TOPICAL SCIENTIFIC ISSUES

UNIVERSITY SYSTEM FOR ENSURING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

Artem Artyukhov
DSc in Economics, PhD in Engineering, Associate Professor
Sumy State University
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1112-6891
artyukhovartem83@gmail.com

This article explores the critical role of a comprehensive and well-structured system for ensuring academic integrity within universities. It examines the key components of such a system, including transparent policies, effective communication strategies, robust reporting mechanisms, and fair and consistent disciplinary procedures. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the crucial roles of various stakeholders, such as students, faculty, administrators, and external stakeholders, in successfully implementing and maintaining a strong academic integrity culture. The paper highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative environment where all stakeholders share responsibility for upholding academic integrity. It also discusses the challenges and potential solutions in creating and sustaining a university's academic integrity culture.

This study investigates the critical elements of a robust university system for ensuring academic integrity. It examines the role of transparent and consistently enforced policies, such as academic integrity codes, in fostering a culture of integrity. Furthermore, the research delves into the importance of effective communication strategies, including educational campaigns, workshops, and open forums, to disseminate information about academic integrity policies and raise awareness among all stakeholders. The study also explores the significance of robust reporting mechanisms that allow students, faculty, and staff to report suspected violations of academic integrity confidentially and without fear of retaliation. Finally, the research emphasizes the need for fair and consistent disciplinary procedures that uphold the principles of justice and due process.

By analyzing the experiences of successful universities and identifying best practices, this research aims to provide valuable insights for higher education institutions seeking to enhance their academic integrity systems. The findings of this study can inform the development of more effective policies and procedures, improve communication and training efforts, and ultimately create a stronger foundation for academic excellence and ethical conduct within the university environment.

Key words: *Academic integrity, university, stakeholders, policies, procedures*

Introduction. Academic integrity lies at the heart of higher education, fostering a culture of trust, honesty, and intellectual rigor. It is not merely a set of rules but a fundamental principle governing knowledge's pursuit. In an era of increasing globalization and rapid technological advancements, the challenges to academic integrity have become more complex and multifaceted. Plagiarism, fabrication of data, cheating on exams, and other forms of academic misconduct undermine the integrity of the educational process, erode public trust in higher education institutions, and hinder the advancement of knowledge. Therefore, establishing and maintaining a robust system for ensuring academic integrity is paramount for the success and reputation of any university (Fostering Academic Integrity-Minded Learning Environments, 2024; Mulenga & Shilongo, 2024).

Stakeholders play a crucial role in fostering an environment that promotes ethical behavior, accountability, and transparency within universities. These stakeholders include students, faculty, administrative staff, university leadership, accreditation bodies, and external partners such as employers and community organizations. Each group contributes uniquely to the overarching goal of uphold-

ing academic integrity, making their involvement essential for the effective functioning of the university system.

Analysis of recent research and publications. A strong system for ensuring academic integrity is not merely about detecting and punishing violations; it is fundamentally about creating a supportive and ethical learning environment where students are empowered to develop their intellectual potential honestly and responsibly. This requires a multifaceted approach encompassing clear and consistently enforced policies, effective communication strategies, robust reporting mechanisms, and fair and consistent disciplinary procedures. Moreover, fostering a culture of academic integrity necessitates actively engaging all stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators (What to do when academic integrity concerns arise, n.d.; Fostering Academic Integrity, n.d.).

The ethical implications of academic misconduct extend beyond the individual student. It undermines the credibility of research findings, distorts merit-based evaluation, and erodes public trust in the integrity of higher education. Furthermore, it can harm the individual student, hindering their personal and professional growth. By upholding the principles of academic integrity, universities protect the integrity of their academic mission and contribute to the development of a more just and equitable society (Mulenga & Shilongo, 2024).

A comprehensive and well-functioning system for ensuring academic integrity is crucial for the success and reputation of any university. This system must be grounded in ethical principles, supported by clear policies and procedures, and actively engaged with all stakeholders. By fostering a culture of academic integrity, universities can cultivate a learning environment that encourages intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and the pursuit of knowledge with integrity (What to do when academic integrity concerns arise, n.d.).

