

Academic ethics as a self-regulatory mechanism and academic safeguard: a proposal for standardising the reporting of Ethics Committees in Romanian universities

Alin Gaureanu

Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania
alin.gaureanu@upt.ro

Caius Luminosu

Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania
caius.luminosu@upt.ro

Anca Draghici

Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania
Anca.draghici@upt.ro

Abstract

This paper analyses the role of university ethics committees in Romania as institutional mechanisms for self-regulation and prevention, proposing a model for standardising reporting to enhance inter-institutional comparability. The study is based on an analysis of 417 complaints from eight universities (2016–2024), using a descriptive quantitative methodology and empirical coding of variables. The results highlight the predominance of misconduct cases (42.9%), a high rate of complaint rejection (67.4%) and a significant proportion of unresolved cases (22.3%), indicating shortcomings in standardisation. The sanctions imposed are predominantly corrective and educational, suggesting a preventive orientation of the system. The study demonstrates that these committees function as mechanisms of ‘institutional shock absorption’, limiting the escalation of conflicts to the courts. It highlights the need to develop standardised reporting frameworks to improve ethical governance and academic integrity policies.

Keywords: academic ethics, academic integrity, institutional governance, standardised reporting, ethics committees

1. Introduction

This paper argues that ethics committees function as institutional mechanisms for mitigation, self-regulation and prevention, which contribute significantly to the qualitative strengthening of the

academic environment. By filtering, resolving and absorbing reported conflicts, they prevent and avert their escalation into court proceedings, such as in administrative, labour, civil or criminal litigation.

Academic ethics and integrity have, over time, become an important component of an ecosystem of integrated academic governance, alongside the quality assurance system or the control and accreditation system within higher education. Universities meet society's demands at every stage of its development. With a civic role, one of social responsibility, knowledge, and future development through research and innovation (Cohen et al., 2026; Ervits, 2024), universities foster a high standard of ethical conduct among their members. As a result of integrated university governance, graduates make their mark both in society and within the academic community, through global visibility and renown.

In Romania, in terms of the institutional harmonisation of ethical concepts, we observe the emergence of a sustained focus following the 1990s, coinciding with the reform of the post-communist university system. Initially, **ethical principles were incorporated on a voluntary basis** into internal regulations (relating to employment relations). Due to the rise in cases of plagiarism, falsification of research data and other breaches of academic ethics, such as nepotism, abuse of authority, conflicts of interest and harassment, the first codes of academic ethics emerged after the 2000s. This development stems from **an autonomous desire to improve the quality** of academic conduct and research. With the introduction of Education Law No. 1 of 2011, all universities nationwide were required to draw up a University Charter containing regulations regarding the Code of Ethics. These processes of transformation reflect the evolution of social standards and the quality of academic standards and are driven by the institutional need to align with:

- the Bologna Process,
- international bodies such as the EUA (European University Association) or
- the European Union (ALLEA – All European Academies, 2017).

Reflecting growing concerns regarding research integrity, academic misconduct and institutional accountability, Academic Ethics is becoming part of quality assurance mechanisms.

At present, within higher education in Romania, ethical governance is implemented in accordance with the provisions of the Higher Education Act No. 199/2023 (Romanian Parliament, 2023). The Government issues framework regulations that in view of university autonomy and social responsibility allow each university to easily develop its own uniformly structured Code of Ethics and Academic Conduct (Government of Romania, 2024), as well as uniform framework regulations regarding the establishment, organisation and operation of its own Ethics Committees (Minister of Education, 2024).

2. Thematic framework of the hypotheses

The academic literature on academic integrity highlights the tension between preventive (educational/regulatory) and punitive approaches (Macfarlane et al., 2014). Whilst some models prioritise strict enforcement of the law and sanctions, others advocate for educational and restorative mechanisms (Bretag, 2016; Macfarlane et al., 2014). At the same time, research integrity frameworks developed at European level emphasise the importance of institutional responsibility and proportionality in sanctioning misconduct (ALLEA – All European Academies, 2017).

Speaking of tensions in approach, another relevant field of divergence is the one created by **university autonomy**, guaranteed by the Constitution, in contrast to **state regulations** on quality indicators in higher education. Regarding the analysis of ethical accountability, a consequence of this tension has led to ethics committees reporting in entirely different (autonomous) formats from one university to another, making it impossible to collect, aggregate and interpret the data in a unified, statistically comparable,

and standardised manner across institutions. Due to this fact, the data is difficult to analyse systematically, and the state cannot utilise strategies in the management of the resulting indicators, thereby losing its prerogative to control and shape the legislative response to ethical breaches.

