Promoting Academic Integrity toolkit

What is academic misconduct?

There are a number of types of academic misconduct. You are probably familiar with the term of plagiarism in an academic context – plagiarism essentially means using someone else's ideas, words, data, or other material produced by them without acknowledgement by using the appropriate referencing techniques (ICAI, 2016). The diagram below explains some terms used when discussing academic misconduct. Please note that although the terms 'patchwork plagiarism' and 'false-referencing' are used widely but are not terms used in CCCU Policy and Procedures.

Student contracts a third party to complete their assessment for them. This may be purchased for an essay mill or persuading/requesting someone else , e.g., a family member to write the assessment

Two or more students work together and submit largely the same or identical pieces of work. Often picked up by Turnitin. Can be done across different modules and assignments

The student tries to paraphrase chunks of text but leaves in a number of words /phrases the same as the original.

Contract cheating (currently falls under academic misconduct in CCCU Procedures)

Collusion

Patchwork plagiarism

Student submits the same piece of work on different modules; or work they completed for a different course or even a different institution.

Types of academic misconduct

Duplication (also known as self-plagiarism)

False referencing (currently falls under plagiarism in CCCU Procedures)

Cheating

Student either lifts references from source and pastes them is as their own. Or just adds in-text citations even if they have not read or used the sources.

Copying answers or accessing resources that are not permitted for use particularly in invigilated or online exams. Bringing in phones, notes, cheat sheets etc. Allowing someone else to take an exam/assessment for you

Contract cheating

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has produced guidance on contracting to cheat in Higher Education (QAA, 2020 https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/contracting-to-cheat-in-higher-education-2nd-edition.pdf and has recently updated this in order to allow the higher education sector to share experiences of contract cheating. It recommends that staff are aware of the problem of contract cheating, how to reduce opportunities to cheat and the procedures to follow when it is suspected. This guidance shows you signs to look out for and ways you can reduce the opportunity for learners cheating in your assessments. Please note that at CCCU primarily we use this term in reference to assessment other than unseen exams or in person presentations / practical assessments. I.e., anything that a student submits via Turnitin.

Defining contract cheating

There is a big focus on contract cheating because it is on the rise.

Lancaster and Clarke originally coined the term contract cheating in 2006,

"**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**" (Lancaster, n.d.).

Essentially, contract cheating is a form of academic dishonesty (Misconduct) where students have their assessed work completed for them which they then submit for credit. While much of this work may be bought through essay mills, money does not have to change hands. If the student's work is done for them by a third party including a friend, parent, former teacher etc. this is also a form of contract cheating.

Although the term 'essay mills' is used, these contracted cheating sites can actually produce a wide range of assessment types and are constantly diversifying.

> "The output from essay mills can range from essays to laboratory reports, reflective journals, dissertations (including whole-dissertation packages that comprise: proposals; intermediate/formative assessments; final reports - with implied fabrication of data in some circumstances; presentation slides; and notes for vivas), PowerPoint presentations, computer programming, film editing and other services. They range across many disciplines and subjects, and across different assessment types. Students are increasingly being targeted by advertising, often via social media or direct email, assuring them that this is acceptable and common practice" (QAA, 2020).

How do students access essay mills?

Beckman et. al. (2017), state that the two main factors which allow contract cheating to occur are motivation and opportunity. However, it should not be assumed that students necessarily go out of their way to seek help of this kind. Students are targeted the moment they arrive at university and can be bombarded with advertisements online and even distributed on flyers and advertisements on campus. Essay mills are easily accessed (a quick Google search will bring up numerous options) and use marketing techniques such as discounts, promises work will be original and plagiarism free, and during the COVID pandemic even offering to "fill the gap resulting from a lack of supervision and helping students stay safe" (McKie, 2020). Contract cheating providers are not necessarily

companies, of course. Some enterprising students may look to sell their work to a new cohort of students. People may offer proofreading services which go beyond simply checking for errors.

