



THE OMBUDSMAN FOR ACADEMIC ETHICS AND PROCEDURES OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

DECISION REGARDING THE BACHELOR'S THESIS OF DANIELIUS BOLOTINAS

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Vilnius

The Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - Ombudsman), <...> investigated the potential violation of the principle of academic integrity of Danielius Bolotinas submitting someone else's work as his own and examined the material No G-497 forwarded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania as well as explanations of Vilnius University (hereinafter – VU) and the documents submitted to the Office of Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - Office of Ombudsman) on 21 August 2015, and determined that:

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania forwarded a notification¹ to the Office of Ombudsman regarding the final thesis of Danielius Bolotinas on 21 August 2015. The Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Ombudsman), on his own initiative, started an investigation on a possible submission of someone else's work as his own to VU on 5 October 2015.

Danielius Bolotinas applied to the State Consumer Rights Protection Service by filling the request of the user on 20 July 2015, where he made a complaint of other reimbursable services and consulting (performance of research work). In the application, the user specifies that UAB “Studium Generale“ concluded “a service and consulting agreement with Danielius Bolotinas where the object was the performance of research work. The contractor failed to comply with all terms and conditions established in the agreement, the work provided was of poor quality, did not meet the requirements for such work to be carried out <...>“ In the service and consulting agreement of 13 November 2014, the subject of the contract is “research work under the theme “Advertisement of Jewish companies in magazines in Lithuania published in Lithuanian language from 1920 to 1940: frequency, visual advertisement tools, target audience, structure and dynamics” (~ 60 pages).“

The material submitted shows that D. Bolotinas addressed UAB “Studium Generale“ regarding the mentioned research work on 13 October 2014: “ <...> Final Bachelor's thesis in History should be written within 6 months. <...> Do you have professionals who could write such a work?“ The correspondence via e-mails between D. Bolotinas and UAB “Studium Generale“ revealed that the writing process of D. Bolotinas thesis was carried out from November to May. The material provided to the SCRPA shows that the purpose of D. Bolotinas cooperation with UAB “Studium

¹ The State Consumer Rights Protection Authority forwarded a notification to Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science.

Generale“ was the research work that had to be delivered for defence in higher education and research institution.

The Office of Ombudsman appealed to VU on 5 October 2015 asking to provide information on the status of Danielius Bolotinas at university and the topic of thesis. On 7 October 2015, VU informed that student Danielius Bolotinas successfully graduated from the Faculty of History and finished continuous undergraduate degree program. The topic of thesis of D. Bolotinas was “Advertisement of Jewish companies in magazines in Lithuania published in Lithuanian language from 1920 to 1940: periodicity, frequency, visual advertisement tools, target audience, structure and dynamics“ (research work supervisor – senior lecturer dr. Jurgita Verbickienė).

Research work supervisor senior lecturer Dr. J. Verbickienė provided the following explanations on the writing process of Danielius Bolotinas thesis on 30 October 2015:

1) “In winter, probably in January, of the academic year 2014–2015, D. Bolotinas agreed with me on the meeting by e-mail.“ During the meeting the student explained that he wants to develop and defend Bachelor’s thesis about advertisement of Jewish companies based on the Jewish promotional ads <...>“;

2) J. Verbickienė agreed to supervise the thesis of D. Bolotinas on the same subject in 2008 “but at the thesis hereupon was not prepared or even started to be developed, so it was not defended, the student was withdrawn from the studies.“ This topic was not developed, so the student was allowed to do analytical Bachelor’s work;

3) Research work supervisor provided the following requirements to the student: “consistent work, consulting and presentation of interim research results for the assessment in order to identify processing, progress and quality of academic text“; “<...> we work with students individually, so a special development plan of Bachelor’s work is not required and was not drawn“;

4) Ms. Verbickienė did not keep any evidence of consistent work development: “remaining options do not convey scale of my consulting, because I do not have letters saved, where I sent my comments on parts of the work“;

5) the first fragment of the work was sent in January 2015, which was evaluated by the supervisor “as not conforming to the requirements of Bachelor’s work, content compilation signs, unanalytical, with arrangement of flawed ideas, of inadequate structure.“ The student was informed that he will not be able to defend such work, so D. Bolotinas considered the comments and corrected the work;

6) Supervisor indicated that she met the student 3 times in half a year, mostly consulted by e-mail, in the last months - by phone;

