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UNIVERSITY STUDENTS REASONS FOR COMMITTING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY  
AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT REGULATIONS

MA Thesis

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## **University students reasons for committing academic dishonesty and knowledge about regulations**

### **Abstract**

The thesis at hand focuses on university students reasons for committing academic dishonesty and students knowledge about regulations concerning academic dishonesty. The subject matter has not been widely researched in Estonia and Finland and this thesis provides universities with a deeper look into why students commit academic dishonesty and how aware students about the regulations on academic dishonesty. A qualitative study has been carried out with students from Estonia, Finland and U.S.A, consisting of six in-depth interviews. A document analysis has been carried out to provide a comparative look into how different universities regulate academic dishonesty. The results indicate that students commit academic dishonesty mainly because of individual reasons such as not being able to memorize the necessary amount of material and individual perfectionism. Neutralization techniques like denial of victim and condemning the condemners are also used by students. The results of this study indicate that students in Estonia and Finland are not very well aware or the regulations concerning academic dishonesty.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, regulations

## Eestikeelne kokkuvõte

### Üliõpilaste akadeemilise petturluse põhjused ning teadmised regulatsioonidest

Käesoleva magistritöö teemaks on akadeemiline petturlus ning üliõpilaste teadmised selle kohta kehtivatest regulatsioonidest. Töö eesmärgiks on selgitada ja võrrelda üliõpilaste akadeemilise petturluse sooritamise põhjuseid ning üliõpilaste teadmisi ülikoolis kehtivatest akadeemilise petturlusega seotud regulatsioonidest. Antud teemat on nii Eestis kui Soomes vähe uuritud. Akadeemiline petturlus on läbiv probleem ülikoolides, mida omakorda on meedia võimendanud nii Eestis kui välismaal. Käesolev lõputöö pakub ülikoolidele ja õppejõududele selgemat ülevaadet üliõpilaste akadeemilise petturluse võimalikest põhjustest ning laiendab arusaama sellest, mida üliõpilased akadeemilise petturlusega seotud regulatsioonidest teavad.

Autor on läbiviinud kvalitatiivse uurimuse, mis koosneb kuuest süvaintervjuust Eesti, Soome ja Ameerika Ühendriikide ülikoolide sotsiaal- ja haridusteaduste üliõpilastega. Lisaks on läbiviidud dokumendianalüüs uuritud ülikoolide regulatsioonidest, võrdlemaks riikide vahelisi erinevusi. Uurimusest selgub, et erinevalt varasemate uuringute tulemustest põhjendavad üliõpilased oma akadeemilist petturlust põhiliselt individuaalsete põhjustega nagu suutmatusega materjali omandada ning individuaalse perfektsionismiga. Lisaks individuaalsetele põhjustele kasutavad üliõpilased ka oma akadeemilise petturluse põhjendamiseks neutralisatsioonitehnikaid. Intervjueeritavate seas esines kahte neutralisatsioonitehnikat. Esimeseks oli ohvri eitamine, mis tähendab antud juhul, et üliõpilane tunneb isiklikku vastutust oma käitumise üle, kuid näeb petmist kättemaksuna õppejõu vastu, näiteks raskete eksamitingimuste tõttu. Teise neutralisatsioonitehnikana esines intervjueeritavate seas hukkamõistjate hukka mõistmine, mis tähendab, et üliõpilane leiab, et on aksepteeritav petta kui õppejõu õpetamisoskused ei ole üliõpilase arvates head. Uurimuse tulemustest selgub, et Eesti ja Soome üliõpilased ei ole väga teadlikud akadeemilise petturlusega seotud regulatsioonidest ning soovivad, et nende ülikoolid panustaksid rohkem ressursse akadeemilise petturluse vähendamisele ning akadeemilise aususe propageerimisele. Võrreldes Eesti ja Soome üliõpilastega on uurimuses osalenud Ameerika Ühendriikide üliõpilane teadlikum oma ülikooli akadeemilise petturlusega seotud regulatsioonidest ning leiab, et tema ülikool panustab piisavalt ressursse akadeemilise petturluse vähendamiseks ja akadeemilise aususe propageerimiseks. Akadeemilise petturluse põhjustes riikide vahelisi erinevusi ei leidunud.

Käesolev magistritöö pakub ülikoolidele mõtteainet, kuidas akadeemilist petturlust vähendada ning toetada akadeemilist ausust.

Märksõnad: akadeemiline petturlus, regulatsioonid

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## Introduction

The topic of this thesis is academic dishonesty. It is a subject matter that time and time again pops up in the academic world. The authors interest in the topic arose from personal experience from the educational systems of Estonia and Finland. Academic dishonesty has not been widely researched in these countries so the the percieved differences in opinions about academic dishonesty between Estonian students and Finnish students are something that the author thinks need to be studied. Most of the research on academic dishonesty has been done in The United States of America and therefore it is important to include the American university system in this thesis. After doing research on academic dishonesty in his BA thesis, the author wanted to follow up on that research and concentrate on students reasons for committing academic dishonesty and knowledge about regulations regarding academic dishonesty. Recent media coverage on academic dishonesty has resurfaced the subject and made it very topical. Plagiarizing scandals have recieved widespread coverage in both the Estonian media and the Finnish media. These scandals reflect badly on the academic community and need to therefore be understood better. Research results may provide helpful tips for universities and faculty members on how to prevent academic dishonesty in the future. The thesis at hand also aims to provide comparative information on the subject matter and that is also the reason for including a Finnish and North American university in the study.

The theoretical background and sources used in this study are mostly written and available in English. The few available articles and sources on the topic in Estonian and Finnish have been used to provide a broader theoretical frame which also accounts for the behaviours and thoughts of Estonian and Finnish students. Academic dishonesty has mostly been studied from the perspective of how frequent and widespread academic dishonesty is or what kinds of attitudes students have regarding academic dishonesty. This study attempts to approach the subject from a different perspective. The thesis focuses on reasons for committing academic dishonesty and students knowledge about regulations on the subject matter.

The aim of this study is to identify and compare university students reasons for committing academic dishonesty and to find out and compare the extent of students knowledge about univerity regulations on academic dishonesty. Based on this aim, the author has compiled four research questions.

1. What reasons do students use to explain their commitment in academic dishonesty?
2. To what extent are students aware of their universities policies on academic dishonesty?
3. Where do students get information about their universities policies on academic dishonesty?
4. What are the differences in university policies on academic dishonesty between the universities in Estonia, Finland and the U.S ?

A qualitative study has been carried out to answer these questions.

The thesis consists of five parts. The first part focuses on the theoretical background. This includes the definition of academic dishonesty and prominent research results on academic dishonesty. The second part lists the different regulations that the universities studied in this thesis have on academic dishonesty. In the third part the study method, research questions and aims of the study have been explained in greater detail. The fourth part covers the results and highlights data discovered in the qualitative study. The last and fifth part of the thesis discusses these results and provides ideas on how to further study the topic of academic dishonesty. Implications and restrictions of this study are also provided in the fifth part of the thesis.