Supporting students

Pressure to succeed, language difficulties, difficulty coping with the shift to university study and many other factors may cause a student to look for help.

The QAA recommend that personal tutoring and academic mentoring "centred on academic performance and its enhancement is critical to the development of students as confident independent learners" making them less likely to turn to essay mills (QAA, 2020). In your role as a PAT, Course Director, or module lead look out for signs that a student is struggling and, if appropriate, and signpost them to support such as the Learning Skills Hub LearningSkillsHub (canterbury.ac.uk) or Student Wellbeing Student Wellbeing Advisers and wellbeing support - Canterbury Christ Church University

Also, ensure that students know what academic misconduct is, how to avoid it and what the consequences of academic misconduct may be (see the CCCU Academic Misconduct Procedures: https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-enhancement/docs/Student-Academic-Misconduct-Procedures-from-Sept-2021.pdf . This is particularly important regarding contract cheating as it can have implications later in the student's life/career.

Negative impact of contract cheating

- Can negatively affect the reputation and credibility of institutions and their qualifications "Under the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the QAA 'Quality Code': Quality Code (qaa.ac.uk)), providers are obliged to ensure that their assessment processes are reliable, fair and transparent, and that the value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards. Contract cheating services, and the students making use of them, pose a risk to achieving this" (QAA, 2020).
- Allowing students to purchase their way to a degree means that they will not have the necessary skills, have met the learning objectives and that their qualification is essentially meaningless
- Devalues the efforts and education of students who do not cheat
- Creates a culture of fraud and commercialisation of education
- Can lead to students being blackmailed later in life

(adapted from ICAI, 2016)

Resources

To help you combat contract cheating the following resources are available in this document:

- Signs to look out for if you suspect contract cheating
- How to design plagiarism and academic misconduct opportunities out of assessments
- Types of assessment to avoid or how to manage risks with specific assessment types
- Using authentic assessment

Other resources

Please refer students to the many useful resources on the Learning Skills Hub:

Academic Integrity:	https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/ccculearningskills/year-0-1/academic-integrity-plagiarism/
Using Turnitin:	https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/ccculearningskills/year-0-1/introduction-to-turnitin/
Referencing:	Introduction to Referencing	LearningSkillsHub (canterbury.ac.uk)
	Advanced referencing	LearningSkillsHub (canterbury.ac.uk)

What signs can I look out for to detect contract cheating in particular?

Signs that contract cheating may have taken place	Issues
Turnitin shows a very low similarity score (0-5%) N.B. Be careful as CCCU policy and procedures do not give an exact text match threshold for application of the procedures. This is a guide for considering if there is an issue to bring to the Course Director's (CD) attention, rather than a measure for the CD to take plagiarism/misconduct action in and of itself.	It is to be expected that cover sheets, headings, direct quotes, citations and elements of reference lists would be matching against other sources in the Turnitin database so a very low similarity score would be unusual.
Very high similarity score (30% or above)	Although essay mills claim that all work is plagiarism free such bespoke documents can be cut and paste from sources.
Metadata in Word document properties - Author - Date created - Short or no editing time - Version number	Metadata will tell you if the author's name is different to that of the student. Be careful though as if they have used a provided template, written it on another person's computer or even renamed an old file written by someone else then this could be perfectly legitimate. However, students should be able to provide drafts or other evidence to show that this is their own work. Remember that a text can only be de-anonymised if there is a clear case to answer as per the Anonymous Marking Policy section3.2. Anonymous-Marking-Policy-AB-approved-June-2021.pdf (canterbury.ac.uk) Of course, your suspicions may only be raised after the work is deanonymized and the grades have gone out. If this occurs consult with your CD.
Format/content is not appropriate to the genre/discipline OR different to that usually used in the subject/discipline.	The writing is completely off topic or the language/content does not fit the language/content/format of the subject area/discipline.
Quality of assignment is different to expectations / writing is advanced for level/ grades much higher than in previously taken assessments	If you are familiar with the student's work you may be aware of differences in quality in terms of level of language, accuracy, content, formatting, style etc. compared to the student's previous work, including formative. When working with anonymous marking this may not become apparent until the scripts are de-anonymized for grades to be input.
Confusing, unreadable language, overuse of jargon and misused vocabulary	Rogerson (2017) notes that commercial assignments produced in essay mills are often produced by reusing information or writing from previous commissions. This leads to poor quality work. She also observes that students often send very limited information to essay mills and can overlook important details in the assessment