7) “<...> I did not save our correspondence as well as my observations conveying the versions of final thesis.“

The Office of Ombudsman appealed to UAB “Studium Generale“ regarding the D. Bolotinas thesis. UAB “Studium Generale“ did not respond to inquiries and did not provide any details relating to D. Bolotinas thesis. The Ombudsman has no coercive measures to obtain information from the institutions engaged in writing and selling of papers. <...>

D. Bolotinas was invited to a meeting at the Office of Ombudsman on 3 February 2016. During the meeting, it turned out (Protocol No TS-8 of 11 February 2016):

1) Danielius Bolotinas did not deliver his research work written by UAB “Studium Generale“ to defence;

2) The thesis written by D. Bolotinas himself, which the student prepared in parallel with UAB “Studium Generale“ was submitted to the defence;

3) D. Bolotinas presented to the supervisor the thesis written by UAB “Studium Generale“ as his own twice (in January and in February);

4) D. Bolotinas provided comments to UAB “Studium Generale“;

5) D. Bolotinas did not terminate the agreement with UAB “Studium Generale“, because the company constantly filled up, corrected and completed the thesis (the last draft version to the client was presented on 22 May 2015).

On the meeting day at the Office of Ombudsman, Danielius Bolotinas presented his version of Bachelor’s thesis given to defence, and the final version of research work received from UAB “Studium Generale“. After a comparative analysis of these two works (Annex No 1), it was found that the thesis of D. Bolotinas coincides with the final research work provided by UAB “Studium Generale“. Both works have 45% of coincidence (the calculation of the characters without spaces), including a review of scientific literature, i. e. based on the theories, insights of other authors. The Description of the procedures for the preparation, defence and storage of the works of the students of Vilnius University approved by the order No R-350 of 24 September 2015 of the vice-rector for studies of Vilnius University, the final thesis is defined as the work/thesis of analytical nature performed individually (underline is ours) by undergraduate, graduate or postgraduate student complying with the requirements of university studies, showing the student’s ability to apply the knowledge gained during the studies, choose the scientific literature and use it (present, analyse, etc.), apply, and/or modify research methods, individually solve raised tasks, submit own conclusions and/or recommendations, as well as showing the ability to describe the research in a correct and neat language.

Paragraph 4.1 of Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University states that “Recognizing the truth, knowledge, skills, understanding of the highest values of studies and expecting the confidence as well as the correct assessment of self-achievements, the University students must observe the principle of academic integrity. Serious breaches of academic integrity principle are considered: <...>

4.1.2. Fraud when accounting for a subject or its part – during colloquiums, credit tests, examinations, etc. Typical cases of fraud:

<...>

4.1.2.3. When the work written by someone else is presented as own.“

The Ombudsman, without receiving information from UAB “Studium Generale“, could not identify the exact part of the material of UAB „Studium Generale“ used in D. Bolotinas thesis, but in the final thesis of D. Bolotinas, delivered to VU has 45% of coincidences² with the work prepared by UAB “Studium Generale”.

In the view of the foregoing, it should be stated that D. Bolotinas, using research work material of UAB “Studium Generale“, presenting the thesis to the supervisor as his own, cheated and therefore violated paragraph 4.1 of the Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University approved by Protocol No S-2006-05 at the Senate committee meeting on 13 June 2006, i. e. the principle of academic integrity.

It is proposed to establish the procedure for consultation of thesis supervisor and the student (detail thesis writing process, e.g., specific to-do list, clear deadlines, records of meetings, interim

² Coincidence is understood as identical parts of the text, which include references and quotes from various sources.

reporting, etc.), which was not specified in procedures for the preparation, defence and storage of Final thesis approved in the meeting of Senate committee of Vilnius University on 2 June 2005 (Protocol No SK-2005-9) nor in the Rules on the procedures for preparation, defence and storage of Bachelor's and Master's thesis of the Faculty of History of Vilnius University approved by the Council of VU Faculty of History on 17 March 2006 (Protocol No 5) (updated on 18 September 2009, Protocol No 9) in order to avoid the violation of principle of academic integrity.

The Ombudsman <...> **decided as follows:**

1. To inform Vilnius University, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania about the violations of academic ethics by D. Bolotinas determined by the Ombudsman.
 2. To make the information of the violations of academic ethics and procedures public.
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