



International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating

October 21, 2020

**SPEAK UP & OUT AGAINST
CONTRACT CHEATING!**

Contract Cheating Definitions

“Contract cheating...is a basic relationship between three actors; a student, their university, and a third party who completes assessments for the former to be submitted to the latter, but whose input is not permitted. ‘Completes’ in this case means that the third party makes a contribution to the work of the student, such that there is reasonable doubt as to whose work the assessment represents” (Draper & Newton, 2017, p. 1).

“Contract cheating happens when a third party completes work for a student who then submits it to an education provider as their own, where such input is not permitted” (QAA, 2020, p. 3).

“outsourcing of student work to third parties” (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016, p. 639).

“Contract cheating occurs when a student procures a third party (who knows about and benefits from the transaction) to produce academic work (that is usually, but not always assessable work) that the student then submits to an educational institution as if it were their own” (Ellis, Zucker, & Randall, 2018, p. 1).

“Contract cheating can happen through “family and friends; academic custom writing sites; legitimate learning sites (eg. file sharing, discussion and microtutoring sites); legitimate non-learning sites (eg. freelancing sites and online auction sites); paid exam takers; and pre-written essay banks” (Ellis, Zucker, & Randall, 2018, p. 2)

ARTICLES/RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Draper, M. & Newton, P. (2017). A legal approach to contract cheating. *International Journal for Academic Integrity*, 13(11), 1-16.

Ellis, C., Zucker, I.M., & Randall, D. (2018). The infernal business of contract cheating: Understanding the business processes and models of academic custom writing sites. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 14(1), 1-21. DOI 10.1007/s40979-017-0024-3

Lancaster, T., & Clarke, R. (2016). Contract cheating: The outsourcing of assessed student work. In T. Bretag (Ed.), *Handbook of academic integrity* (pp. 639-654). Springer-Nature. DOI 10.1007/978-981-287-098-8

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK. (2020). Contracting to cheat in higher education. How to address essay mills and contract cheating (2nd ed). Retrieved from QAA Document



FACT
1

We have an idea of the incidence of contract cheating

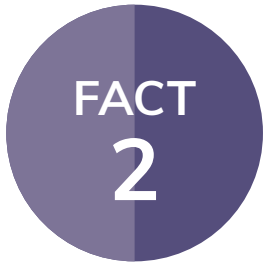
3.5% of students in higher education admit to using sites on the internet where they pay for academic work to be completed [e.g. essay mills, homework sites] (Newton, 2018)

- What is the gravity of this percentage to your organization? Think about this in the numbers of students who are potentially engaging in contract cheating as well as what programs, and therefore what graduates, are potentially participating in contract cheating (e.g. nurses, physicians, lawyers, business experts, engineers). What are the implications for the student, the faculty, the organization, and the public if students have gaps in their knowledge and character?
- Take a look at the following articles to learn more about the impact of contract cheating for graduates who go on to work in professions.

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Lancaster, T. & Clarke, R. (2015). Examining contract cheating, essay mills use and academic misconduct by students in health courses, *Contract cheating Research*, 1-18. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Thomas_Lancaster/publication/323425525_Examining_Contract_Cheating_Essay_Mill_Use_and_Academic_Misconduct_by_Students_on_Health_Courses/links/5a956d4daca27214056920dd/Examining-Contract-Cheating-Essay-Mill-Use-and-Academic-Misconduct-by-Students-on-Health-Courses.pdf

Newton. P. M. (2018) How common is commercial contract cheating in higher education and visit increasing? A systematic review *Frontiers in Education*, 3(67), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00067>



Contract cheating rates are increasing

A recent systematic review reported rates of contract cheating were over 20% in nine different samples of students from 2009 and later so it suggests that contract cheating is on the rise (Newton, 2018).

- Recent events caused by CoVID-19 have created stressful situations where students and faculty were pushed into sudden, sweeping changes in the delivery of educational offerings. Such chaos may create the perfect storm for students to make choices that jeopardize their learning and reputations. If contract cheating is on the rise than our recent world events may potentiate those already reported climbing rates of contract cheating.

