

Contract Cheating: A View From Three Calgary Post-Secondary Institutions

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Session overview

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Overview of Contract Cheating
- 3) Our Project
 - a) Research Question
 - b) Methods
 - c) Findings
- 4) Impact

Project Participants

- 3 Calgary post-secondary institutions
 - ◆ 2 universities - University of Calgary and Mount Royal University
 - ◆ 1 college - Bow Valley College
- Perspectives from different roles
 - ◆ Administration
 - ◆ Academic Staff
 - ◆ Professional Staff

Project genesis and purpose

April 2018 workshop at UCalgary

“Essay Mills, Theses-On-Demand and Contract Cheating:
Latest Research and Resources” (Sarah Eaton)

Purpose

To compare our individual experiences of contract cheating to discover common questions, struggles and approaches to dealing with this complex breach of academic integrity.

What is contract cheating?

“‘Contract cheating’ happens when a third party completes work for a student who then submits it to an education provider as their own, where such input is not permitted.”

(The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2017, p. 1)

A breach of the contract of integrity

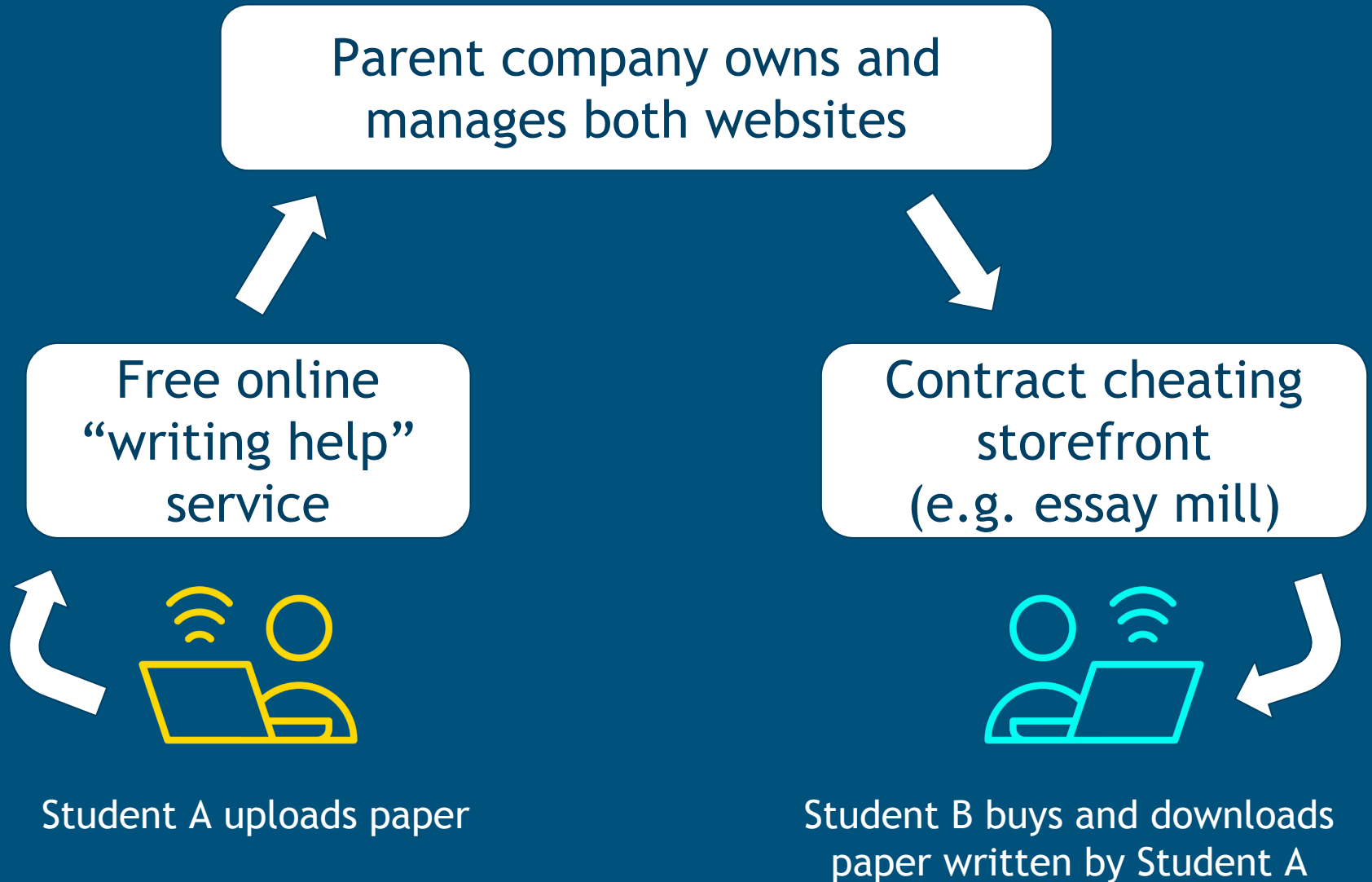
Expectation:



