

Student awareness of fraud in education

We invite you to participate in this questionnaire designed specifically for higher education students like you.

This questionnaire is conducted by the Academic Equivalence Mobility Information Centre ([CIMEA](#)), in collaboration with the [Council of Europe](#).

It is targeted to higher education students and the objectives are to:

- Understand your knowledge of fraud in higher education.
- Raise awareness about this issue and enhance your ability to address it.
- Support the creation of tools that promote ethics and transparency in higher education.

Your participation is key in shaping our approach to foster a culture of integrity and transparency within the academic community. This includes policy makers, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders engaged in addressing fraud in education.

Background

This questionnaire is open to higher education students from the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention ([ETS No. 18](#)) represented at the Steering Committee for Education ([CDEDU](#)) of the Council of Europe.

This questionnaire builds on previous research from the Erasmus+ project "[FraudS+ - False Records, Altered Diploma, and Diploma Mills Qualifications Collection](#)", which led to the publication "[Knowledge and Awareness of Fraud in Education: A Student Perspective](#)". It has been updated according to the principles outlined in the Council of Europe's [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)18 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on countering education fraud](#).

What to Expect

The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Some of the questions are conditional and will appear based on your responses to previous items.

Your responses will be treated anonymously. You will be asked to indicate your country of study and level of education. This information will not be included in the survey report, and no further personal details will be requested.

For any issue or further questions about the questionnaire, please contact Elisa Petrucci, Head of International Projects Unit at CIMEA and member of the evaluation team at e.petrucci@cimea.it.

Thank you for your valuable contribution!

The questionnaire will be open until **6 September 2024**.

- [I have read and understood the data processing policy and confirm that I am of legal age.](#)

Before starting

1. In which country are you currently studying? *

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Albania
- Andorra
- Armenia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Belgium
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Holy See
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Kazakhstan
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Monaco
- Montenegro
- Netherlands
- North Macedonia
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Republic of Moldova
- Romania
- San Marino
- Serbia
- Slovak Republic
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Türkiye

- Ukraine
- United Kingdom

2. Which level are you currently studying at?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Bachelor
- Master
- PhD
- Other, please specify

3. What kind of educational programme are you attending?

- Full degree
- Short degree
- Single course
- Other. Please specify

Awareness of the phenomenon of fraud in education

4. How aware are you of what fraud in education is?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

1. Definitely not
2. Mostly unaware
3. Unsure
4. Mostly aware
5. Definitely aware

5. Please select the types of education fraud you are familiar with:

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Accreditation mills
- Diploma mills
- Essay mills
- Essay bank
- Visa mills
- Plagiarism
- None

Education fraud

Definitions¹

1. “**Education fraud**” is behaviour or action occurring in the field of education intended to deceive and obtain an unfair advantage. It includes: (i) the activities of diploma mills, accreditation mills, visa mills, essay mills and essay banks, as defined below; (ii) impersonation by undertaking in whole or in part any work or assessment required as part of a programme in the place of an enrolled learner; (iii) illegal or irregular use of authentic documents; (iv) plagiarism; (v) production or use of forged, plagiarised or counterfeit documents; and (vi) the offer of unrecognised or unaccredited qualifications with the intention of deceiving another.
2. “**Fraudulent education service providers**” include accreditation mills, diploma mills, essay mills, essay banks and visa mills, whether stand-alone or part of larger undertakings.
3. An “**accreditation mill**” is an institution or organisation (in any legal form) which is neither recognised by national competent authorities nor authorised by the law of any member State to provide accreditation for education programmes or awards, and which intends to mislead employers, students or the public.
4. A “**diploma mill**” (also known as a “degree mill”) is an institution or organisation which is not recognised by national competent authorities or organisations as an institution accredited or authorised by the law of any member State to confer awards or qualifications, and which purports, by means of misrepresentation, to issue such awards or qualifications
5. An “**essay mill**” (otherwise referred to as a provider of contract cheating services) is an organisation or an individual, usually with a web presence, which enters into contracts with students or their representatives to complete, in full or in part, one or more assignments (including student work such as essays, projects, theses and dissertations) for financial gain, whether or not the content is plagiarised, leading to a form of academic misconduct. For the avoidance of doubt, an essay mill does not include providers of private tutoring services lawfully operating within national legislation or regulations.
6. An “**essay bank**” is an organisation or an individual from which or whom students can purchase pre-written essays on topics relevant to their studies.
7. A “**visa mill**” is an institution or organisation (in any legal form) which is neither recognised by national competent authorities nor authorised by the law of any member State as an education institution, and which misrepresents itself as such with the objective of circumventing immigration law by supporting applications for visas or other permits which allow students to stay, study, work or access public funds in a given member State or in a group of member States (for example the Schengen area) with a common visa scheme.
8. “**Plagiarism**” means using work, ideas, content, structures or images without giving appropriate credit or acknowledgment to the original source(s), especially where originality is expected. The term “plagiarised” applies to the ideas, content, structures or images in question.

