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### **What's new copycat?**

#### **Alternative facts in interpretations of RCR guidelines in Finland**

In Finland, all higher education institutions are committed to following a national policy to deal with suspected violations of good scientific practice. According to national RCR guidelines, all suspicions of research misconduct are dealt with at the local level. If "*the person alleged of misconduct or the instigator of the allegation*" is dissatisfied with the decision, s/he may request a statement from the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK 2012, 36). Due to the fact that research misconduct investigations are conducted at a local level the rector of the institution is responsible of the decisions, which has resulted in inconsistent definitions, processes and decisions of plagiarism (Moore 2019).

The data of this conference paper consist of 13 statements and one Request for Correction that the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) has given on dealing with plagiarism in students' Master's theses. Thematic content analysis is used to typify the interpretations of plagiarism and the investigation processes in institutions and statements. Recently, the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity has given statements that are not in accordance with their own RCR guidelines. New interpretations include e.g. that a thesis older than two years is not to be investigated at all (unless the author is in a significant position), the instigator of the suspicion is not a party, the whole thesis needs not to be investigated, the burden of proof is given to the instigator, and the RCR process should not be used at all to investigate Master's theses. The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity has started to comply with local definitions, and by using administrative and legal rhetoric interprets the guidelines in alternative and conflicting ways.

#### **References:**

TENK/ Finnish National Board on Research Integrity 2012. Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland. <http://www.tenk.fi/en/responsible-conduct-of-research>

Moore, E. Inconsistent Responses to Notifications of Suspected Plagiarism in Finnish Higher Education. *J Acad Ethics* **18**, 1–16 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-019-09354-0>