This study addresses this gap by developing a comparative framework for analysing the reports of ethics committees in Romanian universities, proposing a standardised coding method to enable inter-institutional comparison.

Given that the implementation of the ethics system operates within a broader legal ecosystem, which encompasses labour law (Davies, 2012), criminal law, as well as civil and administrative law, all of which may coexist concurrently (Leclerc & Klausser, 2025), the standardised reporting format, in addition to details and indicators, incorporates the most common levels of accountability. Thus, when investigating complaints submitted to Ethics Committees, responsibilities in the areas of ethics, disciplinary-administrative matters and even criminal law are identified. Misconduct falls within a multi-level accountability system: ethical (institutional norms), disciplinary (labour law) and criminal (enforcement of the law by the state). These levels differ in terms of standards of proof, the severity of sanctions and procedural formalities (Davies, 2012).

Due to a lack of clarity regarding the exact remit of the committees, there is a wide variety of complaints, which compels the Ethics Committee to decline jurisdiction over complaints for which it has no investigative powers, particularly regarding disciplinary or criminal offences. Due to this complexity of responsibilities and sanctioning procedures, there are no relevant studies that have examined how these levels of legal responsibility are linked in the practice of investigating and analysing ethical breaches.

Academic integrity is increasingly conceptualised as a governance issue rather than a purely normative one (Bretag, 2016). Institutions rely on internal mechanisms that combine formal rules with informal practices. The concept of the institutional buffer explains how organisations absorb tensions without allowing them to escalate. Ethics committees, like disciplinary preliminary investigation committees acting under the provisions of labour law, act as mediating bodies that seek to prevent conflicts or problematic situations from reaching higher levels of escalation or public exposure – through public proceedings in the courts. However, ethics committees cannot in any way prevent the complainant from taking the matter to court at any time, nor are they supposed to.

3. Methodology

The study employs a descriptive quantitative approach to analyse ethics complaints recorded at university level in Romania. Pie charts and bar charts are presented to illustrate the distribution of variables. Inferential methods were not applied, given the exhaustive nature of the sample analysed, but we rely on the validation of the phenomenology, given that the universities studied are leading and representative of Romania. We do not aim to validate the conclusions within the international academic environment, but we do consider the extent to which we align with that trend.

The dataset comprises a total of 417 reports, classified based on:

- the type of misconduct;
- the resolutions issued;
- sanctions and solutions
 - o sanctions for accepted complaints,
 - o solutions for rejected complaints

The data source consists of the ethics committee reports from 2016 to 2024 of eight leading universities in Romania. In accordance with legal provisions, yearly reports on the activity of ethics committees must be published on the websites of all Romanian universities.

The standardisation hypothesis arose due to the difficulty of statistical documentation caused by the ambiguity and significant differences in the drafting of university ethics committee reports. This difficulty was overcome through an empirical coding of variables, which, once standardised, can be aggregated and compared.

The need for standardisation and coding of variables is a systemic aspect of statistics, and with the help of and through the resulting indicators, university management at national level can analyse, draw conclusions, correlate and intervene, strategically controlling the evolution of indicators through appropriate adjustments.

3.1. First step – Bottom-up selection

This involved the manual extraction of data for the common years for which data is available from 8 leading universities in Romania. These universities and the regions from which they originate represent important and relevant hubs in education and research. Of the 50 mentions in the QS World University Rankings 2026 of Romanian universities across various categories, 39 belong to the universities selected below:

- Politehnica University of Timișoara,
- West University of Timișoara,
- Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca,
- Technical University of Cluj-Napoca,
- University of Bucharest,
- UNST Politehnica Bucharest
- Transilvania University of Brașov,
- University of Medicine in Iași,

3.2. Step two – Standardisation of Variables

To ensure comparability, the data were aggregated at institutional level and analysed cross-sectionally. The indicators calculated include the acceptance rate, the rejection rate, and the percentage distribution of types of complaints and sanctions.

