Contract cheating can be defined as procuring work from another source and submitting the work as one's own without reference to the author (Clarke and Lancaster, 2006). The number of cases of contract cheating is rapidly increasing. To help address the problem, the institution, academic staff and students must all become engaged in a process that advances an academic integrity (AI) ethos into campus life (Bretag, 2015). This, in conjunction with good assessment design, a strong technological safety net, robust relationships between students and staff, and a comprehensive AI policy that addresses both academic and legal components of integrity breaches, can help to deter contract cheating (Newton and Lang, 2015; Bretag, 2015).

To help prevent contract cheating, academic staff can:

• Include AI statements in unit outlines and require students to sign a pledge on assessment coversheets (Seals et. al, 2014)
• Discuss AI, university values, student responsibilities and possible consequences throughout unit
• Promote AI resources - the Academic Integrity Program (AIP), the AI website and the Learning Centre
• Use Turnitin for all possible assessments and examine the originality reports
• Use assessment rubrics
• Incorporate discipline relevant case studies that explore the problematic nature of contract cheating
• Design the unit to limit opportunities to cheat (Lancaster, 2014)
  o Change assessment topics for each student cohort
  o Embed unique descriptors and instructor data into assessment specifications, then create Google alerts to track the terms on contract cheating sites (Lancaster, 2012)
  o Routinely upload assessment specifications into Turnitin to provide match sources for contract cheating requests (Lancaster and Clarke, 2014)
  o Conduct an in-class writing exercise for a baseline writing sample (Bertram Gallant, 2015)
  o Use various approaches for assessing achievement:
    ▪ Use individualised assessments that incorporate information from in-class discussions or self-reflection (Bertram Gallant, 2015)
    ▪ Assess the learning process as well as the product – require the students to show evidence of the process (i.e. proposals, drafts, annotated bibliographies, critical reflections on the process) (Bertram Gallant, 2015)
    ▪ Incorporate oral presentations and practical tests into the assessment process (Lancaster and Clarke, 2007).
    ▪ Use well invigilated examinations (Lancaster, 2014)
    ▪ Link tests with coursework assessments - i.e. reflecting on an assessment under test conditions (Lancaster, 2014)
    ▪ Use carefully designed group assessments – so students cannot split up assessments into individual components (Lancaster, 2014)
    ▪ Assign a peer- and self-review process to assessments (Bertram Gallant, 2015)

What should I do if I suspect Contract Cheating in student work?

• Consult the Staff Guidelines for Dealing with Student Plagiarism and follow the How to Manage Plagiarism Flowchart (p. 21)
• Report potential breaches to the Authorised Officer
References