	brief. This is why assessments which are vague, irrelevant to the topic, using vocabulary inaccurately/irrelevant to the topic or odd references, are "classic signs of contract cheating" (Rogerson (2017).

Bibliography is provided but:
  a. No in-text citations
  b. Does not match in-text citations
  c. Sources are inappropriate/ irrelevant/outdated
  d. Access dates for internet sources predate the assignment/time the student started the course
  e. Fake references are used
And does NOT:
  a. Meet stated requirements
  b. Include required core/recommended texts
  c. Date range is not met (e.g., you may have stipulated that sources are no more than 10 years old)
  d. Referencing style is different to that required (e.g., APA not Harvard)
  e. Does not meet minimum/maximum number of references
	'Bespoke' providers do not necessarily have access to the sources on your reading list, access to journal articles subscribed to by CCCU or much subject knowledge. If the reference list does not contain sources that you provided/requested, or there are errors with the references/formatting/falsified references this could be a sign that the work has been done by a contracted writer.

Anything else that may seem unusual or concerning	Trust your instincts and follow up with a colleague, your Course Director or if you are a Course Director decide whether to initiate procedures as outlined in the CCCU Academic Misconduct Policy: Academic Integrity (canterbury.ac.uk)

Table adapted from TEQSA (n.d) Substantiating contract cheating: A guide for investigators (teqsa.gov.au) and Rogerson (2017) Detecting contract cheating in essay and report submissions: process, patterns, clues and conversations (springer.com)

Remember that any individual sign is not necessarily an indicator of contract cheating. If you do suspect contract cheating do examine the submission in terms of the sources of evidence outlined in the table above.

Designing academic misconduct opportunities out of assessments

The purpose of assignments is to check that students really have learned the information/skills they're supposed to on the course, not to test whether they're "good students". I.e., assessment should support learning. However, it is still important to ensure academic misconduct opportunities are removed in order to ensure the assessment does measure the learning outcomes and test appropriate skills/knowledge.

Planning assessments to reduce the possibility of academic misconduct cheating

Strategy	What you can do	Rationale
Plan and time assessment tasks across the module/course	Ensure that assessments are spread across the semester so that they are not bunched. Consider how assessments (both formative and summative) could build on each other so that students develop knowledge and skills – e.g., submitting plans or drafts, presenting early research findings, an annotated bibliography followed by an essay/report/presentation. Also, check with the course team when their assessments are due so that you can plan to stagger tasks accordingly.	Reduce stress and anxiety and help students plan across the semester
Regularly change the assessment question/topic	One way you can do this without having to change the module spec repeatedly is change the questions each time the module runs while keeping the task type the same. You could set tasks based on recent real-world events/cases/scenarios. The most important thing to keep in mind is ensuring the learning outcomes should be achieved through the assessment, regardless of the assessment specific question/brief. The mode of assessment e.g., portfolio/reflection/essay can stay the same	This stops students copying previous students' work because it is on different topics
Use current/topical examples	Using e.g., original case studies in teaching material and assessment briefs which are relevant to the subject area keeps students aware of the latest research/findings	It's harder for students find work to copy and harder for contract cheating providers to produce as there will be very little for them to draw on. Often information may not have been published yet so students need to use their own interpretation/ideas.
Use authentic assessment tasks	Set assessment tasks which are based on real-life scenarios and relevant to students' future careers	Students are more likely to see the value of the