ARTICLE OF INTEREST

Newton, P. M. (2018) How common is commercial contract cheating in higher education and is it increasing? A systematic review *Frontiers in Education*, 3(67), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00067>



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3

There is no such thing as a cheat proof assignment

No assignment is cheat proof – however “assessment design... remains an important element of institutional strategy to combat contract cheating” (QAA, 2020, p. 2)

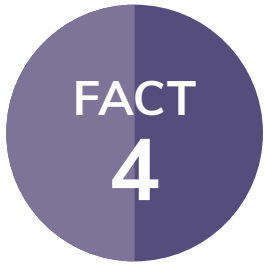
- Assessment continues to be an important element of the work we do in the educational system and allows us to understand what students are learning and where there may be gaps that need to be addressed. Our focus should be on the creation of assessments that evaluate learning and not the perfect cheat proof assignment.
- Click the link and see the section titled Reducing Opportunities to Cheat in the QAA-UK document (p. 6 found QAA)
- Click the link and see the following site for more information on Assessment Design as it relates to reducing contract cheating TEQSA Assessment to foster academic integrity
- Click the link and see the resource that talks about Contract Cheating and Assessment Design TEQSA Contract cheating symptom not problem
- Click the link and find a resource that talks about Redesigning Assessments to engage students TEQSA Redesign high-risk assessments

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK. (2020). Contracting to cheat in higher education. How to address essay mills and contract cheating (2nd ed). Retrieved from <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/contracting-to-cheat-in-higher-education-2nd-edition.pdf>

Skaik, S. (nd). Redesigning high-risk assessment to engage students and address contract cheating. Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), 1-2. Retrieved from <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/redesigning-assessment-cqu.pdf?v=1588831025>

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). (nd). Contract cheating is a symptom, not the problem. Retrieved from https://cheatingandassessment.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SECTOR-RESOURCE-1_CC-symptom-not-problem.pdf



Contract cheating is systemic problem

Contract cheating is a “systemic problem, the causes of which are multiple and complex” (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency TEQSA, nd, p. 1).

- We know that contract cheating is an international problem and is happening around the world.
- Take a look at the following link for a resource that talks about a recent study and some contributing factors to contract cheating https://cheatingandassessment.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/SECTOR-RESOURCE-2_Three-factors.pdf

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency TEQSA. (2017).: Good practice note: Addressing contract cheating to safeguard academic integrity.

TEQSA Good Practice (pp. 5-6)

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency TEQSA. (nd). Three factors contribute to contract cheating. Retrieved from TEQSA Good practice



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We need to talk more about contract cheating with students

We do not talk enough about contract cheating and academic integrity with students. Not talking about the problem will minimize its importance for students and other members of our learning communities.

- “Students do not appear to be aware of the potential harm involved, such as risk to public safety, which may result from graduates who have incomplete knowledge and skills. Students also appear to be unaware of the damage it does to the reputation of their own qualifications, and the negative effects on the student experience and satisfaction in courses where contract cheating is known to occur” (Australian Government Office for Learning, nd., p. 1).
- To learn more about how to talk with students about contract cheating click on the following link [TEQSA Students not concerned](#)
- Click on the link and find out how to explain contract cheating to students [TEQSA Beware of ghosts](#)

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Rundle, K. & Curtis, G. (nd). Beware of ghosts: Explaining contract cheating and ghostwriting and why you shouldn't do it. Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), 1. Retrieved from <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/explaining-contract-cheating-ghostwriting-partnerships-uwa.pdf?v=1588831017>

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency TEQSA. (nd). Students are not concerned about contract cheating and we are not talking to them about it. Retrieved from <https://cheatingandassessment.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EDUCATOR-RESOURCE-7-Student-lack-of-concern.pdf>



FACT
6

Contract cheating and student blackmail

Students are unaware of the risks to their personal information and their academic careers. Stories are beginning to surface about writers working for Internet sites that offer paid services to complete academic work who go onto blackmail students for more money. It is important to help students understand these sites are businesses and do not have their best interest at heart.

- To find out more about students being blackmailed click on the following links & check out the following articles
- Blackmail and scams
- Essay Mills and Blackmail
- TEQSA Contract cheating and Blackmail

ARTICLES/RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Ross, J. (2018). "Contract cheating websites 'Blackmailing Whistle-Blowers'." Times Higher Education. Retrieved from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/contract-cheating-websites-blackmailing-whistleblowers>

Yorke, J., Sefcik, L., & Veeran-Colton, T. (2020). Contract cheating and blackmail: A risky business? Studies in Higher Education. DOI:10.1080/03075079.2020.1730313

Yorke, J., Sefcik, L., & Veeran-Colton, T. (nd). Contract cheating and blackmail. Focus area: Contract cheating. Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), 1-2. Retrieved from <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/contract-cheating-blackmail.pdf?v=1591659442>



