POURING ALE ON CONTRACT CHEATING. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN STRATEGIES TO TACKLE GHOSTWRITING AND ESSAY MILLS USING ASSESSMENT DESIGN, LEGAL APPROACHES AND STAKEHOLDER EDUCATION

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Abstract: Any sort of university assignment can be purchased from 'Essay Mills' or other contract cheating services. These typically use ghostwriters to produce bespoke custom-written assignments. Contract cheating services are quick, cheap, flexible and widespread.

Many strategies have been proposed to address the use of Essay Mills and other 'contract cheating' services. This keynote will review recent research and development in three key areas; Assessment design, Legal strategies, and stakeholder Education.

Assessment design considerations will be influenced by recent research on the types of services currently offered (or not), the numbers and characteristics of students using them, and their reasons for doing so.

Legal and regulatory approaches have been the subject of research which identified key areas where contract cheating might be targeted, but has also revealed some complicating factors. These could be addressed by the creation of new laws or the modification of existing legislation.

Education of all stakeholders is essential to ensure that students understand how and why to do 'the right thing', and the hazards associated contract cheating. Staff need access to education which helps them understand the issue, along with the design of valid and resilient assessments that can withstand challenge from contract cheating. Recent research has shown that academic integrity is not, currently, part of the mainstream discourse of learning and teaching in Higher Education.

Future priorities for research and advocacy will be identified and discussed.

The content of this session will be complementary to a workshop on legal approaches to contract cheating and a panel discussion on contract cheating.

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