This involved data analysis aimed at producing descriptive statistics, which required the manual selection and sorting of the database to enable tabular analysis. The variables could have been much more detailed, but this would have resulted in statistics that were difficult to analyse at this stage. Consequently, it was deemed appropriate to focus the analysis on useful summary indicators, both for quality management and for the impact of the ethics committees' work, thereby highlighting the following indicators:

- the distribution rate of types of complaints
- admissibility rate (acceptance or rejection),
- distribution rate of types of sanctions (of particular interest is their severity)

3.3. Step three – Building the database

This was made possible following the conversion and empirical interpretation of the information into standardised codes (acronyms), which can then be quantified, summarised and analysed. Below is a key to the proposed generic codes and what they represent, as shown in Table 1:

Types of reports:

- C** Conduct = failure to comply with school regulations, breach of confidentiality, abuse of position, bullying, bribery, corruption, denigration, discrimination, xenophobia, insults, harassment, inclusion, etc.
- CR** Challenging Results = in exams, in job competitions, regarding regulations, incompatibilities, conflicts of interest, favouritism, unprofessionalism, influence peddling
- IF** Intellectual fraud = plagiarism, self-plagiarism, unjustified co-authorship, ghost-writing, cheating in exams, falsification/fabrication of data, forgery and use of forged documents
- UDF** Undefined = general misconduct without specific definition

Types of resolution of the complaint:

- A** Accepted
- R** Rejected

Types of solutions for ACCEPTED complaints

- NS** Not sanctioned = The Commission does not consider a sanction necessary after establishing the offence, usually due to negligence or error or other factors
- WW** Written warning = Minor sanction under the code of ethics
- SR** Suspension of Rights = suspension, for a fixed period of between one and five years of the right to apply for a senior or management position or to serve as a member of selection panels;
- DS** Disciplinary Sanctions = sanctions under the Labour Code, relating to breaches of rights and obligations concerning employment relations, which should be applied by preliminary disciplinary investigation committees
- E** Expulsion = the most severe disciplinary sanction for students
- R** Withdrawal of degree or published works = withdrawal of undergraduate theses, degrees from all levels of education, including doctoral degrees, as well as works in which academic misconduct has been established
- REC** Recommendations = The Committee does not impose a sanction, but recommends certain improved attitudes, procedures, and possible points of view
- M** Mediation = The Commission is involved in reconciling and conciliating the parties through mediation, usually in cases of deviations from desirable standards

Types of solutions for REJECTED complaints

- RJA** Res Judicata = The Commission notes that the matter has been resolved in a previous complaint or a re-submitted complaint
- DJ** Declination of Jurisdiction = The complaint falls outside the Commission's jurisdiction and is usually referred to the disciplinary, criminal, or university management bodies (Senate, administrative department), or to faculties or departments for regulatory matters
- UN** Unsubstantiated = unfounded, unsubstantiated, unproven; no breaches, dismissals, failure to appear, or failure to submit evidence within the deadline for investigation or analysis have been established
- I** Inadmissible = The form and/or content of the complaint does not comply with the substantive and procedural provisions of the code of ethics; precariousness – does not comply with any prior procedures; the complainants are found to lack the status of active parties (error of person)

Table 1: Statistics on complaints to the ethics committees of 8 universities in Romania

University	Total Compl.	Type of complaints				Resolutions		Types of resolutions for accepted complaints								Types of resolutions for rejected complaints			
		C	CR	IF	UDF	A	R	NS	WW	SR	DS	E	R	REC	M	RJA	DJ	UN	I
Babeş-Bolyai University	66	7	5	6	48	32	34		15			1		5	12		7	21	5
Politehnica University of Timișoara	16	7	5	4		5	11	1	1			1		1	1			11	
University of Bucharest	97	55	19	23		28	69	5	6	2			1	6	8		28	39	2
Transilvania University	88	34	11	12	31	29	59		16	7	3		2		1	6	21	23	9
Technical University of Cluj-Napoca	59	26	18	7	8	16	43	1	3	3	1		1	5	2		26	13	4
West University of Timișoara	32	22		4	6	11	21		4		1	2		2	1		2	18	2
University of Medicine, Iași	28	14	6	8		7	21		5					1	1		9	11	1
UNST Politehnica Bucharest	31	14	4	13		8	23	1	3	2				2		1	4	18	
Total	417	179	68	77	93	136	281	8	53	14	5	4	4	22	26	7	97	154	23

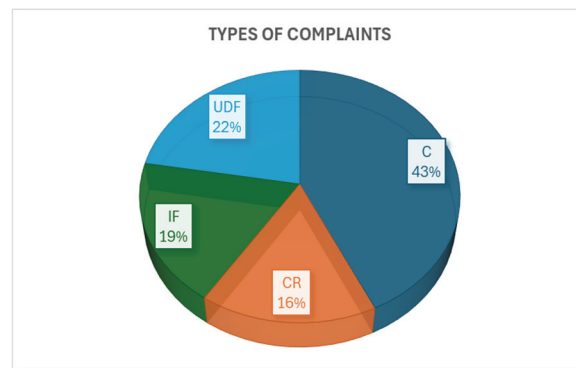
Own study

4. Results

4.1. Distribution of complaint types

The analysis highlights a predominance of complaints in the Conduct category (42.9%), followed by unspecified complaints (22.3%), intellectual fraud (18.5%) and challenges to results (16.3%).

