

UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST'S STRATEGY FOR PREVENTING AND COMBATING PLAGIARISM

Preamble

The University of Bucharest has been and is a reference institution at national level in implementing and supporting a culture of academic ethics and deontology. Several regulations in the University Charter provide the normative framework for promoting a system of authentic values in the field of ethics both in terms of teaching and research staff and students. The Code of Ethics and Deontology of the University of Bucharest is "*in accordance with the mission of learning, research and public service*" and represents "*a tool for educating the members of the academic community in order to prevent the violation of the norms of university ethics*" adequate "*for developing of a culture of ethics and integrity in the University*" which "*must be respected both in its letter and in its spirit*". In the context of the outbreak of a broad public debate sparked by the public disclosure in 2012 of the plagiarism in the doctoral thesis of the Prime Minister of Romania at that time (Victor Ponta), the University of Bucharest reacted on several levels. On the one hand, the Ethics Committee and the University's management analysed the case and publicly confirmed the existence of plagiarism, requesting the withdrawal of the title of Doctor and terminating the contract with the doctoral supervisor, and on the other hand, the CSUD acted to prevent the occurrence of new cases of fraud in the elaboration of doctoral theses. In this regard, in addition to alerting doctoral schools and supervisors to the need for increased vigilance and traditional forms of quality control for doctoral theses, in 2013, the CSUD adopted a Procedure for the anti-plagiarism electronic verification of doctoral theses at the request of doctoral supervisors. Furthermore, in 2014, it implemented a Procedure for the preventive anti-plagiarism checking of theses randomly selected from those submitted for public defense. The experience gained from the preventive measures established at the University of Bucharest served as a source of inspiration for renewing the national legal framework for awarding the title of Doctor and analysing plagiarism in

Romania, leading to the amendment of the Code of Doctoral University Studies and the reorganisation of CNATDCU in 2016.

Beyond the rigorous application of quality control mechanisms for doctoral theses, the University of Bucharest continued to prioritize prevention, piloting courses on ethics and academic integrity even before they became mandatory through Ministerial Order (O.M.) no. 3131/2018. At the same time, through CARFIA and several projects funded by the Institutional Development Fund, the University of Bucharest promoted analyses and debates on academic integrity topics, providing training in this field for its own staff and other interested parties. The training strategy for academic integrity instructors aims to establish guidelines for the instruction and training of teaching staff and personnel with competencies in teaching, training, verifying, monitoring, analysing, and/or reporting issues related to academic integrity. These guidelines are set in alignment with the institutional development needs of the University of Bucharest.

The observance and cultivation of the norms of ethics and academic integrity is one of the main pillars of the internal quality assurance system of higher education within the University of Bucharest. This strategy also constitutes the normative framework for the operationalisation of prevention-based policies to combat plagiarism. Respect for the fundamental values of the university environment also starts from a series of energetic measures to combat any form of academic imposture.

Stages for the implementation of the Strategy and the provisions of O.M. no. 5255/2021

In the following, we shall synthetically list the main stages considered for the fulfilment of the objectives provided for in the Order, some of them having a temporal overlap. Starting from these stages, an investment plan, personnel expenses and other specific expenses will also be established.

I. Establishment of the Office for Analysis and Training in the Field of Academic Integrity

This separate office in the U.B. organisational chart is established in accordance with the Ministerial Order no. 5255 of September 10, 2021 on verifying the compliance with university ethics and deontology in the elaboration of doctoral theses in the period 1990-

2016 and, together with the Doctorate and Habilitation Office, will be part of the Doctorate, Habilitation and Integrity Service.

The duties and staff structure respond to technical and logistical needs, including by creating and managing a database of doctoral theses defended at the University of Bucharest in 1990-2016, and will ensure the implementation of training programmes for trainers in the field of ethics and integrity, the strengthening of the internal quality assurance system within doctoral studies in an integrated approach with the Ethics Committee and CARFIA.

In the same context, doctoral schools (faculties) will provide support and information on doctoral theses defended between 1990 and 2016 for specific fields.

II. Inventory of doctoral theses from 1990-2016

This action aims to establish the material situation and location of the almost 8000 theses defended in this time frame:

- theses already published by publishing houses;
- theses that exist only in physical format;
- theses that also exist on electronic media.