## 1. Theoretical background

### *1.1 Definition of academic dishonesty*

Bernard E. Whitley, Jr and Patricia Keith-Spiegel (2002) have said that "Academic dishonesty appears to be one of those phenomena that few people can define exactly, but that everyone can recognize when they see it" (pg.16). There are many definitions of academic dishonesty which all share some common characteristics. In this study the typology provided by Gary Pavela (1978) will be used because most universities regulations on academic dishonesty seem to be based on this typology. Pavela lists four components of academic dishonesty:

1. Cheating is "intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours". Thus, cheating includes such behaviors as using crib notes or copying during tests and unauthorized collaboration on out-of-class assignments.
2. Fabrication is "intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise". Thus, fabrication includes behaviors such as making up sources for the bibliography of a paper or faking the results of a laboratory experiment.
3. Plagiarism is "deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas or words or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgement". Thus, plagiarism includes behaviors such as turning in a paper written by another student or buying a paper from a commercial source and failing to properly attribute quotations within a paper. Depending on institutional policy, it could also include what might be called self-plagiarism: submitting the same paper for credit in more than one course without the instructor's permission.
4. Facilitating academic dishonesty is "intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another" engage in some form of academic dishonesty.

According to recent research by Whitley & Keith-Spiegel (2002) components like misrepresentation (giving a false excuse for missing a test), sabotage (preventing others from completing their work) and failure to contribute to a collaborative projects could also be added to the typology.



Because the study at hand compares data collected from three different nations (Estonia, Finland, U.S.A) and in two languages (Estonian, Finnish) it is necessary to also look at the definitions of academic dishonesty in these languages and to see if there are any cultural or linguistic differences in the definitions of academic dishonesty. The academic term “academic dishonesty” is also not often used among students so it is important to see if there are differences between the academic use of the term and spoken language in these countries. In Estonian academic dishonesty is called “akadeemiline petturlus”. This word in itself includes the word fraud and even the former Estonian Minister of Education and Research has called academic dishonesty “a form of disguised crime” (Aaviksoo: Akadeemiline petturlus on varjatud kuritegevuse vorm, Postimees, 2013). The most common spoken language word term for academic dishonesty in Estonian is “spikerdamine” which literally means the use of crib-sheets (“spikker”) and cheating. Kivisild & Talts (2008) link the terms “akadeemiline petturlus” and “spikerdamine” together seamlessly.

In the Finnish language academic dishonesty is translated into “akateeminen vilppi” which in the same way as in Estonian includes the word fraud or deceit. In Finnish though, the word “luntaaminen” meaning using crib-sheets is not necessarily seamlessly linked together with “akateeminen vilppi”. Silpiö (2012) categorizes these two words into higher level concepts (akateeminen vilppi) and lower level concepts (luntaaminen).

As for English, the spoken language term for academic dishonesty is cheating. While “spikerdamine” and “luntaaminen” are clearly used only regarding academic dishonesty and only meaning the use of crib sheets, “cheating” is a broader term meaning to act dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain an advantage (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). Whitley & Keith-Spiegel (2002) use these terms as synonyms when discussing academic dishonesty.

In conclusion there are some differences in the definitions of academic dishonesty between the English, Estonian and Finnish language. The word cheating has the broadest meaning on the three spoken language terms for academic dishonesty but is nevertheless generally used as a synonym for academic dishonesty. The Estonian and Finnish language spoken word terms “spikerdamine” and “luntaaminen” are narrower in their meaning but only the Finnish term has been clearly categorized different from the term academic dishonesty.

### *1.2 Students reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty*

Academic dishonesty is a serious problem in the academic realm with more and more attention being directed at understanding it and regulating it. Research on academic dishonesty started in the United States in the 1960's (Silpiö, 2012). The results of older and newer research shows that 50-70% of university students have taken part in activities that can be seen as academic dishonesty during their university studies (Bowers, 1964; McGabe & Trevino, 1993; Curasi, 2013). The reasons students report for engaging in these activities are multiple. They include different psychological processes from neutralization strategies to individual factors and social issues. These reasons will be discussed in the following part.

The reasons students give to explain their academic dishonesty can be roughly divided into two different categories. The first category is individual reasons (Anderman, Cupp & Lane, 2009; Curasi, 2013). These include explanations that stem from the students own actions or the inability to meet certain requirements of academic work. Jones (2011) found that 92% of students engage in academic dishonesty because of the need or wish to get better grades. This result is also supported by Olafson & Schraw (2013) who found that getting better grades was also the most common reason for students cheating (43% of students). Individual reasons also include a lack of proper learning strategies to perform well in school (Anderman & Murdock, 2007) and a lack of time to complete assignment or study for a test and having no interest in the subject (Jones, 2011). Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013) found lack of time to complete a task to be the reason for cheating in 69% of students who had reported engaging in academic dishonesty. They also found that language students cheat because of a lack of good command in language (82% of students). This relates to the study by Olafson & Schraw (2013) where students reported incapability in completing a task a reason for engaging in academic dishonesty.

In conclusion the most prevalent individual reasons for students engaging in academic dishonesty are the need to get better grades, the lack of time and the perceived inability to complete tasks. These individual reasons do not make use of neutralization strategies and explain the engagement in dishonest activities as being the result of individual actions and inability to meet the requirements of academic work. The mentioned research results are also compatible with research concerning academic dishonesty among Estonian secondary school students (Ligi, 2011).

The second category by which students explain their academic dishonesty is institutional reasons. These reasons are strongly related to neutralization strategies in which the students take the blame away from themselves and put it on their respective schools or other individuals (McGabe, 1992; Sykes & Matza, 1957). Neutralization theory was developed while studying juvenile delinquents but is also strongly associated with academic dishonesty and other behavior which goes against societal norms (Curasi, 2013).

Neutralization theory provides five techniques for how people neutralize and explain their immoral behaviour (Sykes & Matza, 1957) :

1. Denial of responsibility is when the individual is able to define himself or herself as completely excused from his or her deviant behavior. For example the individual believes that cheating is understandable when students make no effort to cover up their answers during an exam.
2. Denial of injury is when the individual believes there is no specific person who has been harmed by the deviant behavior.
3. Denial of victim is when the individual accepts responsibility for their behaviour but blames the victim for the occurrence of the behaviour. For example a student cheats because he or she feels that the requirements for an exam are unfairly hard and therefore cheating is a way of retaliating against the professor.
4. Condemnation of the condemners is when the individual deflects the focus away from their wrongdoing but condemns the condemner. For example a student claims that cheating is understandable when the instructor does not care if students learn the material.
5. Appeal to higher loyalties is when the individual explains his or her behaviour with being caught between two conflicting actions. For example a student might think it is understandable to cheat when he or she is in danger of losing his or her scholarship.

Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013) brought out that 84% of students explained that they cheated because it was easy. This explanation is related with the neutralization technique of denying responsibility. Students put the blame of cheating on other other students who don't cover up their answers for example (Curasi, 2013). The blame can also be put on professors who do not care about academic dishonesty in their classes or do not wish to act on it. This is categorized as condemning the condemners. Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013) found out that this was the case with 63% of students. In this case students find that the professor is to blame for

the occurring academic dishonesty because of his inability to act on the problem (Curasi, 2013). Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013) also discovered that 73% of students cheat because they consider that their universities don't offer enough training on the matter of academic dishonesty and that 63% of students also feel that there is a lack of clarity on university regulations regarding academic dishonesty. Both Jones (2011) and Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013) found that students also explain their academic dishonesty with the fact that everyone else is also doing it. This once again takes the blame off the individual who cheats and puts it on others. The social aspect of academic dishonesty has been widely studied and research suggests that seeing other students engaging in academic dishonesty is positively correlated with the individuals own engagement in academic dishonesty (Rettinger & Cramer, 2009).

