

Cheating the system

University students, like everyone, face pressures. In dealing with their stress, some students turn to a practice called ‘contract cheating’, which is when a student outsources their work, or contracts it out, to a third party.

Contract cheating threatens the integrity and operation of a university education, and students caught doing the wrong thing face serious consequences.

While universities recognise the struggles students sometimes go through, cheating is never the answer, no matter how challenging the circumstances.

Laws to stamp out contract cheating

Australia’s anti-cheating laws make it an offence to provide or advertise academic cheating services in higher education. Penalties range from up to two years’ imprisonment or fines of up to \$111,000, or both.

In August 2022, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) used new laws to block access to 40 of the most visited academic cheating websites.

The new protocols streamline the process for blocking illegal academic cheating websites, better enabling TEQSA to enforce Australia’s laws against commercial academic cheating.

The 40 websites TEQSA blocked were being visited about 450,000 times a month.

Blocking these websites will disrupt the operations of the criminals behind them and stop them from exploiting vulnerable students.

In October 2022, TEQSA, in partnership with Quality and Qualifications Ireland, launched the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN) to fight the rise of commercial academic cheating services.

GAIN is working with similar agencies around the world to stamp out these operations that target higher education students.

How do universities respond to cases of cheating?

Universities fully back TEQSA, to track the cheating websites down and close them.

Students caught doing the wrong thing can face serious consequences and may jeopardise their future careers.

All universities have policies and procedures to identify and deal with academic misconduct. Penalties can include expelling students and revoking degrees where this is appropriate.

Universities offer a variety of academic support services, and we strongly encourage students struggling with their studies to seek out help from their university.

Universities Australia’s [Academic Integrity Best Practice Principles](#) were designed to assist universities to uphold academic integrity.

We are working closely with the sector to update these principles to reflect changes in the administration of academic integrity and the delivery of university courses.

Any suspected commercial academic cheating services can be reported to TEQSA: [Reporting a suspected academic cheating service form](#)