

THE ROLE OF STUDENTS IN THE PRESERVATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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Academic integrity is usually protected at European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the work of various committees, expert bodies and services offered to students. In some cases, students get an opportunity to follow different courses aimed specifically to tackle certain aspects of academic integrity (i.e. courses on scientific research that aim to educate students on plagiarism and how to avoid it). However, academic integrity as an important part of higher education is still an underexplored topic among students at the European level.

European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students from 40 countries. Our members are student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles. Since 2020, ESU has been a member of the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI), and it is actively involved in international advocacy on academic integrity from students' perspective. Our goal is to ensure that students actively participate in promoting the values of academic community, uphold them and share the good practices, not only on the international and national levels, but locally within their communities as well.

Through our participation at the European Conference on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism (ECAI) 2021, ESU will present various ways in which students can actively engage in protection of students' rights, mainly through offering peer-to-peer support in the aspects of academic integrity, academic freedom and human rights. Students' rights within this topic, as defined by ESU, are guaranteed rights and obligations all students' have during their time of studies at a particular higher education institution of their choice. They include the rights to students' support services, right to the quality of education, right to vote in students' elections and

to be a candidate in the elections, right to organize into students' groups, right to the protection of their intellectual property etc., without any discrimination based on faith, origin, gender, culture, belief¹. We will explore the impact that students' representatives can have through active participation in promotion of these values, not only as members of university bodies, but through the role of students' ombudspersons as well.

Additionally, we shall present some of the most common breaches of academic standards students notice among their colleagues and teaching staff, warning about the importance of critical dialogue, sharing best practices and assuring that integrity is honoured by all members of the academic community (based on internal consultation with ESU's Board members). Such breaches include plagiarism, contract cheating, collusion, cheating, dishonesty, data fabrication, conflict of interest, ghost authorship and students' intellectual property protection. We want to help institutions engage students more by including them in different ethical bodies or bodies on academic integrity values, and training them to spread awareness, actively participate in upholding academic values, and contribute to the development of new approachable ways to counter academic dishonesty.

On the international level, students can help in sharing best practices through the newly established Working Group for students of ENAI, welcoming all those who wish to contribute to upkeeping the before-mentioned values. How can these students become a voice on the European level for the desired outcomes, and help their colleagues in establishing transparent educational systems? We aim to demonstrate the necessity of their involvement in cooperation with the HEIs existing systems, experts and practitioners.

¹2008 Students' Rights Charter; European Students' Union; 2008; link: <https://www.esu-online.org/?policy=students-rights-charter>

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