Olafson & Schraw(2013) have found that there are differences between students who have been sanctioned for academic dishonesty and students who have not. Students who had been sanctioned indicated more reasons that were institutional instead of individual. Students who had been sanctioned for academic dishonesty mentioned that the reasons why they cheated were; feeling pressured to succeed(19%), feeling incapable of completing the task(17%), earning a higher grade(19%) and other reasons(29%). These other reasons included explanations such as "The class wasn't worth my effort to study." These reasons found by Olafsen & Schraw(2013) are similar to the ones that Jones (2011) found (not having an interest in class). The students who had not been sanctioned reasoned that they engaged in academic dishonesty because they felt pressured to succeed (10%), felt incapable of completing the task (24%), wanted to earn a higher grade (43%) and other reasons (14%). The results by Olafsen & Schraw (2013) show that students who have not been caught reason their engagement in academic dishonesty as more connected to getting better grades and less by other reasons. Another popular reason for cheating is the lack of time to meet deadlines (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013; Jones, 2011; Sendag et al, 2012).

In conclusion the institutional reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty are strongly related to neutralization techniques. Students transfer the blame from themselves to either other individuals or blame their universities for their dishonest behaviour. There are differences between the reasons provided between students who have been caught with academic dishonesty and students who have not been caught. The former explain their academic dishonesty with more institutional reasons than individual.

### *1.3 Students knowledge about regulations and the honor code system*

A factor that is related to academic dishonesty but is often overlooked is university students knowledge about university regulations concerning academic dishonesty (Rezanejad & Rezaei, 2013). Where do students get information about their schools policies and how is this knowledge related to students behaviour? Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013) found that the most common source for students to get information about plagiarism is from their professors (87.6 % of students). Other sources of information include newspapers and magazines (49.2 %), friends or family members from higher levels of education (42.6 %) and TV and radio (41 %). Since this study was conducted in the Middle East, it does not necessarily apply to western universities. Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013) concluded that Iranian students needed more training in the matter of academic dishonesty but what is the situation like in the West? According to Jones (2011) students also received the most information about academic integrity from their professors (75% of students surveyed) and 67% of students surveyed received information about regulations from the university's "Introduction to College Life" course. The author was not able to find any studies from Estonia or Finland that would reflect where and how do Estonian and Finnish students get information about regulations concerning academic dishonesty.

Hamlin, Barczyk, Powell & Frost (2013) carried out a study examining how ten US universities regulate academic dishonesty and what kinds of measures do they take to prevent academic dishonesty and how the schools deal with cases of academic dishonesty. The emphasis of most American universities is on prevention. All of the universities studied by Hamlin et al had used their website to communicate an anti-cheating message and to provide students with resources to get a better understanding of what academic dishonesty is. This is in strong contrast to the study by Rezanejad & Rezaei (2013). The reason for this could be cultural since the availability of internet might be more scarce in the Middle East. Many of the universities represented in Hamlin et al's study also had an official ethical code also known as the honor code or had implemented student pledges which students had to sign when starting their studies. The effect an honour code has on academic dishonesty is prone to discussion. Some research suggests that the existence of an honour code is associated with less student cheating (McGabe & Trevino, 1993; Ely, Henderson & Wachsman, 2013). Other studies claim that honour codes have minimal or no effect whatsoever on academic dishonesty (Gardner, 1988; O'Neill & Pfeiffer, 2011; Yang, 2012). One reason for the different research results could be the way in which honour codes are implemented. There are

many different types of honour codes and also various ways in which these honour codes are promoted.

The classical honor system has a student pledge and means dual responsibility. Students are expected to report oneself and others when a violation of the honor code has occurred. In most cases faculty are required to report incidents of academic dishonesty to a judiciary body instead of dealing with cases of academic dishonesty by themselves. The other way of implementing an honor code is the modified honor code system where one or more of these components are not implemented. That could mean that students might only have to sign a pledge at exams or that faculty have options to assess and take care of honor code violations by themselves instead of always having to report cases to the judiciary body.

Another thing that could explain the different research results is the way in which universities promote academic integrity. O'Neill & Pfeiffer (2011) claim that the existence of an honor code itself does not reduce cheating. The implemented honor code has to be embraced by the students of the university. Their results also show that universities can reduce cheating behavior by raising awareness of what constitutes as cheating. On the other hand if academic integrity is not promoted then universities run the risk of creating a culture of cheating which pervades campus culture and leads to more self-reported cheating. This view is supported by Rettinger & Cramer (2009) who also claim that if universities fail to promote integrity then students may more easily justify their own cheating. This justification may lead to the neutralization of attitudes which in turn leads to students accepting academic dishonesty as acceptable. Aaron & Georgia (1994) found that only half of faculty discuss academic integrity during new faculty orientation. As mentioned before, most universities have started sharing information about academic dishonesty on their webpages nowadays and the web is also used to promote academic integrity.

While prevention of academic dishonesty is done mostly using similar methods in US universities according to Hamlin (2013), dealing with cases of academic dishonesty varies strongly. Six of the ten universities Hamlin studied had a separate board to handle cases of academic dishonesty but the way how sanctions were given varied. In a few of the universities the sanctions varied according to the severeness of the dishonest behaviour. For example a level 1 offence would sanction the student to take part in a seminar on academic dishonesty while a level 4 offence would lead to expelling the student from the university. Another university gave grades which clearly stated that the student had failed the course because of academic dishonesty. Four of the universities studied did not have a board or committee handling the cases but dealt with cases through the dean or by the the professors

themselves. One of the universities clearly stated that they wanted to take a pro-active stance on academic dishonesty and focus less on punishment.

## 2. Regulations of the universities studied

Five universities from three different countries (Estonia, Finland and The United States Of America) have been studied in the thesis at hand. In the following part the studied universities regulations on academic dishonesty will be discussed. The only university studied in this thesis that has an honor code is the university from The United States. In northern Europe university honor codes are less common and none of the Estonian or Finnish universities studied in this thesis have a clear cut honor code which has been implemented for the whole university. As expected the Estonian and Finnish universities do have regulations on academic dishonesty and academic integrity but ethical codes as such are promoted and have been implemented by faculties and smaller departments themselves. In the case of the Estonian universities studied, the general guidelines and regulations on academic dishonesty are covered in the Study Regulations (Õppekorralduseeskiri) document. This is the main document which covers all the regulatory aspects needed by students and faculty. In both of the two Estonian universities studied, the regulations on academic dishonesty are very similar although written out differently. Both documents state six types of academic dishonesty and then follow by what measures will be taken if a student is caught violating the regulations. The six types of academic dishonesty are very similar to the typology of Pavela (1978).

Estonian university A has a point in the document which states that the dean is obligated in cases of academic dishonesty to either give the student a reprimand or to expell the student from the university. University B on the other hand has more options. In cases of academic dishonesty university B will put together a board which will either give the student a written or spoken reprimand, apply for the expulsion of the student to the vice rector. There is also a possibility that no board will be put together and the student will simply receive an F grade<sup>1</sup> on his or her course. Both university A and B have granted the students the possibility of appealing the verdicts given by faculty, dean or the board.

As mentioned some faculties have implemented their own regulations on academic dishonesty. In the Estonian university A, two faculties have done this and issued out clear documents where it is stated what will happen if a case of academic dishonesty is discovered. Both these faculties will form a committee where all the people involved with the case are present. The accused will have a chance to explain his or her behaviour and the committee will then make a decision to either give the student a reprimand (for first time offenders) and

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<sup>1</sup> grade 'F' or "insufficient" – the knowledge and skills acquired by the student are below the



not allow him or her to finish the course during that semester or to apply for expulsion if the offence is serious or the student has been found guilty before.

