

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS AGAINST FRAUD IN EVALUATIONS: THE SITUATION OF POSTGRADUATE LEVEL IN SPAIN

Maria Isabel Montserrat Sánchez-Escribano¹, Rubén Comas Forgas^{1,2}

¹*University of the Balearic Islands, Spain*

²*Stockholm University, Sweden*

Background

This work focuses on fraud in evaluations by Spanish postgraduate students and its regulation and policies designed by universities as a device to combat it. The main aim of the poster is to describe, by using content analysis to assess the regulatory systems in place in 45 Spanish universities, how Spanish higher education institutions design and elaborate regulations and policies regarding academic misconduct behaviours amongst its postgraduate students. We try to elucidate to what extent and with what orientations Spanish universities have put in place regulatory mechanisms to deal with transgressions against academic probity conducted by postgraduate students. These regulatory provisions can be

classified into 2 categories: on the one hand, those of a general nature, approved by the legislative body and that are applicable to all universities, and on the other, those of a specific character to each institution, approved by the various university governing bodies. These latest regulatory devices, those originated by each university, have been developed under the article 2 of Organic Law 6/20015 (BOE, 2001) and are conditioned by a general legal regime that in 2010 was reinforced with the approval of the Royal Decree 1791/2010, of December 30, approving the University Student Statute (BOE, 2010), which regulates the obligations and rights of students.

Methodology

To answer the research questions, content analysis has been used, a method that allows making inferences not only about the texts being analysed but also about the issuer or the audience (Weber, 1990).

The analysis material is constituted by the norms, policies, codes and general documentation that, in one way or another,

incorporate the issue of integrity in the evaluations in postgraduate levels. The identification and retrieval of these documents was done online: the texts were retrieved from the analysis of the websites of Spanish universities (all the 45 public universities), locating 89 documents that are the sample of this study.

Results

The vast majority of the Spanish universities include aspects related to the evaluation and qualification of the subjects —and, consequently, *ad-hoc* policies on academic fraud— in the regulations of its official

Bachelor's and Master's degrees, without having approved an equivalent norm for the Doctorate level. In some others, the same regulation is applicable to all the official programmes, both in undergraduate and postgraduate levels, taught

at the universities. In a third group, a smaller one, there are specific regulations for each one of the three official programmes (undergraduate, Master and Doctoral).

Spanish universities have designed measures against the phenomenon of fraud from a double perspective: a) prevention and punishment; distinguishing two areas: exams and academic assignments. As a fairly widespread preventive measure in exams against the phenomenon of identity theft and similar behaviours, most universities allow professors to demand documentation proving the student's identity before or during an exam. However, the consequences of non-identification differ from one university to another: some establish that, if a student is not identified, he/she will not be able to take the exam, while others allow him/her to present proof of identity later, being able to continue the test or exam, which will be graded only if the documentation is submitted within the term established by the university.

A second and quite common preventive measure is the prohibition of leaving the place of examination or access to it once the examination has begun. Some universities grant 15 minutes to be late for the exam and others allow students to be temporarily absent for exceptional reasons that will be assessed to the responsible lecturer/professor in charge of surveillance, who will also provide that the student is accompanied by someone from the faculty staff during his/her absence. Additional

Conclusions

From the data obtained, we can affirm that, despite the fact that the regulations and policies of Spanish universities, for the most part, refer to the evaluation of postgraduate students and the issue of fraud is addressed, its treatment is very limited and superficial.

In summary, the analysis carried out provides universities with a map of situation regarding how academic dishonesty is contemplated in the regulations of Spanish universities, which

preventive measures are also foreseen, such as the installation of technological means in face-to-face or online tests (or the prohibition of telephone, electronic or computer devices. In fact, although they do not have been approved by regulations, most universities have adopted surveillance protocols for tests carried out online. Regarding to plagiarism, a practice to which few universities make explicit reference, it is scarcely foreseen that the assignments and materials handed-out by the students are accompanied by an explicit signed declaration regarding the originality of the work in Master's, or a commitment to comply with the code of good practices in Doctorate.

Behaviours typified in the postgraduate academic regulations and policies and the commissive means of fraud are generally summarized in a very generic description: use of any unauthorized material during exams, or possession of unauthorized electronic devices —also the alteration of the normal development of the evaluation process or the use of non-permitted means that affect the veracity of the evaluation—and only the few cases define the indeterminate and abstract concept of unauthorized material.

The consequences associated to academic fraud behaviours are widely repeated: regardless of whether or not a corresponding disciplinary process can be opened, the fraudulent completion of any fraud behaviour will result a qualification of 0 in the corresponding call.

can be used as a checklist when developing new regulations and policies.

Finally, it has to be said that a new University Coexistence Law is currently in parliamentary process in Spain. This provision considers academic fraud and plagiarism a very serious offense, and, once approved, will force universities to modify all regulations analysed in this present study.

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