

EVIDENCE-BASED RESPONSES TO CONTRACT CHEATING

Tracey Bretag

Abstract: Following a number of scandals in Australia and internationally, contract cheating has been identified as a significant problem for higher education institutions across the globe. This keynote address¹ will report the preliminary findings from surveys conducted as part of a current Australian Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) funded project, Contract cheating and assessment design: Exploring the connection (led by Tracey Bretag and Rowena Harper) which aimed to determine if and how authentic assessment may be used to minimise opportunities for students to outsource their work.

The keynote will present ground-breaking data from two large Australia-wide surveys – one of students and one of teaching staff – which explored attitudes toward and experiences with students' use of third parties to complete assessment, and related teaching and learning factors. The data provides the higher education sector with a clearer understanding of the relationship between university learning and assessment environments and contract cheating behavior.

The surveys were conducted in late 2016 at 12 higher education institutions and received over 15,000 student responses and 1,200 teaching staff responses. The keynote will share critical findings of international interest, and make recommendations for evidence-based approaches to addressing the issue of contract cheating. Delegates will be informed of:

- Self-reported rates of contract cheating, and the relationship with discipline, mode of study, age and other variables
- Implications for assessment design, teaching and learning, and institutional practices
- Evidence regarding the critical role of the student-teacher relationship

The findings from this project will inform the development of teaching and learning resources which will be freely available on the project website, as well as an online Academic Integrity training program for students and staff, led by Tracey Bretag, and due for release in 2018 by Epigeum, Oxford University Press.

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¹This keynote address is based on data from an Australian research project co-led by Associate Professor Tracey Bretag and Dr Rowena Harper, in collaboration with team members, Associate Professor Cath Ellis, Professor Phil Newton, Dr Pearl Rozenberg, Ms Karen van Haeringen and Ms Sonia Saddiqui. Project website: www.cheatingandassessment.edu.au. Preliminary versions of this presentation have been shared at the Project Symposium, University of South Australia, 13 April 2017, internal university forums and other educational conferences.