Another question is that how available and easy to access are these documents and the regulations regarding academic dishonesty? The Study Regulations document is very easily available on university A's website. University B does not have the document so easily available and the author had to spend a reasonable amount of time to find the document. University A which has granted easier access to the document has also made a so called online university encyclopedia. This online encyclopedia allows for anyone to search for topics about the university and provides an even easier way to access the regulations that govern academic dishonesty and other topics. Although the encyclopedia is not promoted very widely on the university website, the various links on the website lead to the encyclopedia. University B which does not have such an easy way to find the Study Regulations document also does not provide much information about academic dishonesty or academic integrity on its website. In conclusion the Estonian universities studied have a very different approach to covering information about academic dishonesty on their websites. The measures taken in cases of academic dishonesty are quite similar between both universities with university B having a few more options on how to deal with discovered academic dishonesty.

The Finnish universities have a more proactive approach to regulations and access to information about academic dishonesty. Both universities C and D have a clear document where ethical rules of academic conduct are presented. These documents are easily available on the universities websites although they have different names and very different structures. Both documents concentrate on promoting academic integrity instead of simply describing what academic dishonesty is and how it will be punished as was the case in the Estonian universities. University C has the document written in third person. University D has chosen a first person case. In the first person document of university D the responsibilities and freedoms of students and faculty are very clearly stated without much philosophical and ideological discussion. This document is closer to the typical American honor code even though they don't officially require a pledge from the students. The third person document of university C on the other hand has a very ideological approach and states the ideal academic conduct and also discusses possible problematic issues regarding ethical behavior in academia.

Both the Finnish universities studied also have a separate document available in which there are clear instructions about what measures should and would be taken if a case of

academic dishonesty would come out. University C has addressed the document clearly to faculty members with instructions on what to do. This document is a "in a nutshell" version of what measures should be taken and is most likely very easy for faculty members to remember and act by. The measures have been divided into seven categories depending on the severity of the violation. First the teacher should have a talk with the student. If the violation is not very severe or is the result of carelessness then no further action will be taken. If the violation is serious then the teacher can forward the case to the director of the department who will then speak with the student. The director of the department will then hold a hearing where the case will be discussed and if the student admits to the charges then his or her course will be graded F. The director of the department will also forward the records from the hearing to the dean and the dean can then decide to have another hearing. The last and most severe measure is that the case will be settled in the university government. The most severe punishment is an expulsion for a maximum of one year.

University D on the other hand has a very broad document covering everything from what exactly constitutes as academic dishonesty to a very large table which has very clear instructions on what measures would be taken if a certain type of academic dishonesty would come out. The table does leave some room for faculty members to decide on what measures would be taken depending of how serious the violation is according to the faculty member. Depending on the seriousness of the offence the punishments for academic dishonesty include revising course work, failing a course, a written reprimand from the dean, a reprimand from the principal and a temporary expulsion of one year. Since the document is so large and complicated one would think that a "in a nutshell" version of the document would be needed. It might be the case that a shorter version is available for faculty members but only the long version is available for everyone via the university website.

The American university that is studied in this thesis has an honor code. The honor codes states what is expected from students and what will happen if violations occur. The honor code of this particular university has a high emphasis on honesty. The word honesty pops up very often in the code and is used to promote academic integrity. The honor code states very clearly what will happen in the case of violations. A student will be handed a written copy of the charge and he or she will then have four days to build up a case. A hearing will then take place where the charge is discussed and the accused student has a chance to be heard and explain his or her behavior. The student also has the possibility of stating evidence and to call witnesses. The honor board will then make a judgement and if the student is found innocent, no report of the case will remain in his or her college record. If a guilty verdict is

reached the student may be subject to fines, disciplinary probations, suspension or expulsion. Suspensions will also lead to a certain type of mark for the course which indicates that the reason for such a grade is a violation of the honor code. The honor code also explains in detail what constitutes as a violation of the honor code. These are mostly the same as in the Estonian and Finnish universities and include most types of academic dishonesty. The violations also include honor board members and a separate point of improper disclosure is included by which "failure of an honor board member to maintain strict confidentiality concerning honor board proceedings" is also a violation of the code and will lead to a hearing and a verdict. The students also have a possibility to appeal a verdict if they feel it to be wrong. The appeal should be presented in writing and include reasons for why the verdict should be turned over. The honor code of this university is considered a classical honor code which contains dual responsibility and all cases will be dealt by the honor board. The thing that stands out in comparison to the Estonian and Finnish universities is that the American university can impose fines on students for academic dishonesty. This can be explained to some extent by the fact that the university is a private institution which charges tuition. The universities studied in Estonia and Finland are all state funded and for the most part free of tuition charges.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Aim of the thesis and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to identify and compare university students reasons for committing academic dishonesty and to find out and compare the extent of students knowledge about university regulations on academic dishonesty. Based on this aim, the author has compiled four research questions:

1. What reasons do students use to explain commitment in academic dishonesty?
2. To what extent are students aware of their universities policies on academic dishonesty?
3. Where do students get information about their universities policies on academic dishonesty?
4. What are the differences in university policies on academic dishonesty between the universities in Estonia, Finland and the U.S ?

#### 3.2 Method

The study was carried out using a qualitative research method. The author chose in-depth semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection. Johnson (2002, referenced, Marvasti, 2004) says that "in-depth interviewing provides a multi-perspective understanding of the topic". By this he means that in-depth interviews can reveal multiple and even conflicting attitudes about the topic. This is important when speaking about such a delicate topic like academic dishonesty. The author also believes that this is the best approach to discover students use of neutralization techniques.

#### 3.3 Sample

The study at hand was conducted in three countries: Estonia, Finland and The United States. In Estonia two universities were studied. In Finland two universities were studied for their regulations but due to the sensitive topic of the study, only one interviewee was found. In The United States one university was studied. The choice of universities in Estonia and Finland was decided by the size and geographical location of the universities. In both countries the universities chosen have similar relationships with eachother, are of similar size and geographical distance from eachother and are also socially considered to be in the same position as eachother. The university in The United States was chosen by easiness of access

and was chosen with the help of the supervisor of this study. All together 6 interviews were carried out (4 in Estonia, 1 in Finland and 1 in U.S.A). All the interviewees were from humanistic faculties (social sciences or educational sciences). The reason for this was that the author believes that students knowledge on university regulations on academic dishonesty would be higher in those faculties and the topic of academic dishonesty might be more relevant to students studying social or educational sciences. The interviewees varied from 3rd year bachelor students to masters and doctorate level students. Four of the interviewees were female and two male.

The author approached the universities in Estonia and Finland by e-mail and asked for the student coordinator to forward a message from the author to find interviewees (see annex 1) to the student mailinglists. This was effective with both Estonian universities. In Finland this did not work possibly due to the delicate topic of the interview and the author being from a foreign university. The wanted amount of volunteers was not found so the author then contacted student organizations with the same message. This resulted in finding one interviewee from a Finnish university. The interviewee from an American university was also contacted via an e-mail address recieved from the supervisor of this thesis.

The majority of interviews were conducted face to face but due to the difficulty of travel arrangements and cost, three interviews were done using the internet video calling service Skype. All interviews were recorded by using a dictophone and a computer. The lenght of the interviews varied between 15 and 76 minutes. The interviews were conducted in the students mother tongue either in Estonian or Finnish. The author is a native speaker of Estonian and Finnish and also a fluent speaker of English so it was natural to use the students mother tongue so that the interview questions and answers would be clear to all parties.

