

The Academic Integrity of the Managing Staff of the University of Prishtina



ORCA
organizata për rritjen e cilësisë në arsim



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Content

Introduction.....	1
Methodology.....	3
Provisions that regulate issues related to promotions.....	8
Shortcomings in fulfilling provisions.....	10
Steering Council.....	12
The Rectorate.....	13
Deans.....	14
Appointed Senators.....	15
The Senate.....	16
Vice Deans.....	17
Full Professors	18
Associate professors.....	19
Assistant Professors.....	20
Conclusions.....	21
Recommendations	22

Introduction

Since 2014, when the first protests organized by students and civil society sought to protect its academic integrity, following which the rector at the time was forced to resign, and until today, the University of Prishtina (UP) has been the stage of a wide-ranging debate about academic legitimacy and meritocracy. In the years 2015 and 2016 this topic was part of the daily news for the citizens of Kosovo, following the blocking of promotions by the management at the time.

A few days before this report's publication, in February 2017, a new round of promotions began which provoked reactions related to the practice of unmerited promotions. In this way, the issue of academic promotions remains the 'Achilles' Heel' of the largest and most important higher education institution in Kosovo.

As observed by several organisations and key stakeholders, in addition to investigations by Kosovar media, it is apparent that the current model of unmerited academic promotions at UP, apart from serving as a career jump starter for persons with questionable professional integrity, has systematically sabotaged the quality of teaching and the effective implementation of university curricula according to the needs of country's society and economy.

In order to analyse and address this key problem of academic quality at the University of Prishtina in a committed manner, the Organisation for Increasing Quality of Education (ORCA) conducted research on the promotions and legitimacy of academic ranks of academic staff that hold managing positions at the University of Prishtina.

ORCA has reviewed the papers purportedly published in international scientific journals, as required by the principles and criteria established by the regulation in place, of 69 professors who hold executive and managerial positions at UP: members of the Steering Council, rectorate, senate, deans and vice deans.

The research showed that 40% (25 out of 61 who hold professorial ranks) of managerial staff of the UP have at least one paper published in scientific journals (or other forms of publications) that do not meet the principles and criteria of legitimate scientific journals and therefore can be considered as dubious publications.

According to the research findings, if the officials in question were to defend their academic ranks in line with the principles and criteria established by the regulation in place, then 49% of the academic staff with managing positions (or 30 out of 61 who hold professorial ranks) would not be able to justify their academic ranks if their papers published in dubious journals are not considered as scientific papers.

What was more troubling was analysing the justification of professorial ranks as laid out in the current regulation by looking at all the work published as first, corresponding, or second author. 42% (26 out of 61 staff holding professorial ranks) would not be able to justify their ranks even if their papers published in dubious journals were to be considered as valid, or even if their publications as second authors were taken into account, which is not foreseen under the current regulation in place.

These results speak of a longstanding practice of noncompliance with the Statute and laws in power that regulate the matter of academic ranks and honours. The situation created is alarming and as a result requires an immediate institutional response.

The findings of this research should serve as an incentive to increase responsibility and accountability on academic developments, and consequently, to improve the quality of teaching at the university, serving later on as an intervention that could be applied at other public universities in Kosovo.

Methodology

For the total of 72 managing staff of the UP included in the research, 69 CVs of officials were either obtained on the UP website or from the professors responding positively to ORCA's request, while 3 individuals did not provide their CVs. 8 individuals in managerial positions who were teaching assistants or were from the Faculty of Arts (for whom a different formula from scientific publications is applied by UP), were not taken under consideration.

The methodology used for analysing the cases of justifying existing academic ranks of UP managerial staff is based on (i) the Statute of the University of Prishtina, articles 174-177; (ii) the Regulation on the selection and promotion of academic personnel; (iii) the Senate's recommendation on academic promotions, which determines the number of valid publications in relevant scientific journals necessary to be fulfilled by the academic staff depending on the respective ranks.

To be promoted to an Assistant Professor, one should have at least one scientific paper published in a relevant scientific journal, be it regional or international, in which the person is listed as the first or the corresponding author; to be promoted to an Associated Professor three scientific papers published in a relevant scientific journal, while in order to receive the rank of Professor, five such papers are necessary.

Although a number of professors whose CVs were analysed might have been promoted at a time when different criteria applied, ORCA has used the current regulations to assess whether UP's managerial staff would manage to justify the academic ranks they hold in compliance with the provisions in place.

Based on the rules in the abovementioned documents, ORCA does not consider conference proceedings or books, in which the academic staff presented their work, as international scientific journals.

Paper abstracts or conference presentations which were not published as full articles in journals were not recognized as legitimate scientific papers. At the same time, given that a passage of the Recommendation is unclear on conference papers, ORCA referred to the Statute of UP to avoid any biased interpretation.

With regards to papers published in regional journals, ORCA refers to the same regulations which specify that regional journals (excluding those in countries now part of the European Union) need to be indexed in academic indexes Thomson Reuters and/or Scopus.

Publications that do not claim to be scientific journals and which publish predominantly journalistic content or trivia about science, are not considered scientific journals by ORCA.

Papers published in dubious journals are also not considered relevant scientific publications. The methodology used by ORCA to identify dubious journals relies on the principles of transparency drafted by some of the most prestigious organizations of scientific publishing: Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)², Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)³, Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA)⁴, World Association of Medical Editors (WAME).

1 - <http://publicationethics.org/files/Principles%20of%20Transparency%20and%20Best%20Practice%20in%20Scholarly%20Publishing.pdf>

2 - <http://publicationethics.org/>

3 - <https://doaj.org/>

4 - <http://oaspa.org/>

According to established principles and in agreement with local and international academics, ORCA has formulated some basic criteria that need to be fulfilled by a scientific journal in order to be considered as a serious publication:

1. The journal needs to have a consistent editing staff, which consists of real people and whose names are published clearly and in full. Editors need to be competent and specialized in the field the journal covers.
2. The same editorial staff cannot serve in two journals which cover entirely different fields.
3. There needs to be a clear system of peer review by fellow academics of the respective fields, with the exception of special cases on specific manuscripts, which needs to be clarified by the journal.
4. The copyright and licensing information need to be described in a clear manner in the journal's website, and licensing terms need to be indicated on all published articles, both HTML or PDFs.
5. The journal needs to have a correct physical address; a specific and working email address, alongside other genuine and verifiable data.
6. Information regarding the ownership and/or the journal's management needs to be presented clearly on the journal's website. The publisher should not use title of organizations that may confuse potential authors and editors with regards to the nature of the journal's ownership.
7. In cases when the impact factor of the journal is stated on its website, it should be genuine and not in discrepancy with the impact factor listed on relevant international indices.
8. In cases that an author needs to pay a fee to publish a paper in the journal, this needs to be specified clearly on the journal's website.
9. The website of a journal, including its content, needs to show that careful attention has been paid to ensure high ethical and professional standards. The website needs to have functional links and updated information, with the exception of cases in which (for a limited time), the website may not be functional due to maintenance or technical problems.
10. The title of the journal needs to be unique and not an identical reproduction of a title denoting a different journal. The journal needs to have an ISSN code as an obligatory, but not sufficient, precondition.

