook of Academic Integrity" (2016), with the conclusion that honor codes are "one of the most effective strategies to reduce cheating in academia and the larger society" [4].

**Uninvestigated parts of general matters defining.** The common idea of the recent investigations on the fundamental values of academic integrity has been to identify and define values upon which scientific research and educational process in higher education establishments rely. Recognizing the fact that the goals of teaching, learning and research can be accomplished in academic environments with ethical standards, many researchers, teachers and students adhere to the principles of academic integrity, embrace the fundamental values and improve ethical decision-making capacities and behavior. Promoting the fundamental values of academic integrity in higher education requires the mutual efforts of educators and learners, developing effective academic integrity programs being a major concern in scientific community.

The challenge is in contradiction between the further successful development of the educational system in Ukraine and highly skilled specialists, training and the conscious misunderstanding of the academic community (students, faculty, administrators, etc) the necessity of recognizing and adhering to the principles of academic integrity.

There exists an urgent need in putting the fundamental values into the practice of university communities. The potential risks of the lack of motivation and understanding can be eliminated by developing effective academic integrity programs, educating all members of the learning community about academic integrity standards.

**Research objective.** Vinnytsia National Technical University assists students' and staff mobility, promotes cultural and educational relations with higher educational institutions in Europe to share information, discuss and solve common problems at the university level. Meeting the current values and goals of the university community the authors conducted a sociological survey among Master Degree students of VNTU. The main aim of the survey was to study the best practices and expertise in academic integrity application, to enhance the initiatives of Ukrainian University at fostering academic integrity and developing the mechanisms within the teaching and learning process to form positive attitude towards professional ethics issues in education.

The object of sociological research is Master Degree students of Vinnytsia National Technical University studying at the Faculty of Computer Control Systems and Automatics, the Faculty of Civil Engineering, the Faculty of Power Engineering, Ecology and Electrical Mechanics, the Faculty of Information Technologies and Computer Engineering, the Faculty of Machine Building and Transport, the Faculty of Radio Engineering, Telecommunication and Electronic Instrument Engineering, the Faculty of Management and Information Security. The object consists of 445 people, 327 (73,5%) males and 118 (26,5%) females, aged 21 to 23 years being among them.

The subject of sociological research is the attitude of university students to adherence to the principles of academic integrity.

The purpose of this sociological study is to find out how Master Degree students of Vinnytsia National Technical University are committed to adhering to the principles of academic integrity and on the basis of the results obtained to develop practical recommendations on possible ways of solving this problem.

The task of sociological research is:

1. To find out the students' purpose of studying at the university and possible ways to achieve it.
2. To find out the relevance of the problem of complete or partial lack of academic integrity in the educational system.
3. To analyze the level of young people' awareness of falsification of data and cheating fraud practices used during the training.
4. To clarify the attitude of students to academic integrity.
5. To find out the possible reasons for non-compliance with the principles of academic integrity.
6. To find out the attitude of students to such manifestations of academic integrity violations as plagiarism, cheating and bribery.
7. To develop practical recommendations on possible ways of solving the problem of this sociological study.
8. To find out students' attitude to teachers in terms of academic honesty practices.

**The statement of basic materials.** In this paper on the basis of the presented and analyzed material the following hypothesis is put forward: the majority of participants in the academic community of VNTU adhere to the principles of academic integrity.

In the course of this sociological survey the following results were obtained:

According to the results of the answers to the first question of the questionnaire, one can conclude that only half of the students (250 people – 56,18%) have the purpose of studying at the university to obtain professional knowledge. Almost a third of all respondents (129 people – 28,99%) chose the answer – “getting a diploma”. The most unpopular answers were – “receiving scholarship” and “receiving parental approval”, which were chosen by 29 (6,52%) and 28 (6,29%) students, respectively. Only for 9 respondents (2,02%) it was difficult to answer this question.

According to the results of the answers to the question “How do you take exams?” it can be concluded that almost all the students – 400 people (90,91%) do this on their own, and only 32 (7,27%) do not take exams independently. 8 students (1,82%) refused to answer the question.

Being suggested to choose the method of mutual assistance in the group before taking the exam, the following results were obtained: more than half of the respondents – 256 students (58,18%) chose only the

preparation for the exam, one third of the respondents – 153 students (34,77%) assist each other before the exam, preparing cheat sheets, 18 students (4,09%) help to prepare cheat sheets. 13 respondents (2,95%) abstained from answering this question.

When analyzing the question concerning precarious methods students use to pass exams, the most popular option was chosen by almost half of all respondents – 224 students (40,8%), namely, “preparing a crib on the basis of lecture material or other material provided by a teacher”, 100 respondents (18,21%) chose “cheating answers to questions online”, 35 (6,38%) – “cheating other students”, 27 (4,92%) – “preparing cheat sheets on the basis of material found in the Internet, 23 (4,19%) – “an agreement with the teacher or administration as for assessment for services or remuneration”, 9 (1,64%) – “the use of technical means for consultation and recording” and only 5 students (0,91%) buy ready-made cribs. A large part – 126 students (22,95%) chose the answer “other”, hence it can be concluded that students can use methods not specified in the questionnaire or do not use them at all.