### *3.4 Instrument*

The instrument used for this study was a semi-structured interview which consisted of 20 questions (see annex 2, 3 & 4). The questions were compiled considering the theoretical background of academic dishonesty. A pilot interview was conducted in order to find out which questions needed clarification and what kinds of related topics would appear and should be addressed. The pilot interview was conducted in Estonian. The interview questions were originally created in English and then translated to Estonian and Finnish. A few questions which were not clearly understood by the pilot interviewee were edited after the pilot interview. The questions were also divided into three categories (individual, social and

institutional) in order for the interview not to get too broad and drift apart. The questions were not presented to the interviewees in strict order but did follow the general categories in the order presented above. The author asked the interviewees additional questions if necessary to get a better idea of the interviewees thoughts on different matters and to connect the topics of academic dishonesty and university regulations.

### *3.5 Data analysis method*

Due to the qualitative nature of the study a qualitative content analysis was chosen as the data analysis method. All six interviews were transcribed manually using a computer software called Inscribe. The data was then exported to a Microsoft Word file for further editing. First the questions and answers were divided according to the categories of the questions (individual, social, institutional). The answers were also edited and repeated sentences along with sentence construction were corrected so that the idea of each answer would be clear.

After the data was divided into three categories the author made notes to each answer and divided the data into two simple categories based on the research questions. From these categories a new set of subcategories was formed. These categories were deducted from the theoretical background of academic dishonesty and the research questions of the study. The categories were changed based on what was found in the transcribed text. The development of the categories can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Qualitative content analysis categories.



Individual questions	Regulations	Knowledge about regulations	
		Promotion of integrity	
		Sources of information	
Social questions	Regulations	Suggestions for regulations	
		Reasons	Individual reasons
	perfectionism		
Institutional questions	Reasons	Institutional reasons/neutralization techniques	Denial of victim
			Condemning the condemners

The results based on the qualitative content analysis are presented in the following part.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 What students consider to be academic dishonesty

The interviewees were asked what is academic dishonesty in their opinion. The answers varied according to the length of the students studies. Interviewees who were doing their bachelors degree answered the question by bringing out crib-sheet cheating first.

Est Uni 1: *Using disallowed methods in exams or other forms of knowledge checks. If you go to an exam with a crib-sheet that's academic dishonesty.*

Est Uni 2: *All dishonesty ways of getting an academic result. Crib-sheet cheating, plagiarism and ghostwriting.*

Fin Uni 1: *It is at least when you cheat on exams by bringing your notes or looking at other students answers.*

Students who were further along with their studies doing a masters thesis or a doctorate mentioned plagiarism and dishonest referencing first.

Est Uni 3: *Today for me this is a multi-faceted term. It is when a person takes others text and uses it without referencing properly. Using crib sheets also goes under that (academic dishonesty).*

US Uni 1: *Academic dishonesty is when you use someone else's ideas or data in your research without referencing properly.*

There were no significant differences between the countries. Academic dishonesty seems to be a similar concept in all of the universities studied.



#### 4.2 Individual questions

Apart from the definition of academic dishonesty students were asked questions about their own behavior and experiences with academic dishonesty. The results from these questions will be discussed in the following part.

All of the interviewees had taken part in some form of academic dishonesty either in university or in previous education levels. Only one of the interviewees had not committed any academic dishonesty at the university level. The chosen form of academic dishonesty for most was using a crib sheet on exams. Most students explained that they had cheated in secondary school or high school and that they have committed less academic dishonesty on the university level. Only one of the interviewees admitted to committing academic dishonesty in a group course work where students were supposed to carry out a small study with interviews.

*Fin Uni 1: We had to do this course work study and conduct interviews. We decided as a group to fabricate one of the interviews. It was laziness.*

None of the interviewees had ever been caught with academic dishonesty and could therefore not speak from personal experience about the measures taken by universities in cases of academic dishonesty. When asking about the seriousness of their offences none of the students considered their offences to be very serious. Several reasons for this were brought out.

*Est Uni 4: To think that I checked my answers, yes it was serious but I was pleased with the result. It did not bother me morally because I saw that my answers were correct and I just wanted confirmation.*

*Fin Uni 1: It was not serious. I don't feel bad about it at the moment. It was just an exercise.*

Est Uni 1: *I was terribly afraid of getting caught. That one question (on which I cheated) did not kill me. For me it was important not to get caught. I think stealing is a lot worse than academic dishonesty and I didn't do it systematically. It was not a big ethical problem for me and my percentage of crib-sheet use was smaller than the other students.*

Students were also asked about the reasons why they committed academic dishonesty. The answers varied from individual reasons like being incapable of completing the task to using neutralization techniques.

Est Uni 1: *I was not able to memorize all the material.*

Est Uni 2: *I have a bad fact memory. If there is an exam which is based on fact knowledge then I feel bad.*

Est Uni 4: *It was the perfectionist's need for control.*

Fin Uni 1: *It was laziness.*

US Uni 1: *We did it just for fun and to see if it was even possible.*

The neutralization techniques that students use to explain their academic dishonesty did not come out when asking specific questions. The techniques came out in many cases while the student spoke freely after answering a more specific question or as side comments on certain questions. Condemning the condemners and denial of victim were the most used neutralization techniques used by the interviewees. Students used the teaching practises and exam requirements of teachers to explain their academic dishonesty.

Est Uni 1: *I cheated in history because our teacher was not a great didactic from a teaching perspective. Our classes consisted of 45 minutes of writing down notes very fast and memorizing all that information was not necessary since I already knew what I wanted to become.*

Est Uni 2: *I don't like exams which are about nit-picking facts. It should be allowed to check facts to a certain extent. The situations where most academic dishonesty occurs are a result of a lack of student-teacher communication. The teachers could come half way in some cases and think of why students engage in academic dishonesty.*

Est Uni 2: *At the university level the exam hall was just so big that I had the chance of looking at my crib-sheet.*

Est Uni 3: *I didn't see any point in memorizing all the theoretical equations for the exam. I still don't see any point in memorizing facts, it is more important to be able to do things in practise.*

Students were also asked if there are any circumstances when academic dishonesty is excusable and acceptable. The answers were split in half.

Est Uni 1: *I think it is acceptable to cheat up until the moment that you start to learn a profession. I think the negative influence of academic dishonesty is overrated. If I make a crib-sheet it's an overview of the subject.*

Est Uni 4: *People make mistakes and if you don't have the skills of knowledge then they can be developed.*

Fin Uni 1: *It's not because you learn for the benefit of yourself and cheating is wrong.*

When asked what students would do or have done if they see an act of academic dishonesty none of the interviewees were willing to report others academic dishonesty to a member of faculty.

Est Uni 4: *Since I've been guilty myself I haven't been able to take on that responsibility of reporting the offence to someone.*

US Uni 1: *It is very hard to intervene because when you study in an intimate social group where everyone knows each other, there is that (social) pressure). In university it is easier to be anonymous and report academic dishonesty.*

Fin Uni 1: *I don't feel like I need to intervene because they are only hurting themselves.*

When asking about how students social network(family, friends, faculty) has influenced their attitudes on academic dishonesty most interviewees didn't acknowledge distinct influences and could not explain how exactly they have influenced the students attitudes. The interviewees on all countries claimed that their attitudes regarding academic dishonesty have changed from secondary school to university. The changes were attributed to growing up and understanding that academic dishonesty only hurts the student who is doing it. Only one Estonian student credited a faculty member for influencing their attitudes towards academic dishonesty.