FACT
7

Commercial contract cheating sites are big business

Many online pay for fee contract cheating sites use sophisticated business models and careful marketing strategies to engage students in purchasing their services. “Of particular concern is the proliferation of marketing-savvy commercial providers who bombard students via social media, online platforms and other advertising forums of cheating services about their ‘academic services’” (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency TEQSA, 2017, p. 7)

- Pay-for-fee academic writing companies may use different domain names but have the same IP address to save money (Ellis, Zucker, & Randall, 2018).
- Often pay-for-fee academic writing companies will use convenient payment methods to make it easier for students to pay (e.g. paypal)
- These sites can “cater to distinct markets” (Ellis, Zucker, & Randall, 2018, p. 2) and focus on specific disciplines and geographical areas so that it seems like students have choice and that the sites offer specialized services (Lancaster, 2020)
- These sites assure confidentiality, plagiarism free assignments, and foster tensions and an adversarial spirit between professors and faculty within academic institutions and their students, suggesting that the online contract cheating services are there for students’ needs, they suggest a caring approach toward the student and position the work they do as a resource to help students through unnecessary stressful times (Rowland, Slade, Wong, & Whiting, 2017)
- These sites make it easy for the user to click and order and reduce the academic experience to a transaction (online shopping experience) with opportunities to barter the suggested price

- These sites often have specific marketing strategies that emphasize ease, low-costs and high-quality, products that can be customized to the unique need of the student, fast turnaround times (Rowland, Slade, Wong, & Whiting, 2017)
- To find out more about business models and persuasive methods of engaging students to contract cheat, adopted by academic custom writing businesses, take a look at the following articles
- During CoVid-19 these sites increased their marketing strategies and played to students' vulnerabilities and stress

ARTICLES/RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Ellis, C., Zucker, I.M., & Randall, D. (2018). The infernal business of contract cheating: Understanding the business processes and models of academic custom writing sites. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 14(1), 1-21. DOI 10.1007/s40979-017-0024-3

Lancaster, T. (2020). Academic discipline integration by contract cheating services and essay mills. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 18(2), 115-127. DOI:10.1007/s1805-019-09357

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.org/10.1080/02602938.2017.1391948

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. (2017). Good practice note: Addressing contract cheating to safeguard academic integrity. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/good-practice-note-addressing-contract-cheating.pdf?v=1507082628>



FACT 8

There are costs to contract cheating

When a student engages in contract cheating it is a form of academic dishonesty and jeopardizes how we assess knowledge and skill. This may result in gaps in knowledge that can in turn affect their competence in their chosen professional fields after they graduate and move into the workforce. This in turn, puts those that they provide care and service to in harm's way.

- Researchers have reported that when students behave dishonestly in their studies they also behave dishonestly in their professional careers
- The following articles speak to research findings that highlight the problems with contract cheating as it relates to the inability to properly assess student learning, as well as, the worries about dishonest academic behaviour and how that translates to professional acts of dishonesty

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

- Bremner, C. (2020), Pakistan International Airlines grounds one third of Pilots after crash, The Times, 26th June 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pakistan-international-airlines-grounds-third-of-pilots-after-crash-nkdwj8gxs>
- Guerrero-Dib, J., Portales, L., & Heredia-Escorza, Y. (2020). Impact of academic integrity on workplace ethical behaviour. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 16(2), 1-18. DOI.org/10.1007/s40979-020-0051-3
- Harding, T., Carpenter, D., Finelli, C. & Passow, H. (2004). Does academic dishonesty relate to unethical behavior in professional practice? An exploratory study. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 10(2), 311-324.
- Lancaster, T. & Clarke, R. (2015). Examining contract cheating, essay mills use and academic misconduct by students in health courses, *Contract cheating Research*, 1-18. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Thomas_Lancaster/publication/323425525_Examining_Contract_Cheating_Essay_Mill_Use_and_Academic_Misconduct_by_Students_on_Health_Courses/links/5a956d4daca27214056920dd/Examining-Contract-Cheating-Essay-Mill-Use-and-Academic-Misconduct-by-Students-on-Health-Courses.pdf
- Nonis, S. & Owens Swift, C. (2001). An examination of relationships between academic dishonesty and workplace dishonesty: A multicampus investigation. *Journal of Education for Business*, 77(2), 69-77.
- Smith, C. (2010). The relationship between academic and professional dishonesty in online RN- BSN students (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (3436706).



FACT
9

Some countries have outlawed contract cheating

Some countries have moved to criminalizing contract cheating.