Figure 1: Types of complaints

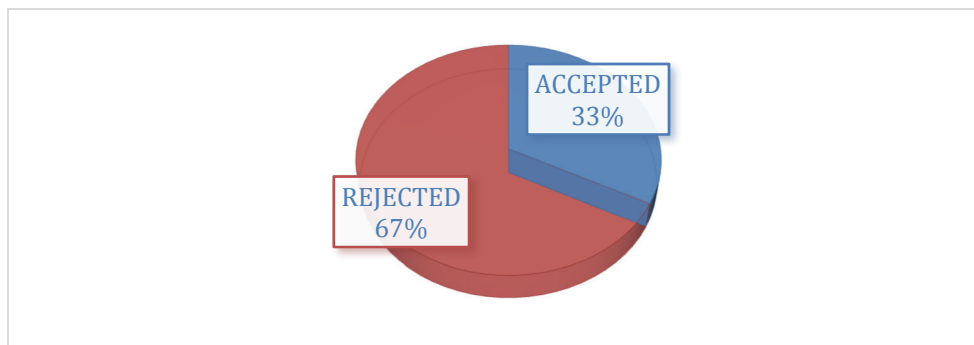


The high proportion of undefined cases is due to a lack of standardisation in the reporting process, as well as the absence of standardisation requirements, which has allowed certain committees to over-generalise cases. Ethics committees change every four years, with some being more rigorous and others more superficial.

4.2. Resolution of complaints

Of the total complaints analysed, 32.6% were upheld, whilst 67.4% were rejected, as shown in Figure 2.

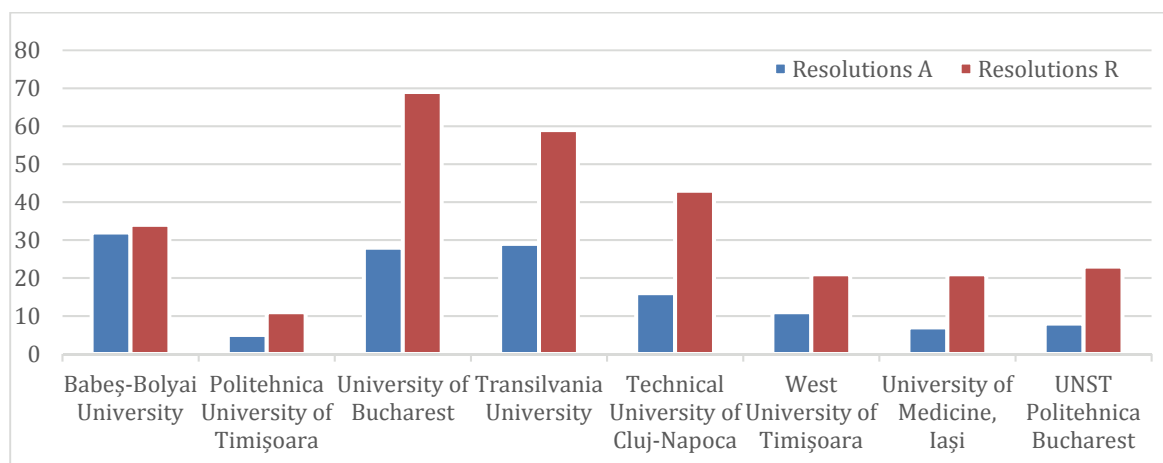
Figure 2: Acceptance rate



This distribution suggests either a high rate of complaints with insufficient grounds or the existence of rigorous validation criteria applied by the ethics committees.

The graph in Figure 3 shows that there is a lower acceptance rate at Babes-Bolyai University compared to other universities. It can be seen that the acceptance rate is generally two or three times lower at other universities, but at Babes-Bolyai University it is approximately equal to the rejection rate