Est Uni 4: *In university I have understood the system of my supervisor that if you don't come up with something yourself then you have to reference it.*

The influence of family was also considered to be minimal by all interviewees. Academic dishonesty is not something that is talked about a lot at homes and attitudes towards academic dishonesty have developed by general value education at home. The influence of friends on attitudes was also considered minimal by students.

#### 4.3 Social questions

The second category of questions asked from interviewees were of social matters concerning academic dishonesty. These will be discussed in the following part. While explaining the reasons behind their own academic dishonesty students mostly presented individual reasons and neutralization techniques regarding their teachers methods. When asked about why other students engage in academic dishonesty the answers were somewhat different.

Est Uni 4: *It could be that social group has formed where the idea is that "we pass our exams by looking at others answers".*

Fin Uni 1: *The biggest reason is probably desperation and the need to get the important study points.*

Est Uni 1: *It could be the issue of too little time to study. It could be that someone is just not very good at a certain subject. And also because it is so easy.*

The interviewees were also asked how much is academic dishonesty discussed between students. Most students in all countries claimed that academic dishonesty is not a very common topic of discussion among students. It is also not a tabu but most students just don't bring it up that often. One Estonian student claimed that students talk about it when they are asked about it but otherwise it stays under the surface. Another interviewee said that while in high school academic dishonesty was to some extent bragged about, now in university it is not as acceptable and therefore people don't talk about it at all. Since the topic is not often discussed between students it might also seem to some that it is not a very big problem in the academic community.

Fin Uni 1 : *We don't really talk about it since there is no need for us to do it.*

#### 4.4 Institutional questions

Interviewees were also asked questions with an institutional nature. These questions dealt with students knowledge about regulations concerning academic dishonesty, students knowledge about the honor code system, students thoughts on how accessible information about academic dishonesty is in their respective universities and how academic integrity should be promoted. The results will be discussed in the following part.

Estonian and Finnish students are not well aware of the honor code system which is popular in the United States. This is most likely because none of the Estonian and Finnish universities studied had an honor code in place. The American university that was studied on the other had an honor code and the system was also quite well known to the student who was interviewed from that university. The Estonian and Finnish students mostly agreed that the honor code system might be of some help in reducing academic dishonesty in their universities but did not think it would be very effective. Only one student was very keen on the idea.

Fin Uni 1: *I don't know if it would be very useful . I don't know how big the issue of cheating is in my university. I think that even if there was an honor code , students would still cheat.*

Est Uni 3: *In principal there could be an honor code but there is the risk that it will be just a formality. I don't think it would change the situation.*

Est Uni 4: *Sure. My university is one of the most traditional universities in Estonia. If we don't set the trend then other universities will think they don't need an honor code either.*

When asking about the students knowledge about the regulations concerning academic dishonesty, most students knew the basics of the regulations and where they can be found. As expected everyone knows that academic dishonesty is not allowed but the specifics of the regulations are not very clear. Students also think that other students don't know very much about the regulations.

Est Uni 1: *I don't know(about the regulations). I've never had any problem with cheating so I've never had to look up what the regulations are. I think the average student doesn't know anything about the regulations.*

Est Uni 2: *I know because I've read about it. But the random student doesn't probably know. The Study Regulations document is the only document that regulates it I think. Plagiarising is prohibited and cheating too. Basically academic dishonesty is prohibited with the punishment of getting thrown out of school or getting a reprimand.*

Est Uni 4: *The Study Regulations document is the first thing. That's the main document. I don't really know anything else. I can't remember what is written there.*

US Uni 1: *I know that plagiarising is prohibited and cheating aswell.*

Students generally believe that the regulations in their universities are embraced by students. According to the interviewees the regulations are embraced more because of students general ethics not because they are very well aware what the exact regulations in their universities are.

US Uni 1: *Nobody questions the honor code. Nobody says that the honor code is nonsense. There is a lot of respect for the honor code.*

Fin Uni 1: *I think they(regulations) are embraced. If you get caught it's very shameful. I think it's only in the big things but in the small things like exercises, the regulations are not embraced as much.*

Est Uni 4: *I think most students do embrace the regulations. When they write their thesis they know what to do.*

Access to these regulations is relatively easy according to students but as one interviewee mentioned the regulations do not catch the eye of the average student when he or she is visiting the university's website. In other words one has to look for the regulations. Most students would look to the internet for more information about their university's regulations on academic dishonesty. Other means of access to the regulations included reading books on the topic, writing to the student council for information and asking faculty members.

Est Uni 4: *One of the places where I've looked is an old book on the regulations in my university. I would also look at the university's homepage and find the documents. Also thesis, articles and homeworks. Generally something that is reliable and related to the university, not Facebook for example.*

Est Uni 1: *I would write our student council and ask if they know anything about the regulations. As far as I've looked at the university's website I haven't seen anything that has caught my eye (concerning academic dishonesty). I think for the average student who is not interested in the topic, it doesn't stand out on the website.*

Students were also asked about how their universities promote academic integrity. In the case of the student from the American university the simple answer was through the honor code. The honor code in itself promotes academic integrity and the honor code is being promoted via the university website and during freshman orientation days. In the Estonian and Finnish universities the promotion on academic integrity is more complicated. Both interviewees from the Estonian University B concluded that academic integrity is in no way promoted in their universities. In the Estonian university A the promotion of academic integrity is also quite nonexistent according to the interviewees but some teachers do promote good academic practice.

Est Uni 1: *In no way (how is academic integrity promoted?). Teachers talk about how the course is graded but don't speak about cheating.*

Est Uni 2: *Everyone has their ethics from home. But we have not been told what is academic ethics.*

Est Uni 4: *Mainly through teachers. My supervisor has emphasized that this is science not popular science. If you claim something then you have to reference it.*

In Finland the promotion of academic integrity is similar to the Estonian way. Academic dishonesty is not spoken about very much and the promotion of academic integrity is also close to nonexistent.

Fin Uni 1: *I've never seen any directions and information about it. It isn't really spoken about since I think not that many students get caught.*

While the promotion of academic integrity seems to be close to nonexistent in the Estonian and Finnish universities and in the American university it is done through the honor code, students do feel that academic integrity should be promoted more. Almost all the interviewees felt that their university should commit more resources into promoting academic integrity. The methods of how this could be done varied. One student from the Estonian university A claimed that the promotion should be done through actually doing something instead of doing campaigns or teaching the rules. Others thought that there should be more visible information about it and that the academic dishonesty checking software should be made available to the students to prevent bad academic writing practises. One interviewee was satisfied with the current situation.

Est Uni 3: *There is no point in using marketing tricks. It should be done through actions. I think there should be a course already in the bachelors level on this(academic writing/integrity). The rules can also be there but it can't be only teaching the rules. Teachers should give independent exercises which need deciphering information and then check if the students do so. I don't think many teachers are motivated to do so.*

Fin Uni 1: *There should be more information about it and more visible. It could be on the website and teachers should maybe mention it more.*

Est Uni 1: *On the bachelors level it could be talked about more . On the masters level there is no problem. Those who cheat cheat and their ethics are fine with it. There could be something in the first academic level(bachelors degree) and if people learn there then fine.*



*Est Uni 2: I think many of the problem would be solved if there was more information and understanding about it. There could be at least some mention of it during freshman orientation.*

*US Uni 1: I think it's well done(the promotion of academic integrity) and everyone takes it very seriously.*

## 5. Discussion

The aim of the thesis at hand is to identify and compare university students reasons for committing academic dishonesty and to find out and compare the extent of students knowledge about university regulations on academic dishonesty. The author composed four research questions with the aim in mind. These questions and the results will be discussed in the following part along with implications, restrictions and the authors conclusions.

