



# **The Role of Quality Assurance in Ensuring Academic Integrity**

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# What do we mean by academic integrity and contract cheating?

*“a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage”*

International Centre for Academic Integrity

*“Contract cheating describes the process through which students can have original work produced for them, which they can then submit as if this were their own work. Often this involves the payment of a fee and this can be facilitated using online auction sites.”*

Thomas Lancaster, Imperial College London

*“If an institution does not think it has a problem with academic integrity, it just has not detected it yet”*

Anthony McClaren CEO TEQSA Australia

# What are the common manifestations?

- Fake certification (HECSU Prospects)
- Inappropriate/Fraudulent degree validation
- Admissions Fraud
- Exam fraud
- Essay Mills
- 'Traditional' plagiarism
- Corruption

# Contract cheating - who is doing this?

- How many essay mills?
- Who owns/runs them?
- How many students are cheating?

# What is QAA's role?

Cheating, including plagiarism, poses a threat to academic standards

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Revised Code's core practice: "The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent."

QAA is well-placed in the UK HE sector to lead on a matter that is clearly in the public interest

In 2017 QAA was asked by the Government to lead the sector's efforts against contract cheating and essay mills

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## ASA Ruling on All Answers Ltd t/a UK Essays

Upheld | Internet (on own site) | 21 March 2018

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### Background

Summary of Council decision:

Two issues were investigated, both of which were Upheld

### Ad description

A website for the essay writing service [www.ukessays.com](http://www.ukessays.com), seen on 28 July 2017. The home page featured text that stated "... GUARANTEED GRADE, EVERY TIME We're so confident you'll love the work we produce, we guarantee the final grade of the work. Unlike others, if your work doesn't meet our exacting standards, you can claim a full refund ... LOVED BY CUSTOMERS & THE GLOBAL PRESS UKEssays have lots of press coverage from all over the world confirming that a 2:1 piece of work produced by us met this standard ... We were the first company in the world to offer you guaranteed 2:1 and 1st class work".

Additional information about the service was included on pages titled 'WORLD CLASS GUARANTEES' and 'UK ESSAYS IN THE PRESS'.