Violation:



Corporate cheating cartels



Prevalence of contract cheating

≈ 3.5% of students self-reported

(Curtis & Clare, 2017)

1 in 7 students (15.7%)

(Newton, 2018)

62.5% did it more than once

(Curtis & Clare, 2017)

Most common disciplines

1. Business
2. Engineering
3. Science
4. Humanities
5. Education

(Curtis & Clare, 2017; Bretag, 2017)

How many providers in Canada?



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Prevalence in Canada

2006

Canada in top 4 countries from which students bought academic work online



2018

Canada now tied for 2nd:
top countries where students engage in
contract cheating

A perfect storm

- commercialization of higher education
- massification without adequate supports
- internationalization
- changing social norms
- technology
- precarious job markets

Conceptual lenses for academic integrity

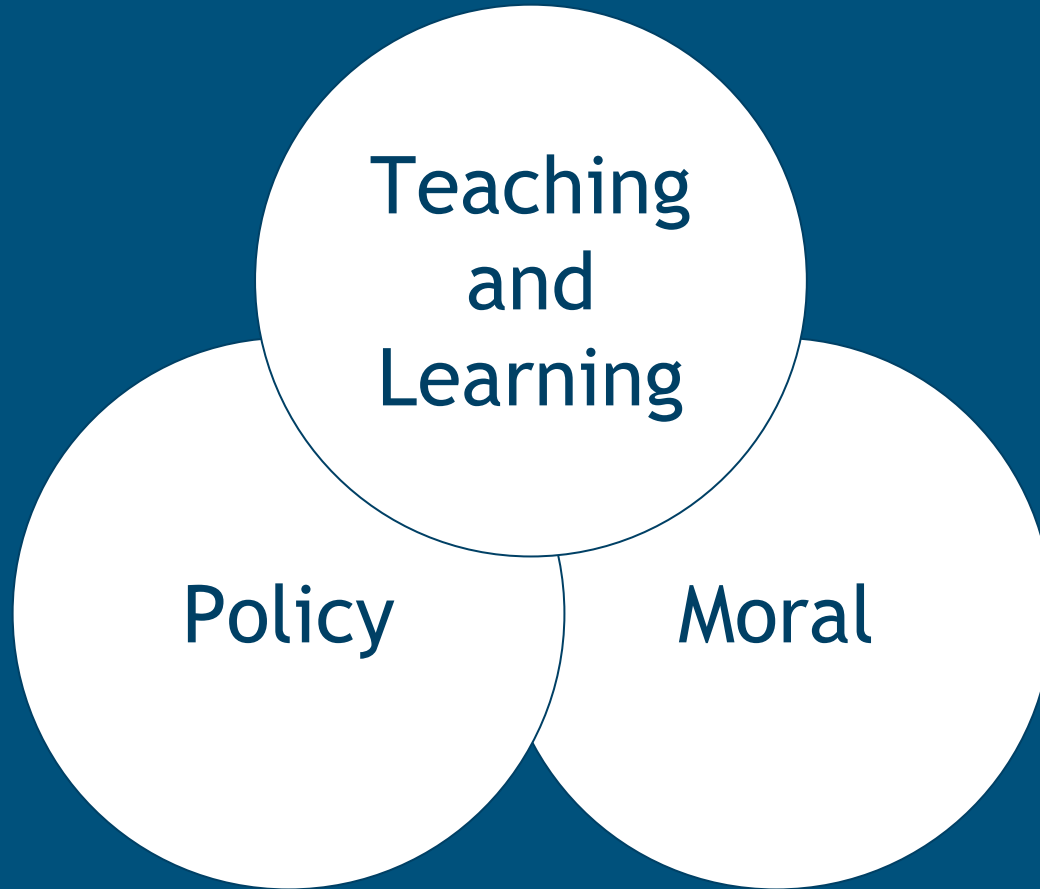


Figure 1: Conceptual Lenses for Academic Integrity, adapted from Adam (2016).

A teaching and learning lens

Academic integrity is a teaching and learning *imperative*.

(Bertram Gallant, 2008)

The question isn't "Why are students cheating?", but "Why aren't our students learning?"

(Bertram Gallant, 2008, p. 6)

Primary Research Question

How do our respective institutions address the problem of contract cheating?

Sub-question:

How might a teaching and learning lens be explicitly used to engage in an inquiry on contract cheating?

Method

- Qualitative, action research design, exploratory focus
 - ◆ “Exploration is a valid and important mode of scientific inquiry . . . vital for discovery”