Moreover, additional but not determining indicators of the integrity of a scientific journal are:

1. If the editing staff of the journal hold relevant scientific positions in the respective field and the members of the journal's editorial team continuously publish in that journal.
2. If working contact details of the editing staff are accessible on the journal's website.
3. If the journal promotes the fact that it is listed on dubious or confusing indices, such as Index Copernicus etc. A serious journal should not be promoting its listing on dubious indices.

4. The frequency in which the journal is published needs to be stated clearly and should not be subject to drastic fluctuations in time.
5. If the papers published in a journal are characterized by grammar and spelling errors (in English). Any serious journal should have capacities for proofreading.
6. If the published papers in a journal are characterized with aesthetic divergences or are not written in the format requested by the paper. For example, if two papers on the same journal are written in different styles, or if one paper is written in one style/format in some parts, and in a different style/format in other parts.
7. If a journal is listed on Jeffrey Beall's List of "predatory journals".

A note on Beall's List: At the time of writing of this report, content, including the list of potential "predatory publishers" as well as potentially "predatory journals", has been removed from Beall's page (for unknown reasons). The respective materials, however, have been saved and republished elsewhere on the internet by various academics and organizations, and are also accessible through Wayback Machine.

Nevertheless, ORCA considers these lists only as indicative and complementary but not definitive. There were (rare) cases when journals listed by Beall as dubious, yet they fulfilled the aforementioned criteria of serious journals, and as a result ORCA considers those as legitimate. At the same time, there have been evidenced cases of journals violating principles and ending up considered as dubious, although they do not appear on Beall's lists.

The majority of the 32 journals in which UP managerial staff published their papers and which were evidenced as dubious appear on Beall's list of "potentially predatory journals."

ORCA holds no prejudice of the authors' knowledge or intent with regards to their publication in dubious journals, but is content with evidencing the existing situation.

Local academics with extensive and quality experience in publishing and international scientific peer review were consulted throughout the research.

Methodological limitations

Apart from publishing papers in relevant scientific journals, the criteria in place at UP for academic promotions also include additional conditions such as number of lecturing hours, publication of monographs, supervising master's students and PhD candidates etc.

Nevertheless, for reasons of feasibility in implementation, reducing the potential margin of error and taking into account the realistic possibility of completion within a reasonable time period, this research is focused solely on the identification of scientific work published in international and regional journals, as one of the most important criteria.

If the study had also taken into account other criteria for promotion, the results of the justification of current academic ranks held by the UP managing staff could have been even more unfavourable for the individuals verified, based on a number of specific cases analysed separately by ORCA.

The official CVs of managing staff have been downloaded or received personally from the professors subject to the study by the end of January 2nd 2017. As a result, subsequent changes to the CVs have not been reflected.

In some cases it was found that professors who have had papers published in dubious journals, have not included them or removed them from their CVs. As a result, these papers and journals have not been included in ORCA's research since the authors themselves have not presented them as relevant.

One problem encountered in the analysed CVs was related to the fact that some of them are not updated or do not reflect the entire scientific work of the relevant authors. Another limitation is related to the inconsistent and unsystematic drafting of the CVs, where authors have left necessary academic and professional fields blank.

As a result, these shortcomings could have affected the reflection of the actual state of academic publications in some particular cases.

Managing staff of the University of Prishtina

1	Marjan Dema	Rector	41	Iliriana Islami	Vice Dean
2	Abdullah Zejnullahu	Dean	42	Alajdin Abazi	Steering Council
3	Kadri Morina	Vice Dean	43	Alberta Troni	Steering Council
4	Violeta Nushi	Vice Dean	44	Fevzi Berisha	Steering Council
5	Afrim Hoti	Vice Dean	45	Kemajl Bislimi	Steering Council
6	Faton Berisha	Vice Dean	46	Zeqir Veselaj	Steering Council
7	Myrvete Badivuku	Vice Dean	47	Afrim Hamidi	Vice Dean
8	Naser Sahiti	Vice Dean	48	Mentor Thaqi	Vice Dean
9	Teuta Pustina	Vice Dean	49	Hajrip Mehmeti	Vice Dean
10	Ismet Jonuzi	Senator	50	Skender Kaçi	Dean
11	Naser Pajaziti	Senator	51	Bujar Dugolli	Dean
12	Liridon Veliu	Senator	52	Agim Zogaj	Vice Dean
13	Avdi Visoka	Senator	53	Dashamir Berxulli	Vice Dean
14	Enver Sherifi	Senator	54	Ethem Çeku	Dean
15	Sabrije Osmanaj	Senator	55	Qazim Elshani	Vice Dean
16	Musli Bajraktarij	Senator	56	Zeqir Shaqiri	Vice Dean
17	Naser Kabashi	Senator	57	Agim Selimi	Dean
18	Adem Nura	Senator	58	Hazir Haziri	Vice Dean
19	Kurtesh Sherifi	Senator	59	Florita Raifi	Vice Dean
20	Afrim Koca	Vice Dean	60	But Dedajiti	Dean
21	Hasim Rushiti	Vice Dean	61	Shpresa Hoxha	Vice Dean
22	Shqipe Bajçinca	Vice Dean	62	Driton Balaj	Vice Dean
23	Jehona Lushaku	Senator	63	Lindita Rugova	Dean
24	Avni Puka	Senator	64	Albulena Blakaj	Vice Dean
25	Myrvete Paçarada	Senator	65	Nysret Krasniqi	Vice Dean
26	Musa Selimi	Dean	66	Nuran Muhaxheri	Vice Dean
27	Ibrahim Rudhani	Vice Dean	67	Suzana Manxhuka	Dean
28	Gloria Staka	Vice Dean	68	Kreshnik Hoti	Vice Dean
29	Agim Gashi	Vice Dean	69	Beqir Sadikaj	Steering Council
30	Naim Syl	Vice Dean			
31	Tahir Arbneshi	Dean			
32	Enver Hamiti	Dean			
33	Mimoza Ibrani	Vice Dean			
34	Vjollca Komoni	Vice Dean			
35	Ahmet Shala	Dean			
36	Ilir Doçi	Vice Dean			
37	Nexhat Qehaja	Vice Dean			
38	Shpëtim Lajqi	Vice Dean			
39	Besfort Rrecaj	Vice Dean			
40	Haxhi Gashi	Dean			

Provisions that regulate issues related to promotions

Similar to all higher education institutions in Kosovo, the University of Prishtina is regulated by the Law No. 4/L-037 on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo.

The University of Prishtina operates based on the Statute of the University of Prishtina, which is directly ratified by the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo.

Promotions and issues related to them are regulated by the two aforementioned documents. In the Law No. 04/L-037 on Higher Education, promotions are regulated by Article 26: Ranks and Grades (sic) of Staff.

This article defines in general terms the matter of ranks and degrees, leaving room for specific documents, such as the Statute of UP, to set out in more detail the manner and ways in which academic ranks and degrees are given.

The Statute of the UP regulates the issue of academic promotions with articles 175, 176, and 177.

The rank of Full Professor is regulated by article 175 of the Statute of UP.