The physical condition and/or the status of the electronic media of the theses will be analysed, and other characteristics necessary for subsequent stages will be inventoried, including information on the enrolment year, public defense date, thesis title, doctoral supervisor, and Confirmation Order.

III. Creation of a database and a digital library of doctoral theses of the University of Bucharest

The public nature of the database and digital library will allow all interested parties to view information regarding the doctoral theses defended between 1990 and 2016 and to report any potential violations of academic ethics. The associated stages will include defining the detailed structure of the database and initiating the process of importing and uploading the doctoral theses into the database.

IV. Implementation of mechanisms for analysis and resolution of complaints.

The University of Bucharest will implement an updated mechanism for analysing and resolving complaints, which will ensure:

- Electronic registration of complaints
- Appointment by the Rector, upon the proposal of the Director of the C.S.U.D., of expert committees tasked with analysing the complaints and drafting a specialised report
- Right of appeal for the complainant in the event that the specialised report dismisses the complaint
- Submission of the thesis for review by the Ethics Committee if the specialised report confirms the suspicion of a breach of academic ethics
- Right of appeal for the author of the thesis if the Ethics Committee proposes the withdrawal of the doctoral degree and/or sanctions against the doctoral supervisor
- Submission of proposals for sanctions to the Rector of the University of Bucharest or to the Ministry of Education, as applicable.

V. Implementation of programmes for training instructors in the field of ethics and integrity

The main objective of this component of the strategy is to train with priority, at the highest quality standards, the personnel responsible for administering and enforcing the rules of academic integrity within the University of Bucharest. The secondary objective is to contribute to raising and strengthening quality standards in the field of academic integrity at institutional level. The University of Bucharest will initiate training programmes for *instructors in academic integrity*, which will be supported by specialists/trainers in the fields that define and structure the concept of academic integrity. The trainer will design, carry out and evaluate theoretical and practical activities within the training and professional skills development programmes specific to the field of academic integrity.

The following will be considered:

- Changing the paradigm at the institutional level from a policy characterised as being reactive, to a pro-active one, based on prevention
- Raising awareness among the academic community about the implications and effects of academic fraud

- Improving the quality of scientific publications produced by members of the academic community, through better dissemination of norms and standards on the publication and presentation of these contributions
- Creating a culture regarding whistleblowers in relation to possible activities assimilated to academic imposture.

The training programmes will include two distinct course modules, which will be taught differentially, for the training of trainers and the training of teaching/research and administrative staff in the academic sphere. The training priorities will follow three directions:

1. the transmission of essential knowledge in the field of academic integrity;
2. developing competences and skills specific to the field of academic integrity;
3. strengthening the specific knowledge of the position held.

The structure of the courses intended for the training of instructors will take into account an assurance of the professionalisation of the decision-making process, and for the training of the teaching/research and administrative staff, the component of knowledge of the rights and obligations arising from academic integrity will be emphasized. The University of Bucharest proposes the following course modules for which a training plan will be detailed:

Module no. 1. *Training of instructors. Academic integrity in scientific research*

This course will be intended in particular for members of ethics and ethics committees for scientific research, teaching staff who are part of the editorial boards of scientific journals, doctoral supervisors who have obtained their habilitation in the last five years and integrity advisors and representatives of doctoral students.

Module no. 2. *General continuous education module*

This module will have two components.

Component no. 1: *Academic integrity for trainers/ Special notions of academic integrity.*

This course will be intended for all professors teaching the compulsory course in ethics and academic integrity.

Component no. 2: *Introduction to academic integrity/General notions of academic integrity.*

This course will be aimed at employees interested in gaining a better knowledge and understanding of academic integrity issues. The course is recommended both for employees in the teaching and research area, as well as in the administrative area: chief secretaries or people who provide the secretariat for doctoral departments, but also for employees of the doctoral offices of the university, as well as representatives of doctoral students.

VI. General provisions

The strategy shall be accompanied by two annexes, the first containing the implementation deadlines and the second a detailed preparation plan.

The C.S.U.D. shall adopt the decisions on the implementation of the strategy within 60 days of its entry into force.

The strategy and database shall be public.

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