- Contract cheating is a deliberate form of academic dishonesty and jeopardizes the ability of professors and teachers to evaluate student learning. The risk of students graduating with gaps in their knowledge, and moral development present risks to members of the public who receive their care and service. Due to the widespread negative effects for hiring organizations, and society at large, some countries have taken a deliberate stand to combat contract cheating through legislation.
- Click on the links to see some of the countries that have criminalized contract cheating.

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

[Australian Law](#)

[Irish Law \(pp. 20-21\)](#)

[New Zealand Law](#)



FACT
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Academic integrity is an academic quality standard

Some countries around the world have included academic integrity in their national quality educational standards—A few quality assurance and accreditation bodies are already taking action to alert providers to these dangers and requiring them to take action, for example, in UK and Australia

- Lack of academic integrity negatively impacts on academic quality and standards
- If schools, colleges and universities allow students to graduate who have benefited from contract cheating, then, in addition to unfairness and dangers to health and safety, the lack of professional skills in their graduates will damage their reputation as an education provider
- For all the reasons set out here and those covered earlier, it is incumbent on all Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies responsible for educational oversight to ensure that all educational institutions
 - have a serious approach and commitment to integrity in education and research
 - develop, implement and maintain robust policies and procedures for promoting academic integrity
 - develop, implement and maintain robust policies and procedures for detecting and correcting all forms of academic dishonesty
 - take all necessary steps to raise awareness about and discourage contract cheating, in all its forms

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK. (2020). Contracting to cheat in higher education. How to address essay mills and contract cheating (2nd ed). Retrieved from <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/contracting-to-cheat-in-higher-education-2nd-edition.pdf>

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). (2017). Good Practice Note. Retrieved from <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/good-practice-note-addressing-contract-cheating-safeguard-academic>



FACT
11

Academic integrity is an academic quality standard

“Rather than focusing solely on the responsibilities of individuals (whether those individuals are students or teachers), establishing a culture of integrity requires a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach which promotes integrity in every aspect of the academic enterprise” (Australian Government, 2017, p. 8).

- Contract cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty can be managed and mitigated through a unified and multi-pronged approach within organizations
- There are evidence-informed practices that can support building cultures that value academic integrity across all members of the learning community including leaders, students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders.

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) & Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). (2020). Toolkit to support quality assurance agencies to address academic integrity and contract cheating. Retrieved from <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/inqaah-teqsa-qbbg-academic-integrity-toolkit-v1-0.pdf?v=1594958272> (pp 9-37).

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK. (2020). Contracting to cheat in higher education. How to address essay mills and contract cheating (2nd ed). Retrieved from <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/contracting-to-cheat-in-higher-education-2nd-edition.pdf> (pp. 21-33).

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). (2017). Good Practice Note. Retrieved from <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/good-practice-note-addressing-contract-cheating-safeguard-academic> (pp. 6-30)



FACT
12

It's ok to get someone else to do my work—is a value that is being taught to children at a very young age

“...[when schools set] assessments that... expect parents to help followed by students then presenting the project as their own [in classrooms], the message is dangerous as it actually says it is ok to have someone else do an assessment for a student...” (Khan & Mulani, 2020, p. 48)

- Children learn at a young age what is acceptable and what is not. When they see their parents, siblings, and others around them completing their projects and then asking them to take credit, they learn that this is an acceptable practice in completing assessments.
- Some parents go beyond their own capacity to ask stationery shops to make science projects and models for their children, because they no longer have time as dual-working parents. This further teaches the child that it is now acceptable to pay someone to get an assessment completed.
- Most projects completed by parents are easily identifiable and most often appreciated and recognized as good projects by teachers and other parents, reinforcing the message
- While high schools and tertiary education institutions fight contract cheating, the seeds of this practice begin much earlier in a child's life, as the below research highlights

RESOURCES OF INTEREST

Khan, Z.R. & Mulani, V. (2020). Contract cheating values in school assessments – what values are we really teaching our young students? Proceedings of 6th International Conference Plagiarism Across Europe and Beyond 2020, European Network for Academic Integrity. April 17 - 19 2020. Pp 47 – 49. University of Wollongong in Dubai. Dubai. UAE. Retrieved from <http://academicintegrity.eu/conference/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Abstract-Book.pdf>

Khan, Z. R. (2019). The desert diorama dilemma. International Centre for Academic Integrity. Retrieved from <https://www.academicintegrity.org/fairness/the-desert-diorama-dilemma/>

Cullen, C. (2019). Growing with your students: Integrity as an issue for primary schools. International Centre for Academic Integrity. Retrieved from <https://www.academicintegrity.org/respect/growing-with-your-students-integrity-as-an-issue-for-primary-schools/>

