

AICO Contract Cheating Sub-Committee Report

A presentation by members of the AICO executive
ICAI, Canadian Consortium
Thursday, March 7, 2019


Video

“Degrees For Sale: Inside The Essay Writing Industry: Students On The Edge”

- **Source:**
- Creator: BBC 3
- Title: Degrees For Sale: Inside The Essay Writing Industry: Students On The Edge”
- Posting Date: September 20, 2018
- Retrieved from:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOSVW8rGZTk&feature=youtu.be>

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Topics:

- Who is AICO?
 - AICO, Sub-Committee on Contract Cheating
 - Approach, Goals and the Action Plan
 - Next Steps
 - Invite Feedback
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A red arrow graphic pointing to the right is located on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the text area.

Who is AICO?

- Academic Integrity Council of Ontario
- Formed in 2008; by-laws 2013
- University and College membership (30+)
- As a council we:
 - share and promote academic integrity best practices;
 - collaborate on professional development;
 - discuss current issues and concerns;
 - share information, research and knowledge;
 - meet 1 to 2 times per year.

Contract Cheating Sub-Committee

- Define: Contract Cheating
- At the Fall 2017 AICO meeting, hosted by Ryerson University, Chris Lang, Director, Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances (University of Toronto), delivered a key-note about contract cheating.
- The Sub-Committee on Contract Cheating was formed as a result of the call to action from Mr. Lang's presentation.
- The Sub-committee has been meeting regularly to develop and gain endorsement of an Action Plan, which we share with you today.



Sub-Committee Membership

- **Andrea Ridgley**, Academic Integrity Specialist, Ryerson University; AICO Co-Chair
- **Angela Clark**, Academic Integrity Facilitator, Sheridan College; AICO Secretary/Outreach Coordinator
- **Emma Thacker**, Manager, Academic Quality Assurance, Durham College; AICO Co-Chair
- **John Paul Foxe**, Director, Academic Integrity Office, Ryerson University
- **Kim Mason**, Academic Integrity Officer, McMaster University
- **Amanda McKenzie**, Director, Quality Assurance, University of Waterloo; Secretary, ICAI
- **Jennie Miron**, Professor, Bachelor of Nursing Program, Humber College
- **Nagina Parmar**, Faculty, Ryerson University
- **Cebert Adamson**, Dean, Continuing Education, Academic Quality and Centre for Teaching and Learning, Mohawk College, AICO College Liaison
- **Special Advisors:** Mr. Chris Lang and Dr. Tricia Bertram Gallant, Director, Academic Integrity Office, University of California San Diego; ICAI, Advisory Board Member



What are the concerns?

- Students who rely on contract cheating providers are at **risk of a skill and knowledge deficit** upon graduation, as they have bypassed some learning.
- Contract cheating providers are **exploiting students** in increasingly sophisticated ways. Marketing strategies specifically target students with promises of properly referenced papers, original work, passing grades and expert, discipline specific writing.
- Services are **widely advertised** and increasingly persistent and persuasive, influencing students to rationalize the purchase of an assessment (Rowland, 2017).



... the concerns?

- There are instances of students who engage in contract cheating being **blackmailed**. Contract cheating providers threaten to expose the student to the college/university, unless additional payments are made (Lancaster, 2016), adding an additional layer of risk to students.
- Students who engage in contract cheating are provided with an **unfair academic advantage** over their peers.
- Commissioned work is often **difficult to detect** and hence, document for evidence.



... the concerns?

- Contract cheating contributes to a **culture of academic dishonesty**. There is a growing concern that contract cheating damages the value of credentials and reputation of institutions.
- Contract cheating causes **reputational harm to academic institutions**. A scandal in Australia prompted the federal government to intervene and manage Australia's higher education reputation (Harrison, 2014).
- It is challenging to seek prosecution of contract cheating providers, as it is **not illegal** in many countries, including Canada.
- Canada is lagging behind, with a response to this issue.



Goals

- The AICO Contract Cheating Sub-Committee has developed an Action Plan which aims to work collaboratively to reduce the threat of contract cheating.
- The Action Plan was presented to AICO members for feedback, discussion and endorsement on November 17, 2018.

Goals



- The Action Plan is broad in scope to engage ALL stakeholders:
 - Universities, colleges, students, family, staff, faculty, administration, external associations, researchers ...
- AICO intends to align itself with the growing international movement to reduce the threat of contract cheating.
- The Action Plan has 5 items, as follows:

Action Plan Item #1 (of 5)



- Raise awareness about contract cheating within all constituencies of our member institutions (e.g. students, administration, families, staff, faculty);

Action Plan Item #2 (of 5)



- Raise awareness about contract cheating with relevant provincial and national education stakeholders, such as:
 - Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario;
 - Council of Ontario Universities;
 - Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council);
 - Canadian Association of Graduate Studies;
 - Colleges Ontario;
 - Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities;
 - Universities Canada;
 - Colleges and Institutes Canada.
- There are others!

Action Plan Item #3 (of 5)



- Develop and share contract cheating reduction strategies
- (e.g.: develop guidelines / best practices, engage in research)

Action Plan Item #4 (of 5)



- Advocate for legislation to offer a legal pathway to prosecute contract cheating providers.

Action Plan Item #5 (of 5)




- Engage with international stakeholders to work collaboratively on initiatives and build international capacity.
- Stakeholders such as:
 - International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI)
 - Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
 - European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI)



Next Steps



- Strategize! Prioritize! Collaborate!
 - Briefing note created to raise awareness
 - Request for contract cheating-related material from members
 - Compile a resource package
 - Approach relevant education stakeholders
 - We welcome your feedback and questions!
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- Thank you!

- AICO website:

<https://academicintegritycouncilofontario.wordpress.com/>



AICO Twitter: @AICOIntegrity

References

- Harrison, D. (2014, November 13). Australia's education reputation at risk, Kim Carr warns. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from: <https://www.smh.com.au/education/australias-education-reputation-at-risk-kim-carr-warns-20141113-11m60d.html#ixzz3J1JdgAYt>
- Lancaster, T. (2016, October 19). It's not a victimless crime – the murky business of buying academic essays. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2016/oct/19/its-not-a-victimless-the-murky-business-of-buying-academic-essays>
- Rowland, S., Slade, C., Wong, K., & Whiting, B. (2017). 'Just turn to us': The persuasive features of contract cheating websites. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43:4, 652-665, [doi: 10.1080/02602938.2017.1391948](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2017.1391948)