		assessment, engage more and make a genuine effort
Use different assessment types	Vary assessment types to utilise different skills and make it harder for the assessment to be plagiarised, and particularly contract cheated. Different assessment types could include reflective writing, blogs, posters, reports, oral presentations, annotated bibliographies or portfolios. Just remember that this needs to be balanced with authenticity and remember that too many types of assessment can lead to student stress. Variety when it's authentic e.g., clinical practice, report writing, staged interview/review after a critical incident can all contribute to authentic skills e.g., a nurse will need on graduation don't feel you have to add in lots of variety for the sake of it.	Students gain different skills, demonstrate different skills and are less likely feel the need to cheat.
Where appropriate require higher order outcomes rather than description or explanation	Ensure that assessments require students to evaluate, analyse, critique and synthesize information rather than simply relaying facts or describing things such as processes. **E.g. Avoid:** 'Explain the effects of the government's sugar tax on healthcare provision.' **Alternative:** 'Identify three academic sources which discuss the implementation and effect of the government's sugar tax. Compare and contrast the views in these sources and make a set of recommendations based on your findings with rationales to support your ideas'.	Students should recognise that these tasks require original thought/voice and that they need to think about the specific topic/input/angle required. This is harder to get a third party to produce.
Include self-reflection	Include a reflective section/blog/journal in the assessment pattern	Reflection requires students to connect their own thoughts/experience to the research/topic. A personalised approach is hard to plagiarise.
Use formative assessment	Build in formative versions of assessment – this means you can see their research process and how their ideas/answer develops. Feedback can be delivered in written feedback but also in tutorials where students are required to discuss a plan, or peer-to-peer feedback on a draft paragraph during class time are all possible alternatives.	Students should gain confidence in their abilities if they can access feedback before they attempt the main assessment.
Set references you expect students to use OR e.g., set up	Provide a list of references that you want students to read and reference in their assessed work.	You will be able to see if students have read the set texts because you are familiar with the content. It

structured assessments.	An example of a structured assessment could be a brief that advises students to "choose one topic and one theory/model from this list, include a minimum of three sources from this list, plus your own research. Apply the theory/model to the topic and reach a conclusion."	is much harder for a contract cheater to access the relevant texts and also much less likely that students can plagiarise from a text that has used the same sources.
Regular and effective assessment literacy/preparation.	This reminds students of good academic practice that they should. Equally importantly, a clear statement of what isn't acceptable from a tutor they know and feel comfortable discussing things with or asking questions of is very helpful.	As stated earlier, some students cheat because they do not understand the task and haven't had a chance to reflect on it and discuss it with tutors/peers prior to deadline. Therefore, preparing students for the summative assessment is the most important thing to do. This includes discussing marking criteria, having related formative activities which provide students with feedback, and mocks if a type of assessment is unusual.
Help students to be autonomous and signpost them to useful resources	Refer students to the relevant Learning Skills Hub information and support: LearningSkillsHub (canterbury.ac.uk)	Students don't always know where to go for help/advice. It is always helpful to remind them as they are bombarded with a lot of information.
Find opportunities for introducing flexibility in assessment methods	Some suggestions for including flexibility around assessment are described below. Timelines: • Allowing students to choose their own deadlines from a set of options or within a set of criteria; • For an assignment tied to weekly course content, having students choose which week's content they would like to focus on; and/or • Creating an online test that can be written over a window of time, offering multiple times to write a test, and/or budgeting significantly more time to write a test than	Building flexibility into choosing assessment methods can give students more control over their assessments and as a consequence, more control over their learning experience.

what is generally needed, and giving this extra time to all students.

Weighting:

- Offering several quizzes/tests and dropping the lowest mark from the final grade, providing optional quizzes for students who would like to reduce the weighting of a final exam, or adding the weight from a missed or poorly completed test to the final exam; and/or

- Allowing students the option of completing 2 smaller assignments or 1 larger assignment.