Academic integrity is not merely a set of rules imposed by the institution; it is a shared responsibility that requires all stakeholders' active engagement and collaboration. Students, faculty, staff, administrators, and even external stakeholders such as employers, accrediting bodies, and professional societies play crucial roles in fostering a culture of academic integrity. Students are responsible for upholding academic integrity by engaging in honest and ethical academic practices. At the same time, faculty members play a pivotal role in modeling ethical behavior, creating a supportive learning environment, and effectively addressing academic misconduct. Staff members, including academic support services and administrative personnel, provide resources, support, and guidance to students and faculty in navigating academic integrity issues. Administrators are responsible for establishing clear policies, implementing effective procedures, and allocating resources to support academic integrity initiatives. External stakeholders, such as employers and accrediting bodies, can influence institutional practices by setting expectations for academic integrity and recognizing institutions with strong commitments to ethical conduct (What is academic integrity? (n.d.); Nasrudin et al, 2021; Young, 2023; Kier & Ives, 2022).

The success of any academic integrity system hinges on the active participation and collaboration of all stakeholders. Effective communication and open dialogue are essential to ensure that the perspectives and concerns of all stakeholders are considered and addressed. This requires creating open communication and feedback platforms, such as faculty forums, student town halls, and stakeholder committees. Furthermore, fostering a culture of transparency and accountability is crucial, where all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities in upholding academic integrity (Bieliauskaitė, 2021).

Building a strong and sustainable system for ensuring academic integrity necessitates a collaborative and inclusive approach. By actively engaging all stakeholders, universities can create a shared understanding of the importance of academic integrity, foster a culture of ethical conduct, and ensure that all academic community members contribute to a positive and productive learning environment (How can stakeholders enhance academic integrity in the use of AI Tools? n.d.).

The success of any university system for ensuring academic integrity hinges on the active engagement and collaboration of all stakeholders. By fostering a culture of shared responsibility and open communication, universities can create a more ethical and equitable learning environment where all academic community members can thrive (Upholding academic integrity, n.d.).

The aim of the article. The purpose of this article is to describe the effective multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity with the interconnected parts between horizontal and vertical units and the role of stakeholders in academic integrity promotion.

Results and discussion

Multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity.

A multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity is presented in three dimensions: as a framework (Figure 1), as a set of activities (Figure 2), and as a hierarchical structure (Figure 3).

Multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity as a framework (Figure 1).

1. The regulatory framework unit includes formal documents like codes of conduct, academic policies, plagiarism prevention guidelines, and disciplinary procedures. It provides a structured basis for ensuring consistency in addressing violations and maintaining fairness across all levels.
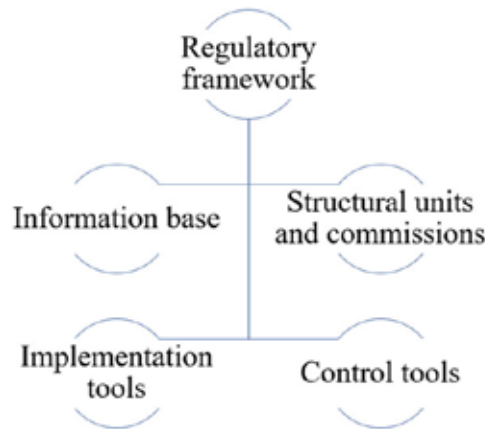

Fig. 1. Multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity (framework)
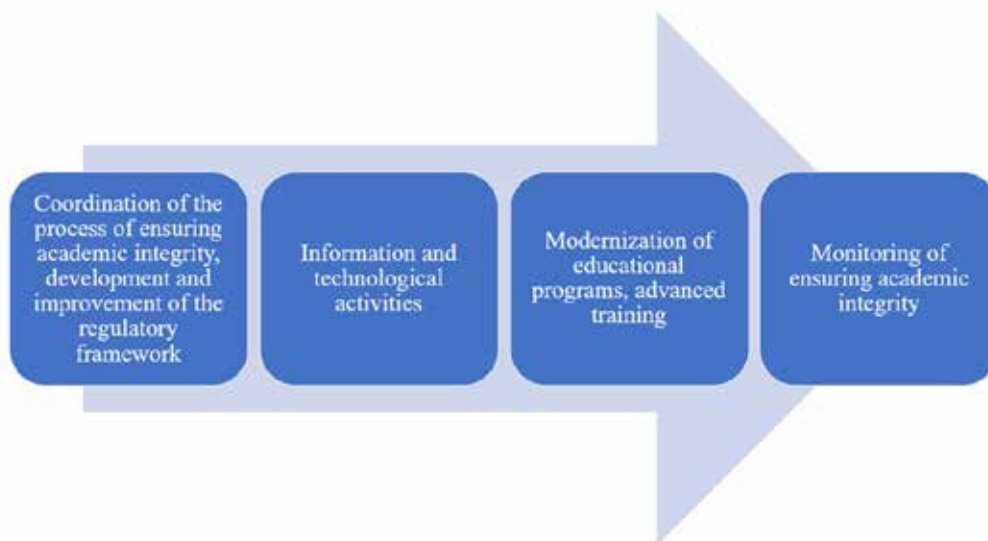