¹ All definitions presented in this section are contained in the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)18](#) adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 July 2022 and explanatory memorandum.

6. Did you already know these definitions before participating in the survey? Please rank from 1 to 5 (1 being 'Definitely not' and 5 being 'Definitely yes').

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Definitely not
- Mostly not
- Unsure
- Mostly yes
- Definitely yes

7. Now that you have read these definitions, please select again the phenomena you are familiar with.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Accreditation mills
- Fraudulent education service providers
- Accreditation mills
- Diploma mills
- Essay mills
- Essay bank
- Visa mills
- Plagiarism
- None

8. Do you think education fraud may negatively affect the quality in education?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

9. If your answer to the previous question is "yes," in your opinion, what are the main aspects affected/caused by education fraud? Please list them from the most important to the least.

Please list them from the most important to the least.

- Access to equal opportunities for learning and protection for all citizens
- Transparency of the national education systems
- Quality Assurance
- International mobility of students
- Employability
- National economy
- Credibility of regulated professions (e.g. medical sector) and public-service employment
- International reputation of the education institution and education system it belongs to
- Mechanisms of mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications at the international level

10. In your opinion, where is education fraud most commonly found? Please list the following points from the most to the least relevant

Please list the following points from the most to the least relevant

- Upper secondary education
- Post-secondary non tertiary education
- Tertiary education
- Bachelor
- Master
- Doctorate
- Lifelong learning
- Adult learning

Experiences of fraud in education

Please find below the definitions², if you need to read them again.

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² All definitions presented in this section are contained in the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)18 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 July 2022 and explanatory memorandum](#).

8. **“Plagiarism”** means using work, ideas, content, structures or images without giving appropriate credit or acknowledgment to the original source(s), especially where originality is expected. The term “plagiarised” applies to the ideas, content, structures or images in question.

11. Have you experienced fraud in education?

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Yes	Uncertain	No
Accreditation mills			
Diploma mills			
Essay mills			
Essay bank			
Visa mills			
Plagiarism			

12. How did you get information about activities that turned out to be fraudulent?

This question will be shown only if the answer to the question n° 11 was YES.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Advertising via web
- Advertising via email/spam
- Other type of advertising
- Searched for it yourself on Internet
- Contacts via social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, etc.)
- Students
- Colleagues
- Friends
- Family
-
- Other

13. If you experienced fraud in education within your academic community, whom did you report to?

This question will be shown only if the answer to the question n° 11 was YES.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- To the teacher of the course
- To the students' ombudsperson

- To the ethics committee
- To nobody, I don't consider it my responsibility
- To nobody, I was unaware it was illegal
- To nobody, I was unsure where and to whom to report it to
- To other, please specify
- It did not happen
- Other, please specify

14. In case you would experience fraud in education, to whom would you report to in your academic community?

This question will be shown only if the answer to the question n° 11 was NO.

Please choose **all** that apply:

- To the teacher of the course
- To the students' ombudsperson
- To the ethics committee
- To nobody, I don't consider it my responsibility
- To nobody, I am not aware it is illegal
- To nobody, I am unsure where and to whom to report it to
- To other, please specify
- I don't know
- Other, please specify

15. In your opinion, how frequently do instances of fraud occur within your academic community?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Almost always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never
- I don't know

16. Which departments or entities at your institution can you contact in case of fraud?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Faculty board
- Institutional/ University board
- Ethics committee
- Student Council
- Case-appointed committee
- None of the above
- I don't know
- Other, please specify

17. To your knowledge, what are the most common sanctions for fraud in education at your institution?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Oral or written warning
- Recorded misconduct
- Suspension of a student
- Freezing of work contract/ studies
- Termination of contract/ studies
- Financial penalty
- Other, please specify
- None of the above
- I don't know
- Other, please specify

18. Should you find yourself in the situation of reporting education fraud in your institution, would you consider yourself protected by your academic community?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

19. In your opinion, which measures could be put in place to make you feel more protected when reporting education fraud?