Figure 3: Acceptance rates/Universities

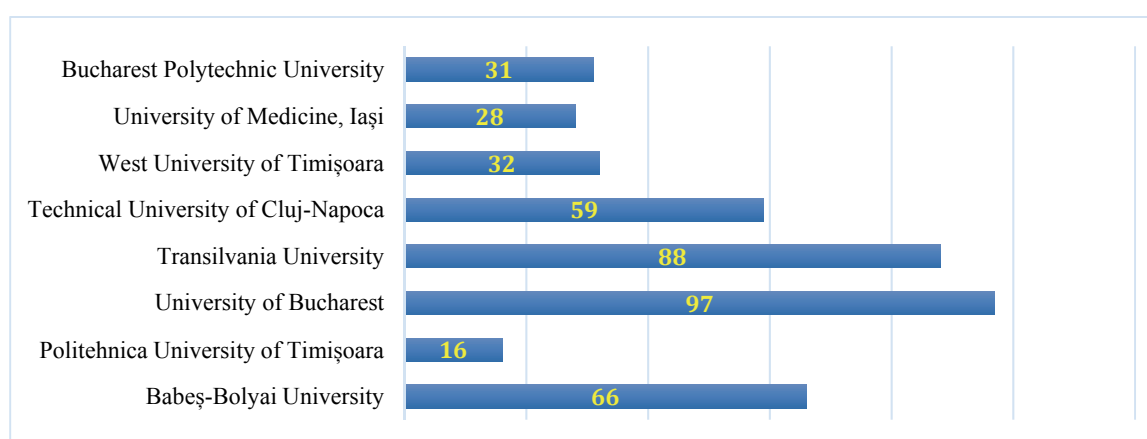


According to empirical evidence, this phenomenon is attributable to the role of the **‘Ombudsman’**. The Ombudsman at Babes-Bolyai University acts as a facilitator, engaging in objective and impartial discussions, offering advice and mediation, making recommendations, and building a closer rapport with the complainant. This approach helps to reduce the number of rejections by effectively preventing the submission of inconclusive, unfounded complaints or those with major substantive or procedural deficiencies. It is affiliated with the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and the European Network of Ombudsmen in Higher Education (ENOHE). In the three years since its establishment (2020), the number of complaints handled by the Ombudsman has increased more than fourfold: from 5 complaints in the first year to 23 in 2023 (UBB Ethics Committee, 2023).

4.3. Institutional distribution

The number of complaints varies significantly between universities, as shown in Figure 4, with the highest numbers recorded at: the University of Bucharest (97), Transilvania University (88 cases) and Babeş-Bolyai University (66 cases).

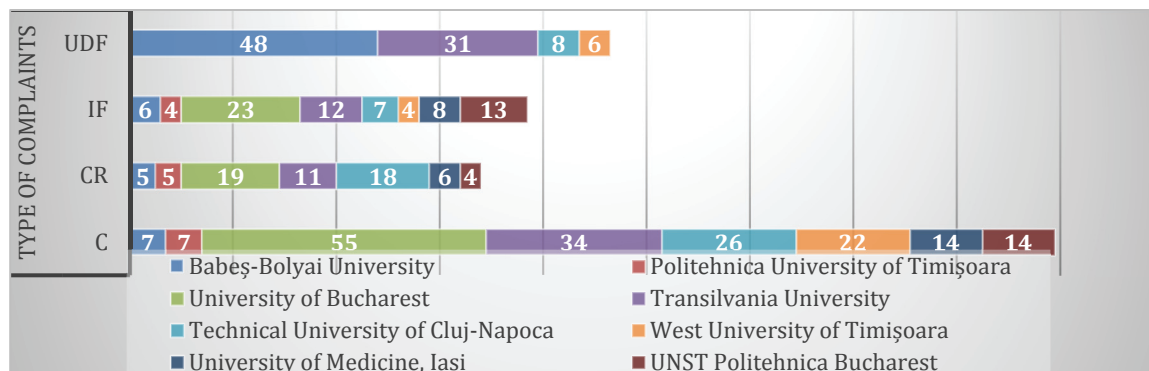
Figure 4: Volume of complaints by university, 2016–2024



These differences may reflect institutional size, the level of awareness of reporting mechanisms, or specific organisational culture. A strictly descriptive analysis does not provide an overview of the phenomenon unless it has a common reference point, for example, per 100 students.

Furthermore, Figure 5 shows the distribution of complaint types by university. It can be seen that the number of undefined complaints (UDF) occurs at Babes-Bolyai University (48) and Transilvania University (31), which indicates a lack of standardisation, but also a lack of attention to detail.