### *5.1 What reasons do students use to explain their commitment in academic dishonesty?*

The students interviewed gave various reasons for committing academic dishonesty. Most of the reasons given by students were individual meaning that they only saw themselves behind their academic dishonesty. Contrary to previous research the most popular reason for engaging in academic dishonesty was not to get a better grade. The most prevalent reason given was that the student was not able to memorize the necessary information and therefore resorted to academic dishonesty. Laziness and a self-percieved perfectionism were other individual reasons given. While explaining their academic dishonesty many students also used neutralization techniques but these were not used when asked specifically what the reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty were. It seems that the interviewees believe that other students academic dishonesty occurs because of institutional reasons like the teacher making exams based on only facts. The students also say that these institutional problems bother them but they do not contribute their own academic dishonesty to be mainly because of institutional reasons. In conclusion the interviewees take responsibility of the own academicy dishonest behaviour and do not blame only others for their actions. A reason for this might be the fact that most of the interviewees were either masters or doctorate level students. More research is needed to find out if the reasons that students give for their academic dishonesty vary between bachelors, masters and doctorate level students.

### *5.2 To what extent are students aware of their universities policies on academic dishonesty?*

In general the interviewees in this study were not very well aware of what the specific regulations on academic dishonesty in their universities are. All students are of course aware that academic dishonesty is prohibited but what exactly counts as academic dishonesty and what are the consequences are less known to students. Based on the results of this study one could argue that the use of an honor code does make students more aware of the regulations. This of course can not be confirmed since this is a qualitative study. The interviewees in this study also believe that other students are not very well aware of the regulations concerning academic dishonesty in their universities. This is a point that universities struggling with academic dishonesty could tackle. As many students said the awareness of regulations might not completely eradicate the growing problem of academic dishonesty but it surely can't hurt.

### *5.3 Where do students get information about their universities policies on academic dishonesty?*

The interviewees of this study have gotten and would get their knowledge about the regulations on academic dishonesty in their universities from the internet, books, the student council and faculty members. These results are partly in compliance with the research of Rezanejad(2013) and Jones(2011). Students do get informations about regulations from their professors, teachers and other faculty members but this is not the main channel. The students from Estonian, Finnish and American universities interviewed in this study look to the internet for answers. This can be explained with the cultural norms of Estonia and Finland and also the high level of internet services available to the students. More research is needed to determine how students get their information about regulations.

The access to these regulations is also a topic that should be discussed. Students percieve that the access to regulations is relatively easy but in reality it is easier in the case of American universities than the universities of Estonia and Finland. This is a point that universities should consider.

Another interesting thing that came out in this study was the fact that students from Estonian and Finnish universities strongly believe that their universities should allocate more resources into promoting academic integrity. Rezanejad&Rezaei (2013) discovered that students cheat because they consider that their universities don't offer enough training on the matter of academic dishonesty and that students also feel that there is a lack of clarity on

university regulations regarding academic dishonesty. This seems to be the case in Estonian and Finnish universities as well. The Estonian and Finnish students participating in this study felt that too little is talked about academic dishonesty and ethics in their universities.

#### *5.4 What are the differences in university policies on academic dishonesty between the universities in Estonia, Finland and the U.S ?*

The main difference that the author discovered was the use of an honor code system. The American university that was studied had a classical dual-responsibility honor code where the rights and obligations of the student were clearly stated. The honor code also left little room for interpretation and all cases of academic dishonesty are handled by the honor board. The Estonian universities have a document called Study Regulations where all regulations concerning the university are stated. This document has a section dedicated to academic dishonesty where academic dishonesty is defined and the consequences of getting caught are explained. The Finnish universities studied did not have one clear document where all the regulations on academic dishonesty could be found. Instead they had various different ethical codes and guidelines for students. Some of these were university-wide and some made for certain faculties and institutions only.

The differences between the countries are therefore clear. Firstly the American and Finnish university emphasize academic integrity and honesty more than the Estonian universities. The American honor code and the Finnish ethical codes pay more attention to prevention and upholding ethical standards. The Estonian Study Regulations documents on the other hand focus more on the definition of academic dishonesty and clearly stating what the consequences are.

Secondly the way in which faculty members can handle cases of academic dishonesty varies between universities in different countries. In the American university all cases are handled by the honor board and faculty members have cannot settle cases by their own. How this works in reality is not clear and could be a topic for further research. In the Finnish and Estonian universities the teachers and faculty members have more power to settle cases on their own or report the cases to a higher authority.

In conclusion the regulations of the American university and the Estonian universities are the furthest from each other. The Finnish universities regulations are somewhere in the middle and if the Finnish universities would gather their ethical codes into one document then it could be considered as a modified honor code.

### *5.5 Restrictions*

The study at hand has several restrictions and provides many more ways how to further study the subject matter. Since the study is qualitative the results can not be used to describe the general population and the general situation in the universities of Estonia, Finland and The United States. This study provides an deeper look into the regulations of these particular universities and into the thoughts that students have about academic dishonesty. The number of interviewees in this study was quite small due to the difficulties of getting voluntary interviewees. This is understandable because of the sensitive subject matter but in further research more interviewees should be done to provide a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The interview conditions in this study also have some restrictions. It is unclear what kind of an effect doing interviews via Skype software has compared to doing interviews in person. It could be that the anonymity of using Skype allows for the interviewees to open up more about this sensitive topic or it could be the other way around. This study focused on two separate topics; reasons for committing academic dishonesty and regulations on academic dishonesty. In future research one could focus on one of these topics and go deeper into either the students thought and the psychology behind academic dishonesty or do a larger scale document analysis on the regulations to provide universities with ideas on how to promote integrity and prevent academic dishonesty.

### *5.6 Implications*

The results from this study can be used by universities to better their regulations on academic dishonesty and to get an idea of what students know about the regulations. This is especially the case in Estonia and Finland. It seems that students do want more informations about academic dishonesty and academic ethics in general. The study shows the need for Estonian and Finnish universities to develop their strategies on dealing with academic dishonesty and promoting academic integrity. The results also provide a look into the reasons why university students engage in academic dishonesty in America, Estonia and Finland. The reasons provided by the interviewees suggest that there could be clear differences between the reasons for committing academic dishonesty between American, Estonian and Finnish students. The results also somewhat differ from existing research and reflect the need for moving away from fact-based testing in universities. More research is also needed to see if there are differences between the reasons for engaging in academic dishonesty between bachelor, masters and doctorate- level students.

## **6. Thanks**

The author would like to thank all the studied universities in Estonia, Finland and The United States for their cooperation and willingness to take part in this study. The author would also like to thank all the interviewees for their participation and openness to discuss such a sensitive topic. A Special thanks goes out to the the supervisor of this thesis, Karmen Trasberg for being very professional and always ready to answer all of the authors questions on quick notice.

## **7. Acknowledgment of authorship**

I confirm that I have compiled the thesis at hand and have correctly brought out the contributions of other authors and supporters. The thesis has been compiled according to the thesis requirements of the University of Tartu and is in accordance with good academic traditions.

Date and signature here

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## 9. Annexes

### 9.1 Annex 1. Messages to universities and student organisations in Estonian and Finnish

Tere!