Article 175

1. For the rank of full professor of an academic unit the candidate must have the following qualifications:

1.1. Hold a doctor of science degree (or equivalent at the Faculty of Arts);
1.2. To have proven a high level and academic competence and scientific experience in the subject which is proven by:

1.2.1. A significant number of monographs, textbooks, publications in international scientific or art journals with at least 5 main papers published in international science or art journals as first or corresponding author;

1.2.2. Active participation in national and international conferences;

1.2.3. Well known art works or having public presentations and to have contributed in the case of the Faculty of Arts; he or she should have contributed in a special way to the development of culture and art;

1.2.4. Long term experience in research projects of basic and applied research;

1.2.5. Advanced educational and pedagogic abilities through reasonable practice;

1.2.6. Ability for academic leadership

1.2.7. Supervision of master's and doctoral dissertations

2. All appointments for ranks as well as the duration of employment are made for

The rank of associated professor is regulated by article 176 of the Statute of UP.

Article 176

1. For the rank of associate professor the candidate must fulfil the following conditions:

1.1. Hold a doctor of science degree (or equivalent at the Faculty of Arts);

1.2. To have a select number of monographs, publications in international science or art journals, with at least 3 main papers published in international journals, as first or corresponding author;

1.3. To have created true works of art or to have had public presentations, in the case of the Faculty of Arts;

- 1.4. To have demonstrated ability for teaching;*
- 1.5. To have demonstrated work, knowledge, and mastery in the subject of the relevant field.*
- 2. All appointments for ranks as well as the duration of employment are for 4 years.*

The rank of assistant professor is regulated by article 177 of the Statute of UP.

Article 177

- 1. For the rank of assistant professor the candidate must fulfil the following conditions:*
 - 1.1. Hold a doctor of science degree (or equivalent at the Faculty of Arts);*
 - 1.2. To have a select number of monographs and publications reviewed in international science or art journals, with at least one main paper published and reviewed in international journals, as first or corresponding author;*
 - 1.3. To have created works of art or to have had public presentations, in the case of the Faculty of Arts;*
 - 1.4. To have demonstrated ability for teaching;*
 - 1.5. To have had at least three years' work experience in the teaching process in higher education.*
 - 1.6. Candidates appointed for the first time must not be older than 50 years of age.*
- 2. All appointments for ranks as well as the duration of employment are for 4 years.*

In addition, a Regulation is also in place which derives from the Statute of the University of Prishtina, titled the 'Regulation on Assessment Procedures for the Selection and Promotion of Academic Personnel at the University of Prishtina'. This Regulation sets out in articles 5, 6 and 7 the same criteria related to the promotion of academic staff.

Shortcomings in fulfilling provisions

Presentations in conferences vs reviewed scientific publications

It has been noticed that the vast majority of professors verified in this research have not been consistent in presenting their scientific work in their CVs. They have listed in the field “scientific publications” papers presented at various conferences.

In almost all these cases, the field “scientific publications” was followed by the field announcing papers in different conferences and other papers that are considered as scientific by the authors.

Although scientific papers presented in the two categories are identical in terms of their nature and scientific value, they are presented as separate, creating the impression that conference presentations listed in the “scientific publications” field are of a different academic nature and importance.

Unjustified degrees

The research has found that 49% of UP managing staff (30 out of 61 verified according to the research methodology) do not justify their current academic ranks in line with current regulations if we do not take into account as valid the papers they have published in journals that do not meet the principles laid out in the research methodology.

In addition, 42% of UP managing staff (26 of 61 verified according to the research methodology) do not justify their current academic ranks in line with current regulations, even if we do take into account as valid the papers they have published in journals that do not meet the principles established in the research methodology.

There are cases when associate or full professors have no papers at all published in international scientific journals.

The Senate Recommendation vs. the Statute of the University of Prishtina

Regarding promotions, the Senate of the University of Prishtina has approved a recommendation which began as a process in 2016 with a circular issued by the rectorate and which for a time was published on the official web page of the University of Prishtina, titled “Basic proposal of the management of the University of Prishtina to be recommended by the Senate of UP”.

This document lists initially 8 platforms to be used for publication, with the first two, Scopus and Web of Science (Thomson and Reuters), receiving special recommendation, adding 3 points which required:

“to not be published in the region (Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina)”

Thus it was clarified which countries are considered to be in “the region”.

“to not be conference papers”

A precondition that suggested an end to the practice of equating conference presentations with publishing in a scientific journal.

“to not be on the lists of dubious publishers or journals (see for example <https://scholarlyoa.com/publishers>)”

This is the Beall's List which contained the names of dubious publishers and journals. In addition, the document included the proposals for other platforms from different faculties.

In June 2016, UP's senate approved the Recommendation nr. 1/344, which lists 36 platforms for publication, including Google Scholar, Google's automatic platform for indexing persons who have publications to their name, but which are not necessarily scientific papers.

The recommendation states that papers published in regional journals (without specifying the countries) should not be taken into account for promotions, with the exception for cases when the journals are indexed by Scopus and Web of Science.

According to the recommendation, it is required that papers should not be conference papers listed in 34 of the 36 mentioned platforms, excluding from this limitation, but not mentioning by name, the platforms Scopus and Web of Science. Even if it is not stated explicitly, there is room for interpretation that papers published in conference publications that are listed in these two platforms, can be taken as valid for promotion.

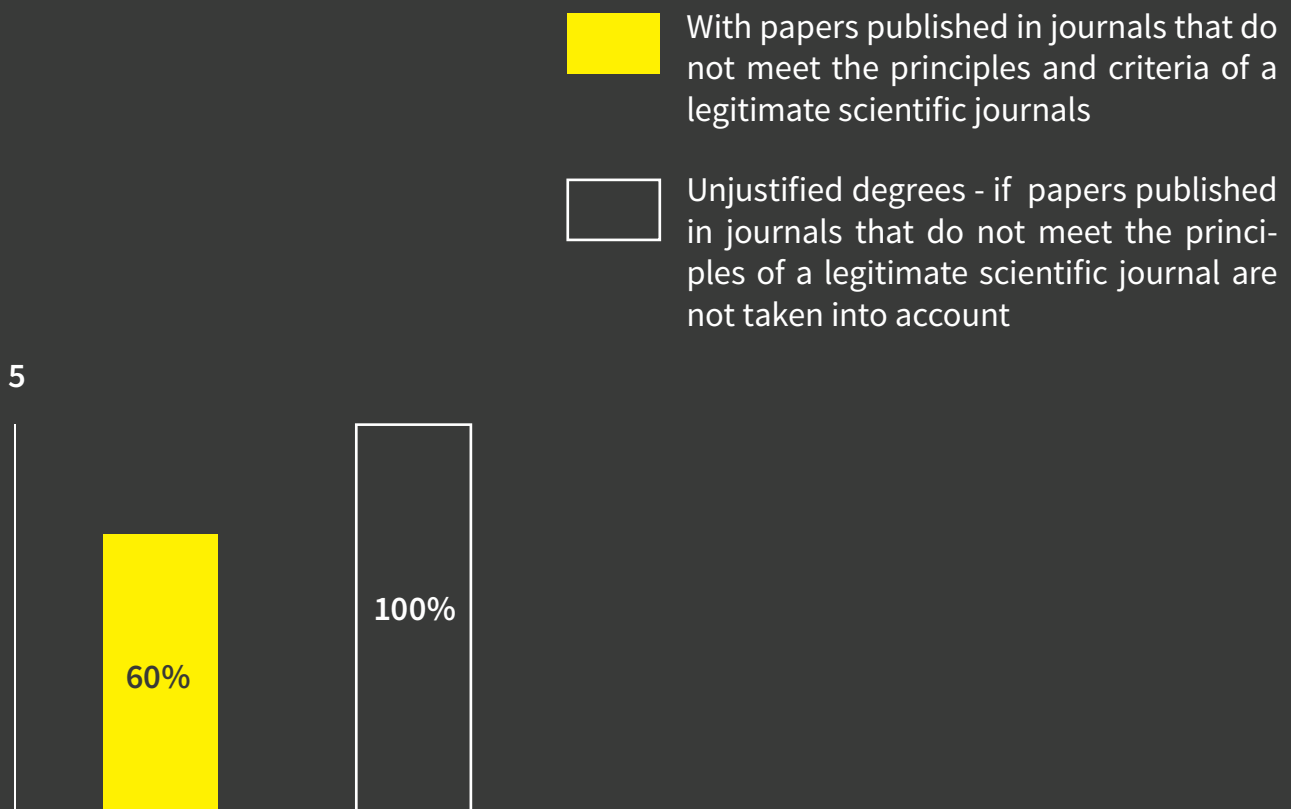
This exception is in direct contradiction with articles 175, 176 and 177 of the Statute of UP, as well as articles 5, 6, and 7 of the Regulation on Assessment Procedures for the Selection and Promotion of Academic Personnel at UP. In these documents it is clearly stated that for the ranks specified in the respective articles, candidates must have "publications reviewed in international scientific journals", but they do not foresee exceptions for papers published in conference proceedings or books.