Fig. 2. Multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity (activities)
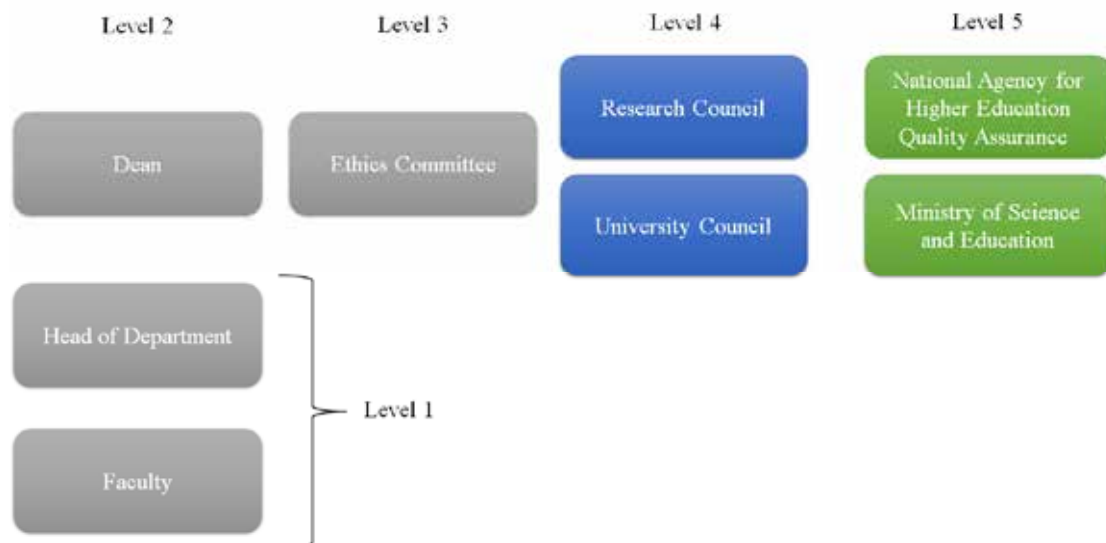
Fig. 3. Multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity (hierarchy)

2. The structural and commissions unit represents the organizational bodies tasked with implementing and overseeing academic integrity policies (integrity councils, ethics committees, or specialized offices within the university that address misconduct cases). Their role is to ensure that policies are applied effectively, with appropriate governance and decision-making processes.

3. A control tools unit is a set of tools and mechanisms used to monitor, detect, and prevent violations of academic integrity. They may include:

– systems for uniqueness checker programs and plagiarism detection mechanisms;

– systems for monitoring exam integrity, such as proctoring tools or AI-based surveillance;

– regular audits and assessments of academic practices;

– control tools act as safeguards to identify potential breaches and maintain accountability.

4. The implementation tools unit focuses on the practical application of academic integrity measures:

– training programs for students and staff;

– workshops or seminars on ethical practices in research and education;

– online modules or materials aimed at fostering awareness of academic standards.

These tools ensure that policies are theoretical and actively embedded into the university's culture.

5. Information base unit refers to the repository of knowledge, resources, and data used to support academic integrity:

– Databases of past misconduct cases and their outcomes.

– Educational resources about ethics and integrity.

– Research findings or statistics related to academic misconduct trends.

The information base serves as both a reference for decision-making and a learning resource for all stakeholders.

