

Based on responses from 14,086 Australian university students, 814 students reported that they had engaged in at least one of seven cheating behaviours. Two thirds of the 'cheating students' reported that they are not at all concerned, or are only slightly concerned, about contract cheating as a problem (Bretag & Harper et al., 2018). This lack of concern exists despite the fact that the consequences for being caught cheating in this way can be severe, both for students' ongoing study at university, and for their future careers.

Scenario*

Choi Seul is in her second year of a Bachelor of Arts degree at an Australian university. Early in her degree, she spent a lot of time and effort writing her own essays, but was only just passing. Choi subsequently met someone on social media who offered to write essays for her, in exchange for payment. He wrote four essays, but then things changed. Choi paid him to do a fifth essay, but he didn't complete it. When Choi asked for her money back he kept making excuses and wouldn't pay it back. She then received an email from him saying that he had been contacted by an investigative journalist who was offering to pay him money to hand over essays, so that the journalist could catch students cheating. In his email, he told Choi that she would have to pay him money to keep quiet. Choi paid him the money, but now she is worried he will report her to her university. He has kept records of all their conversations on Gmail and has evidence of financial transactions on Hulu, which include her real name. He also knows the name of Choi's university and has copies of the four essays she has already submitted for assessment.

Points for discussion

1. What can we take from this story about the issues that may arise when students don't act with integrity?
2. Are students aware of the kinds of ramifications they may encounter due to contract cheating?
3. Are teaching staff aware of the kinds of ramifications students may encounter due to contract cheating?
4. What other sorts of risks might students be taking when they procure the services of others to complete their assessment for them?

**Inspired by a real-life situation as reported on Essay Scam Forum (n.d.)*

References

- Bretag, T., Harper, R., Burton, M., Ellis, C., Newton, P., Saddiqui, S., Rozenberg, P & van Haeringen, K. (2018). Contract cheating: A survey of Australian university students, *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1462788>
- Harper, R., Bretag, T., Ellis, C., Newton, P., Rozenberg, P., Saddiqui, S., & van Haeringen, K. (2018). Contract cheating: a survey of Australian university staff. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1462789>

Further resources available at www.cheatingandassessment.edu.au/
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