Answering the question “Are there any cases of higher education quality assessment for services provision or money at your faculty?” a third of the respondents – 167 students (37,95%) found it difficult answering the question, and another third – 165 students (37,5%) responded “negatively”. 89 respondents (20,23%) confirmed the possibility of getting FX marks. 19 students (4,32%) abstained from answering this question.

Answering the question who is the most frequent initiator of receiving remuneration for services provision or money, 66 respondents (15%) mentioned teachers, and the majority – 264 respondents (60%) mentioned students. 110 respondents (25%) refused to answer this question at all.

The next question was asked to choose which of the listed resources students use in their study. After analyzing the answers, one can conclude that half, namely 271 students (49%), rewrite the text from the source with their own words without reference to the origin; 60 students (10,85%) use foreign texts literally with reference to another source; 54 students (9,8%) download essays and other types of works from free sites of abstracts and use them as their own; 52 students (9,4%) use foreign texts without referring to authorship and translate foreign texts from foreign languages into Ukrainian and use them in their works without reference to the source; 47 students (8,5%) copy other people’s texts changing the order of words in the sentence without reference to the origin; 17 students (3%) join the group work without the author’s participation in writing the text.

The next question was asked to select those options that the respondents regard as plagiarized. The following results were obtained:

1. Use of other people’s texts (full or partial) without reference to authorship – 238 respondents (34,2%) have chosen.

2. Loading essays and other types of works from free sites and using them as their own – 134 students (19,28%).

3. Use of other people’s texts verbally with reference to another source – 89 students (12,81%).

4. Copying of foreign texts with the change of the order of words in the sentence without reference to the source – 87 students (12,5%).

5. Translation of foreign texts from one language to another and use them in their own works without reference to the source – 71 students (10,2%).

6. Coping and paraphrasing the text from the source without reference to the source – 41 students (5,9%).

7. Joining the group work without the author’s participation in writing the text – 35 students (5%).

Hence we can conclude that the students are partially aware of the fact that there is such kind of unfair practices as plagiarism.

The next questionnaire was about informativeness of students about the main criteria for detecting plagiarism. The majority of respondents – 232 students (52,7%) answered that they were informed, one third – 166 students (37,7%) answered “no” and 42 students (10%) of all respondents refused to answer the question.

The following answers were received to the question “What is the main factor of plagiarism popularity in the students’ environment?”:

1. The need for a large volume of written papers during the academic semester / year – 35,4%.

2. Lack of understanding of the necessity and purpose of writing written papers (non-professional, not interesting, obsolete subjects) – 18,2%.

3. Lack of practical application and prospects of application of the results of work – 15,1%.

4. Repeatability and irrelevance of written papers – 14,3%.

5. Teachers attitude towards plagiarism (neutral or positive) – 5,64%.

6. Controversial actions related to the conditions of preparation of written papers in high school – 4,2%.

7. Lack of clear and universal standards for assessing the originality of texts, and the relation with the assessment of written work – 4%.

8. Low level of professionalism, motivation and interest of teachers – 3,2%.

The results of the answers to the question “Are students’ projects checked on plagiarism?” can be demonstrated in the following percentage ratio:

1) difficult to answer – 25,5%;

2) sometimes – 25,3%;

3) yes – 22,3%;

4) often – 12,7%;

5) from time to time – 10,9%;

6) never – 5,7%.

The final questionnaire was about methods for checking student works. One third of the respondents (37,3%) chose the answer “teachers review printed versions of previously delivered projects”, another one-third (35%) chose “teachers use online search engines”, while the rest (27,6%) – “teachers use special programs”.

Taking into consideration all the above mentioned results we can conclude that more often students do not know about whether the teachers check their works on the lack of plagiarism.

**Conclusions.** It is worth mentioning the fact that the current survey results became a part of the elaborated academic integrity programme discussed in the course of academic visit of Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme participants to the Faculty of Business and Law of Northumbria University, United Kingdom, Newcastle city, initiated by the British Council (22–27 October 2018).

Taking into consideration the research results obtained and having the goal of promoting the fundamental values of academic integrity in higher education institutions the following recommendations are suggested:

1. To develop and introduce the effective and helpful programs and projects on academic integrity issues.
2. To organize discussions of the fundamental values and involve students in activity to combat cheating.
3. To educate students and faculty about academic integrity standards and potential risks and problems of their violation.

4. To support and encourage the learners who follow the policies and adhere to academic integrity standards.

5. To follow the current trends in educational practices and promote learning opportunities for students.

The introduction of the principles of academic integrity in Ukrainian higher education institutions is a question of raising the quality of higher education and the reputation of universities, increasing their rating, recognizing university diplomas at European and world levels, and motivating the competitiveness of graduates of these higher educational institutions.

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