



ČESKÁ KONFERENCE REKTORŮ
CZECH RECTORS CONFERENCE

Statement of the Czech Rectors Conference Presidium on Plagiarism

Prague, 23 July 2018

Czech Rectors Conference (CRC) strongly condemns any attempts at plagiarism in order to obtain higher education degrees.

CRC is convinced that the current public cases and suspicions of copying are always failures of individuals who violated higher education rules and thus have blemished not only the tens of thousands of honest students and academics but also the reputation of higher education environment in the Czech Republic.

Czech higher education institutions have measures in practice to exclude any attempts at copying and cheating, just as other European higher education institutions. At the same time, the higher education institutions randomly verify functionality and reliability of these mechanisms.

With respect to the ethics of scientific and academic work, plagiarism checking of students' final theses has always been a part of the preparation for theses defences.

The urgency of introducing comprehensive and automatic final theses checks resulted from the availability of academic and scientific works as electronic sources on the Internet, and in particular from the obligation to publish full texts of all final theses. This obligation was introduced with the Higher Education Act amendment effective since 2006.

Masaryk University created the "Theses" system for the purpose of comprehensive plagiarism checks of final theses and almost all public higher education institutions in the Czech Republic (23 out of 26) have joined in since 2008. At the same time, Czech higher education institutions have confirmed obligatory and systematic plagiarism checking of final theses in their relevant regulations.

About 700,000 final theses and roughly 30 million documents are stored in the "Theses" system and each thesis is checked for plagiarism also against other selected Internet sources. A record of each thesis check in this system is used by supervisors and reviewers during theses assessments.

At Charles University, plagiarism checking of final theses has been obligatory since 2011 and also checking in the foreign system "Turnitin" has been gradually introduced since 2017. Its advantage is a larger database of documents and sites against which the plagiarism checking is carried out and it is also possible to use this system preventatively – in order to improve students' work with literary sources during their studies (and final thesis writing).

Anti-plagiarism systems determine the degree of sameness, but then an expert check has to be made because the same texts can be properly and correctly quoted. These checks have to be carried out by higher education institutions.

Another important step was made with the Higher Education Institutions Act amendment effective from September 2016. Also the current Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, Ing. Robert Plaga, Ph.D., significantly contributed to its creation. The amendment has become an important step in combating cheaters since it allows the higher education institutions to initiate a procedure in the case of plagiarism in order to pronounce invalidation of thesis defence as a part of the graduate's final state exam.

Everyone involved in improving the systems and measures to eradicate dishonesty from higher education deserves a big thank you. Their work contributes to the cultivation of not only Czech higher education environment.

Higher education institutions are not preparing actions to check theses already defended, however, it is possible to re-verify those over which any doubts arise.

CRC will continue to support with the most strength all steps to stop cheaters who do not hesitate to cheat in obtaining their higher education degrees.

Prague, 23 July 2018

On behalf of the Czech Rectors Conference Presidium

Prof. Dr. Tomáš Zima
Czech Rectors Conference President