Figure 5: Types of complaints



4.4. Types and severity of sanctions in accepted cases

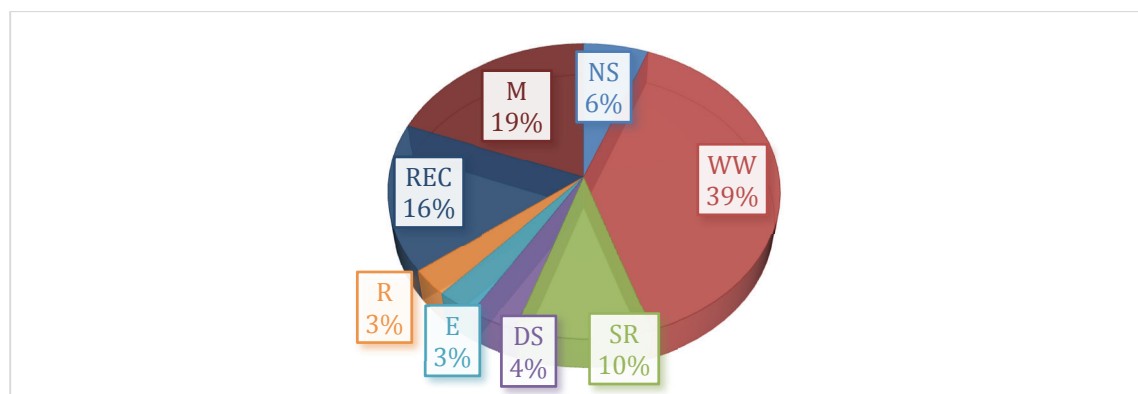
Among the accepted complaints, as shown in Figure 6, the most common measures applied are:

- Written warning (WW) – 53 cases (39%),
- Mediation (M) – 26 cases (19%),
- Recommendations (REC) – 22 cases (16%).

Highly severe sanctions are relatively rare:

- suspension of rights (SR) – 14 cases (10%),
- expulsion (E) – 4 cases (3%) and
- withdrawal of coursework/diplomas (R) – 4 cases (3%).

Figure 5: Types of complaints



These results indicate a predominant focus on corrective and preventive measures, rather than severe punitive sanctions.

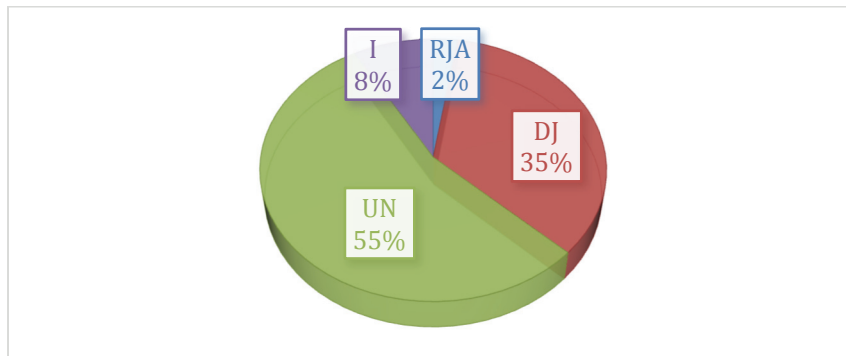
4.5. Reasons for rejecting complaints

The main reasons for rejection are:

- unfounded complaints (UN) – 154 cases (54%),
- lack of jurisdiction (DC) – 97 cases (35%),

- inadmissibility (I) – 23 cases (8%),
- res judicata (ALJ) – 7 cases (2%).

Figure 6: Types of resolutions for rejected complaints



The predominance of the ‘unfounded’ category suggests a frequent lack of evidence or insufficient substantiation of complaints. At the same time, the high number of declined cases indicates possible ambiguities regarding the Ethics Commission’s remit, scope of competence, and knowledge of the regulations and the types of misconduct that may be reported to the Commission.

5. Discussions

The results highlight four major trends:

1. The prevalence of breaches of conduct compared to academic fraud;
2. The high rate of rejection of complaints, mainly due to a lack of substantiation or a decline of jurisdiction
3. The issue of unresolved cases
4. A preference for moderate sanctions, suggesting an intervention model based on correction and prevention.

5.1. *The prevalence of misconduct*

The majority of complaints regarding conduct ($\approx 43\%$) is consistent with international literature, which shows that interpersonal misconduct (harassment, discrimination, abuse of authority) is reported more frequently than academic fraud itself (European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO), 2023).

This phenomenon can be explained by:

- the increased visibility of interpersonal behaviours;
- the direct impact on the organisational climate;
- the greater barriers to detecting and proving intellectual fraud.

