

## Contract Cheating

- 1.1 Contract cheating involves a student commissioning work from a third party and submitting it as their own work. A very low proportion of students engage in contract cheating, but it is considered a particularly severe form of academic misconduct as it involves a deliberate intention to cheat on the part of the student;
- 1.2 Essay mills are companies which offer to write essays or other student assignments in exchange for money. They typically advertise themselves as academic writing services;
- 1.3 Essay mills use a number of different ways to target students, such as distributing flyers on university campuses, targeting students on social media, and recruiting other university students to advertise their services. Many advertise their services as if they are normal and acceptable, and some claim to have links with the University of Edinburgh. This is a deliberate move on the part of the companies involved to make students think that contract cheating is something that lots of students do and that it is an acceptable practice. Contract cheating is totally unacceptable and if suspected will always result in a formal academic misconduct investigation;
- 1.4 Students should be aware that if they submit work written by someone else then they are committing plagiarism, regardless of any claims that companies or ghost writers make about providing “plagiarism-free” work;
- 1.5 Students should also be aware that by sharing their own work with other students or posting it online that they run the risk of their work being used by others, with or without their knowledge which could result in allegations of plagiarism and potentially disastrous consequences for others;
- 1.6 Students also run the risk of becoming victim to threats of blackmail by contract cheating companies who in some cases threaten to expose students to their institutions, employers or professional bodies unless greater sums of money are paid or further work is commissioned;
- 1.7 There are a number of reasons that students choose to engage the services of an essay mill or ghost writer. In some cases, students do so because they are struggling with their work, or feel under pressure due to mitigating circumstances. There are a wide variety of support systems that students can take advantage of if they are feeling under pressure such as extensions and special circumstances. Further information is available at the following links:

Extensions and Special Circumstances Requests -

<https://www.edweb.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/extensions-special-circumstances>

Additional Support: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/academic-life>