

# The 411 on Contract Cheating and Essay Mills

## The Practice of Contract Cheating

Contract cheating is the practice of engaging third parties to complete an assignment on behalf of someone else.

### How many students contract cheat?

Experts estimate that between 3.2%<sup>1</sup> and 15.7%<sup>2</sup> of student have paid others, either websites or friends and family, to complete their work.

### Why do students contract cheat?

- They are struggling to manage their time and the rigors of higher education.
- They feel pressured to succeed at any cost.
- They have been conditioned by the transactional nature of the gig economy.

### How do you prevent contract cheating?

- Institution-wide academic integrity policies
- Intentional instructional design
- Remediation supports for students
- Faculty education and training
- Technology solutions

## The Business of Essay Mills

Essay mills, also known as Academic Custom Writing Websites, are third party businesses that provide original custom academic writing to paying customers.

### How do essay mills attract students?

Essay mills market themselves aggressively with manipulative messaging that protects them from legal prosecution. They pose as tutors and homework helpers and actively recruit customers via social media and popular website, such as YouTube.

### What is the size of the essay mill industry?

Turnitin estimates that the contract cheating industry in the Anglosphere makes approximately \$253 million per year.\*

\*There are 27.1 million higher education students in the Anglosphere. At the low end, 3.2%<sup>3</sup> of these students contract cheat, and an average of 1.6<sup>4</sup> papers was purchased per student. The average contract cheated paper costs \$182 (1,428 words delivered in 4.5 days<sup>5</sup>).

## Why should you care about contract cheating and essay mills?

The essay mill industry is eroding the value of our educational systems. If contract cheating persists, higher education degrees lose significance, institutional reputations are jeopardized, and the skillset of the workforce is diluted.