5.2. *The high rate of rejection of complaints or lack of jurisdiction*

The high proportion of rejected reports ($\approx 67\%$) is a critical indicator. The literature suggests that such figures may reflect a lack of understanding of the complexity of probation standards, as well as a high level of institutional formalisation. Probation starts, as Fanelli (2009) noted, with the terminological definition of misconduct in research, and whether the terms FFP (Fabrication, Falsification, Plagiarism) are equivalent and can be interpreted as ‘alteration’ or ‘modification’, or ‘enhancement of results’. The specialist literature also highlights other aspects concerning both institutional conflicts of interest arising

from self-investigation and the fear of potential reprisals (Jørgen Vie, 2020; Lubalin & Matheson, 1999; Steneck, 2006)

About the declination of jurisdiction (DJ), the main causes stem from issues concerning the institutional remit of the Ethics Committee, which cannot investigate matters falling within the remit of other committees, competition regulations, or disciplinary or criminal offences. The high number of referred complaints suggests ambiguities regarding the demarcation of competences, as well as a lack of clear mechanisms to guide complainants. These issues are frequently highlighted in the literature on university governance (Stensaker & Harvey, 2011).

5.3. *The issue of undefined cases*

The significant percentage of ‘undefined’ cases ($\approx 22\%$) indicates a methodological and procedural shortcoming. To this percentage can be added possible more or less accurate interpretations in the identification and standardisation process. According to (Tauginienė et al., 2019), there should be more efforts with regard to the unification of the definitions of academic misconduct and for a taxonomy in the classification of complaints at institutional level. Linguistic heterogeneity is considered by (Horbach et al., 2017) to make a uniform classification of reports impossible, whilst (Bouter et al., 2016) criticise superficial standardisation practices, which allow some dubious practices to go unrecorded. The classification of violations is essential for the following aspects:

- institutional comparability;
- risk monitoring;
- the development of preventive policies.

5.4. *Types of sanctions: corrective-educational rather than punitive-repressive*

The distribution of sanctions indicates a predominance of measures such as warnings, recommendations and mediation, which underline the predominant nature of mild, corrective-educational sanctions.

This approach is aligned with modern approaches to ethical governance, which promote restorative and educational models over punitive sanctions (Gary Pavela et al., 2017; Sopcak & Hood, 2022).

However, the limited use of severe sanctions may raise questions regarding the intended effect of the sanctioning system, namely deterrence for the purpose of prevention. Another effect would be the dilution of the consistency of the strict application of sanctions in serious cases (McCabe & Trevino, 1993).

6. Conclusions

An analysis of data on ethics complaints from eight Romanian universities highlights the functioning of institutional integrity mechanisms, which are rigorous in terms of procedure but cannot be centralised. The results indicate a predominance of breaches of conduct over academic fraud, as well as a high rate of dismissal of complaints. These characteristics suggest that the research ethics system is more frequently involved in managing interpersonal conflicts and organisational behaviour than in investigating and sanctioning serious breaches of scientific integrity.

Another relevant finding is the significant proportion of undefined cases, which reflects limitations in the standardisation of classification and reporting processes. This shortcoming of all autonomous systems must be regulated at national level. This objective must be achieved because, by aggregating standardised data resulting from continuous monitoring, a conclusive picture of the evolution of ethical

phenomena can be obtained. Once this picture is complete—this as accurate a history of the system as possible—strategies, plans, solutions and interventions can be established centrally and uniformly to regulate prevention and keep breaches of ethics at the lowest possible level.

Regarding the sanctions applied to admissible and investigated complaints, the level of severity was examined. The distribution of sanctions reveals a predominantly corrective-preventive, approach based on warnings, recommendations and mediation, to the detriment of severe sanctions such as expulsion or suspension of rights, or the withdrawal of plagiarised works. The predominance of low-intensity sanctions may weaken the deterrent effect, particularly in cases of repeated misconduct. These findings highlight the need to balance preventive approaches with the consistent application of more severe measures. Viewed as a whole, the system for investigating and managing academic ethics measures appears to function more as a mechanism for organisational and educational regulation than as a punitive instrument, which is in line with international trends in the field of ethical governance.

Academic ethics committees do not limit themselves to assessing breaches but actively shape their institutional trajectory. They determine whether cases remain within a lenient regulatory framework or whether they are referred to the disciplinary or criminal sphere. Through this shaping, ethics committees become institutional shock-absorbing mechanisms. By defusing conflicts at an early stage, they reduce escalation and contribute to organisational stability. However, this shock-absorbing function may also limit the severity of sanctions.

The governance system identified in this study reflects a hybrid model, combining mediation and regulation. The high rate of procedural filtering might suggest, in standardised terms, increased efficiency, but it may also create potential barriers to access, due to poor dissemination to the academic community.

