

Findings from a survey of 14,086 Australian university students show that three factors influence contract cheating behaviour: the perception that there are 'lots of opportunities to cheat', dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning environment, and speaking a language other than English (LOTE) at home (Bretag & Harper et al., 2018). A student's LOTE status had the *strongest* effect on cheating behaviours of any of the three factors.

Scenario

Tiffany Wu is a highly motivated student from China, currently in the first year of her Nursing degree. Due to visa issues, Tiffany arrived three weeks after the semester had started. However, having achieved good grades at her pre-university college in China and with an International English Language Test Score of 6.00, Tiffany is confident that she will do well. By mid-semester Tiffany is struggling. She has had to complete a number of written assignments, the requirements of which are completely unfamiliar to her, and which seem to have nothing to do with Nursing. Why does she have to write a 'reflective journal'? What is it, exactly? How will this help her with the practical tasks of caring for a patient? With other assignments due, and a drug calculations exam to prepare for, Tiffany becomes extremely anxious. She asks her Australian classmates for help, but everyone is too busy to do more than tell her to check the Course Outline for information or post a question to the online Discussion Forum. While online, a commercial essay writing service pops up on her browser, offering 'High quality, plagiarism-free assignments at low prices'. Tiffany asks her Korean friend, Lim, if this is a legitimate learning service, to which Lim replies: 'No, not really. But everybody uses them sometimes. They do a pretty good job, and no-one can tell it's not your own work'. Tiffany doesn't feel it would be right to use the service, so she completes the reflective journal herself. Two weeks later, she receives a fail grade and the following feedback: "I can see you have made an effort here, but your written expression really let you down. Also, it's not enough to describe events, you need to demonstrate critical reflection. I strongly recommend that you see a Learning Advisor before you submit your next assignment".

Points for discussion

1. What are some of the critical issues in this case?
2. How important is it that international students arrive in time for the start of semester?
3. What supports should be put in place to ensure that Tiffany succeeds in her program of study?
4. Was the marker's feedback useful? What else might Tiffany need to understand the requirements for a reflective journal?
5. List the top ten challenges that international LOTE students face when studying at an Australian university. Brainstorm practical strategies for addressing these challenges, including who would be responsible.

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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