As for avoiding publication in dubious journals, the recommendation in place, in contrast to the initial circular, does not name any list of dubious journals, leaving it unclear as to which ones should be considered.

Steering Council

There are 9 members in total in the UP Steering Council. ORCA has had access to 5 CVs. 3 Professors have not sent their CVs even though they are obligated to publish them on UP's web page. 1 member of the Steering Council is from the Faculty of Arts and due to reasons mentioned in the research methodology has not been verified.

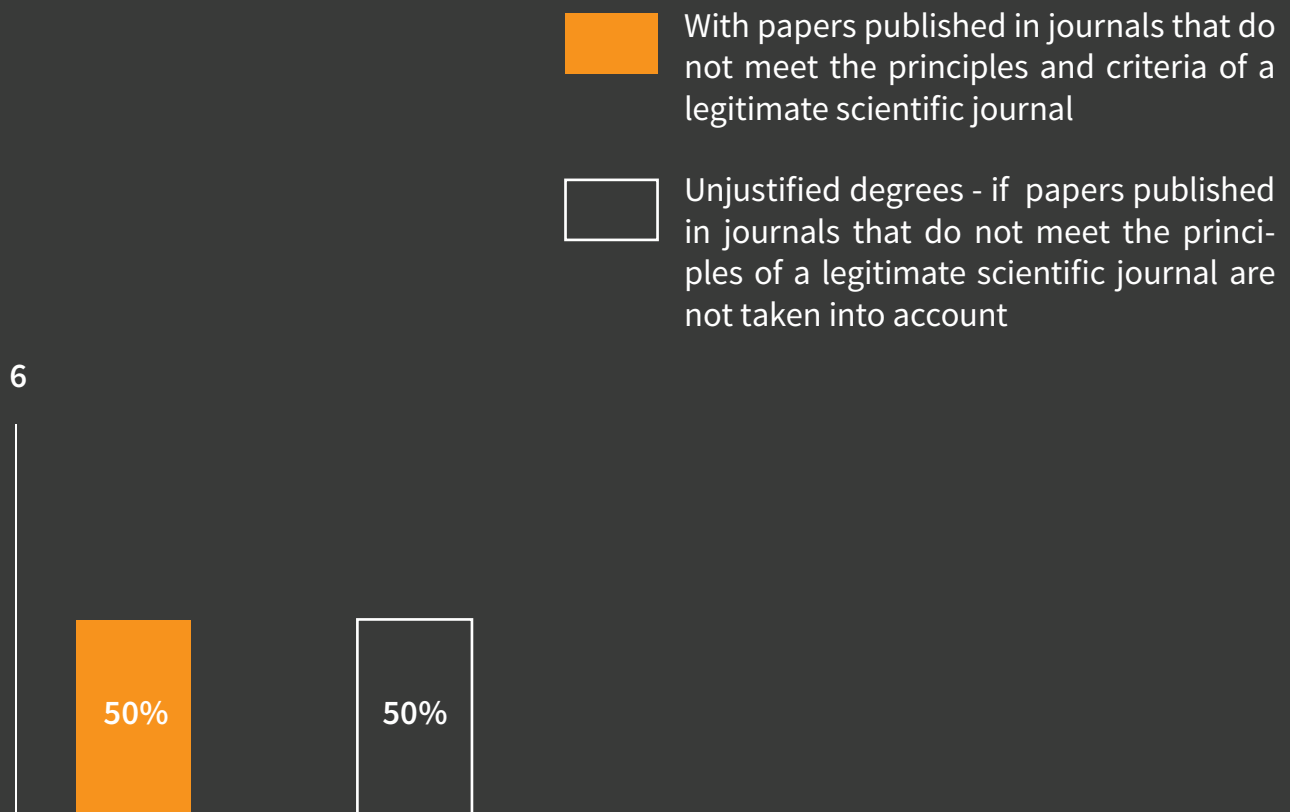
Out of the 5 verified members, the findings show that 3 of them have papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal. The 5 verified members do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation currently in place at UP, if we do not take into account the papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.



The Rectorate

The research shows that out of the 6 members of the rectorate, 3 of them have published papers in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

