

The centralized originality check of the doctoral dissertations at the University of Belgrade: a model of a controlled and transparent procedure

Abstract. The procedure of originality check of the doctoral dissertations at the University in Belgrade, established in 2018 is presented in this paper. Since that year, at the University of Belgrade, the service Ithenticate (Turnitin) is used systematically for originality checks for all Ph.D. thesis that are in the process of evaluation. This presentation intends to explain how the procedure can be maximally controlled on one side but also transparent enough on the other.

1 Introduction

In June 2018 the Senat of the University of Belgrade has adopted The Rule of procedure for verification of originality of doctoral dissertations. By that Rule, from October 2018, one new step of the procedure is established. All dissertations that are in the process of evaluation have to be checked using the service Ithenticate. For this process of originality check, the Central Library of the University, University Library “Svetozar Marković”, is taking charge. The procedure prescribes that the results of the originality check should be sent to the mentor of the dissertation.

2 The procedure

The procedure of verification of originality includes the following steps: the student is delivering a completely finished doctoral dissertation to the students' service at his/her faculty. The officer at the faculty uploads the thesis to the specially established system (Valtez - DSpace repository, created by the University of Belgrade Computer Centre, and especially B. Kosanović) as a central infrastructure for the exchange of the information and documentation. This entry has to contain the most necessary information such as the name of the candidate, the title of the dissertation, the name and the mail of the mentor. The person in charge at the Central library will download the document and perform the originality check using the service Ithenticate. After getting a similarity report, the librarian will enter this relevant data back into Valtez system: link to the report, and the date when the check is performed. Valtez system will generate standardized mail for mentors with important information and additional useful data. The main information within this mail contains, besides a link, also credentials for access to the report. A copy of that mail is sent to the Central Library at the address of the person in charge.

However, mentioned credentials do not belong to mentors, but to the whole faculty. In fact, within the settings of the University Ithenticate account, each faculty of the University is registered as a single Ithenticate user, but only with the privilege to read and share folders, without the possibility to upload the documents. Each one of the University's 31 faculties is related to one folder of the Ithenticate, and all dissertations from that faculty are uploaded into this particular folder only.

The faculty folder contains current dissertations that are in the middle of the process of evaluation, and after 30 days these theses have to be moved into Archives - folders not visible to faculty users. Besides the administrator and performer of this procedure in the Central Library, who has access to all folders and University account, the same privileges are related to the Rectorate of the University. In other words, two centralized institutions of the University (the Rectorate and the Library) have access to the whole procedure, having full insight into the process and having control over it. On the other side, faculties have also insight into all current theses that should be defended by that faculty.

3 Advantages

This structure of the procedure has several advantages, both technical and structural:

- 1) It enables full university control over the process.
- 2) Being results visible not only for the mentor but for all the faculty members, it enables internal control and transparency inside of the institution.
- 3) It puts the Central library in the middle of the process, enabling it to make a stronger connection with the kind of material that it, at the end of the process, archives permanently.
- 4) Central library becomes important education centre for academic society organizing the trainings and workshops about the procedure, copyright issues and academic writing.
- 4) With Valtez system, support for the process makes the exchange of information and documents simple, quick, and easy to adjust which is necessary since the whole process includes a relatively large number of participants (employees at the faculties, mentors, etc.); it also enables better control over final parts of the procedure (like sending generated mail with the information about the check to the mentor, and sending the copy of that mail to Librarian, assuring the copy if, for some reason, a mentor cannot access the mail that is sent to his address).
- 5) Since mentors can easily access the Ithenticate report online, and use all available tools that such service provides, they can understand much better the results of the check and evaluate them properly.

3 Towards conclusion

The centralized procedure enables an easier approach to the aspect of purchasing the Ithenticate credits, which is since 2020 also centralized and realized by the Ministry of education for the purpose of all universities in Serbia.

This model of centralized check could be modified in some parts, but the core of the process (including the access to results that are limited for particular faculty) remains a basis of such transparency and supervision.

References

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