Format:

- Permitting an assignment to be submitted as a written text, podcast, video, or oral conversation (Fuller, Healey, Bradley & Hall, 2004);

- Offering short answer questions as an alternative to multiple choice questions; or

- challenging students to design a campaign of their choosing to share what they've learned from the course with the broader community.

(McMaster University, 2017: Flexibility in Assessment – Forward with FLEXibility (pressbooks.com)

(Adapted from Carroll, 2017)

Avoid risky assessment types

Invigilated exams
- This may be surprising as we often think of exams being the best way to ensure academic integrity. However, a recent study found that exam cheating is far more widespread than contract cheating and that staff detected cheating far less often. Cheating is also more prevalent on heavily weighted high stakes tasks like the traditional 3-hour finals exams. Students also felt that cheating was more acceptable in assignments they considered to be irrelevant to their future learning or employability (Bretag et al, 2018). This is not the case at CCCU but it is still good to be aware and to make students aware of the consequences if they are caught.

What can be done?
- While exams still have their uses try not to make an exam too heavily weighted. If an exam is not run by trained invigilators keep an eye out for cheating – this may include smuggling in mobile phones, writing answers on body parts, hiding worksheets in the exam room, hiding model answers inside calculator cases/pencil cases/rolled up inside pen barrels, passing notes/calculators between students etc. In extreme cases students can even hire someone to take their place in the exam room.
- CCCU now has many exams that are 2 or 3 hours rather than 3.

Online tests/quizzes

- Bretag et al (2018) discovered that cheating in quizzes is more than double than in other forms of assessment.
- "It happens ALL the time for online quizzes … Everyone just does them together, even if they get different questions … It disenfranchises students who want to, and regularly do the right thing, and incentivises you to buy into a cheating framework".

What can be done?
- Run online tests/quizzes in invigilated computer labs.
- Use online quizzes for formative rather than summative assessment.
- If students are allowed to access sources, then ensure than they reference appropriately
- Give limited time to provide answers to cut down on the time for accessing the internet or other source of help

Managing risk for different assessment types

No assessment type is 100% academic misconduct proof. However, some assessment types are more likely to be the subject of academic misconduct activity, including being outsourced to a contract cheating provider. The table below shows how academic integrity can be fostered in a range of assessment tasks and also identifies the challenges and advantages in terms of academic integrity.

Assessment task	Risk	Value	Strategy
Short turnaround time	It is not best practice to give students too little time to understand the task or to acquire the skills needed to complete the task and learning objectives effectively. It also puts pressure on students and therefore makes them more likely to seek external help. Bretag et al. (2018) and Harper et al. (2018) found that this type of assessment was the most likely to be open to academic misconduct.	Even if the turnaround time is short, it still provides more time than a traditional invigilated exam. This could be an important graduate attribute as many professions may require the ability to complete a task or undertake research quickly. N.B. some courses have requirements set out by Professional Statutory bodies that require an unseen exam to be used and for it to be of a specific length (e.g., accounting) So it may be that the course cannot always vary this as one of their assessment modes in a module	Ensure that there is ample time to practice in a safe low-stakes conditions. Permit peer support/collaboration as appropriate. Build in a verbal follow up task. E.g., a reflective one-to-one interview where the student can discuss the experience and present their rationale(s).
Heavily weighted assessment	The more heavily weighted the assessment the higher the pressure to pass. This is most often seen in long final exams which can include a lot of undetected cheating or rote memorisation.	These do concentrate efforts for both staff and students. There may be some authenticity in completing a high stakes task.	Provide plenty of relevant practice and feedback with planning strategies, mock exams etc. Break up the task into sequential components mirroring the format of the final assessment and ensure that there is time for feedback and monitoring of progress. Also plan to minimise the impact of failure on progression (e.g., provide supplementary assessment opportunities)
Continuous assessment	Having to engage in weekly learning to gain marks can become monotonous, and trivial. There can also be a danger of teaching to test rather than focussing on meeting learning objectives. Integrity issues	Regular assessment can promote familiarity with assessment task/type. Provides regular feedback for both staff and students.	Ensure that weighting and task conditions contribute to a more formative assessment and provide opportunities for practice, sharing of ideas/experience and feedback.