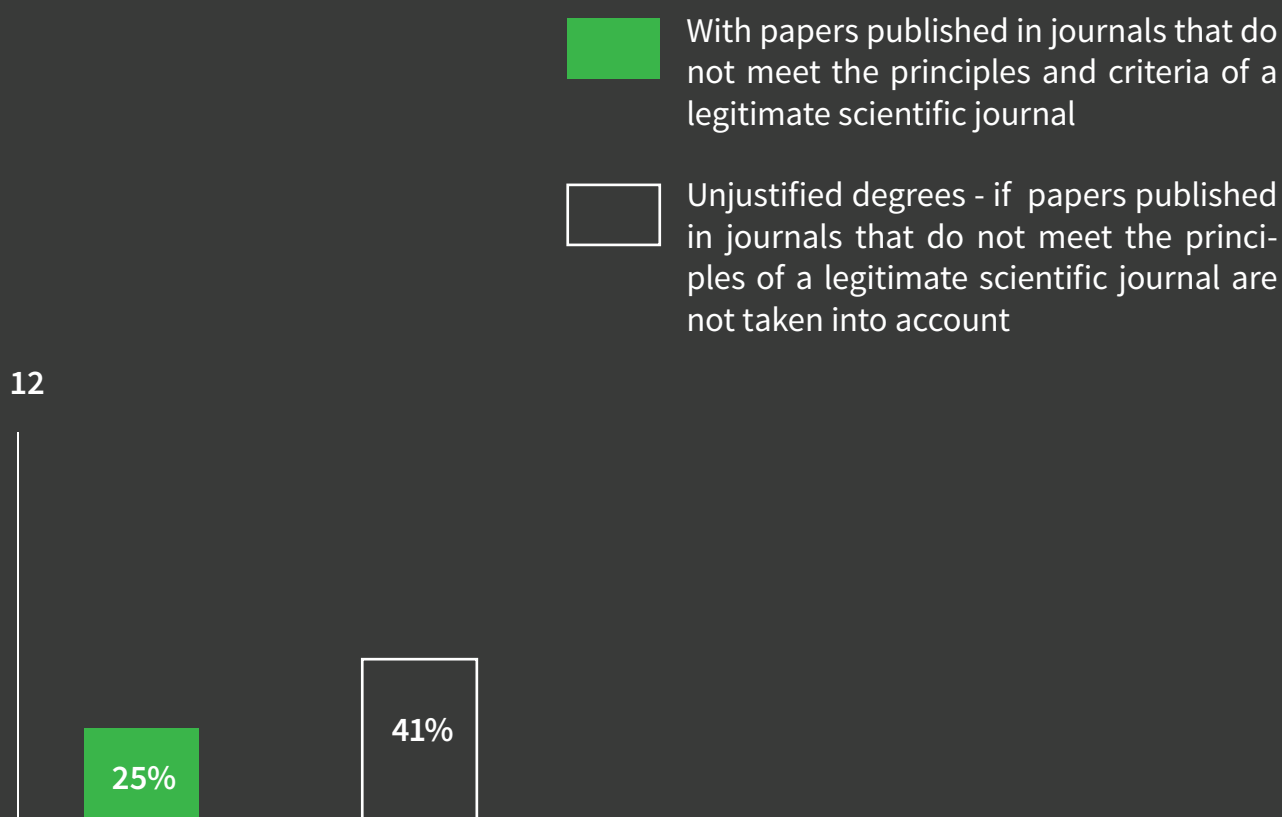
3 members of the rectorate do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation in place at UP if we do not take into account papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.



Deans

1 dean is from the Faculty of Arts and was not verified due to the reasons mentioned in the research methodology. Out of the 12 deans verified, 3 of them have papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

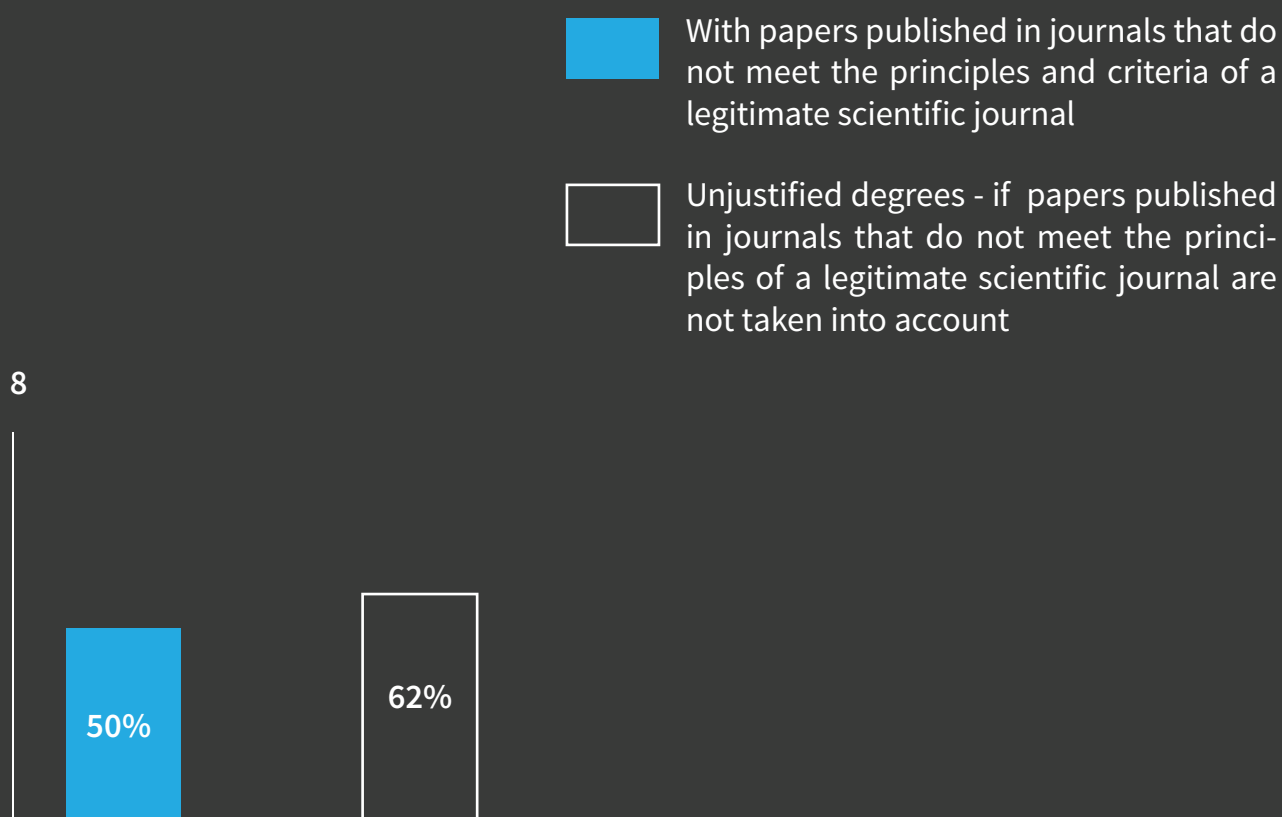
5 members who were verified do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation in place at UP if we do not take into account papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.



Appointed Senators

Out of the 8 appointed senators, the research finds that 4 of them have published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

5 appointed senators do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation in place at UP if we do not take into account papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