### All Answers Ltd

Venture House  
Cross Street  
Arnold  
Nottingham  
NG5 7BL

Number of complaints: **1**

Complaint Ref: **A17-394574**

# Tackling the problem

## QAA guidance (October 2017)

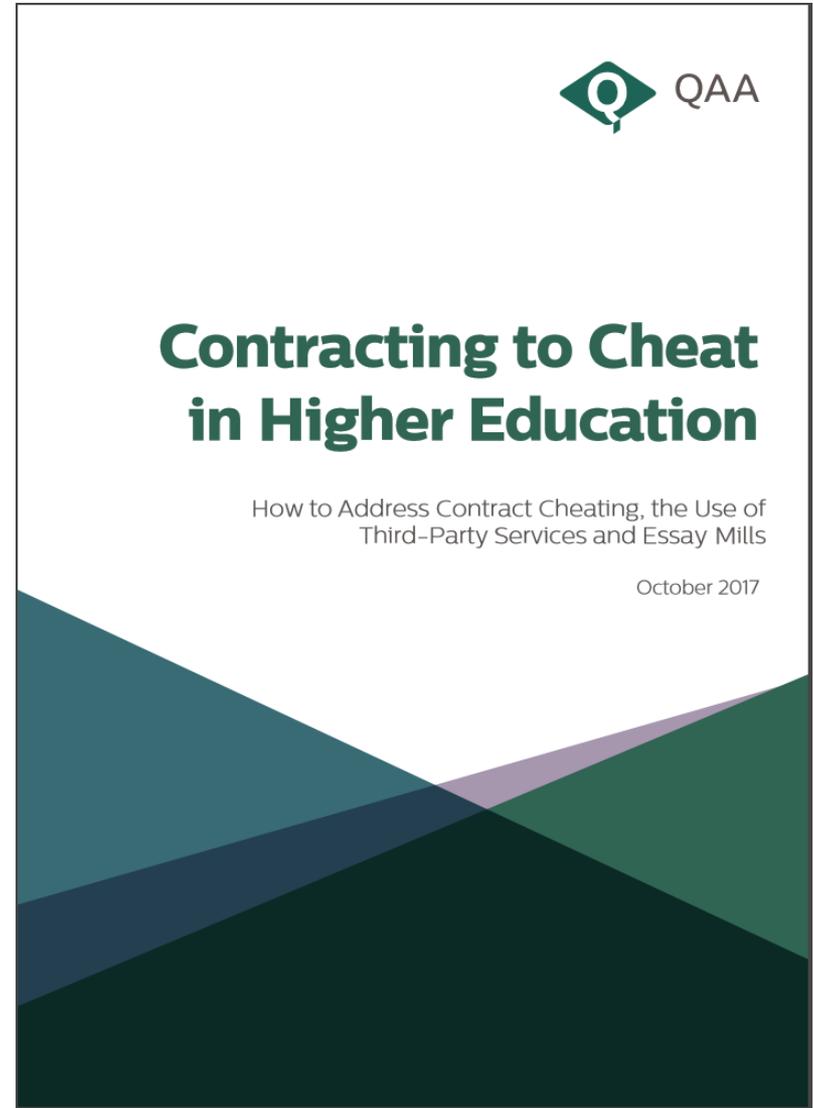
Background

Education (staff and students)

Prevention

Detection

Regulations and policies



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# The YouTube stars being paid to sell cheating

By Branwen Jeffreys and Edward Main  
BBC Trending

🕒 1 May 2018

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The YouTubers selling cheating: 'Get an A on your paper - and you don't even need to do it'

YouTube stars are being paid to sell academic cheating, a BBC investigation has found.

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# Essay mills: 'One in seven' paying for university essays

31 August 2018



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More students than ever are paying someone else to write assignments for them via "essay mills", a Swansea University study has revealed.

# Developments and considerations

A complex issue with no simple solutions

Sector consensus and action is critical

But...

- Is there a disincentive for institutions to take action?
- Is there a danger of overregging the pudding?
- Are we providing a service for essay mill companies?

# Recent Developments 1

## Academic Integrity Advisory Group

Experts across the sector, providers, representative bodies, UK Governments, Turnitin, HEDD & a parliamentarian. Identified two priority work streams;

- Is legislative action appropriate (even if no magic bullet)?

Lord Young of Cookham; *'we remain open to legislation in the future should the steps we are taking prove insufficient.'*

- A new strict liability offence?
  - The New Zealand/Republic of Ireland model
  - Existing fraud law?
  - Company Law?
- Impact of existing guidance focussing on e.g. assessment

# Recent Developments 2

## A UK Centre for Academic Integrity?

- Need to co-ordinate across all nations of the UK and internationally
- Letter from 45 Vice Chancellors and sector leaders from across the UK asking the Government to take action including *‘supporting the QAA’s proposed initiative to establish a UK Centre for Academic Integrity, with a formal remit to research, analyse and combat academic misconduct.’*
- How might a centre be funded?

# What does this mean for Quality Assurance and how it is defined?

A broader approach to Quality Assurance – facilitative to the sector, beyond enhancement

Might not sit within every agency's remit – QAA has remit for maintenance of standards

The protection of academic integrity will require

- A multi faceted, multi-agency approach
- International co-operation
- Horizon scanning for future developments, e.g. blackmail of students

Working with broad range of agencies and actors – new networks and alliances

# Questions for discussion

1. In your system, do you see academic misconduct as a problem and, if so, what strategies are being deployed to address it?
2. In your system, is there another organisation in charge of or with a role to play in ensuring academic integrity? If so, how do HEIs and quality assurance agencies collaborate with it?
3. Is it valid for quality assurance agencies to take on this type of facilitative role? Where are the boundaries between agency and institutional responsibilities?
4. Is there a danger an agency could be seen as both 'coach' and 'referee'?