	depend on format. E.g., online quizzes have different issues from in-class tasks.	Can help you get to know the student's ability and writing style.	
In-class assessment	Inflexible because it requires attendance and therefore catching up or potentially affecting progression opportunities for students. Can be difficult to invigilate unless class environment can replicate exam conditions. Can also contribute to student anxiety or pressure.	Helps you to get to know your students' strengths/weaknesses and capabilities. Can be helpful for students to gain formative or summative feedback. Still open to a range of cheating opportunities.	What is the primary purpose? Ensure that it is clear whether it is formative or summative. Is the aim to give students practice/feedback/sharing of ideas? Set your weighting and assessment brief/conditions accordingly.
Personalised/unique	This can be difficult to achieve with large cohorts. Can also be difficult to standardise marking if assessments vary greatly.	Reduces the possibility of collusion. Students can feel more engaged. Students recognise that cheating can be easily detected although nothing can be 100% certain given the range of services offered by essay mills.	Ensure that students know why tasks have been individualised. Clarify where they can collaborate with peers and where they cannot.
Vivas	These can be hard to schedule, particularly with large cohorts due to time constraints, limited staffing or room availability. Can also cause exam type pressure for students.	Vivas are a good way to assess verbal skills in a more authentic way than a formal presentation. They are another skill that a student can build on. Adds variety to assessment types. Much harder to outsource to a contract cheating provider.	Ensure that there is a clear purpose and link to learning outcomes (i.e., a viva is not simply being used to avoid misconduct). Set weighting and conditions as appropriate and clearly communicate these to the students.
Reflection on a course of study	Students often only see value in the experience and not in the reflective part of the assessment. It is important that reflective skills are taught and that it is clear how it will be assessed or it can be unfair and confusing experience for students.	A good way of assessing what was actually learned from the experience and not just a descriptive account of what happened or what was done. Less likely to be outsourced to a contract cheating provider unless it is a student from an earlier cohort or someone with specialist knowledge in the field.	Ensure that reflective skills are taught, modelled and practiced. Ensure marking rubrics are clear and aligned to learning outcomes. Consider an oral element. E.g., students may keep a written journal but be assessed in a reflective interview where they summarise what was learned in the experience of writing the journal.
Online quizzes	Collusion in unsupervised environments is commonplace and almost impossible to avoid as you have no way of knowing who students are with or what resources they have access to. It is also easy to cheat by looking up answers on the internet, using calculators etc. Students can see them as trivial.	They can encourage engagement and participation. Incremental learning can take place and can be a good way to offer regular feedback. Can form a low stakes part of the assessment on a module. Easy to administer.	Either make them a very small percentage of the overall assessment or make them formative/voluntary. Ensure that students know the purpose – e.g., to check understanding soon after the input in class.

Adapted from: EDUCATOR-RESOURCE-Managing-risk-for-assessment-types.pdf (cheatingandassessment.edu.au)

Using authentic assessment

Authentic assessment is essentially "situating teaching and assessment in real world issues, problems and applications" (Fry et al., 2015, p.428).

Using authentic assessment can engage students and help them to see the relevance of their learning and assessment activities.

However, do be aware that 'authenticity' on its own is unlikely to minimise academic misconduct. An analysis of online requests posted to multiple cheat sites, along with breach reports from two universities, showed that even highly authentic tasks are routinely outsourced (Harper et al., 2018). There is some evidence to indicate that while authentic assessment cannot prevent cheating, it may make detection of cheating more likely. Ideally assessment tasks should not only be authentic to students' future lives, but also to where they are in their learning journey, in line with the CCCU Learning and Teaching Strategy. Discipline areas would benefit from engaging students as partners in designing assessment and therefore giving students more ownership in the teaching, learning and assessment process.

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