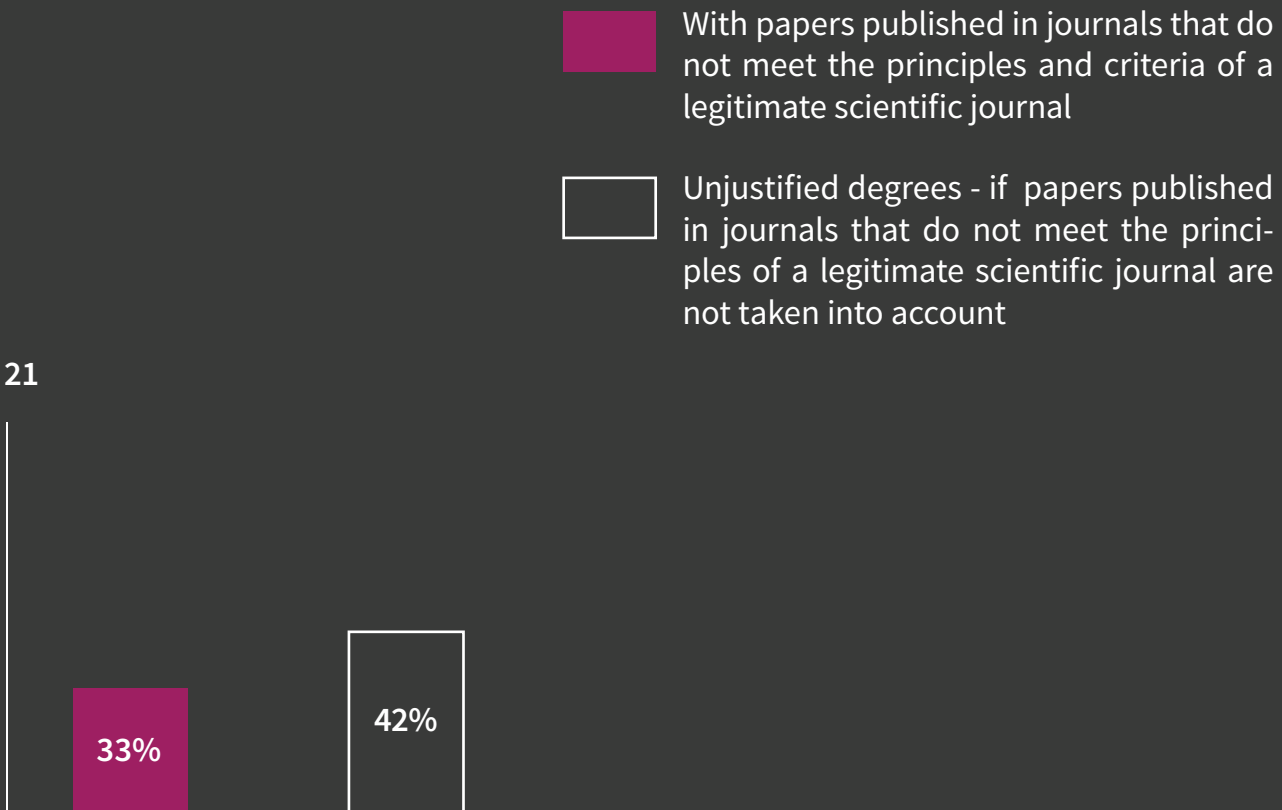


The Senate

The “Senate” category includes professors who are deans and professors who are appointed senators from the faculties. Student senators and assistant senators are not included in this verification, nor is the rector as the head of the senate, since the rector has already been included in the “Rectorate” category.

Out of the 21 senators, 7 of them have published papers in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

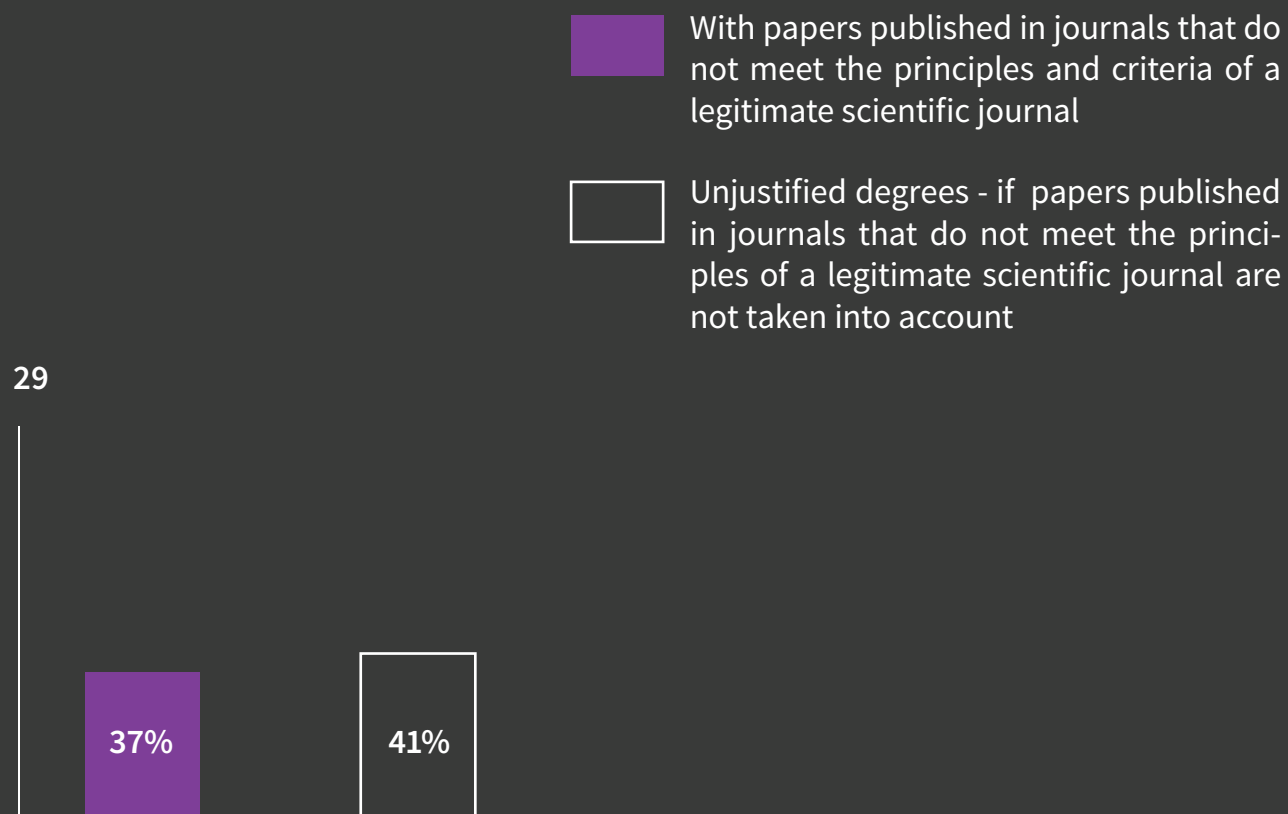
9 senators do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation in place at UP if we do not take into account papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.



Vice Deans

Out of 29 verified vice deans, 11 of them have published papers in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