(Gernsbacher, 2018, p. 3).
 - ◆ Action research as reflective inquiry for professional development and educational practice
(McNiff, 2010, 2013, 2014)
- Data source: Narratives of researcher-participants
- Collaborative and interactive thematic analysis
(Saldaña, 2016)

Findings

Key themes:

- 1) Types of contract cheating
- 2) Students
- 3) Awareness
- 4) Evidence and policy implications
- 5) Educational development

Types of Contract Cheating

- 1) Paid source
- 2) Contract collusion
- 3) Loyalty

Students

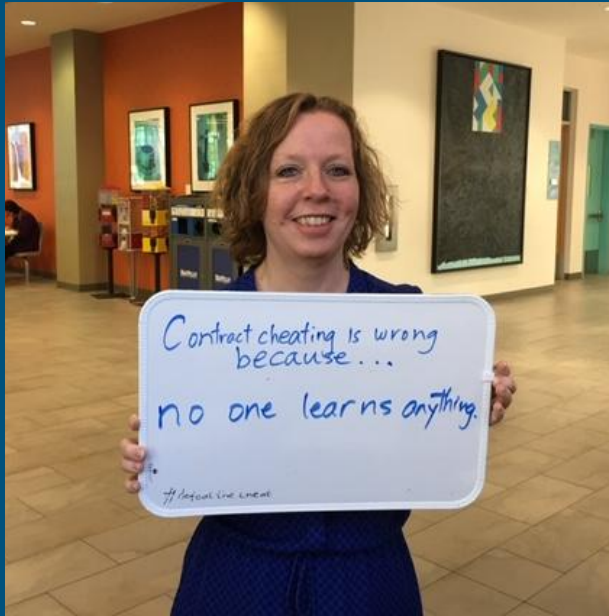
→ Motivations

- ◆ feeling overwhelmed
- ◆ time pressure
- ◆ pressure to succeed

→ Previous learning experiences

- ◆ sharing through internet
- ◆ cultural experiences of academic integrity

Awareness



International Day of Action Against
Contract Cheating - Oct. 17, 2018



Evidence and policy implications

- “But I can’t prove it”
- “How do I talk to the student?”
- “What’s our policy?”

Educational development

→ Students

→ Faculty

Impact

- 1) Personal impact on our individual practice
- 2) Mobilizing knowledge at our institutions
- 3) Cross-institutional collaboration

Limitations

- 1) Alberta perspective
- 2) Urban institutions
- 3) No student perspective

Recommendations and next steps

- 1) Start / extend the dialogue
- 2) Include in institutional policy (and include student-friendly support documents)
- 3) Develop supports for faculty and staff
- 4) 4th International Day of Action - Oct. 16, 2019

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