Mina olen Magnus Ligi ning teen oma magistritööd. Minu töö teemaks on akadeemiline petturlus. Töö on kvalitatiivne ja viiakse läbi kolmes erinevas riigis. Seega sooviksin leida meie teaduskonnast 2 magistri- või doktoriastme üliõpilast, kes oleksid nõus osalema intervjuus. Kõik intervjuu käigus räägitud asjad jäävad anonüümseks ning intervjuu kestvus on maksimaalselt 1,5 tundi. Osalemiseks saatke palun e-mail aadressile [magnus90@ut.ee](mailto:magnus90@ut.ee) ning siis saame leppida täpsemalt kokku teile sobiva intervjuu toimumiskoha ning aja.

Kohtumiseni!

Magnus Ligi

Hei!

Olen Magnus Ligi ja teen graduani Tarton Yliopistossa, Virossa. Graduni teemana on akateeminen vilppi. Teen tutkimustani kolmessa eri valtiossa ja nyt etsin Turun Yliopistosta maisteri- tai tohtoriohjelmien opiskelijoita haastateltavaksi. Kaikki haastattelussa puhutut asiat jäävät anonyymiksi ja haastattelun kesto on maksimissaan 1,5 tuntia. Haastattelu tehdään suomen kielellä.

Olen tulossa Turkuun tällä viikolla (1.4 - 4.4), mutta jos tuo ajankohta ei sovi sinulle, haastattelu voidaan tehdä myös internetin välityksellä, Skype palvelussa.

Mikäli haluat osallistua haastatteluun niin kirjoita minulle osoitteeseen [magnus90@ut.ee](mailto:magnus90@ut.ee) ja voimme sopia sinulle sopivan haastatteluajan ja paikan.

Terveisin

Magnus Ligi

## 9.2 Annex 2. Interview questions in Estonian, Finnish & English

### **Individuaalsed**

1. Mis on sinu arvates akadeemiline petturlus?
2. Kas sa oled kunagi sooritanud akadeemilist petturlust?
3. Kui tõsine oli sinu arvates sinu sooritatud akadeemiline petturlus?
4. Kas sa oled jäänud vahele akadeemilise petturlusega? Kui jah siis milliseid samme võttis sinu ülikool ning millised olid tagajärjed?
5. Millistel põhjustel sooritasid sa akadeemilist petturlust?
6. Kas akadeemiline petturlus on mõningates olukordades aksepteeritav?
7. Mida sa teeksid/teed kui kui näeksid teist üliõpilast sooritamas akadeemilist petturlust?
8. Millist mõju avaldab sinu sotsiaalne võrgustik(pere, sõbrad, õppejõud) sinu suhtumisse akadeemilisse petturlusse?

### **Sotsiaalsed**

9. Millistel põhjustel sooritavad üliõpilased sinu arvates akadeemilist petturlust?
10. Kas akadeemilise petturluse üle diskuteeritakse üliõpilaste vahel sinu ülikoolis?

### **Institutsionaalsed**

11. Kas sinu ülikoolis on honor code ehk "eetikakoodeks"?
12. Kas sinu ülikoolis võiks sinu arvates olla honor code?
13. Kas tead millised regulatsioonid kehtivad akadeemilise petturluse kohta sinu ülikoolis?
14. Kas sinu ülikooli honor code/regulatsioonid on üliõpilaste seas aksepteeritud ning väärtustatud üliõpilaste seas?
15. Kui sooviksid leida informatsiooni sinu ülikooli akadeemilise petturluse regulatsioonide kohta, siis kust sa seda informatsiooni otsiksid?
16. Kas sinu ülikooli regulatsioonid akadeemilise petturluse kohta on lihtsasti kättesaadavad?
17. Kust said sina teada sinu ülikoolis kehtivate akadeemilise petturluse regulatsioonide kohta?
18. Kuidas propageerib sinu ülikool akadeemilist ausust?
19. Mida teeb sinu ülikool kui üliõpilane jääb vahele akadeemilise petturlusega?
20. Kas sinu arvates peaks sinu ülikool suunama rohkem ressursse akadeemilise petturluse vähendamisele/aususe propageerimise peale?

## Interview questions in Finnish

### **Henkilökohtaiset**

1. Mitä on mielestäsi akateeminen vilppi?
2. Oletko ikinä suorittanut akateemista vilppiä?
3. Miten vakavana pidit akateemista vilppiäsi?
4. Oletko ikinä jäänyt kiinni akateemisesta vilpistä? Mitä yliopistosi teki? Millaisia seuraamuksia kiinni jäämisellä oli?
5. Mitkä olivat syitä akateemiseen vilppiisi?
6. Onko akateeminen vilppi hyväksyttävää joissain tilanteissa?
7. Mitä teet/tekisit jos näät toisen opiskelijan suorittavan akateemista vilppiä?
8. Miten sosiaalinen verkostosi(perhe, ystävät, opettajat) vaikuttavat sinun suhtautumiseen akateemiseen vilppiin?

### **Sosiaaliset**

9. Miksi opiskelijat suorittavat akateemista vilppiä?
10. Keskustellaanko opiskelijoiden kesken akateemisesta vilpistä sinu yliopistollasi?

### **Institutionaaliset**

11. Onko sinu yliopistolla käytössä honor code eli ”eettiset ohjeet”?
12. Pitäisikö sinun yliopistolla olla käytössä honor code?
13. Tiedätkö millaisia akateemiseen vilppiin liittyviä sääntöjä yliopistollasi on?
14. Ovatko yliopistosi akateemiseen vilppiin liittyvät säännöt arvostettuja opiskelijoiden seassa?
15. Jos haluaisit löytää tietoa yliopistosi akateemiseen vilppiin liittyvistä säännöistä, niistä mistä etsisit?
16. Ovatko yliopistosi akateemiseen vilppiin liittyvät säännöt helposti saatavilla?
17. Mistä sinä sait tietää yliopistosi akateemiseen vilppiin liittyvistä säännöistä?
18. Miten yliopistosi edistää akateemista rehellisyyttä?
19. Mitä yliopistosi tekee, jos opiskelija jää kiinni akateemisesta vilpistä yliopistollasi?
20. Pitäisikö yliopistosi käyttää enemmän resursseja akateemisen vilpin vähentämiseen/akateemisen rehellisyyden edistämiseen?

## Interview questions in English

### **Individual**

1. What is academic dishonesty in your opinion?
2. Have you ever committed academic dishonesty?
3. How would you rate the seriousness of your academic dishonesty?
4. Have you been caught with academic dishonesty? What measures were taken by your university? What were the consequences?
5. What were the reasons for you committing academic dishonesty?
6. Is committing academic dishonesty excusable in some situations?
7. What would you do if you witnessed an act of academic dishonesty by fellow students?
8. How does your social network(friends, family, faculty) influence your attitudes towards academic dishonesty?

### **Social**

9. Why do you think students commit academic dishonesty?
10. Is academic dishonesty discussed between students at your university?

### **Institutional**

11. Is there an honor code or "ethical code" in your university?
12. Should there be an honor code in your university?
13. What kinds of regulations does your university have on academic dishonesty?
14. Is the honor code/regulations embraced in your university by students?
15. Where would you look if you needed information about the regulations on academic dishonesty in your university?
16. Are the regulations on academic dishonesty easily accessible in your university?
17. Where did you find out about the regulations on academic dishonesty in your university?
18. How does your university promote academic integrity?
19. What kinds of measures are taken by our university when a student gets caught with academic dishonesty?
20. Do you think your university should use more resources to reduce academic dishonesty/ promote academic integrity?

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

Mina Magnus Ligi 18.02.1990

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