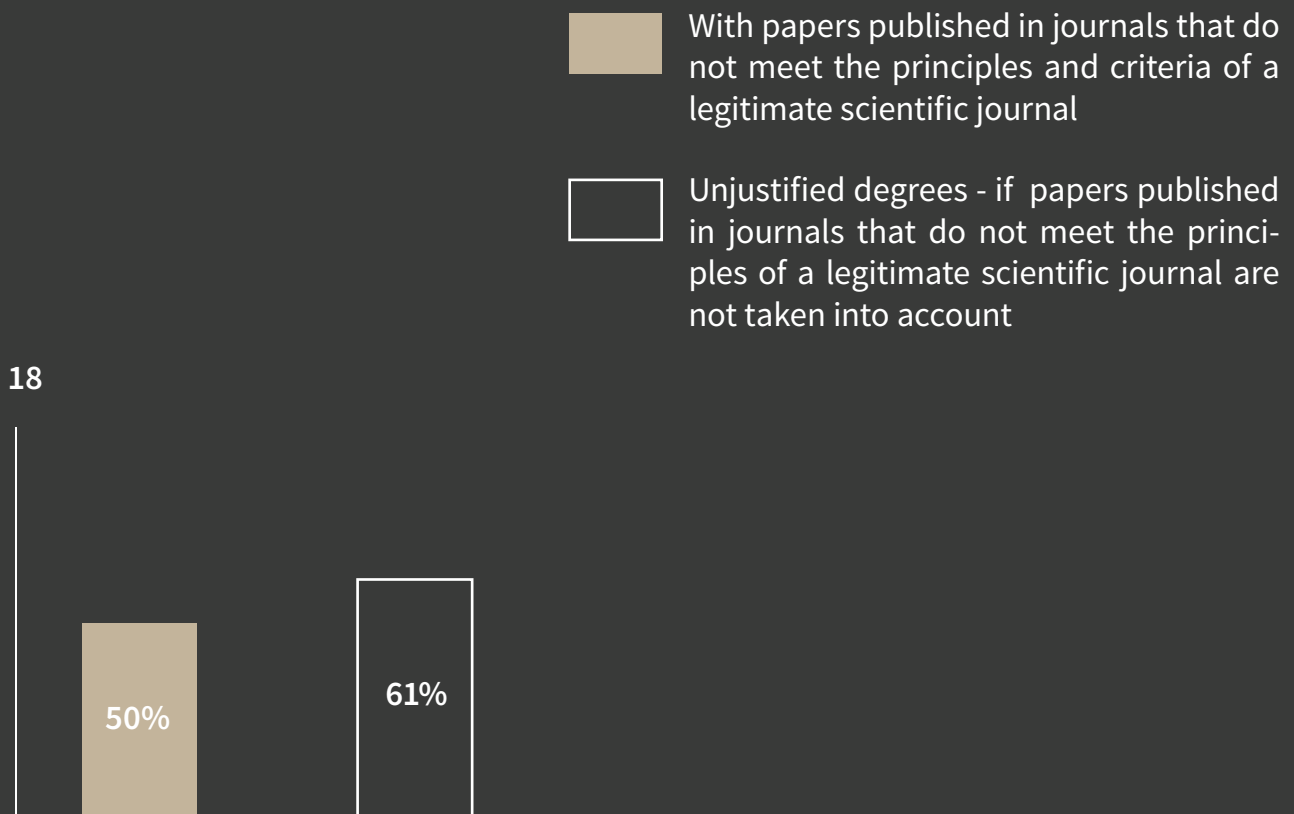
12 vice deans do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation in place at UP if we do not take into account papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.



Full Professors

Out of 18 verified full professors, 9 have published papers in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

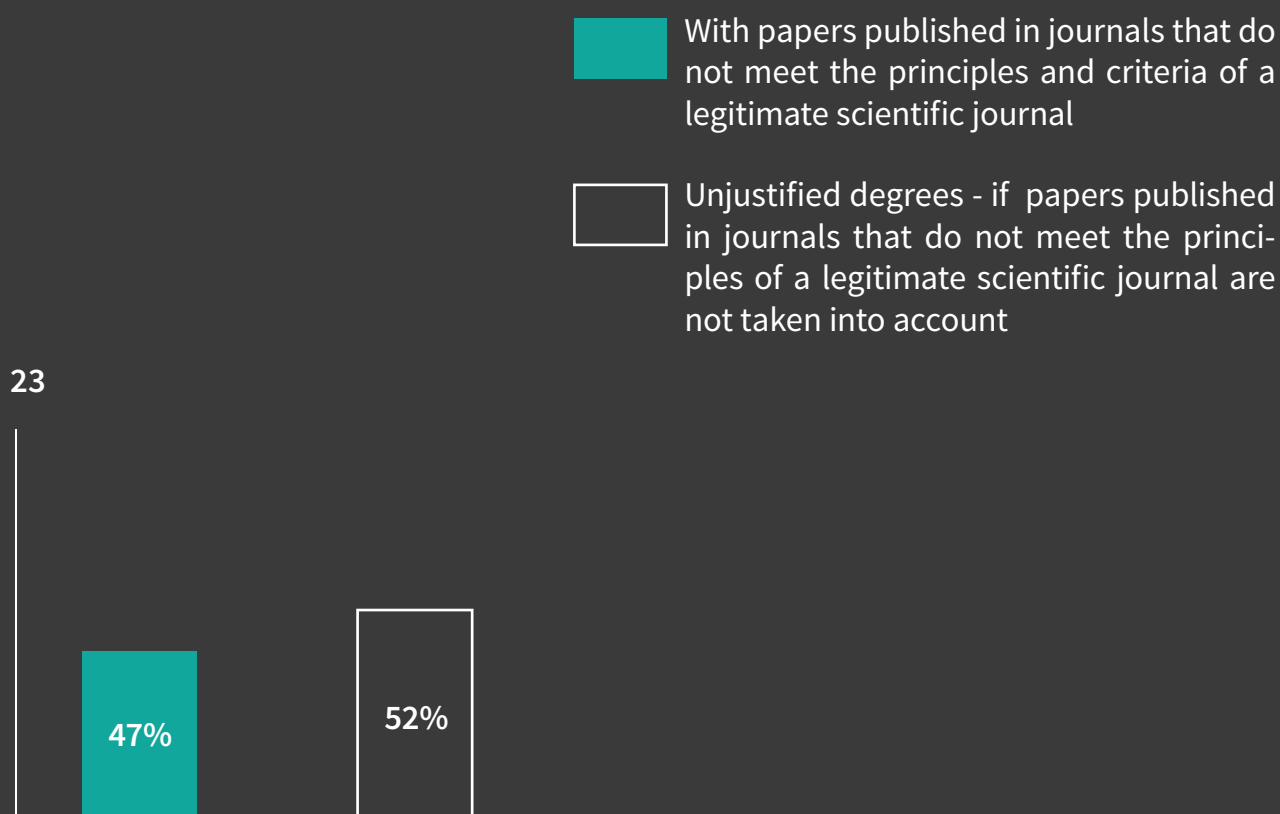
11 professors do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation in place at UP if we do not take into account papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.



Associate professors

Out of 23 verified associate professors, 11 of them have published papers in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