Please specify _____

Use of new technologies

20. How much do you agree with the hypothesis that there is a relation between new technologies (such as artificial intelligence) and education fraud?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

21. How much do you agree with the following sentence?

“AI and digital tools are not inherently problematic. Instead, it is essential for higher education institutions to change their perception and adapt to these new technologies”

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

22. Are you familiar with Artificial Intelligence tools (e.g. Generative AI, conversational agents, etc)?

Please choose only one of the following

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- Other, please specify

23. If the answer to the previous question is “yes”, have you ever used it for learning purposes?

This question will be shown only if the answer to the question n° 22 was YES.

Please choose only one of the following

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

24. If the answer to the previous question is “yes”, what did you use Artificial Intelligence tools (e.g. Generative AI, conversational agents, etc) for?

This question will be shown only if the answer to the question n° 23 was YES.

Please choose only one of the following

- Getting explanations on certain topics
- Getting help in drafting the structure of a paper
- Getting help in writing part or all of an assignment or academic paper
- Verifying if a paper would be accepted
- Other, please specify

25. In your opinion, can the use of AI tools and conversational agents be considered as a form of plagiarism?

This question will be shown only if the answer to the question n° 23 was YES.

Please choose only one of the following

- Yes
- No
- Depends on the type of use → please specify
- I don't know

26. If the answer to the previous question is “no”, what did you use AI tools and conversational agents for?

This question will be shown only if the answer to the question n° 25 was NO.

Please choose only one of the following

- Entertainment purposes

- To explore the responses provided by AI tools and conversational agents to questions in daily life
- Other, please specify

27. How much do you agree with the following sentence?

“New technologies are part of the problem of education fraud, as they easily allow to forge documents and create fake qualifications”.

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

28. How much do you agree with the following sentence?

“New technological tools can play a significant role in preventing and addressing education fraud; for example, they can facilitate secure exchanges of digital student data and enable the creation of online platforms to authenticate qualifications”.

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Initiatives to increase awareness in the academic community on fraud in education

29. Have you received training specifically focused on recognising and preventing fraud in education?

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes, in the initial phase of studying (first semester)
- Yes, both in the initial phase of studying (first semester) and while progressing through the studies
- No
- I don't know.

30. Is academic integrity included in the curriculum at your institution?

Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes, in the initial phase of studying (first semester)

- Yes, both in the initial phase of studying (first semester) and while progressing through the studies
- No
- I don't know

Tackling the phenomenon

31. What would you propose to further address fraud in education?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Code of ethics to be signed at enrollment
- Compulsory module on ethics and integrity
- Awareness campaign
- Tools to learn how to avoid committing fraud (e.g., tutorials on plagiarism prevention, etc.)
- Strengthening the role of the students' ombudsperson
- Development of appropriate skills in critical thinking, academic writing and research
- Other, please specify

32. Who do you think can play a significant role in addressing fraud in education?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- Student associations
- Universities
- Teaching staff
- Students
- National government
- Police
- International organisations
- Professional bodies
- Private organisations
- Companies
- I don't know

33. What actions do you think the national government can take to prevent and combat education fraud?

Please rank the following issues from most to least relevant

- Introduce in their legal framework to protect the names of qualifications and institutions to combat education fraud
- Provide adequate training on the prevention of education fraud while promoting ethics, transparency and integrity
- Introduce and develop technical solutions for the identification of education fraud at national level
- Prohibit the advertising and promotion of fraudulent education services
- Establish code of ethics at national level
- Establish measures to protect individuals who report education fraud
- Other, please specify

Conclusions

This survey was conducted within the scope of activities of the Council of Europe Ethics, Transparency, and Integrity in Education ([ETINED](#)) Platform.

34. Are you familiar with the work of the ETINED platform?

Please choose only one of the following

- Yes
- No

35. Do you have any additional comment?

[...]

Thank you very much for your valuable contribution!