The study helps to highlight relevant structural and functional patterns in research into breaches of academic ethics. The results underscore the need for an integrated approach that combines procedural standardisation, ethical education and the strengthening of inter-institutional cooperation, with a view to increasing the efficiency and credibility of academic integrity systems. The integration of such a component into the academic governance ecosystem demonstrates balance, cohesion, academic excellence and, implicitly, social responsibility.

References

- ALLEA - All European Academies. (2017). *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity - revised edition 2023* (2023rd ed.). <https://doi.org/10.26356/ECOC>
- Bouter, L. M., Tjldink, J., Axelsen, N., Martinson, B. C., & ter Riet, G. (2016). Ranking major and minor research misbehaviours: results from a survey among participants of four World Conferences on Research Integrity. *Research Integrity and Peer Review*, 1(17), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-016-0024-5>
- Bretag, T. (2016). *Handbook of Academic Integrity*. SpringerNature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-098-8>
- Cohen, M., Fernandes, G., & Godinho, P. (2026). ScienceDirect Developing Indicators for Measuring the Impacts of University-Industry Collaborations: An Exploratory Approach. In *Procedia Computer Science* (Vol. 278). www.sciencedirect.com
- Davies, A. C. L. (2012). *EU Labour Law* | Elgar Online. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781005156>
- Ervits, I. (2024). Developing indicators for the social benefits of university-industry collaborations. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility* 2024 9:1, 9(1), 8-. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-024-00097-9>
- European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO). (2023). *ENRIO Handbook on Whistleblower Protection in Research*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8192478>

- Fanelli, D. (2009). How many scientists fabricate and falsify research? A systematic review and meta-analysis of survey data. *PLoS ONE*, 4(5). <https://doi.org/10.1371/JOURNAL.PONE.0005738>
- Gary Pavela, B., McCabe, D. L., & McDuff, D. (2017). *Updated Ten Principles of Academic Integrity for Faculty*. www.facebook.com/tenprinciples/
- Government of Romania. (2024). *Government Decision 305/2024*. <https://lege6.ro/app/document/ge2tanbtgm4dc/hotararea-nr-305-2024-pentru-aprobarea-codului-cadru-de-etica-si-deontologie-universitara>
- Horbach, S. P. J. M., Halfman, W., & Halfman, W. (2017). Promoting Virtue or Punishing Fraud: Mapping Contrasts in the Language of “Scientific Integrity.” *Sci Eng Ethics*, 23, 1461–1485. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-016-9858-y>
- Jørgen Vie, K. (2020). How should researchers cope with the ethical demands of discovering research misconduct? Going beyond reporting and whistleblowing. *Vie Life Sciences, Society and Policy*, 16:6, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40504-020-00102-6>
- Leclerc, O., & Klausser, N. (2025). From research misconduct to disciplinary sanction: an empirical examination of French higher education case law. *Research Ethics*, 21(1), 34–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17470161241240241>
- Lubalin, J. S., & Matheson, J. L. (1999). The fallout: What happens to whistleblowers and those accused but exonerated of scientific misconduct? *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 5(2), 229–250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11948-999-0014-9>
- Macfarlane, B., Zhang, J., & Pun, A. (2014). Academic integrity: a review of the literature. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39(2), 339–358. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2012.709495>
- Mccabe, D. L., & Trevino, L. K. (1993). Academic Dishonesty - Honor Codes and Other Contextual Influences. *Journal of Higher Education*, 64(5), 522–538.
- Minister of Education. (2024). *Order of the Minister of Education 3839/2024*. <https://lege6.ro/App/Document/ge2tqnjwg4ydg/regulamentul-cadru-privind-organizarea-si-functionarea-comisiilor-de-etica-universitara-din-30092024?d=2026-03-28>
- Romanian Parliament. (2023). *Higher Education Act No. 199/2023*. <https://lege6.ro/app/document/geztqmjwgq4ts/legea-invatamantului-superior-nr-199-2023>
- Sopcak, P., & Hood, K. (2022). *Building a Culture of Restorative Practice and Restorative Responses to Academic Misconduct*. 553–571. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83255-1_29
- Steneck, N. H. (2006). Fostering integrity in research: Definitions, current knowledge, and future directions. *Science and Engineering Ethics* 2006 12:1, 12(1), 53–74. <https://doi.org/10.1007/PL00022268>
- Tauginienė, L., Gaižauskaitė, I., Razi, S., Glendinning, I., Sivasubramaniam, S., Marino, F., Cosentino, M., Anohina-Naumeca, A., & Kravjar, J. (2019). Enhancing the Taxonomies Relating to Academic Integrity and Misconduct. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, (17), 345–361. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-019-09342-4>