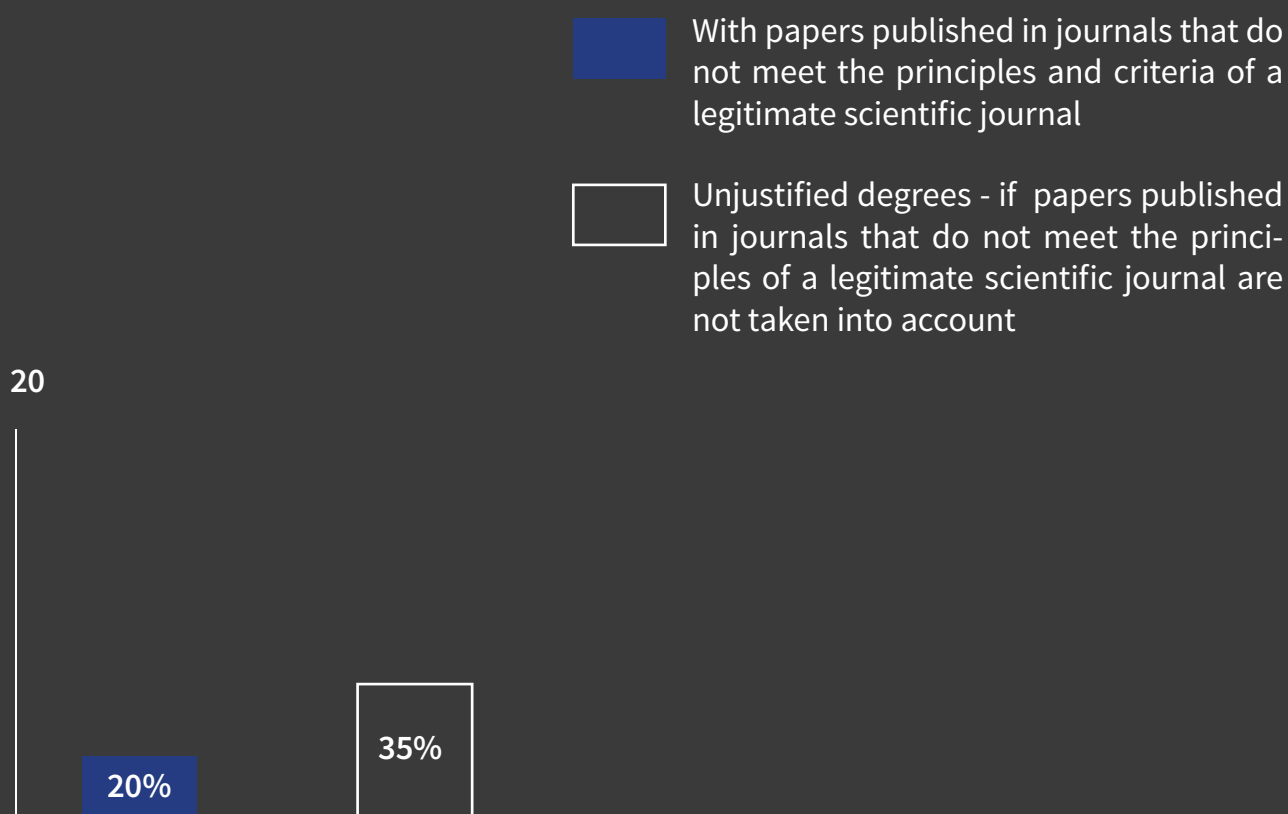
12 associate professors do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation in place at UP if we do not take into account papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.



Assistant Professors

Out of 20 verified assistant professors, 4 of them have published papers in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.

7 assistant professors do not justify their academic ranks as required by the regulation in place at UP if we do not take into account papers published in journals that do not meet the principles of a legitimate journal.



Conclusions

The unjustified academic ranks for around half of the managing staff of the University of Prishtina, based on the regulation in place and compared to the data declared in their official CVs, reveals a serious weakness in the academic integrity and scientific performance of the university.

The numerous cases of papers published in publications that do not meet the criteria and principles of legitimate scientific journals, which as such can be considered dubious, show a high level of vulnerability of UP's management towards predatory platforms and practices in science.

The problems with the insufficient number of relevant scientific papers and the high rate of papers published in publications that do not meet the criteria and principles of legitimate scientific journals, or of those that are listed as dubious journals, is widespread at all levels of academic degrees and managing positions, starting from assistant professors to full professors, from the university Rector and to the senators.

The situation of the justification of academic ranks and papers in publications that do not fulfil the criteria and principles of legitimate scientific journals, which as such can be considered dubious, becomes more problematic for the highest academic ranks and more positive for the lowest ones. These findings might be indicative of a stronger pressure on Associate and Full Professors to have more scientific papers published in order to justify their ranks, which might affect the increase in publications which are invalid for academic promotion.

The tendency to declare conference papers as legitimate papers published in scientific journals – a practice at odds with the regulatory provisions in place – is much more widespread among the managing positions at UP.

In at least one case, there is a discrepancy between both the Statute and the Regulation of the UP for academic promotions on one hand, and the Recommendation of the Senate for the same matter on the other, where in the latter there is room for interpretation that might allow conference papers to count as scientific papers in exceptional cases. The Statute and the Regulation do not foresee any exceptions for this issue.

Even though the Recommendation of the Senate for promotions calls for dubious journals to be avoided, it does not provide any reference or concrete criteria for their identification. The global scientific publications sector provides mechanisms and access to trustworthy and updated experience on the integrity of scientific publications, however, the UP has not taken measures to adapt international experience in this regard.

In the Recommendation it is specified as a condition that journals in which scientific papers are published, should be indexed in specific academic databases. However, the indexes mentioned in the Recommendation number a total of 36, including platforms of questionable quality, as well as Google Scholar, which is not a formal academic index and does not offer guarantees for the quality of journals and papers it mentions.

There is a lack of standardisation for academic resumes of UP's teaching staff. In a series of cases, CVs that contain substantial differences between them have been used. Furthermore, a portion of the CVs were found to contain inaccurate, incomplete, or outdated information.

Recommendations

The troubling situation with the academic integrity amongst the managing staff of the University of Prishtina demands an immediate and well-formulated intervention in order to improve the most alarming issues, as evidenced in this report. This intervention could be implemented by a committee composed of key UP management and professors with extraordinary academic merits, assisted by relevant international institutions and civil society.

The University of Prishtina must draft and approve a new detailed regulation on the issue of academic promotion, in complete agreement with the legislation in place and the Statute of the UP. Along other criteria necessary for a promotion, a special emphasis should be placed on publications in scientific journals. This measure would entail an update to the current regulation, but also the preservation of the current criteria on the necessary number of relevant scientific publications needed for a specific promotion. The new regulation would automatically abolish the current Recommendation on promotion, which has proven shortcomings.

In addition to the proposed new regulation, the issue of publications in dubious journals needs to be taken under special consideration and needs to be treated by a special guideline, based on the best international practices, in the likes of the Principles of Transparency of Scientific Journals, set out by four of the most renowned platforms of scientific publications. In spite of the useful practice of “black lists,” such as Jeffrey Beall’s, the opposite approach of “White Lists” should also be considered. This approach would also be facilitated by a careful selection of indexing platforms of scientific journals, whose number should be decreased from the current 36 (some of which are not genuine or safe indices), and by relying on relevant international academic assistance for this process. There are a few international institutions in Kosovo which could offer their cooperation on this matter.

UP needs to establish a dedicated and permanent structure, which should fulfill the role of a control and certification mechanism for academic promotions, which relies on the updated regulation (as proposed here) and which functions according to specific procedures. The team in charge should be mainly composed by local professors with excellent academic achievements, including those who have experiences in editing processes of quality international scientific journals. At the same time, it could be necessary to involve international consultancy by academics with relevant experience.

The provisions and criteria on the selection of candidates in key decision-making positions of the university need to be reviewed, placing a strong emphasis on certified academic achievements. This improvement would be a precondition for installing mechanisms of academic meritocracy in UP, which would positively impact the quality of teaching and the university’s overall performance.

There is a need for standardizing official CVs of the academic staff of the University of Prishtina. All CVs of professors and assistants need to be accessible on the UP website; they should contain complete and clear information, without errors; and need to be updated periodically. Such a thing is necessary also for the university’s transparency. It needs to be emphasized that while UP has special subjects for teaching and grading students on their ability to write CVs, the teaching staff needs to be an example in fulfilling this necessity for transparency.

UP needs to publish online all the recommendations for promotions and the dates when the academic ranks were given to the staff, according to specific promotions.

All of the aforementioned recommendations can be implemented and could have an impact only by abiding to the principles of accountability and transparency.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society

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