

Outsourcing assessments: The implications of contract cheating for teaching and learning in Canada

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Contract cheating¹ is a growing problem in higher education with an estimated prevalence of ~3.5%². At this rate, 71,223 post-secondary students in Canada are requesting others to complete their work for them³. In Canada, the definition of plagiarism in academic integrity policies often subsumes contract cheating but it is beginning to emerge as a distinct category of academic misconduct.^{4,5}

Tactics to entice and manipulate

Contract cheating providers use a number of tactics to entice and manipulate students to use their services⁴. Students are often victims and here are some examples of how they are lured:

- **Expertise** “team up with certified Ph.D. experts to ensure academic success” (flashediting.com)
- **High quality standards** “We put decades of writing experience to work for you and are passionate about helping you succeed.” (grademiners.com)

- **Price and value** “5% off first order” (edubirdie.com); “FlashEditing offers professional academic help complemented with a whopping 50% off!” (flashediting.com); “Free revisions” (writemyessay.ca)
- **Timely delivery** “fast, reliable and secure writing services” (99papers.com); “a quick turnaround time from 3 hours;” “No missed deadlines – 97% of assignments are complete in time.” (graderminers.com)
- **Client guarantee** “customer satisfaction guaranteed” (graderminers.com)
- **Risk reduction and confidentiality** “anonymous communication” (99papers.com)
- **Empathy** “bid farewell to academic worries forever” (flashediting.com)

Dangers of contract cheating

Students face serious consequences when engaging with these companies.

- **Being reported** “A lot of educational institutions have reported writers ringing them up and saying, ‘I did this work for the student. They haven’t paid their bill’”⁶
- **Blackmail and extortion** “. . . companies have also attempted to shake down students for more money, threatening to rat them out if they didn't pay up.”⁷
- **Risk to students’ reputations**
- **Suspension and expulsion**

Strategies to educate and protect students

- Establish a culture of integrity in the learning environment
- Discuss *why* academic dishonesty is wrong –

- be explicit about the risks and harms
- Get to know your students and their work³ and let them know this with timely, detailed feedback
- Consider alternative assessments⁸
- Blocking internet-based contract cheating providers URLs on campus⁹
- Legal ban on contract cheating companies
- Participate in the *International Day of Action against Contract Cheating*¹⁰

References

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- ¹⁰International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) <https://academicintegrity.org/day-against-contract-cheating/>



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