The regulatory framework serves as the core, guiding the activities of all other components. Structural units and commissions rely on the information base and implementation tools to ensure informed and effective decision-making. Control and implementation tools are practical components that enforce the principles outlined in the regulatory framework.

Multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity as a set of activities (Figure 2).

1. Coordination of the process of ensuring academic integrity, development and improvement of the regulatory framework.

This block emphasizes the importance of centralized coordination and management. It suggests the need for a well-defined framework, policies, and procedures to guide the entire process of ensuring academic integrity. This block involves activities like policy development and review, standard setting and guidelines, collaboration with stakeholders (faculty, students, administration), and resource allocation for academic integrity initiatives.

2. Information and technological activities.

This block highlights the role of information and technology in supporting academic integrity efforts. It encompasses activities such as implementing plagiarism detection software, training on the ethical use of technology and online resources, data analysis, reporting on academic integrity violations, and disseminating information about academic integrity policies and procedures.

3. Modernization of educational programs, advanced training:

This block focuses on proactive measures to prevent academic misconduct. It includes activities such as integrating academic integrity education into curricula, developing students' critical thinking and research skills, providing faculty training on identifying and addressing academic misconduct, and promoting a culture of academic integrity within the university.

4. Monitoring of ensuring academic integrity.

This block emphasizes the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. It involves activities such as tracking and analyzing data on academic misconduct cases, assessing the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures, identifying improvement areas, and conducting regular reviews and audits of academic integrity practices.

Multilevel university system for ensuring academic integrity as a hierarchy (Figure 3).

A hierarchical model includes:

1. Top-level governance: university leadership and governing boards ensure policies are implemented and resourced.

2. Mid-level oversight: faculties or departments administering integrity measures tailored to specific academic disciplines.

3. Operational level: day-to-day management of academic activities, where faculty and administrative staff ensure that students adhere to standards.

4. External oversight: accreditation bodies, employers, and the community provide validation and external accountability mechanisms.

Stakeholders.

Students are at the forefront of academic integrity initiatives. Their understanding and commitment to ethical standards directly influence the culture within educational institutions. Universities can cultivate a sense of ownership over their academic work by engaging students in discussions about plagiarism, cheating, and ethical research practices. Additionally, student-led organizations can advocate for integrity, promoting awareness campaigns and peer support systems that encourage adherence to ethical guidelines.

Faculty members also play a vital role in ensuring academic integrity. They are responsible for designing assessments that minimize opportunities for dishonesty and for modeling ethical behavior in their research and teaching practices. Faculty can implement clear policies regarding academic misconduct and guide proper citation practices and research ethics. Furthermore, ongoing training and professional development opportunities can equip faculty with the tools to address integrity issues effectively and foster a culture of trust in their classrooms.

Administrative staff and university leadership are instrumental in creating policies and frameworks that support academic integrity. So, it includes developing comprehensive honor codes, establishing reporting mechanisms for misconduct, and ensuring appropriate consequences for violations. Leadership must also prioritize transparency in decision-making processes related to integrity issues, reinforcing the institution's commitment to ethical standards. By fostering an institutional culture that values integrity, leaders can inspire confidence among all stakeholders.

External stakeholders, such as accreditation bodies and employers, further emphasize the importance of academic integrity in higher education. Accreditation bodies often assess institutions based on their commitment to ethical practices and may require evidence of effective integrity policies as part of their evaluation process. Employers also seek graduates who demonstrate strong ethical standards; thus, they are vested in supporting initiatives promoting academic integrity. Collaborations between universities and external partners can enhance programs to instill integrity values in students while preparing them for professional environments. The role of stakeholders in ensuring academic integrity within the university system cannot be overstated. Their collective efforts are essential for creating an environment where ethical behavior is valued and upheld. By actively engaging students, faculty, administration, and external partners in discussions about academic integrity, universities can strengthen their commitment to ethical practices and enhance their overall educational mission. As institutions continue to navigate challenges related to academic dishonesty in an increasingly digital world, fostering collaboration among all stakeholders will be critical for sustaining a culture of integrity in higher education.

Conclusions and prospects for further research.

The framework component establishes the foundation, encompassing formal documents such as codes of conduct and plagiarism prevention guidelines. Structural units and commissions oversee implementation, while control and implementation tools ensure practical application. Finally, the information base serves as a repository of knowledge and resources.

The activities component emphasizes coordination, information technology utilization, educational program modernization, and continuous monitoring. These activities translate the framework into action through policy development, training initiatives, data analysis, and ongoing evaluation.

The hierarchical structure highlights the roles of various stakeholders. Top-level governance establishes policy and allocates resources. Mid-level oversight tailors integrity measures to specific disciplines. Operational-level faculty and staff enforce standards within classrooms and departments. Finally, external oversight from accreditation bodies and employers provides external validation and accountability.

Students, faculty, administrative staff, and external stakeholders contribute significantly to fostering a culture of academic integrity. Students' understanding of ethical practices and commitment to honest work are crucial. Faculty members model ethical behavior, design assessments that minimize dishonesty, and guide proper citation practices. Administrative staff and leadership establish frameworks and policies, while external stakeholders reinforce the importance of integrity through accreditation and employment expectations.

In conclusion, a multilevel university system with engaged stakeholders is essential for ensuring academic integrity. By working collaboratively, universities can create an environment that values ethical conduct, upholds its educational mission, and prepares students for success in a world that demands strong ethical grounding. As the digital landscape evolves, fostering collaboration among all stakeholders will be critical for sustaining a culture of integrity in higher education.

Further research should focus on several key areas: quantitative and qualitative evaluation of existing academic integrity systems, exploration of technology-enhanced approaches, investigation of the impact of different stakeholder engagement strategies, cross-cultural comparison of academic integrity systems, and longitudinal studies to assess the impact of academic integrity interventions.

References:
1. *Fostering Academic Integrity-Minded Learning Environments.* (2024, February 10). Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost - the University of Iowa. Retrieved from https://provost.uiowa.edu/news/2024/02/fostering-academic-integrity-minded-learning-environments#:~:-text=The%20International%20Center%20for%20Academic,%2C%20fairness%2C%20respect%2C%20responsibility%2C
2. Mulenga, R., & Shilongo, H. (2024). Academic Integrity in Higher Education: Understanding and Addressing Plagiarism. *Acta Pedagogia Asiana*, *3*(1), 30–43. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.53623/apga.v3i1.337
3. *What to do when academic integrity concerns arise: 2024 guide*. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.infonetica.net/articles/academic-integrity-concern-detected
4. *Fostering Academic Integrity | UNISQ Academic Integrity Project. (n.d.). Retrieved from* https://integrity.unisq.edu.au/understanding-academic-integrity/
5. What is academic integrity? (n.d.).
6. Retrieved from https://www.teqsa.gov.au/students/understanding-academic-integrity/what-academic-integrity#:~:text=Protecting%20your%20reputation&Actions%20that%20undermine%20the%20academic,your%20reputation%20in%20the%20future
7. Nasrudin, D., Yuningsih, E. K., & Millah, M. F. (2021). Stakeholders in Higher Education Accreditation: A Bibliometric Analysis. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Islamic Education (JQAIE)*, *1*(2), 112–120. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.47945/jqaie.v1i2.469
8. Young, L. (2023, October 31). *How can leaders in higher education build an academic integrity policy? Turnitin*. Retrieved from https://www.turnitin.com/blog/how-can-leaders-in-higher-education-build-an-academic-integrity-policy
9. Kier, C. A., & Ives, C. (2022). Recommendations for a balanced approach to supporting academic integrity: perspectives from a survey of students, faculty, and tutors. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 18(1). Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-022-00116-x
10. Bieliauskaitė, J. (2021). Solidarity in Academia and its Relationship to Academic Integrity. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 19(3), 309–322. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-021-09420-6
11. *How can stakeholders enhance academic integrity in the use of AI Tools? | ResearchGate. (n.d.).* ResearchGate. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/post/How_can_stakeholders_enhance_academic_integrity_in_the_use_of_AI_Tools#:~:text=Stakeholders%20can%20play%20a%20crucial,AI%20Developers%2C%20Research%20and%20Innovation
12. *Upholding academic integrity. (n.d.).* Retrieved from https://www.sparxservices.org/blog/upholding-academic-integrity#:~:text=By%20working%20together%2C%20universities%20can,knowledge%20and%20skills%20to%20uphold